CFO of the Year Winner: Bill Alcorn, North Texas Food Bank

*Dallas Business Journal*

By Steven Thompson

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While on vacation in Hawaii last fall, Bill Alcorn dialed the offices of the North Texas Food Bank and participated in the biweekly, 7:30 a.m. executive team meetings. It was 2:30 a.m. in Hawaii.

“He was getting up in the middle of the night to make this call,” said Jan K. Pruitt, president and CEO of the NTFB. “We would not have had him do that if we would have known. We would have switched the meeting.”

Pruitt says this is just another example of 62-year-old Alcorn’s dedication to the cause of the food bank, something that she says makes him stand out as a CFO.

Alcorn, who has been CFO for two years, started his work for the NTFB in the early 1990s when he moved to Dallas for the second time with JCPenney Co.. Alcorn said he was approached to be on the board of directors of the food bank, and sat on the board for 10 years.

“Penneys is a good company to encourage its employees to volunteer throughout the community,” said Alcorn, who retired from the company after 37 years in 2008.

Alcorn grew up in Florida, graduated from the University of Florida with a degree in accounting in 1971 and went to work for JCPenney. After various promotions and seven relocations, Alcorn ended up working in Dallas as vice president, controller and chief procurement officer for the company.

When Alcorn retired, Pruitt asked if he would work as CFO for the NTFB temporarily.

“It was a good opportunity for me to be active in a lot of things that I had expertise in and be supportive of an organization that I thought was a terrific organization,” Alcorn said.
Before Alcorn, the food bank didn’t have a CFO and he brought new procedures and processes to the nonprofit. The temporary position turned into an open-ended agreement that allowed Alcorn the freedom to be CFO and travel.

“He brought best-in-class practices from JCPenney, but what works at JCPenney overall might not work at a nonprofit,” Pruitt said. “So he coupled best-in-class practices with creativity and passion for our mission to make it work.”

Alcorn said his passion for continuing his work at the food bank during retirement is only natural for him.

“I was fortunate to get an education, and I become a CPA, and I learned a lot at Penney’s,” Alcorn said. “I always tell people, ‘If you had the opportunity to get an education, or you have skill sets that a lot of people don’t have, I think it’s important to give something back to the community.’”

And the NTFB isn’t the only place Alcorn gives back. He and his wife, Patti, have an endowment set up that gives out two scholarships each year to two qualified students at the University of Florida. Alcorn also sits on the boards of the Dallas Zoo, The Women’s Museum at Fair Park and the University of Florida.

During his time at the NTFB, that group kept expenses under $1 million, expanded its facilities by 50 percent and doubled the amount of people it feeds.

“He’s been the puzzle piece that fits perfectly in our team to enable us to double our impact,” Pruitt said.

Alcorn said being a CFO for a nonprofit after retiring from a large corporation has required some adjustments.

“I came from a large corporate environment with administrative and technical assistance in most of the initiatives I worked on,” Alcorn said. “While we have an excellent team, I am more on my own and have had to learn new skills to get things done.”

Alcorn also tries to teach others at the nonprofit, Pruitt said.

“He is a tremendous mentor, not only to his department, but to women and to younger people,” Pruitt said.