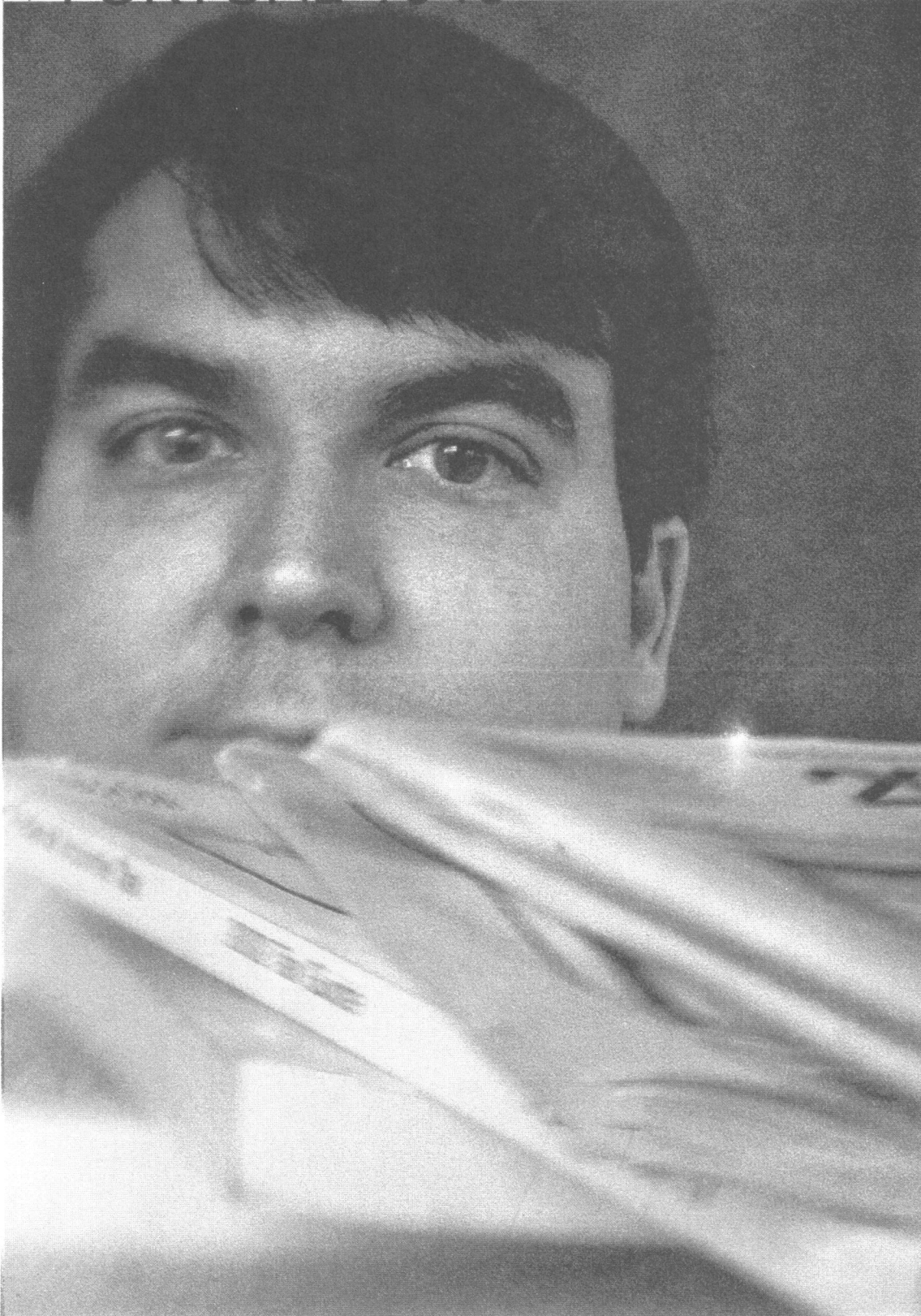


>> FORTUNE 1040



Bob Burke

MISSION: Share the wealth

MOMENT OF TRUTH: In 1994, Burke was volunteering as a kids basketball coach and mentor on the West Side when he concluded he wasn't doing much good. The kids had fun, but any talk of a bright future rang hollow: They still had to go home to families that could barely afford food and clothes. "It made me realize that working poor people need opportunity *and* money, not one without the other."

BACKSTORY: Burke, then a consultant for Arthur Andersen, figured many low-income families were unaware of tax credits and refunds they qualified for. He started the non-profit Tax Assistance Program, recruiting volunteers from major corporations to give free tax-preparation help in poor communities (taxassistance.org). This tax season, 1,800 TAP volunteers are working every Saturday in 17 Chicago neighborhoods and six suburbs.

OUTCOME: Last year, TAP returned \$12 million in refunds to 9,237 families. The average refund was \$1,300 to a client making less than \$20,000 a year. Recently, TAP has grown beyond tax help to also offer financial services, from starting bank accounts to helping students obtain financial aid for college or trade school. Burke believes clients and volunteers flock to TAP because it's run like a corporation, emphasizing efficiency and results. "We want to be the Goldman Sachs for the working poor," he says.

SIDE EFFECTS: Burke has less tolerance for slack, strings and long-winded meetings. "I have no time for blah-blah-blah. It doesn't serve my clients."

PAYOFF: "People don't dream big if they don't see what's possible. I want to expose people to what's possible."

dchen@tribune.com