

RISING STAR

MU Alum becomes successful Hollywood money manager

WHILE GROWING UP IN COLUMBIA, MISSOURI, talk around Jeff Runyan's dinner table naturally gravitated to finance. With his mother manager of a large scale local credit union and his father a risk mitigation specialist, "the natural progression of dinner talk was always money management, then minimizing risk," Runyan joked.

It seems finance really is in Runyan's DNA. In 2000, Runyan graduated with a master's in consumer and family economics from MU's department of Personal Financial Planning, where he'd also earned his bachelor's. Runyan then moved across the country to be with his then-girlfriend, now-wife, Jenni, in Beverly Hills, California.

Runyan had no relationships or network to speak of when he moved west to start his career as a financial manager. But in just over a decade, Runyan has built a formidable client list, including some of the most respected and recognized business names in the Beverly Hills area. Last year Runyan, now

an Investment Consultant with Wedbush Securities, received the prestigious Five Star Wealth Manager award, an honor bestowed upon less than 2 percent of wealth managers in the Los Angeles area.

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Runyan adheres to a philosophy that could be described as the Hippocratic Oath for investment managers. "First and foremost, do no harm," he said. "Philosophically, that's a core principle I subscribe to." Runyan says the key to his success is building strong relationships and trust with his clients, which range from every day, hardworking professionals to those inside the world of entertainment.

"It takes time to become a part of the fabric of a community that's this longstanding," Runyan said. "To have authentic and genuine relationships with my clients — there's no plaque on my wall for



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that, but that's what I'm most proud of."

Bea Smith, former dean of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, recalls Runyan as an ambitious student leader, an ideas guy. "It comes as no surprise that he has carved out an ever-expanding niche," Smith said. "No doubt his clients appreciate him as an outstanding professional with their best interests at heart."

Runyan says his time at Mizzou imparted priceless lessons he'd later draw from as a professional.

"Clients ultimately make their own decisions. It's the role of the investment manager to aid the client through rational and orderly evaluation of their financial objectives and then utilize the tools and strategies best equipped to accomplish those intents," he said. "The program instilled in me that, at the end of the day, financial decisions

are fundamentally emotional decisions that all families must make," he said.

Personal Financial Planning associate professor Deanna Sharpe says Runyan was a "creative, optimistic, adventurous" student. "I watched him grow as a person and as a professional while in our program," she said. "He has applied that same spirit and energy to his career, and I'm very proud of him for what he has accomplished."

Sharpe recalled that when Runyan finished his master's degree in 2000, he delivered to her office a very large package. Inside was one of Runyan's paintings. He wrote a long thank you note that almost covered the entire back of the canvas. "The picture has hung in my office ever since, not only as a reminder of Jeff, but also as an affirmation of the value of investing in our students," Sharpe said.