

Local

What it's like to be a ... A financial advisor

With college students choosing majors and high school students deciding between college or the workforce, this series will highlight one career path each week in August and September.

This week, we introduce you to **Jeff Higgins and Crystal Gainer** of Financial West Group on Campbell Street.

This installment concludes our series—for this year. We've enjoyed bringing it to you!

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The BCP: What is your actual title?

Jeff: Registered investment advisor.

The BCP: How long have you been doing this?

Jeff: 18 ½ Years

Crystal: Since 2007, so almost seven years.

The BCP: How does one become a registered investment advisor?

Jeff: Typically it requires some degree—it doesn't have to, if you want to be independent it doesn't necessarily require a degree but if you want to work for a "wire house"—a brokerage firm having several branch offices connected to its main office, for example Merrill Lynch—then you have to take series of exams. A series 7 exam, a stock trading exam in order to buy and sell stocks for clients, a series 63 allows you to handle mutual funds and annuities, and if you want to do what we do in the planning stage you must take an additional test a series 65 or 66 allows you to do the managed plan portion.

There are several other series for example if you wanted to trade commodities, so each individual specialty has its own exam you have to pass in order to do those things. The series 7, 63 and 65 or 66 allows you to do options contracts but not commodities.

The BCP: How do you take the tests or find out about taking a test?

Jeff: If you have a degree, you'd go to a large firm do an interview, they determine whether or not they will allow you to take the exams and work for them. If you go out independently, you go where you know.

The best way to do it would be through an internship. Go to an independent firm tell them you're interested in this, let them know where you are in your educational concept and then ask if there is anyone that needs an intern.

It is going to be grunt work, cold calling and things like that; it's not going to be fun but if you take a little time to learn and ask questions you can amass an excellent concept of how this business works pretty quickly but you have to be inquisitive.

The BCP: What advice would you give to someone wanting to choose this as their career path?

Jeff: Going the educational route, I would say be sure you have a firm understanding of economics, a good concept of history, and then a good grasp of psychology as well because the interactions you have with your clients over time become relationships and as an advisor your biggest job is to problem solve. The better you are at that and the better you are at understanding where your client is coming from the better advisor you are.



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Crystal Gainer and Jeff Higgins work at Financial West Group in Baker City.

The BCP: Do you have any major successes that really stand out for you?

Jeff: There are several. What I find to be most rewarding is not only working with an individual from, a time early on when they don't have a lot of money to going through the career process and having them be able to say at 55 years-old you can stop working if you want to or you don't have to, ultimately, that is the most rewarding concept for me.

If we've done things well, if I've helped them to save well, we've invested well and we've put it all together appropriately then at 55 years-old they get to make the choice as opposed to having to wait until they are 65 or until a health condition creates a situation where you can't work as much. But they get to make that choice. Many of them continue to work though because they are doing what they love or they have personal goals still to meet but they get to make that choice and 10 years before the average person that is pretty rewarding.

We have helped a lot of folks, usually your motivation to get involved in being an advisor a stockbroker is to make money but I think the most rewarding thinking for me over the last 18 ½ years has been the response for clients being grateful that someone was there to help and guide them a little bit and help them to reach their ultimate goal. 'I'm ready to retire and there is enough to take care of me and I can still do the things I want to do.' Saving isn't easy to do.

I think what has surprised me the most about the career is that you feel successful in what you're able to help other people accomplish.

The BCP: What have

been the biggest challenges?

Jeff: The market is always the big challenge. I think that biggest thing that is involved in investing is the emotional attachment people have to their money. So I see it as part of my job to not only to help to educate them in what they have so they have a good understanding of what they are invested in and why but the other challenge is to help them separate their emotional attachment to the money when you difficult stock market conditions like we did in 2008.

That is where having an advisor, someone that you can talk to, becomes extremely important because as difficult as it is to see that happen it is that much more important to keep yourself from making a mistake at that point.

That is the biggest challenge helping clients separate their emotion from their money.

The BCP: What advice would you give to a young person just entering the workforce in regard to planning or saving for their future?

Jeff: Just getting started there isn't a lot of spare money typically but you can discipline yourself to save and basically pay yourself. From the time you begin earning if you can be disciplined enough to pay yourself 10%. I would start, if you're looking at the long term concept, with a ROTH IRA. Because as young as you are at that point you don't need a lot of tax breaks. So putting the money in after tax the ROTH IRA allows you to grow tax free. It is available for extra things as well like first time home purchases there is a limited amount available for that without penalty, paying for education can now be done from a ROTH IRA. It doesn't take much to get it started depending on what mutual fund you might start with and a mutual fund is a good place to begin but it's definitely not something that you want to maintain forever because as you are able to earn more you want to expand and diversify a portfolio so you have many different options within the portfolio.

Mutual Funds allow you low entry levels as far as

cost factors and you can sustain the volatility that is typical in the stock market early on versus as time goes on you want to reduce that risk overall.

The BCP: We were all young once. Saving and planning for our future was not the first thing on our minds as we were choosing our desired courses in life.

Jeff: No, but you can start small and the younger you can start the easier it is. If you can do the 10% concept, if you can take that 10% out of every paycheck for yourself first and out that money into a ROTH IRA from 18-20 and continue to the maximum in every year and expand it from there as time goes on. It is a great building block and it doesn't take a lot at the beginning but if you're not doing it until you're 50 there is a lot of money that has to go somewhere if it's going to take care of you.

The BCP: I know a lot of people just think 'oh when I retire I'll just live on Social Security' is that realistic?

Jeff: There is not a lot of that Social Security money to go around in a month. I didn't expect that it would be there for me, I didn't plan for that. Right now it's still there but it is not a significant amount of money to survive on. And it might not be around at all for future generations. Having other options is your best bet.

The BCP: Any parting thoughts?

Jeff: It is an amazing career. I feel very lucky to do it. If one has an affinity for it, it can become something fantastic. If you're getting a degree in something else it doesn't matter. A degree is completely unrelated.

As an example, one of the greatest individual bond traders that I've ever met had a history degree and drove a taxi.

He pulled up and dropped a guy in a suit off who was going into a trading office went back later when he was off duty and became a very successful investment advisor with a significant career.

So again, you don't have to have a specific background, but you do have to be able to learn, adapt and interact.

Pine-Eagle lawsuit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Dispositive motions are due by February 1, 2016. Expert discovery closes 30 days after the Court rules on dispositive motions. These deadlines were ordered by Judge Michael H. Simon.

No one ever accused the wheels of the legal system of turning quickly, and the grant of a request for further extensions of time by either party is always a possibility.

McLean, through attorneys Ralph E. Wiser and Roderick Boutin from Boutin & Associates out of Lake Oswego, claims that while she was working as an elementary school teacher in Halfway, her civil rights were violated during an April 26, 2013 "active shooter drill" at the school during a teacher in-service day.

According to several residents, students were present on site during the drill, despite the in-service-day timing, and witnessed at least a portion of that drill, which made national news at the time. Citizens in Halfway remain divided in their opinions on whether the drill was harmful or helpful, as well as on the lawsuit.

The U.S. Civil Statute under which the suit was filed is 42 USC Section 1983 with deprivation of civil rights and state law tort claims listed.

The suit itself was filed in United States District Court for the District of Oregon in Portland, and has six claims: 1. 14th amendment violation, state created danger / failed to protect; 2. 14th amendment violation, failure to train or supervise; 3. 14th amendment violation, false imprisonment; 4. 14th amendment violation, procedural due process violation, deprivation of a liberty interest without due process; 5. Intentional infliction of emotional distress; and 6. Claim against Civil Assault.

The court filing goes on to describe McLean's view of the drill. "All of a sudden, a man dressed all in black with a hoodie and goggles burst through the classroom door into the classroom. Ms. McLean was disoriented and her heart started racing. The man walked toward Ms. McLean, pointing a gun at Ms. McLean's face. Ms. McLean could not move, as she sat terrified in her chair. Ms. McLean recognized the gunman as the school safety office, Shawn Thatcher, an instant before he pulled the trigger. Smoke filled the room. Thatcher told Ms. McLean that she was dead. Thatcher left the room. He and John Minarich, who was also dressed in camouflage, and brandishing a weapon, continued going into and out of rooms, pointing their weapons at other teachers, pulling the trigger of the gun, and stating that the teachers were dead. Panic ensued. A teacher wet her pants. A teacher tried to keep Minarich from entering his room and scuffled with Minarich, injuring the teachers arm. Some teachers fell down trying to hide or escape from Minarich or Thatcher."

The court filings then describe McLean's later treatments for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, an inability to return to the school, and what she says was subsequent hostile treatment in the community by the defendants. McLean is asking for attorneys' fees and costs, as well as punitive claims in an unspecified amount as allowed by law.

On July 20, the defendants, except Alpine Alarm, filed their initial response to the lawsuit via attorneys Karen Vickers and Blake Fry from Portland.

That response, brief by its legal nature, acknowledges: Shawn Thatcher and John Minarich participated in the active shooter drill, that McLean was an Oregon resident and registered teacher, Pine-Eagle is a registered charter school, the defendants listed as school board members at the time of the drill were in fact school board members, Corley was superintendent, DeCastro was principal at the time, Thatcher was employed as safety office, plaintiff was hired in 1982, and the teachers gathered in the school library after the drill with Baker County Sheriff's Deputy Scott Imoos present.

Defense also confirms that the Baker County Sheriff's office and Dispatch were notified prior to the drill.

The defense denies or says it has insufficient knowledge to address all the other statements outlined in the plaintiff's filing.

Alpine Alarm, represented locally by David Auxier of Coughlin and Leuenberger of Baker City, filed a separate response on August 5, asking for reasonable attorneys fees and a court date. The company states it is "not a proper party to plaintiff's claims and that the claims also should be dismissed because "at no time was defendant Alpine Alarm acting under the color of state law."

Alpine Alarm also states that they believe the venue in which the suit was filed is incorrect, and that they lack the knowledge to either confirm or deny much of the allegations listed in McLean's claims.

Museum Day Live! happens Saturday

Baker Heritage Museum will open its doors free of charge on Saturday, September 26, 2015, as part of *Smithsonian Magazine's* eleventh annual Museum Day Live! On this day only, participating museums across the United States emulate the spirit of the Smithsonian Institution's Washington DC-based facilities, which offer free admission everyday, and open their doors for free to those who download a Museum Day Live! ticket.

Inclusive by design, the event represents Smithsonian's commitment to make learning and the spread of knowledge accessible to everyone.

The Museum Day Live! ticket is now available for download at Smithsonian.com/museumday. Visitors who present the Museum Day Live! ticket will gain free entrance for two at participating venues for one day only. One ticket, per household, per email address is permitted.