

# First Impression

WITC instructor quickly knew Matthew Harrington had the qualities to succeed

Story and Photo by Deborah Anderson



Matthew Harrington's start as a college student at WITC-Rice Lake coincided with Hugh Harris' first year teaching finance-business administration at the college. Harris remembers Harrington saying that his goal was to be an investment advisor. As Harris got to know his student's positive personality, intelligence and self-motivation, he could see that Harrington had the qualities and drive necessary to achieve that goal.

Harrington grew up in Sussex in southern England, graduating from a secondary school, Tendring Technology College, in 1999. He was accepted to a university, but decided to take a "gap year," a time when British and European students might work or travel the globe before starting college. That year, on a trip to Florida, he met a girl from Wisconsin and decided to pursue the relationship, moving to Rice Lake in 2000.

But Harrington didn't put his education on the back burner. He looked into

colleges in the area, and because he was a visitor to this country and couldn't get financial aid, he decided it would be more affordable to attend Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

"People should know that WITC is an absolute hidden gem," Harrington says. "It is a terrific value and has instructors like Hugh Harris who go above and beyond for their students."

Harrington and the group of 2002 finance graduates developed a close bond in their two years together, Harris says. They put together an "Unofficial WITC Yearbook," a partly humorous collection of their observations about their instructors and each other. Harrington was described as a good dresser, his favorite saying "Cheers!" and his future as "the person most likely to become president of Wall Street." And most remembered him for "that bloody accent."

In addition to his studies and coaching soccer at the Rice Lake middle and high

schools, Harrington also secured an internship at the Edward Jones branch office in Rice Lake. After graduating and passing the Series 7 exam from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Harrington got his license and was hired there as an investment representative.

Over the next few years, he moved on to become a financial advisor with H&R Block Financial Advisors, which was subsequently acquired by Ameriprise Financial Services. Harrington is now partner and associate vice-president of Knooihuizen, Harrington & Associates, a branch office of Ameriprise. Their office in Lake Elmo, Minnesota, serves more than 600 clients in Minnesota, as well as 20 other states.

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– *WITC Instructor  
Hugh Harris*

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Harrington says helping people is what he likes most about his job.

“Every person is unique,” he says. “They and their families have unique needs. It is only by getting to know them that a solution to their financial needs can be made. It takes a while to build trust before they hand over management of their assets. We can make a powerful difference in their lives.”

In 2013, Harrington was named to the Ameriprise Circle of Success, which is awarded to the top 20 percent in the company. He followed that up by being named as one of 2014’s Top Wealth Managers in the Twin Cities by Twin Cities Business Magazine.

Harrington married the girl from Rice Lake but, unfortunately, they later divorced. He is now happily planning a wedding for December with his fiancée, Elizabeth. A large family contingency from England will be coming and staying at his house for two weeks.

He has remained close to his family, even with an ocean separating them. “I get to see

them in the flesh roughly every 18 months. And Skype is an absolute Godsend, even trying to schedule around a six-hour time difference.”

Harrington is also active in British Expats in the USA, a group of roughly 100 couples around the Twin Cities that get together for events. “It is purely social – just enough to get our ‘fix’ of life back home,” he says. “On Saturday mornings, I’ve been known to run over to ‘The Local,’ an Irish pub and official home of the London Arsenal Soccer Team Supporters Club, to watch them play. What’s wrong with Guinness for breakfast?”

In just a few short years, Harrington has parlayed his education and skills, along with a desire to put others first, into recognition as a top financial advisor and is a prime example that a combination of education, skills, and a desire to put others first, can yield great rewards. ■

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