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NICHOLAS GRINER | STAFF

Bryan Thaler is an investment counselor at Van Sant & Mewshaw.

Bryan Thaler

Title: Assistant investment officer and senior investment counselor
Company: Van Sant & Mewshaw
Age: 33
Education: B.S., Towson University

What's the name of your cellphone ring? I have no idea. It's generic.
Morning person or night owl? Night owl
What did you last download onto your iPod? I don't have an iPod.
Who was your greatest mentor? My father and Bob Mewshaw (president of Van Sant & Mewshaw)
How many e-mails you receive a day, roughly? 10-15 work e-mails; another 20-plus are spam
What is your greatest weakness? I'm very detail oriented; I like things to be perfect.

The seeds of Bryan Thaler's career were sown at the old Reisterstown Road Plaza movie theater.

The movie — "Stir Crazy" — wasn't what set Thaler on his professional course. It was the sight of a couple walking up to Thaler's father, who worked in insurance, and thanking him for making a difference in their finances — and their life.

Thaler wanted to have that same kind of effect on people. First, he took a year off before college to "do some growing up," waiting tables and working other jobs. Then, after graduating from Towson University, he became a financial adviser. The path quickly led him to Van Sant & Mewshaw, a Lutherville investment advisory firm with more than \$200 million in assets under management.

There, Thaler did some more professional growing up — faster than he ever expected. The firm's president, Paul Van Sant, died unexpectedly of a heart attack

in March 1998. Still a trainee at that time, Thaler had to jump in to help reassure Van Sant's clients and keep their affairs running smoothly.

"Those first six to nine months here, they cut my teeth," Thaler said.

Eight years later, Thaler is assistant investment officer at Van Sant & Mewshaw, deeply involved in both researching investments and working with clients. He is directly responsible for managing \$50 million in clients' assets.

Analyzing a particular investment is the easy part of Thaler's work, he says. The hard part is understanding what a client wants and helping him or her consistently make decisions to move toward that goal.

Darrell Krushensky of Towson, who is retired from Bank of America and works part time, has worked with Thaler for five years. Thaler immediately put Krushensky and his wife at ease when the couple approached him for advice, and Thaler always

responds quickly to their questions.

"If he continues to do what he's doing, he's going to be the guy I'll be dealing with for the next 10 years," Krushensky said.

When Thaler's not advising clients, he's often working on behalf of his alma mater, Towson. He was the youngest president of Towson's alumni association and is now treasurer of the Towson University Foundation board. Thaler also does board and committee work for the Baltimore Jewish Council and the York Jewish Community Center near his southern Pennsylvania home.

Despite Thaler's full schedule and the intensity of his work, Lori Armstrong, Towson's associate vice president of alumni relations, says she has never seen him in a bad mood.

"I like to play," says Thaler, who unwinds by playing sports with his 4-year-old son and other neighborhood kids. "I relive my youth through my son."