

Good Deeds Hit Home

Financial planner returns to The Bronx, helping kids and seniors with his expertise



Muñoz (inside doorway) has grateful people of all ages doing the wave in the Bronx.

MANUEL MUÑOZ, CFP®, thought he was leaving the mean streets of his Bronx, N.Y., neighborhood for good when he went to college, later became a football coach and eventually launched a career in financial services. In truth, he's never roamed too far away, either geographically or emotionally.

For example, 10 years into building his business, Muñoz returned "home," recruiting some friends to help him coach football part-time at Cardinal Hays High School in the South Bronx. "It was one of my greatest experiences," says Muñoz, now living in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. "It wasn't about coaching for a living, it was about life."

Today, as CEO and founder of M Advisory Group in nearby Eastchester, Muñoz volunteers at the other end of the demographic spectrum. For five years, he's worked with RAIN (Regional Aid for Interim Needs), a Bronx-based organization that provides services and low-cost housing to senior citizens, recently becoming board chairman.

Executive director Louis Vazquez engaged Muñoz to improve RAIN's employee benefits

package. But Muñoz went further. "He teaches financial planning classes to our 1,200 employees," says Vazquez. "In addition, he's instrumental in making sure that our housing projects are properly, and affordably, insured. Manny has generously shared his financial expertise." Muñoz, 58, also is active in RAIN's Hearts and Hammers program, which offers seniors home repair services.

A self-professed "teacher to the core," the tireless Muñoz lately has again turned his attention to the area's youth, joining the board of the Mid-Bronx Hope Charter Elementary School, scheduled to open next fall.

"I'm passionate about helping people with limited ability to help themselves," he says. "If you've been blessed with good fortune, you have a responsibility to reach back and pull others up. I hope I've been able to do just that."

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FINANCIAL PLANNER FOR YOU

In addition to requesting a comprehensive disclosure document from a prospective planner, you may want to follow up with a personal interview. Here are some basic questions you could ask:

- What is his or her basic approach to financial planning?
- What professional designations does the planner hold?
- What's his/her educational background and work experience?
- Is he/she licensed to sell certain products, such as life insurance or securities?
- Does the planner have any minimum net worth or income requirements?
- How would the planner address your particular financial needs?
- Will the planner personally implement recommendations?
- Does he/she have business relationships that pose a conflict of interest?
- How is the planner paid for services, and what are the typical charges?

The interview should leave you with a sense of trust and rapport with the planner, knowing that he is focused on your needs, not just selling products.



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