

PORTSMOUTH

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Men of
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Photography:
Nick LaVecchia

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wealth management, with a *twist*

Wealth advisor Art Meconi brought whimsy to his practice, turning balloon animals into business leads

It's not every day a balloon dog helps pave the way to a retirement plan. Yet, that's exactly what happened in a local mall when wealth advisor Art Meconi set up a table. As he twisted balloon dogs, ducks, and swords and handed them out to delighted children, he also handed them his business card to parents and grandparents.

Meconi owns Meconi Financial Management & Advisory, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial. With offices in Bedford and Portsmouth, Meconi and his four-person team serve clients in 31 states. Meconi, who holds CRPC™, CDFP® and APMA™ certifications, didn't intend to work in the financial industry. He was an engineer for 10 years but admits the role never satisfied him. So in 2002, Meconi made a 180-degree turn when he joined American Express Financial Advisors.

He learned by doing. "A lot of cold calling," he remembers, "to meet the bar they set." American Express mandated that every new representative secure five clients in their first six weeks, or they were out. He met that marker and went on to exceed requirements before branching out in 2003. Meconi Financial Management & Advisory was born.

Speaking of births, Meconi and his wife Jenn were expecting their first child. They lived in a two-family house in Massachusetts and when Meconi left his engineering job, they saw their income plummet. "Thankfully, rent from our upstairs tenant covered our mortgage each month," he points out.

Even with the security of rental income, Meconi says they struggled. He's quick to note that he and Jenn share the same entrepreneurial vision, perseverance, and hard work needed to build what is now their successful practice. "Without Jenn's support from day one, the business would not be where it is today," he says.

The recession in 2008 hit hard, and revenue dropped more than 50%. Meconi's business partner exited the firm in January 2009 and the market bottomed out two months later. Compounding professional pressures, the Meconi family was expecting their second child. Their son arrived in May 2009, nicknamed the Bull Market Baby. "Nathan was born and the market moved from bear into bull territory," he says with a wide smile. "Things started looking up."

Meconi says, in a way, he built his practice twice. It took him from 2003 to 2007 to gain his footing, only to lose it again in late 2008. He and Jenn doubled down and by 2015 they were seeing the fruits of their labor once more. As Meconi likes to say of his



ARTICLE BY ANN KATHRYN KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLIE BURKE
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resolve during that time: “Smooth seas never made a good sailor.”

A focus on marketing raised their public profile. He also credits his firm’s “concierge model” that delivers high-touch and comprehensive client services through partnerships with legal, real estate and banking, and estate planning professionals.

In the lean early years, Meconi set up table events at the mall to help drive connections. Foot traffic was scarce—until he landed on a bolt of inspiration and swapped brochures for balloons. “Who is always at a mall?” Meconi asks. “Kids, and often with parents or grandparents.” He bought a lesson book on balloon animals and began plying his trade on Saturday afternoons. The whimsy worked. For a \$10 air pump and a \$1.99 bag of balloons, Meconi started landing clients.



Allie Burke Photography



Allie Burke Photography

“Kids came running to my table, so the adults with them had to follow,” he chuckles. “As I twisted balloons, I pitched my value prop and handed out business cards.” Everyone was happy: children, Meconi, and yes, even the adults—especially when they became clients and experienced his guidance firsthand.

He shares that several children for whom he made balloon animals more than 20 years ago are now clients. Truly a full-circle moment on wealth management, with a winning twist.

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