

2018 RYAN BENDZINSKI YOUNG LEADERS AWARD



Greg Van Wagnen

Greg Van Wagnen has been awarded the 2018 Ryan Bendzinski Young Leaders Award. The Award is presented annually to a municipal advisor who shows leadership qualities and a commitment to the MA profession. It is named after Ryan Bendzinski who was a rising star in NAMA, and served with his father in the firm that his grandfather founded in Michigan, Bendzinski & Company.

Please congratulate Greg when you see him during the conference and learn more about him below.

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Why did you choose a career in public finance?

I was interested in the investment banking industry when I first began college but lacked a full understanding of the variety of directions that term could entail. During college I took multiple fixed income specific classes which gave me an appreciation for that section of the securities markets. During graduate school I met Mike Sudsina who introduced me to a number of people to network with which led me to a position in the JP Morgan Fixed Income Asset Management Department. I also interned for Sudsina & Associates with the expectation that I was there to determine if a position at his municipal advisory firm would be a better fit for me. What I found was that the work was more interesting and more importantly we work as a fiduciary to the issuer. The main attraction I had to the municipal advisory sector was the ability to help small issuers in a fiduciary role.

What is it like working in a small MA firm?

I love working for a small firm. It is a drastic change from JP Morgan where I worked in a building with 10,000 employees. For me personally I like to know how everything works and at Sudsina and Associates I am able to get involved with every project and see the different stages of a bond sale through to completion.

Why do you enjoy working with clients?

Thankfully Mike Sudsina threw me in the deep end right away and put me in contact with clients and let me be a part of the team. From day one I was going to events, interviews, presentations and meetings and it quickly made me a known member of the industry here in Ohio. I find it most rewarding to work directly with clients and being able to show them different scenarios and how small changes can make large differences down the road. Particularly with municipal clients I get to dive deeper into this aspect of the job and look at their debt situation from the highest level to help form a long-term plan. Knowing what I have learned in this role I can see where a good finance team can influence the direction of a community. Setting out a plan, working to lower long term costs, and improving financial stability are essential for creating a strong community and a municipal advisor can have a positive role in creating those financial plans.

What are your future plans in public finance?

I am excited to continue learning about the profession and growing the awareness of municipal advisors. I intend to continue participating in the NAMA organization and contributing to the Communications Committee and NAMA's social media platforms.