



**Jim Weddle, Managing Partner
Edward Jones**

St. Louis
www.edwardjones.com

At the core of all business is financial business. And, with Edward Jones, Scottrade and Stifel Nicolaus headquartered in Missouri, the state is a financial services powerhouse. Jim Weddle, managing partner for Edward Jones talks about the business and the city he's called home for 26 years.

"I love the industry. It's fast-paced, it provides a huge service — capital creation — for business development, and it fuels the economy. Edward Jones has such a amazing mission and business model. We work with investors and help them reach their financial goals. We help send their kids to college, we help them plan for retirement, we help people live with dignity and pass on a legacy to their kids. That's important. It makes a difference in people's lives and I get all excited about coming to the office.

"There have always been a lot of financial services firms headquartered here. It's tradition. Way back 50 or 60 years ago they came here, because it was in the middle of the country. And a lot of the business has just stayed here for the same reason. Today there are more financial services firms headquartered in St. Louis than in any other city in the U.S. besides New York. That's okay. Good competitors make you better."

A central location is also an advantage when it comes to training. Edward Jones recently built a dedicated training facility in the metro area.

"We do an enormous amount of career-long training with our financial advisors, and, to be in the middle of the country, you don't have quite the travel challenge getting people here.

"We consider training to be an investment, not an expense. There are certainly requirements regarding continuing education, but we go way beyond that for all of our associates — home office, branch office, and our financial advisors as well. You've got to stay current, because the industry is changing all the time. We're geared up for it.

"Of course, we've got the Midwest work ethic, too, which means we've got a terrific pool of people to draw from. We also have great schools... Washington University, Webster University, Saint Louis University and UMSL (the University of Missouri – St. Louis). We hire hundreds of graduates from those fine institutions. They're sharp, they've been challenged to think critically, and they've got good communications skills.

These schools also reach out to local employers. They are sincerely interested in developing curricula that will produce graduates who can make a contribution quickly. We say, "How nice of you to ask!" The business schools — undergraduate as well as graduate — do a terrific job.

As a father, Weddle is equally impressed with the St. Louis region.

"There are more quality high schools here than I've ever seen. The joke is, when you say you're from St. Louis, people ask, "where did you go to school?" and they're not talking about college!

"You've got the educational opportunities here and you've got all the cultural things any big city offers, but not the issues of those mega-cities.

"I grew up in a suburb of Chicago, and you didn't go downtown just to go downtown. It was too big and intimidating. St. Louis is not that way. You've got the Cards and the Rams and the Blues, but you've also got the Symphony and the Fox and the Science Center and the Art museum. And you've got access. I can be downtown from my house in 10 minutes. How nice is that!

"Forest Park is a tremendous asset. I used to ride my bike through the park in grad school, so I can navigate my way through it as well as anybody. Now I'm a car collector, and I drive through the park often. I'm delighted to see how much it's used.

"I've found that the only people who don't appreciate St. Louis are the ones who haven't been here. Once we were looking to hire someone out of New York, and he said, 'thank you for the opportunity, but I'm going to have to turn it down.' Well, I went to see him and his wife, and said, 'What's the issue? Is it the firm? Is it the industry?' And they said, 'We don't think we'd like St. Louis.' And I said, 'Have you ever been there? Come and spend a weekend...'

"These were New York people, and, once they came out, he wound up joining the firm. This is a nice place. I tell people to kick the tires. Take a look. There's nothing not to like!"