

Making a world of difference

Big picture in focus

Sally Sharp Lehman '88

Joseph Hasten '78

James Reynolds '82

Jamee Field '04

Rick Waddell '79

Daniel Hayden '01

Melanie Chan '06

Horace Allen '04

Joseph Seminetta '05

David Pope '94

Cory Zanin '91

Well and good, but does it work?

Making a difference in the curriculum

Crunch time

Trials of a family business

[Address Update](#)
[Alumni Home](#)
[Submit News](#)

[Index](#)
[Search](#)
[Internal Site](#)
[Northwestern University](#)

Kellogg Search



Investing in success: Joe Seminetta gives back to the community by bringing quality education to those who need it most. Photo © Nathan Mandell

Passion for education finds Joe Seminetta '95 creating a rich community resource

By Aubrey Henretty

"I gave my notice to leave Northern Trust four days before 9/11," says Premier Asset Management Inc. President and CEO **Joe Seminetta '95**. After a 15-year investment career with some of Chicago's largest banks, Seminetta had decided the time was right to start his own firm. "I went from being on top of the world to thinking, 'What have I done?'"

Admitted to both the Chicago Graduate School of Business and the Kellogg School, Seminetta says he chose Kellogg for its strong curricula in management and entrepreneurship. "Independent and Competitive Decision Making was probably the best class of my life," he says, recalling lessons in game theory and how not to be blinded by one's personal biases. "It's helped me become a clearer thinker." Between his triple major in finance, management and strategy, and organizational behavior — along with the insights gleaned from his diverse Kellogg classmates — Seminetta had all the tools he needed to strike out on his own.



"That's what really gave me the guts to start my own firm," he says.

Current Top Headlines

[View all current news](#)

[Subscribe to Kellogg News](#)


Seminetta didn't take many big risks before he founded Premier Asset Management, he says. But with his wife, Denise, whom he had met in 1987 and who is now the firm's director of research, he decided to take a chance: "We risked it all because we thought we could do it better."

Sept. 11, 2001, wasn't nearly the business setback Seminetta thought it would be, he says. Because his initial client list was small, the firm was able to devote all of its energy to the ones that stuck around. Premier Asset Management now manages approximately \$500 million.

The firm is just one project the Seminettas have taken on together.

"My wife and I both have a real passion for education," he says. In recent years, the couple joined forces with other families in their Kenilworth, Ill., community to sponsor the transformation of a failing school on Chicago's South Side, turning it into Providence Englewood, a thriving charter school.

Providence Englewood was truly a community effort. Families contributed labor as well as funding, sometimes so enthusiastically that they had to plan on the fly: "We built a beautiful library and thought, 'Hey, what's missing?'" Quickly, the community called on a local Boy Scout troop to organize a successful book drive.


The fully operational library now employs a librarian and a technology instructor.

"This is the right thing to do," says Seminetta of his family's involvement in the charter school. "We've been so blessed and education was a big part of that." The first member of his working-class family to go to college, Seminetta began to appreciate the power of quality education when he transferred out of his community Catholic school (where he says he was "not getting along") and into Hardey Preparatory, a Sacred Heart school on Chicago's Far North Side. The difference in culture and curriculum were immediately apparent, he says: "I went from being a smart kid to being really average." With more expected of him, young Seminetta pushed himself harder. He would eventually make the dean's list at Kellogg.

The students at Providence Englewood are headed down a similar path. In last year's Illinois Standards Achievement Test, says Seminetta, they scored 65 percent above average in reading and 69 percent above average in mathematics.

And Premier Asset Management continues to flourish. "We're growing very quickly — quickly and steadily," says Seminetta, noting that strategic outsourcing of tasks has allowed the firm to focus entirely on money management and customer service. "When I worked for big institutions, there was so much noise around my day that was not related to why my clients hired me," he says.

Seminetta says he and his family are fortunate to be able to use their resources to help others.



"Because we've been successful in investing, it allows us to do certain things, and giving back to the community is a big part of that."