

# JOURNAL PROFILE

## Michael Whellan

President and shareholder  
Graves Dougherty Hearon & Moody PC



About two years ago, at least three factors aligned to lead Michael Whellan to conclude it was time to get in better shape. A friend had suffered a heart attack; his brother, a cardiologist, had reviewed Whellan's medical lab results; and another friend was encouraging him to try a new fitness program.

Soon after, Whellan — president and shareholder of Graves Dougherty Hearon & Moody PC, an Austin-based, 65-lawyer firm — started participating in CrossFit Central Bootcamp three days a week and running after work and on Saturdays. He's since shed about 25 pounds and reduced his 1-mile run time to 6 minutes and 15 seconds.

More importantly, he feels better and is more productive.

"Being more fit reduces anxiety and helps me be more focused during the day," he said.

Meanwhile, being fitter gives him more energy to do something else he likes to: helping resolve conflicts in his community, whether they be related to his city, his synagogue or elsewhere.

"I really like complex problems with diverse interests and messy facts or situations," said Whellan, who is a graduate of Leadership Austin and a former board member of Court Appointed Special Advocates of Travis County and the Travis County Dispute Resolution Center, among other community organizations.

In other words, even when Whellan is not being a lawyer, he enjoys applying himself to tasks on which his professional skills can be brought to bear. For example, he was instrumental in resolving a recent dispute involving the Austin Rowing Club and the operation of the Waller Creek Boathouse.

"That's where I can bring the maximum value to this community or an organization," he said.

### As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A lawyer.

### What's the most influential book you've read?

"In Search of Excellence" by [Tom] Peters and [Robert] Waterman, and "To Kill a Mockingbird" [by Harper Lee].

### What are you most afraid of?

Large insects like the tarantula wasp.

### What's something not many people know about you?

I like bagpipe music.

### Who's your favorite athlete?

Kevin Durant.

### How deep are you into social networks like Facebook and Twitter?

Not at all.

### What attribute do you seek most in the people you want to be friends with?

A positive outlook.

### What are your top Web browser bookmarks?

CNN and AustinTexas.gov.

### Are you an advice giver or an advice seeker?

Most people would say I'm an advice giver. But I lean on many people regularly for insight and advice.

### What's the toughest part of your job?

Building consensus for firm goals and strategies.

### How'd you earn your first buck?

I was a runner and office services employee for a law firm in San Antonio.

### Favorite place to eat?

El Azteca for lunch and Fino Restaurant Patio & Bar or Asti Trattoria for dinner.

### Where do you go when you have to get away?

Tent Rocks, N.M., between Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

### Where did you go for your last vacation?

### IN DETAIL

**HOMETOWN:** San Antonio

**AGE:** 47

**FAMILY:** Wife, Margaret Menicucci; daughters, Alexis, 15, and Hanna, 12

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree, Liberal Arts Plan II, University of Texas, 1987; law degree, UT, 1990.

Israel over spring break.

### Where would you like to go next?

The Galápagos.

### What makes you happy?

Spending time with my wife and kids.

### Talk radio or music in the car?

NPR or comedy.

### Do you prefer to get news online, in print or from television?

Online and print.

### What's your favorite thing about Austin?

The Butler [Hike and Bike] Trail at Lady Bird Lake.

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

### What about Michael Whellan made the strongest impression on you when you first met him?



**Mark Clayton**  
Senior vice president  
St. David's HealthCare

Integrity and intelligence — these two words sum up the man and my first impression some years ago when our paths first crossed. I have come to know him well and have seen these traits in action time and again, together with his persistent energy and humor.



**Mary Nichols**  
Senior vice president and general counsel  
Texas Mutual Insurance Co.

My first impressions of Michael Whellan were that he has a warm and infectious laugh and he's very generous with it. At the same time, he is a supremely capable advocate for his clients; I've seen him in action at the courthouse. The overall impression is one of great balance: Michael doesn't let his seriousness get in the way of his charm, and he certainly doesn't let his charm compromise his seriousness.