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# MIZZOU

## Young and Restless

**MU alumnus earns national fraternity Thirty Under 30 award.**

*Story by Kelsey Allen*

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**A**t 25, Brian Kirn is pretty young to be recognized for his post-college achievements. The national fraternity Pi Kappa Phi recently honored Kirn with its inaugural Thirty Under 30 award. But then again, he's always been a bit of an overachiever.

The St. Louis native transferred to Mizzou from Indiana University his sophomore year and immediately got involved. A theater buff, he starred in numerous campus productions, including *The Grass Harp* and *Side by Side by Sondheim*, and worked in the theater



Brian Kirn was named one of the national fraternity Pi Kappa Phi's Thirty Under 30. Photo courtesy Brian Kirn.

department as a stage manager and technician. He also performed with the Interactive Theatre Troupe as part of the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative. Through scripted sketches, the troupe tackled issues from racism to heterosexism to religious intolerance.

“It was a great experience because I got to engage with diverse groups about difficult topics that really need to be talked about and even challenge my own perspective on the issues.”

One sketch the troupe performed dealt with a conversation between a student and a street preacher (think Speakers Circle fixture Brother Jed). “Like many of my peers, I always found his aggressive tactics on campus to be hurtful and off-putting,” Kirn says. “But my work with the Interactive Theatre Troupe made me stop to consider his perspective as well as his constitutional freedoms.”

Kirn graduated from Mizzou in 2011 with three bachelor's degrees: theater, psychology and Spanish. “It sounds a lot crazier than it was,” Kirn says. He then combined his interests in his own Spanish classroom at a St. Louis visual and performance arts high school with Teach For America, a nonprofit that places college graduates in inner-city schools.

“I was lucky enough to be in a private school and get a quality education,” Kirn says. “People just down the street from me weren't as lucky.”

When Kirn finished his two-year commitment, he accepted a job at Teach For America's national headquarters in New York, where he is the coordinator of communication and training for finance and administration.

When Kirn's not at work, he's still working — as an actor in the city. He booked his first audition in the Big Apple and was cast in *SPEARS: The Gospel According to Britney*, a musical that tells the story of Jesus Christ through Britney Spears songs, including “Stronger,” “... Baby One More Time” and “Crazy.” The 13-person cast performed the show Nov. 7, 2013, at the Foxwoods Theatre on Broadway. As King Herod, Kirn sang Spears' “Toxic,” “which happens to be my favorite Britney song,” he says. (He also played Pontius Pilate and a disciple).

Since *SPEARS*, Kirn has appeared in several other gigs around town, including small cabarets, and auditions three or four times a week. His next project is the workshop of a parody musical version of the TV show *Dexter* called *Dark Passenger: The Musical*. Kirn will be playing Trinity, Oliver Saxon and other characters. “I'm doing as much as I can to perform,” he says.

He also does as much as he can for Mizzou. A lifetime member of the Mizzou Alumni Association (a graduation gift from his parents), Kirn served on the College of Arts and Science Alumni Organization

Board and is secretary of the association's New York alumni chapter.

“I love Mizzou,” Kirn says. “I want to keep that connection alive, especially now that I’m so far away. Whether it’s raising money for scholarships or hosting happy hours or connecting with interns working in the city, I want to give back to Mizzou.”

**Topics:** Academics, Alumni, Web Exclusives

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