Certification for Long-Term Care

Educating Americans on the critical importance of extended care planning

Always Strive to Become Better:

A story that leads to passion

I recently had the opportunity to return to my hometown of Bismarck, North Dakota, to give a Long-Term Care presentation to NAIFA North Dakota. While I was “home,” I also had the opportunity to see many family members and long-time friends and couldn’t help but reflect upon how blessed I have been to be surrounded by such amazing people in my life. During my reflection, I was reminded of a fantastic person named Marilyn.

Marilyn's Story: A Life of Care and Change

Marilyn was one of the most outgoing, generous, and kind individuals I have ever met. She would help anyone with absolutely anything. Based on her personality, it wasn’t a surprise to anyone when Marilyn became an elementary school teacher and spent 40 years of her career teaching in elementary education. Marilyn was a hard worker and always saved as much money as possible. I can still remember when the whole community celebrated Marilyn when she was finally able to retire.

Unfortunately, early into Marilyn’s retirement, people started noticing some cognitive changes in her behavior. Changes started slow, like misplacing her keys or forgetting someone’s name. Fast forward a little bit to a story about Marilyn being parked at a four-way stop sign, being confused, and not knowing which direction to drive home after a lunch date with friends. Fast forward a little bit more to Marilyn waking up one morning and no longer knowing her own home and no longer recognizing her own husband, who was the primary caregiver at the time. At this point, the family had no choice but to place Marilyn into a Memory Care facility and, shortly after that, into a Skilled Nursing Facility.

A Personal Wake-Up Call

I happened to have a front-row seat to these events as they unfolded, and based on my viewpoint, I saw Marilyn's 40 years of savings spent down within 3 ½ years. I remember thinking then, "How is that even mathematically possible?" I saw Marilyn's family members extremely stressed out; all of them gained significant weight, they each had declines in their work performance, and none of them had a social life. Marilyn's husband, the perceived healthy one and untrained caregiver, developed so many new health impairments during this period that he got sick and died, predeceasing Marilyn. And the husband was only 68 years old!

During this same period, I became upset with Marilyn's Financial Planner. Not because he didn't sell her long-term care insurance but because he let Marilyn retire without having a "plan" for this type of event—a plan that would have mitigated the severe consequences to the people that Marilyn loved, including her family.

If you haven't guessed it yet, Marilyn was my mother.

And to make matters worse, I was her Financial Planner.

From Regret to Action

This event in my life still haunts me to this day. I wish I could have done a better job, but I didn't. At that moment in my career, I vowed to become an expert in Long-Term Care planning, with the goal of helping Financial Professionals and their clients have more comfortable and engaging conversations about Long-Term Care planning.

> During my research to become an expert, I was introduced to the Certification in Long-Term Care (CLTC) designation. The educational information that the CLTC designation provided me honestly changed my whole career.

The idea from CLTC that "Insurance isn't the Plan, the Insurance Pays for the Plan" changed my entire perspective and approach to the Long-Term Care subject and how to plan for it properly. The CLTC provided me with everything that I needed to become confident. My newfound confidence gave me the leadership and courage to finally start reaching out to families proactively, not reactively, to initiate an engaging long-term care planning conversation.

A Message to Financial Professionals

My final message to any financial professional, whether new to the industry or a seasoned veteran, is that if you're not an expert in something, you should become one or partner with one. It's never too late. From 2005 to 2016 in my career, I probably couldn't even spell Long-Term Care. Since then, I have had the opportunity to be on CLTC's Board of Advisors, become a CLTC Instructor, and have traveled the country to coach other financial professionals on how to have comfortable and engaging long-term care conversations with their clients. So many clients and their families are counting on us (Financial Professionals) to guide and protect them through this sometimes confusing and stressful event called life. We owe it to them to be exceptional!

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Regional Vice President with E4 Insurance Services

Shane is a specialist focusing on education, solutions, and service. He has been helping Financial Advisors intentionally integrate insurance into their practice. Advisors work with Shane not only for his industry knowledge and product expertise but also for his leadership, work ethic, and dedication to their success.