



Member of the Month: **Evan Beecham** Listen and Learn - The 2007 September NEB Interview



Ethics isn't something you learn from a book. You learn it by living—by making tough choices and by listening to people who've lived longer than you. NEB Member Evan Beecham is a perfect case in point.

Before entering financial services full time in 1993, Beecham worked for the Morgan County Sheriff's Department, eventually becoming captain of the county jail. He stayed in law enforcement for 12 years, where he learned a tremendous amount about ethics, especially from the lieutenant he worked under early in his career. "He taught me to mean what you say and say what you mean, to keep your word, and to be honest," Beecham says.

While he was still in law enforcement, Beecham also worked as pastor of a church. Once again, he found himself in a job that required a strong sense of professional ethics—and a big heart.

"My first two jobs instilled in me a compassion for people," Beecham explains. "You don't do those jobs for the money. You do them because you care."

But compassion doesn't always pay the rent. So while he was still doing police work—and God's work—he began to study up on financial services. Eventually, he joined a pre-need life insurance company as an agent. He learned as much as he could and then went out as an independent, aligning himself with a funeral home that helped clients pre-fund their funerals. "The funeral home was looking for more ways to help people in nursing homes," Beecham said. "These people had a lot of unaddressed financial needs."

So Beecham decided to broaden his focus to include long-term care insurance, Medicaid planning, and "safe money" financial products.

Today, some 14 years later, Beecham is president of Beecham Agency Safe Financial Strategies, where he, his wife, Sue, and his daughter, Kari, specialize in estate preservation planning for people at or near retirement.

Even though his law enforcement and ministering days are well past, Beecham still brings a passion for ethics to his financial advisory work. His commitment to ethics often turns into outrage when he sees how some financial professionals treat seniors.

"We see a lot of folks coming into the business with a brand-new license. Unfortunately, many don't have a clue what they're doing," Beecham says. "So they make big mistakes that end up hurting their clients and giving the industry a bad name."

When it comes to serving seniors, the "three deadly sins" for Beecham are bait and switch, misrepresentation, and selling unsuitable products. "One of my clients got some information about setting up a trust," Beecham continues. "I warned the person about how trusts are often used to get access to a client's assets. Sure enough, that's exactly what the other financial professional did."

"Now, most advisors are doing a great job," Beecham says. "But a few are really muddying the water."

How to differentiate yourself from the latter? Beecham encourages advisors to join the National Ethics Bureau. "I knew right away that NEB membership would convey an openness . . . that it would help people get to know us and see how we operate. It's done that and more."

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Beecham has worked hard to integrate NEB's brand and services into his company. "I make the NEB member brochure available at all my seminars and I put the NEB logo on my brochure and web site. At my seminars, I take the time to go over what NEB membership means. I also stress the differences between NEB and the Better Business Bureau."

Although NEB membership is helpful, what's most important, Beecham says, is putting your clients first. "When I was growing up, my Dad owned a Sears store," Beecham notes. "Working for him was tough. I didn't get paid and the hours were lousy. But he taught me one important thing: He took care of his customers no matter what."

Now as a successful financial advisor, Beecham is quick to acknowledge the ethical lessons his father, his fellow peace officers, and his congregation taught him. "By the time I entered financial services, I already had a lot of ethics training from a lot of good people," Beecham says. He also had the wisdom to listen and learn.



About the NEB

The National Ethics Bureau™ (NEB) is a membership organization of financial professionals who have successfully passed a comprehensive seven-year background check and have agreed to maintain NEB's membership standards. All members are admitted into NEB's national registry, which consumers can access free of charge to verify a member's background. For more information, call (800) 282-1831 or go to www.ethicscheck.com