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Raised on orchard, managing director now helps others grow

Aside from working at Northwestern Mutual, the only other job David Parsons, CLU, ChFC, ever had was working on his family's orchard in Leavenworth, Wash. "Of course, being the boss's kid, I didn't know what a real job was," he laughed.

Parsons hardly had it easy, sometimes getting up at 1 a.m. to try to prevent the crop from being destroyed by frost. "My parents were always at the whim of Mother Nature, so they could never predict exactly what they were going to be paid," he explained. "I don't know how many times we'd be out there and my dad would say, 'Well, we just lost everything.'"

Helping other financial representatives grow

The upbringing taught Parsons, now managing director with The Hubbell Financial Group in Wenatchee, Wash., important lessons in preparing for his career at Northwestern Mutual. "Our business is also about risk, although it isn't so much financial risk as it is interpersonal risk," he said. "Are you willing to ask enough people to give you the opportunity to show them what you do?"

Parsons believes every successful financial representative is able to answer "yes" to that question. "During the interview process, we test people for whether they are able to do what it takes to succeed," he said. "We have 100 percent retention rate among those who buy into the system and do what we ask them to do."

He doesn't ask them to do too much



David Parsons, CLU, ChFC, managing director with The Hubbell Financial Group in Wenatchee, Wash., is pictured with his family: wife Christi, daughter Kaitlin, son Griffin and son Brady. His own work ethic has allowed him to lead others to grow.

too soon, however. "I think being a financial representative was easier back when I started when it was much simpler times," said Parsons. "I try to lower the noise with my new financial representatives."

Parsons enjoys recruiting representatives and helping them succeed. "I'm proud of being able to make an impact," he said. "I get to watch them grow in their careers."

Internship opens the door

According to Parsons, everyone has

an interesting story about how they started at Northwestern Mutual. In Parsons' case, he became a client first, as a 19-year-old business major at Washington State University.

"We had a strong college internship program at the district network office in Pullman," he recalled. "One of the representatives prospecting a few of the guys in my fraternity, including me."

Two years later during his senior year, the same representative made a

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presentation to his economics class about the internship. Parsons thought the internship would look good on his résumé, so he signed on. But he was surprised at how much weight the internship had in getting him substantial offers from companies that had nothing to do with the insurance or investment business.

“They kept saying they wanted to get me away from Northwestern Mutual because they knew I was well trained,” he said. “That got me started thinking that Northwestern Mutual might be a pretty good place to work.”

Home alone

As fate would have it, one of the representatives from the Pullman office moved to the Wenatchee office – close to where Parsons grew up – to become managing director in 1981. Shortly after, Parsons took a position as financial representative.

Things came easy for Parsons at first. His last name was recognized by people in the fruit industry, so he had a built-in market. But within two years, the managing director who opened the office left for the home office and the only senior financial representative left the company, soon followed by the younger representatives.

“After everyone left, I had to do everything by myself to keep things going and survive,” Parsons said. “Of course, being by yourself helps you learn how to do things fairly quickly.”

Balancing act

Parsons was promoted to managing director in 1989. He enjoys leader-

ship, as well as the recognition the title affords him in a smaller community. Balancing production and management responsibilities isn't easy, however.

“The key is to have a good staff providing support,” he said. “Here in our office, my main assistant, **Jenny Dahlstrom**, does everything. And we have a great initial training program. I just have to focus on helping our new representatives grow once they get out of training class.”

In addition to balancing management and production, Parsons has also found balance between work and his personal life. Parsons' three children – **Kaitlin**, age 20, **Brady**, age 18, and **Griffin**, age 11 – have all been very active in sports and school, and Parsons takes pride in the fact he's never missed an event.

“My children are a very fulfilling part of my life,” he said. “My wife **Christi** and I have hauled them all around the country to national and regional sporting events, and I've been a coach and sponsor from day one. I have a running joke that if you don't like the coach, talk to the sponsor – which of course is me.”

Helping clients in need

Parsons has earned numerous company and industry awards, including lifetime membership in the Million Dollar Round Table, the District Agent Achievement award, and the Outstanding Achievement in Recruiting and Sales (OARS) award. But Parsons' proudest accomplishments are helping his clients.

“We have a convention center here in town named after someone who worked with me and **Tom Irvin**, one of our representatives,” said Parsons. “The client asked us to ensure that his business would be transferred to his key employee so his estate could leave a lasting legacy. Upon his death, the client's trustee made a huge donation to the town to build a civic center in his name, transferred his business to his key employee and now his name lives on forever.”

Another of Parsons' clients is a nationally-known orthopedic surgeon, who recently survived a serious acci-

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Managing director, The Hubbell Financial Group

dent when his bicycle was hit by a car. Although he was on life support for about a week, he survived and is now paralyzed from the chest down.

“We get calls from our clients' families in times of crisis looking for assurance that everything is going to be okay financially,” he said. “And it's nice to be able to reassure them that because the client cared so much for them, he allowed me to put in place insurance products to make certain their financial future will be secure. I've never had to apologize for anything I've signed my name to that had Northwestern Mutual's name on it.”