



WEALTH PLANNING>ESTATE PLANNING

## NAEPC Presents Martin M. Shenkman with Hartman Axley Lifetime Service Award

His acceptance speech highlighted importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration and diversity.

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On Nov. 17, at its annual conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils presented our editorial advisory board member Martin M. Shenkman with the Hartman Axley Lifetime Service Award. His acceptance speech highlighted both the importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration and the need for diversity, equity and inclusion and how DEI efforts can help our profession, our practices and ourselves personally.

Below are some excerpts from that speech:

### Thank You to Many Councils

Sixteen years ago, my wife Patti was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Flying and vacationing became too difficult. So, we tried to squeeze lemonade out of that lemon. Every spring and summer my wife and I, with our puppy, travel around the country by RV lecturing. Our mission has been to build awareness of planning for those living with chronic illness. Most of our lectures have been to estate planning councils. These travels have given me the opportunity to meet and speak for scores of smaller

councils in smaller cities around the country. All of the councils have been accommodating to our travel needs and other challenges. They have accommodated dates that vary from their normal schedules, found parking for our RV or pick-up truck and more. Thank you to all the many councils who have been so kind.

## **Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration**

I'm passionate about the NAEPC mission of a collaborative team of multi-disciplinary advisors. I zealously believe that's the only approach to achieving the best results for our clients. From analyzing and lecturing on many malpractice cases and defensive practices, I believe that a multi-disciplinary team of advisors that truly collaborates will also reduce the exposure of every adviser. I encourage all of you to make a concerted effort to involve each of a client's other advisors in the planning and the implementation of every plan.

Please don't use the excuse "the client did not want to pay to have other advisors involved." We all know that's just not reasonable and that we wouldn't encourage collaboration if it wasn't beneficial.

Please don't neglect collaboration under the misguided assumption that less collaboration will mean more control over the client and more business. It won't. All of us, no matter what specialty, need to proactively educate clients as to how they'll benefit from this collaborative approach and insist on it. If we all send the same message to all our clients, many more clients will permit and benefit from collaboration.

## **DEI**

I have had the privilege to be involved on the NAEPC Board and many committees but given the limited time I will only mention one: DEI.

I'm grateful for all the consideration so many NAEPC Councils have shown my wife and I on our speaking tours each spring and summer. Making accommodations for our health challenges is exactly what DEI is about.

We all have a responsibility to open NAEPC, our respective professions, and our practices, to everyone. It's simply the right thing to do. But for each of us individually and for our practices, gaining an understanding about faiths, lifestyles and cultures different than ours, expands our horizons and exposes us to new ideas. That will enhance our knowledge, facilitate our growing our client base, increasing the services we can offer, and make us more creative. Whether it's by lecturing or writing on these topics, spending the time to understand and tailor planning to a particular client's needs, hiring those who add new perspectives to our practice, or other steps, each of us can and should find ways that we are comfortable participating in this endeavor.

These steps will benefit not only society, our practices, but each of us individually. I've had the opportunity to write and lecture on estate planning for a multitude of faiths: Christian, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Baha'i, Scientology, Latter Day Saints and others. I've written and lectured on human aspects of estate

planning, planning for clients with chronic illness, LGBTQ planning, using powers of appointment to address [needs of Muslim](#) and [LGBTQ clients](#) and more. A simple step we can take is to add these topics to the presentation agendas of our Councils.