

NapervilleSun

Life lessons remembered

Attorney creates program to help clients pass wisdom on to family

By Angela Bender

Published – March 16, 2011

The lessons we learn throughout life are probably the same lessons our parents learned, and the same ones our children will have to learn.

Denice Gierach, a Naperville estate planning and business law attorney, was bothered that people relearn these same lessons over and over. She decided to create the Lifelessons Program to make sure the most significant events in her client's lives, along with their wisdom, are given to the most important people in their lives.



Denice Gierach interviews Greg Wildman for her Lifelessons Program. Submitted by Denice Gierach

“I thought about my own lifetime,” Gierach said, “(and) about how little I knew about my own parents.”

The Lifelessons Program includes a video biography of people, with the help of a professional camera crew and editor, complete with personal photos and background music. The completed DVD is also combined with a photo album organized to tell the person's life story.

Gierach's office is set up like a studio where, over a few hours, she asks clients a series of questions to get them thinking about their life. The questions focus not only on the past but also their wishes for the future. For example, Gierach may ask: “What did they want to be when they grew up? Who was their best friend? What was their relationship with their siblings? What did their parents teach them?” Then, as they tell their story, the session goes in whatever direction the subject takes it.

“They become very immersed in the process of answering questions,” Gierach said. “I can ask questions the family may not feel comfortable asking, and they may not feel comfortable answering in front of family.”

Jon LoDuca, 39, who has two young sons, had a video made through the Lifelessons Program last year. He found the process of recounting his life and the lessons learned to be moving in itself.

“It was powerful to sit and reflect on all the bits of wisdom that I’ve collected so far,” LoDuca said.

After the session, a professional DVD is edited, broken into chapters, with music as well as the addition of pictures provided by the subject, documenting different points in the subject’s life. The DVD is put together so that it tells a story, editing out Gierach’s voice and questions. Clients then receive the DVD along with a photo album.

The cost for the Lifelessons Program is dependent on the client’s wishes. A 40- to 45-minute DVD, including pictures and photo album, is about \$4,000. For a longer DVD and a larger photo album, the cost would be about \$7,500.

“At first blush, these amounts may seem like a lot of money,” Gierach said. “But a professional film crew does cost a fair amount, and the finished product really is priceless.”

As LoDuca can attest to, the Lifelessons Program is not only for the elderly, but also for young parents who might want a record for their children of the hopes and dreams they had for them. It also can be something that is repeated every 10 years as an update.

“What excited me about this opportunity was to have me recount to them about my life and the kinds of things that are important to me that I’d like them to learn and I wanted to share with them,” said LoDuca, who plans to give the DVD to his oldest son when he turns 18.

After receiving the DVD, LoDuca watched it with his wife and parents.

“I was able to sit and listen and be with my own wisdom and just observe the ideas I’ve learned,” he said. “That was kind of a wild experience.”