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pg. 42

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Known for its depth of expertise, fierce independence, and all-in-one approach to wealth planning, **Westover Capital Advisors** enables clients to make confident long-term decisions.

pg. 56

Left to right: Chief Investment Officer Chip Sawyer, founder and CEO Murray Sawyer, and Director of Wealth Management Matthew Beardwood

GAINING VALUE



KNOWN FOR ITS DEPTH OF EXPERTISE, FIERCE INDEPENDENCE, AND ALL-IN-ONE APPROACH TO WEALTH PLANNING, **WESTOVER CAPITAL ADVISORS** ENABLES CLIENTS TO MAKE CONFIDENT LONG-TERM DECISIONS. by **BILL DONAHUE**

H. Murray Sawyer Jr. was working as a full-time attorney in 1999, the year he founded Wilmington, Delaware-based Westover Capital Advisors LLC. He did so because he saw an opportunity to help people who were, in his eyes, “getting bad advice.”

Westover Capital has since grown far beyond anything Murray could have imagined. He attributes the firm’s ascendance to a team of talented financial professionals who devote their time and expertise to making a lasting impact on others’ lives. Today, leadership is centered around a partner team: founder and CEO Murray Sawyer, JD; Chief Investment Officer Chip Sawyer, MBA, CFA®; Director of Wealth Management Matthew Beardwood, CFP®; and Director of Tax Dennis Perdue, CPA.

“We have created a culture of putting the client first at all points,” says Murray, who leads Westover Capital as CEO. “We don’t sell products; we’re here to provide really good investment planning and tax advice. And we’re going to do that with Ritz-Carlton service, with a commitment to always do more than what the client expects.”

A privately owned Registered Investment Advisory firm, Westover Capital has a fierce independent streak rooted in what Murray calls “doing the right thing.” The firm’s



Associate Director of Marketing and Business Development Steve Crifasi Jr. welcomes a client to the office.

advisors have a fiduciary responsibility to act in each client’s best interest; they sell no commissioned financial or insurance products and are compensated through a transparent fee based on the assets they manage for clients. In other words, the firm makes every recommendation in a thoughtful and transparent manner, free of the conflicts of interest often seen in other sectors of the industry.

In addition to the full scope of investment, retirement, estate, tax, and wealth-transfer planning, Westover Capital provides family-office solutions for high-net-worth clients. These concierge services are designed to guide successful families through the unique challenges and opportunities that accompany significant wealth. Examples include assisting

the sale of a business or real estate holdings, coordinating with attorneys and accountants during estate settlements, and facilitating an aging loved one’s transition to a continuing-care retirement community.

The firm’s comprehensive nature should come as no surprise considering the multitudinous experiences of the man who brought it to life.

When Murray was a young man in the turbulent 1960s, widespread civil discord made him want to effect change. He saw a career in law as the most direct pathway to achieving his goal. After earning his juris doctor from Vanderbilt Law School, he started his legal career in corporate law, and then started “wearing a white hat” as a prosecutor with the attorney general’s office. He eventually went on to become the founder and managing partner of his own law firm, Sawyer, Akin & Herron.

After he became involved in local politics by serving on the New Castle County Council, his legal practice evolved to include real estate development and zoning law. His career took another “twist” when he decided to shift his legal focus to estate planning.

“The practice of law is reduced to advocacy or counseling,” he says. “I had been an advocate in my trial practice and in the land-use cases, where there’s a winner and a

loser. When you're working as a counselor, your job is to give the best fiduciary advice to your client—to call it as you see it and try to move the clients' wishes forward in a proper and planned way."

In the process, Murray began working with a financial broker who recognized his talent for giving informed advice and a keen interest in investing. That ultimately led Murray to become licensed as an investment advisor and to launch Westover Capital. He continued to practice law, quite happily, but the investment business took off like a rocket.

"My time was consumed with both professions," Murray recalls. "From that little acorn, Westover Capital started to grow. By 2008, I got to the point where I needed help."

Enter Chip Sawyer, Murray's son. Chip, who earned a degree in psychology and an MBA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, joined the firm after gaining valuable financial experience elsewhere; his prior posts included lead equity trader for a multibillion-dollar investment management firm in Oakland, California, and principal research analyst for a hedge fund in Durham, North Carolina.

"We tilt the portfolio where it should be tilted," Chip says of Westover Capital's investment strategy. "We generally don't own mutual funds because there's an added layer of fees on top of our own. We believe in reasonably priced stocks with strong balance sheets, dependable management teams, and secular growth tailwinds. Every month, I put together a list of the 30 best stocks on a fundamental basis, but that doesn't mean I buy everything on that list. There are times when a stock looks fundamentally strong, but we never buy it because the chart doesn't look good.

"If the market action is telling us not to buy [a stock], we won't buy it," he continues, "even though the fundamental numbers line up. It's a combination of fundamental and technical analysis. My former boss, Vance Tucker, taught me that great investors walk that fine line between confidence and humility, because the market has a habit of humbling investors when they get overconfident."

Chip began his tenure at Westover Capital in the summer of 2008, just a few months before the market "fell off a cliff" with the official start of the so-called Great Recession. While the ensuing weeks and months were difficult, he remembers the experience as "a good time for me to learn."

"My psychology background has been very helpful over the years, because part of

the job is talking clients through difficult times and getting them to focus on the long term," he says. "It's easy to get emotional, so we're here to hold their hand and help them remain calm and clear-eyed."

Westover Capital's deeply personal advisory style goes hand in hand with technical prowess. Each member of the firm's advisory team possesses at least one advanced professional designation, such as Chartered Financial Analyst®, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, or Certified Public Accountant. Such designations underscore the firm's commitment to providing the best possible guidance, according

and maintaining those relationships is what Matt enjoys most about the work.

"We're leaving no stone unturned and looking at every possible opportunity to make a positive impact," he says. "Oftentimes in a firm, you'll see a tax professional simply doing the tax return and filing, while the advisor does the investments—no coordination. Here, we work in tandem. Having those disciplines in-house, working together, enables us to give the best, actionable, proactive advice.

"It's rare to find a silver bullet," he continues, "but we get very excited when we can make

adjustments, even small ones, that improve a client's financial position. If you can do that over multiple years, especially over multiple generations, it's even more impactful."

Of course, Westover Capital's service to clients extends far beyond the ones and zeroes.

"The planning component is important, but we're also very much involved in the execution," Matt says. "One of our team members recently took a client to a retirement community and toured it with her. We also hired a moving company and engaged a Realtor to ease some of the challenges for the client and their kids. We have a whole litany of services to underscore the value we provide. Being innovative and creative like that is what we believe modern wealth management should be."

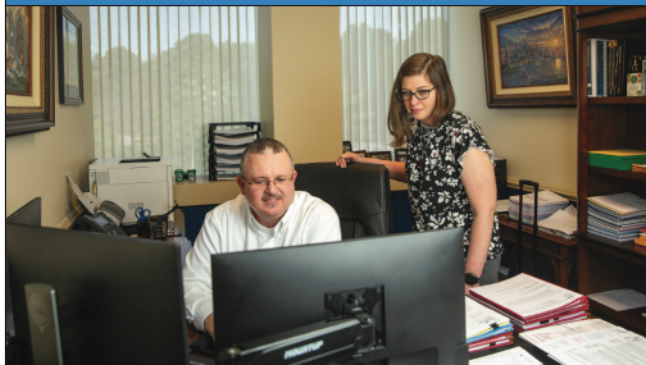
As he reflects on the firm he founded, Murray Sawyer has much to be proud of, including its client-first culture. As the team has grown—nearly a dozen people, including Client Service Operations Lead Sawyer Crowley, the third generation of the Sawyer family at the firm—so have its assets under management. Today, Westover manages more than \$700 million

in assets on behalf of over 200 families.

"There are larger companies out there that are looking to gobble up people like us," Murray says. "If we wanted to sell, we could make a lot of money, but that would mean we would have to adhere to their culture and their rules. We're fiercely independent, and we think what we're doing now is the right thing. Plus, I'm too old to have a boss. With Chip, Matt, Dennis, and the rest of our team helping to carry the firm forward, our clients can be confident that Westover's advice is built to last well beyond any one person. In 50 years, if we're still independent and wrapping our advice around clients in an intelligent, thoughtful way, that will have given me a legacy much greater than mere money ever could." ■



Chief Investment Officer Chip Sawyer, founder and CEO Murray Sawyer, and Director of Wealth Management Matthew Beardwood meet with clients.



Director of Tax Dennis Perdue and Client Services and Tax Associate Kelly Doran review a client's tax return.

to Matt Beardwood, Westover Capital's Director of Wealth Management and Chief Compliance Officer.

"Wealth is a tool to help you accomplish what you want in life," he says. "Chip brings discipline and judgment in constructing portfolios, while the planning team, including Caitlyn Tierney, CFP®, and Steve Crifasi Jr., CFP®, helps integrate investment strategy with each client's broader life, tax, estate, retirement, and family goals. Every client has a financial philosophy largely shaped by their life experiences. When we meet with a client, we're doing a lot more listening than talking so we can understand what matters to them most."

Having those honest conversations requires a high level of trust. Developing

Group photo by Alison Dunlap; candid photos by Kirstie Donohue



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