



Member Spotlight



GETTING TO KNOW DEREK L. GRAHAM

What drew you to the practice of special needs planning?

My practice grew very organically. On March 8, 2009, my wife and I had our first child. We had a daughter and like nearly all of our clients, we were thrown for a total loop when a nurse whispered to me about 10 minutes into her life “I think your daughter has Down syndrome.” At that time in my life, I could not have told you the difference between Medicaid and Medicare and I had no idea what SSI stood for. I quickly learned that asking legal questions about the DD field could lead to wildly different and inconsistent answers from attorneys who “dabbled” in this field. I connected with a wonderful attorney who knew the field very well and he was a mentor that helped train me in how our DD system works. With 3-4 years, nearly all of my work was representing families who face the same challenges/questions that my family faces and I love what I get to do for a living.

How do you describe your work to people who are unfamiliar with it?

I tell people that the majority of what I do for a living is teaching. While I am an attorney, most of my time is spent helping families learn how the system works and how to utilize the system. Even the process of setting up a special needs estate plan is rooted in educating them on how the system and how money can be properly used/protected while still receiving the necessary benefits.

What’s something about you that might surprise others?

You would never know it by looking at me, but I enjoy running and completed two marathons last year!

Who or what inspires you the most?

My daughter Megan (Down syndrome). Like many of our clients, she overcomes more challenges and harder challenges in a week then I do in a year and she does it with so much determination and positivity.

What is your ideal way to spend a Saturday?

Outside. My wife’s family has a maple syrup farm and I love getting outside and working in the woods or hiking, golfing or just being in nature.

What is the last book you read?

“The British are Coming” by Rick Atkinson