

THE LAST WORD WITH Neil Rongaus

By Sylvia Cavallo

Neil Rongaus, Wealth Manager for Confluence Financial Partners of Southpointe, grew up in Donora, PA where he attended Catholic School through fifth grade and continued his middle and high school education in the Ringgold School District. In 1997, he earned his degree in Finance from Duquesne University. Rongaus now resides in Carroll Township with his wife Marijo; son Marco (8); and daughter Remi (5).

How long has Confluence Financial Partners been in existence and why did you want to work there?

I have been in the investment advisory business since 2002. After graduating college in 1997, I started in corporate finance (CONSOL Energy and Bayer AG) and then I joined a team at UBS Financial Services in 2002 for nearly a decade. I wanted to focus more on comprehensive financial planning versus the traditional broker model and spent three years at TIAA-CREF before finally joining Confluence Financial Partners – a firm with a vision that aligned with mine. I had known Greg Weimer, one of the co-founders of Confluence Financial Partners, from my UBS career. Weimer was The American Funds wholesaler at that time, and our team always had a great relationship with him. Weimer and I crossed paths again at a local restaurant in McMurray and I was reminded of his vision and uncanny ability to impact people. When the opportunity arose to join Confluence, it was a no-brainer.

What are some of the greatest benefits of being a member of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce?

The networking opportunities are far better than any chamber with which I have been affiliated. I have attended every event so far this year, met some really great people and have been provided with timely information. Also, the chamber has been a great way to stay abreast of all the great things taking place within our area.

What do you believe are some of Washington County's greatest assets?

People, infrastructure and resources. I am a lifelong

Washington County resident, am proud of where I come from, and believe that most Washington County residents feel the same way. The strides that Washington County has made in terms of infrastructure have been amazing. We used to have to drive to Pittsburgh for a “night out”. Now we have so many great opportunities right in

Washington County. Obviously our natural resources are an enormous asset to the county and could be a huge catalyst for much more economic development in the future.

What are some of the greatest challenges today's clients face and why?

I believe that one of the biggest challenges people face is underestimating the amount of money they will need in retirement to maintain their lifestyles. For example, a married couple both 65 years of age – there is a 72 percent chance that one of them will live to age 85, and a 42 percent chance one will live to age 90. So retirement

income will need to last 25 years or longer in many cases. Not only will it need to last, but people need to be prepared to grow their retirement income to keep pace with inflation. Based on the CPI (Consumer Price Index), prices have risen by approximately 73 percent over the past 25 years. In other words, if you retired in 1993 with an initial retirement income of \$100,000 per year, you would need \$173,000 per year today to purchase the same goods and services.

I feel another challenge is not having a long-term vision and becoming a victim to short-term “noise” in the markets. We like to encourage that clients focus on their long-term goals versus what the market did yesterday or last week. Based on a Dalbar study (ending 12/31/2015), over the past 30 years, the S&P 500 yielded results of +10.35 percent per year. However, the average equity mutual fund investor over the same 30 years had results of +3.66 percent. This difference is referred to as the “Behavior Gap”. This is a result of investor behavior that can be detrimental to portfolio performance. Investors are better served by developing a disciplined investment process and focusing on their goals.



Any opinions are those of Neil Rongaus and not necessarily those of RJFS or Raymond James. The information contained in this report does not purport to be a complete description of the securities, markets, or developments referred to in this material. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged index of 500 widely held stocks that is generally considered representative of the U.S. stock market. Inclusion of these index is for illustrative purposes only. Keep in mind that individuals cannot invest directly in any index, and index performance does not include transaction costs or other fees, which will affect actual investment performance. Individual investor's results will vary. Past performance does not guarantee future results.