Creating Relationships – Meet Richard Collins

CCOSA is fortunate to work with many business partners. This edition of *Better Schools* profiles long-standing partner Richie Colllins of Horizon Financial Services who participated in a conversation with Gracie Branch to discuss his company and navigating the road to financial advising.

How did you get into this business?
It all started in 2000, when I was offered a position with a small insurance agency, my senior year at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO). This small agency had an association with a larger insurance company that was uniquely connected to the school business. We hosted recreational quail and pheasant hunting, for school administrators, to develop lasting relationships. This venue gave us the opportunity to explain the need for our retirement planning services for their faculty and staff. As an avid hunter, this was a unique way to get to know more about the school profession and the beginning of so many great relationships.

Why work with schools?
It's all I've ever done. I believe in our administrators and teachers. You will not find a more genuine, compassionate and loyal clientele. They put everything they have into their kids and communities. I have the privilege to experience it. It's my job to get them to focus on themselves even if it's for a few minutes.

What is your business philosophy?
An individual financial advisor boils down to personal relationships and accountability. The personal touch has been lost in the business world. Being different is about overcoming the "new normal." Every phone call, email and meeting is important. When you are dealing with money, it takes you into the personal lives of your clients, you have to be accountable.

What does it take to make it?
If we are talking about building a practice, you have to have a specialty. For me, it's about focusing my expertise in the areas of Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System (OTRS), Social Security, and Retirement Accounts. The education market is undervalued and under-serviced. I'm happy to fill that role. Of course, integrity and consistency go a long way in any business. Our market is a close knit group of people, so you have to take that into consideration.

What is your relationship with CCOSA?
I've grown up with CCOSA and owe this organization so much. Dr. Raburn and I started this relationship as a partnership on the Oklahoma Educator Recruiting and Retention Plan. This plan is still in place and exists as a cost saving alternative to traditional salary. Our co-sponsored retirement planning workshops have been a huge success, and we look forward to adding retirement planning webinars for 2015-2016.

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What are you most passionate about professionally?
Education. For most people, my profession is a foreign language and confusing; yet so important to their lives. It's not much different from a court room, doctor's office, or tax return in the fact that you have to trust that individual for objective advice. I'm dedicated and passionate about fulfilling this professional role in my clients' lives.

What do educators really need to know about getting ready for retirement?
It gets here faster than you think. Of course, in order to be eligible to retire you have to threaten to retire at least three years in a row!

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What does a day in your life look like?

It's a fine balance between traveling, office, and family. I've always traveled 30,000 miles a year—Oklahoma is a large territory. Traveling to workshops, schools, or to a client's home has been a cornerstone of my business and is a contrast to the normal business model. It gets you out there on a more intimate level with these communities. One disadvantage is that the office work is always waiting when you return. Also, you can't miss the kids' evening activities since you only get one shot at these memories. I thank Heather, my amazing wife of 15 years, for keeping us organized and my clients for this daily reminder. In my spare time, I enjoy lake activities during the summer months since I grew up on Lake Keystone. The kids love the lake, too. The fall is my favorite time of year, and I look forward to my hunting adventures with my pals. Heather and I love to travel and have been to some amazing destinations.

What's next for you?

This profession always keeps you guessing on what's next. You have to keep up with state and federal legislation which is one of the reasons CCOSA is a vital relationship. The Department of Labor is pursuing significant regulatory changes as we speak. The economy affects client accounts and school budgets. All of these things require planning. The ultimate goal is to always be in a position to give timely and specific advice for my clients.

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Thursday, February 4th

OKC – CCOSA Offices
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Times: 10:30am - 1:00pm

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