



2016 Year in REVIEW

The graphic for '2016' is stylized with blue and white geometric shapes, including lines and rectangles, giving it a technical or architectural appearance. The word 'Year' is in a dark blue sans-serif font, and 'in REVIEW' is in a lighter blue sans-serif font.

Dear Clients and Friends of The Center:

One of my favorite movies is Forrest Gump. Not only am I a Tom Hanks fan, but I think the character Forrest Gump encompasses a little of each of us when we are at our best. As Forrest said, “My momma always said you got to put the past behind you before you can move on.” Then, Forrest went on one of the longest runs in history! I will do my best not to run too long here, but in the spirit of moving into 2017 please find some of our firm’s highlights from 2016.

As I write this we are just finishing up another office expansion led by partner Melissa Joy, CFP®. We were fortunate to have access to roughly 2700 more square feet contiguous to our current space. Our growth continues to be very measured and intentional. The additional space allows us extra client meeting space as well as some additional private offices for our growing team.

Record Numbers Once Again

Thanks to a continued focus on providing world class service, new business development focus, inorganic growth, continued favorable equity markets, and a dedicated team, The Center once again experienced record numbers in 2016 in a variety of areas.

We quietly passed \$1 billion in assets under management (AUM) with the addition of a satellite office. This is quite an achievement. The Center is in a solid financial position with no debt and adequate reserves. This strong financial position allows us to reinvest in our current team and consider strategic investments in new team members for the benefit of clients. Perhaps most importantly, a strong financial position allows us the freedom to think long term—the next 30 years instead of 30 days.

Just as we stress with our clients, financial success is merely one part of the equation. The Center’s Mission, in addition to achieving financial success so that we can reward ourselves and grow, also speaks to delivering outstanding client service and to providing fulfilling careers and professional satisfaction for the entire team. In short, the success of our clients and team members is fundamental to why The Center exists.

Back in 1985, our founders wanted to build and create a firm bound by principles serving clients in a different, better way. They envisioned assisting clients through their life goals not by selling investment and insurance products; rather they offered a planning process. Little did they know that this change in thinking would result in The Center currently serving roughly 860 clients and 22 team members.

While the financial planning profession, the financial services industry, and our firm has changed considerably,



some core principles seem to be as relevant today as they were 30+ years ago. Clients still seek, and deserve, a trustworthy relationship (competence, security regarding your assets, safeguarded conversations of a personal nature) with a financial advisor. This is still an elusive relationship for most folks.

For 30+ years, clients have benefited from our Customized and Comprehensive Services. We don't provide the "one-size-fits-all" mentality of other financial institutions. Just as 30 years ago, most firms, both large and small, merely paid lip service to financial planning. We deliver what we promise. Financial planning to the majority of companies in the financial services industry is not a process; rather it is a tactic used to sell financial products. We work with clients to identify their particular goals and objectives—objectives that are clearly articulated, in many cases, during the first meeting with our team. Lastly, our firm has collected the resources and technical expertise to assist clients in all aspects of their financial lives (income tax, retirement, estate, risk management, etc.) for better decision making.

While we are proud of our investment management skills and service, the financial planning process (a firm value) provides the glue to solid relationships, and more importantly, provides the basis to give clients' the greatest probability of achieving financial success—that is meeting their specific financial goals. Our experience confirms that our clients benefit most when our discussions center on FINANCIAL PLANNING issues and not simply investment advice. That is because investments are simply one component of a comprehensive and coordinated financial plan – a means to an end. Some of our best work and value has come from our team engaging in difficult conversations with clients and assisting when a beloved spouse or parent has passed away; providing elder care resources; talking about tightening spending when times grow tough; hosting family meetings with parents and children as family values were passed to the next generation (instead of just the values of financial assets); and lastly, encouraging them to systematically pursue their dreams and live a meaningful life.

“Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.”

No I didn't say that, Albert Einstein apparently did. The point? The point is that there were many successes in 2016 that may not show up in a scorebook but nonetheless were noteworthy and important. At The Center, client service is viewed more broadly than merely technical excellence. Our Vision 2020 continues to provide inspiration: "Great service is viewed as an opportunity, and it happens everywhere at The Center regardless of title or function." And, we have an opportunity to be even better. In 2016 we increased our client education efforts via webinars on topics such as [Year End Financial & Tax Planning](#), [Student loans](#), [Investments](#), [Elder Care issues](#), [Cash Balance retirement plans](#) and [ESG](#). We also held live events on Investment Market Outlook and Medicare planning. Moreover, many clients joined us at sponsored Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings concerts. Lastly, our team continues to be avid writers via our [blog](#) posts providing resources for our prospective and current clients, as well as, internally.



Technology

Technology continues to play an increased role in our ability to provide world class service. 2016 brought about a significant change in that we have begun implementing a new Client Relationship Management system. We have committed significant time and money on training for our team to know and provide the best service experience possible for both clients and team members.

In 2015-2016 we implemented two factor authentication, researched and implemented password best practices, upgraded PC's, Windows and servers and have begun working on upgrading email and document encryption procedures – whew! Security of client data and our systems will continue to receive our full attention going forward.

Team

In 2016, The Center said goodbye to some longtime friends and team members. In June Jen Hackmann decided to pursue other ambitions as did Jennie Bauder & Melissa Parkins in October. Transitions are never easy.

Luckily, 2016 brought us some stellar talent as well. In July, Lauren Adams “found” The Center after a Cool Places to Work search and joined us in a new position - Director of Client Services. It was the right time and fit. Other team members joining our Client Services Department include Emily Lucido (August), Jeanette LoPiccolo and Ashley Frank (September). Last but not least, Joshua Bitel (December) recently joined the firm in the Financial Planning Department.

Summary

The Center, thanks in large part to our 31 year history, is on solid footing. We continue to operate in a disciplined manner with time proven systems and processes for serving clients, as well as, in managing a growing firm. The firm's three founders have all successfully transitioned and retired as practitioners; their values and ethics remain a strong part of The Center.

We thank you, our clients, professional partners and friends, for your continued confidence and trust. It is something we work hard at everyday – it's what we love to do. Wishing you and yours a Happy 2017.

Timothy Wyman, CFP®, JD
Managing Partner

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