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## Profile of Progress

### *A Client Story: Ed Leefer, D.C. and Ilene Cohen-Leefer, Esq.*

By: Bob Fragasso, President

**E**d Leefer and Ilene Cohen-Leefer and their children are representative both of our clients and of the people who help give our region its hard-working, family-oriented reputation. Ed is a chiropractor and Ilene is an attorney. They have two children: Jeremy, a 21-year-old who attended Penn State University and is currently interning with the Chicago Options Exchange Board and Eri, a senior at Upper St. Clair High School who will be attending Indiana University Bloomington. The course of their lives and their life today is representative of so many of our clients. For that reason, they are our inaugural client for this profile feature.

Ilene grew up in Stanton Heights. She received her law degree from The University of Pittsburgh in 1978 and worked as a litigator for the National Labor Relations Board for a decade before leaving to become a stay-at-home mom. In the late 1990s, she served as Executive Director of the Cambria/Somerset Labor Management Committee, an organization comprised of CEOs and their counterparts committed to improving labor management relations to enhance economic development. While raising her children, Ilene held leadership positions in varied non-profit organizations, including the Susan G. Komen Pittsburgh Race for the Cure. During this period of time, she became a certified group exercise instructor and personal trainer, both coordinating and teaching at local gyms and employee wellness centers, as well as providing personal back training for Ed's chiropractic patients. Currently, Ilene teaches pre-school at Temple Emanuel Nursery School in Mt. Lebanon where she has developed and is implementing a movement class for pre-school children.

Ed grew up in Munhall, the son of a veterinarian who maintained a career-long practice in the area. He attended West Virginia University studying for a degree in business. While there, he suffered from a stomach ulcer that was being properly treated medically, but still recurring. On a recommendation, Ed visited a chiropractor who evaluated a misaligned spine and corrected that condition through chiropractic therapy. During that process, the ulcer disappeared. Ed was convinced that chiropractic practice was his future. He enrolled in the Palmer College of Chiropractic and graduated in 1974. Ed spent his first year gaining experience working in the offices of others before borrowing money and opening his own practice in 1975. When he opened his doors, the immediate challenge was to make people aware of his profession and location, 5800 Brownsville Road in the Pleasant Hills section of Pittsburgh (the same location out of which he practices today). He immediately used some of that borrowed money to hold an open house with appropriate publicity and quickly signed up 63 new patients. Meeting Ed now, you would not be surprised at those results, as his kind and gentle manner immediately instills comfort and trust. A local newspaper once characterized Ed as practicing "in a way that allows him to get to know each and every person that seeks his care."

A personal example illustrates this. The author suffered a multiple break ankle injury in 1988. After six months of operations and non-weight-bearing casts, the author began



*The Leefer Family: Jeremy, Eri, Ilene and Ed*

exercise therapy. There seemed to be perpetually pulled back muscles that the author attributed to exercising. This was mentioned to Ed at a client review meeting and, typical of Ed, he did not suggest visiting him. He awaited the author's realization of that potential benefit. Up to then, the recommended solution by others was muscle relaxant medication, with all of the attendant side effects. At the first visit, Ed demonstrated with X-rays that the months of imbalanced movement on crutches had caused several vertebrae to turn and press on nerves. This was the source of the pain, not pulled muscles. After two months of chiropractic therapy, the vertebrae were returned to their proper position and the pain was gone – never to return. No medication and no surgery would be needed. Ed is fortunate to be able to make a comfortable living and help people in the process.

But, professional practice and life do not run a consistently smooth course despite hard work, good intentions and competency. In the early 1990s, Ed experienced what all of our medical profession clients have endured – the advent of managed care. While most agree with the need to control costs, the severity of the actions taken at the federal level and by individual health care insurance providers caused a cataclysmic shock to medical care providers. In Ed's case, people who sought care could not access it because most managed care plans offered financial incentives to "gatekeepers" to deny or severely restrict referrals to specialists. Managed care challenged Ed's practice but, he found ways to rebuild it and continue to offer superior patient care. Today, Ed participates in and provides care through all of Highmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield and all of Highmark's managed care plans as well as UPMC, Health America, Cigna, United Healthcare and Medicare.

What do Ed and Ilene care about today? They want the same things that you likely do. They want their children to have an education that allows them to actualize and to provide for their families some day. While Ed and Ilene never expect to retire, they wish to have the financial security that allows them the freedom to decide. Knowing that they have provided for each other and for their children allows them to proceed through life comfortably and happily. They were prudent through the years and we are pleased and proud to have provided them with the advice and guidance they sought from us. We feel this sense of gratitude about all of our clients and are proud to count Ed and Ilene among our friends.