

Rave Reviews

The William Sparks Agency in Timonium, Md., has a Customer for life.

The relationship with Richard Powell began in 2007 when Agent **Danielle Sparks** helped him transfer his home and auto insurance to ERIE from another carrier—one he had been with for 30 years.

"Danielle was very particular and made sure I received all the same coverages but with better rates," says Richard. "And any time I've needed assistance with additional coverages, Danielle's response is always, 'No problem.'"

Since then, Powell has been spreading the word about the exceptional service Danielle and the agency have provided. As senior vice president of the Erickson Retirement Communities in Baltimore, Md., he's raved about the agency to hundreds of his employees.

"I've been working in the service industry for more than 30 years, and I've never seen the level of service I've received from the Sparks Agency," said Richard. "Whenever I get the chance to teach employees about providing the finest customer service possible, I always reference the Sparks Agency." ■

What Works

Sales Training Coaches Agents towards Success *Pilot Program continues in February, June*

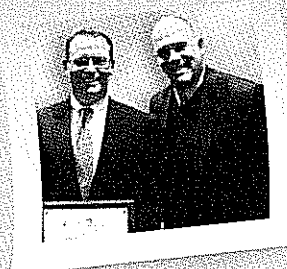
In the fall, 19 Agents participated in the Polestar Producer Development Program, a pilot sales training program aimed at helping participants to make improvements in four key areas: production, retention, profitability and efficiency.

The course consisted of three training sessions at ERIE's Home Office between September and December. Polestar trainers gave personalized sales coaching to help Agents establish production goals and construct formal business plans, which they presented at the concluding meeting.

ERIE splits the tuition fee with Agents, but if participants reach the production goals they established at the beginning of the program, Agents will be reimbursed for their share of the tuition.

Agent **Jeff O'Connor** of the Jeff O'Connor Agency in Oakdale, Pa.,

has been implementing the knowledge he gained. "It was a great program and worth the investment," he said. "The techniques we learned are definitely helping."



Jeff O'Connor (left) with Mel Hirst at the Polestar graduation ceremony.

Maryland Agent **Krista Kenny** said the experience "really helps me set clear-cut goals for myself and my agency for 2010."

District sales managers (DSMs) attended the sessions with their Agents, serving as guides throughout the entire process. Jeff's DSM, **Mark Bazari**, Pittsburgh Branch, said, "I've already seen short-term dividends with my Agents enrolled in this new approach to sales training and development. Going forward, this type of sales training will help the long-term success of these Agents and ERIE."

Krista's DSM, **Shane Badon** of Silver Spring, agreed, noting "the knowledge is something I can take to the rest of my Agents."

Lou Colaizzo, senior vice president and director of Agency Operations, and **Mel Hirst**, manager of Corporate Sales and Agency Relations, brought Polestar to ERIE. Mel noted that this particular training is unique because the Polestar coaches are available indefinitely after completion of the program. "The relationships (our Agents) build with their coach they can have throughout their life," he explained.

Project Manager **Kevin Kunik**, Corporate Training and Development, coordinated the program, which is based on the book *Hard Market Selling: Thriving in the New Insurance Era* by Polestar founder Scott M. Primiano. "Polestar is in line with ERIE's principles in that it stresses the critical role of exceptional service in earning a client's business," said Kevin.

The program will be offered again starting Feb. 10 to interested Agents from the following branches: Rochester, Indianapolis, Waukesha, Peoria, Harrisburg, Allentown, Knoxville, Roanoke and Richmond. A third program will be offered beginning in June. Additional details will follow in the near future. ■



Lou Colaizzo with Brittyn Walbridge from the Schaubert-Van Schaik Insurance Group.

For information on the program, talk to your DSM or visit the Polestar Web site:
<http://www.gopolestar.com>.