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Upcoming events:

January 16

Martin Luther King jr Day

February 14

Valentine's Day

February 20

President's Day

March 17

St Patrick's Day

March 20

Spring Begins



"What does it take to be the best? Everything. And everything is up to you!" --Emmitt Smith



Hello, and Happy New Year!

I wanted to take this opportunity let those who attended the Springfield Bright Nights Holiday Light Bus Tour in December, that I enjoyed seeing and talking with all of you on a more social basis. I really enjoyed myself along with my colleague Leslie Esoian, and I hope that all of you did too. Leslie was so impressed with it, she took her two-year-old son Kyle the following week.

Over the past several months and into the New Year, I plan to meet with you, my clients, on a more regular basis. I have put doing workshops on hold so that I can meet with all of you more. As life situations change, your finances may be affected as well. Therefore, it is imperative that you are aware of any changes in things such as IRS codes, Trusts, and HIPPA regulations. If you have any questions currently, and I have not met with you yet, please feel free to give me a call and schedule an appointment. I am happy to sit with you and go over all of your concerns.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

Warm regards,

Donald O'Connor, CSA
Certified Senior Advisor

Recipe Corner News:

As some of you may have noticed, we began our "Recipe Corner" section of our newsletter the end of 2005. We know that many of you enjoy the recipes, and we want you to be part of bringing some great recipes to all of our clients. For those chefs and bakers out there, please feel free to submit your favorite recipe to us, and in our 2nd Quarter newsletter (Due out in April 2006), we will chose one to include, and indicate "Courtesy of..." and your name and town. The Recipe chosen, will win a gift certificate to Williams-Sonoma valued at \$25. Please mail your recipe to the following: The Asset Protection Group, "Recipe Corner", 2306 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT. 06111.

See our current recipe corner for the newest recipe for you to try.

AVOIDING PROBATE

I have spent some time with all my clients discussing probate and how to avoid it. But as time goes by, it is easy to forget or become confused about some of the issues on probate. Therefore, I thought it would be prudent to put a brief summary of the Probate issue in this newsletter.

Probate can involve either death or living probate. I am writing here about death probate. Probate is really a process of changing title to property; that is what 90% of the death probate process is about. If the deed to your home is in your name, when you pass on, your children or whomever you want to leave your home to cannot just go out and sell the home and collect the proceeds. Why? Because the deed is in your name not in the intended recipients name. Your Will is nothing more than a letter to the Probate court judge saying "this is the way I would like to see my stuff distributed". What is the problem with going through the probate process? It is time consuming and when you get an Attorney involved, expensive. Furthermore, once the probate process is completed, your information is public record. There are companies that mine this information all the time. Don't you think that insurance and investment companies would like to call your relatives, and children up after they have received their inheritance and suggest where they should invest it?

You can even put beneficiaries on savings accounts, investments accounts etc (called pay on death or transfer on death provisions). Any account with a beneficiary on it, goes around the probate process and does not go thru probate.

Some things, like owning a home or car would require joint ownership with survivorship to avoid probate. You can establish a Revocable Living Trust and anything owned by your Trust will avoid probate (this type of Trust allows you to control all of your affairs when you are alive and to name a person to carry out your wishes after your death or disability). As always, never try to do legal work yourself. Always engage a lawyer to fully understand the above issues and to draft all of your documents. If you have any questions about probate call us or we will be happy to refer you to competent legal professionals.



Recipe Corner:

Date-Nut Sticks

Recipe courtesy of Paula Deen

As seen on the FoodNetwork show "Paula's Home Cooking"

Recipe Summary – Difficulty: Easy **Prep Time:** 15 minutes **Cook Time:** 10 minutes **Yield:** 45 sticks

1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter	1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs, beaten	1 cup chopped pecans
2 cups sugar	1 1/2 cups crispy rice cereal (recommended: Rice Krispies)
8 ounces chopped dates	3 cups finely grated coconut

In a saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the eggs, sugar, and dates. Bring it to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla, pecans, and cereal. Cool and shape into finger-sized sticks. Roll the sticks in coconut.

Episode#: PA0509 Copyright © 2003 Television Food Network, G.P., All Rights Reserved www.foodnetwork.com

What do the flu, farm fields and vacations have in common?



First it was Y2K, then a terrorist bio-chemical attack and now the bird flu. I'm sick of it! You probab are as well. We cannot afford to turn a deaf ear to threats, however, neither can we let the possibility of these things happening run our lives. You worked too hard to earn a comfortable retirement to not live it the way you want to without reservations.

There is only one way to approach these and any other emergencies that can affect you in life and that way is PREPARATION. There is no emergency that cannot be better handled through better preparation. Spontaneity as an idea is terrific...but preparation rarely fails to bring better results. So what should we do about the "bird flu"? If it comes, a little preparation will go a long way.

What to do to prepare

Quit Smoking – Smoking irritates the bronchial tubes, making them more vulnerable to germs that could find their way into your throat. Smokers also have a harder time fighting sickness once they contract it.

Lose weight – Being over-weight can cause undo stress on your heart and lungs making survival from the bird flu more difficult.

GET VACCINATED!!!! – No, we do not have a vaccination for the bird flu yet, but getting the current flu vaccination will keep you healthier. That way, in case the bird flu does occur, your body will not already be run down from a bout with the regular flu. If your spouse refuses to get one...**MAKE THEM!** Remember, they are not just putting themselves in danger, they are also putting you in danger.

Take Vitamin C – First they tell us to take it...then not take it...and now its back to take it again. Why not? It's inexpensive and easy to take.

Stockpile emergency goods – Emergencies always bring runs on stores. Maintain a 2 week supply of canned and boxed goods and water. Always keep additional supplies of your regular prescription and general over the counter drugs. Alcohol wipes...lots of alcohol wipes!

What to do if there is an outbreak

Avoid crowds – Stay at home as much as possible. Avoid airplanes, theaters and malls.

Take precautions – Wash your hands frequently with alcohol solutions such as Purell after touching anything that has been handled by others. The debate is still out on whether surgical masks will prevent viral infections, but hey, they are cheap and might help.

See your doctor immediately - if the bird flu does ever reach your state and you start experiencing chills, fever, sore throat, fatigue, cough, runny nose, head or muscle aches. Anti-viral drugs such as Tamiflu can help **ONLY** if taken within 48 hours of the onset of your first symptoms.

What about my finances?

You should always maintain a healthy amount of cash on hand. During a catastrophic event like Hurricane Katrina or if there ever was a quarantine due to an epidemic, banks and financial systems may temporarily shut down. When these types of things occur, cash is king. Keeping up to \$500 in small bills, in a safe place, makes total sense.

The rest of your financial affairs should always be kept in a place that family members or a close friend know about and can get to if you are not able to. A safe deposit box with cash or other important documents may not be accessible during times of emergencies, so make sure it is a safe place that is **ALWAYS** accessible.

There are several other ways to prepare your finances for major emergencies as well. Remember that electricity and phones may be down, buildings may be inaccessible, transportation may be difficult...all these things can cause temporary financial hardship with even the wealthiest people (there is nothing like a catastrophe to even the playing field for everyone).

Please give me a call if you would like to briefly go over your situation and make sure you are totally prepared for the next emergency.

Our goal is to keep you informed and do all the things other advisors forget to do. Please feel free to call us anytime with any questions or concerns. –Donald O'Connor

Have a Healty, Happy, and Prosperous New Year!

