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Inside This Issue...

Helpful Home Tips for the Winter Weather...Page 1

The Secret to Happiness...Page 2

“Green Tips” for the Holidays...Page 3

Happy What Holidays?...Page 3

Beat This Trivia Question And You Could Win a \$25 gift card to Subway!...Page 4

Real Estate Corner...Page 4



Don Puryear...

Service For Life!®

“Insider Tips For Healthy, Wealthy & Happy Living...”

Helpful Home Tips for The Winter

With the Holiday Season upon us, Houstonians finally get a break from the muggy weather! Hooray – the winter months are here! If you own a home, now is the right time to get it ready to withstand the harsh winter conditions, *i.e. the dry air, frequent winds, large amounts of rain and low*



temperatures. Here’s a quick list of things to get your winter weather checklist started.



Start at the Top – From the ground, take a good look at your roof. If you notice any sagging, this might be an indicator of rotting or structural damage. Check all the *flashing*, the thin metal strips around your vents or roof openings, for any leaks. In the cold months, these leaks could cause your home’s insulation to be useless!

Chimney Check – To insure unwanted moisture isn’t getting in through your chimney, make sure you have a chimney cap. These are easy to come by at any home repair store and are relatively inexpensive (around \$40).



Also, make sure your damper operates freely, and check your chimney with a flashlight for any creosote buildup. This can be hazardous if ignored. There are easy methods of cleaning your chimney of creosote, like using a “Chimney Sweeping Log.”

www.cleanyourchimney.com

Leaf-Free Gutters – Keeping your gutters free of leaves makes for a drier home during heavy rains. Rain will seep under the shingles if it cannot escape through your home’s gutter system. There’s really no easy way to clean a gutter but getting on a ladder and scooping the leaves away with a scoop. While up there, you should inspect your gutters for sagging or leaking.



Weather Stripping Works Wonders – By taking the time to inspect all your windows and repair/ replace old weather stripping, you can save money in heating costs.



Cozy Your Pipes – Insulate all of your exterior faucets and pipes with foam insulation tape. This simple and inexpensive preventative can save you so much; nothing is more damaging than a burst water pipe. If possible, try to turn off the outside water supply as another step to prevent damage.

Even though our Houston winters are fairly mild compared to other areas, the harsh conditions can still cause discomfort and damage if you do not prepare yourself....so these inexpensive preventative measures are worthwhile.

Don’t know what to get for someone who has everything? How about a donation in their name to Heifer International? Your donation provides a means for underprivileged families to sustain themselves with gifts of livestock. Donate \$20 for a flock of chicks, ducks or geese; \$120 for a goat or pig; \$250 for a water buffalo... or \$10,000 for livestock development. For more information, visit www.heimer.org or call 800-422-0755.





JOKER'S CORNER

If athletes get Athlete's Foot, what do Astronauts get? *Missletoel!*



What do elves learn in school?
The Elfabet!

Oreo Psychology

Psychologists have discovered that the way you eat an Oreo speaks volumes about your personality.



- Eat the filling and then the cookie - You are a very curious person.
- One bite at a time - You are "normal" and conservative.
- Slow and methodical nibbling - You are very meticulous and detail-oriented.
- Fast nibbling - You get things done quickly.
- Dunked in milk - You are upbeat and likeable.
- The whole cookie in one bite - You're irresponsible...or just very hungry!

Is Unpredictable Weather "Bugging" You?

In Houston, the weather changes by the hour! Get up-to-the-minute weather information on your desktop with Weatherbug! Download the free software to your computer, and Weatherbug will keep you informed with severe weather alerts, updated weekly forecasts and more!



www.weatherbug.com



Name that Tune!

Can you guess the song's title?

1. *Sir Lancelot with laryngitis*
2. *We are Kong, Lear, and Nat Cole*
3. *A joyful song of reverence relative to hollow metallic vessels which vibrate and bring forth a ringing sound when struck*
4. *The three words that best describe you are as follows, and I quote: "Stink, Stank, Stunk!"*

(Answers are on page 4).

THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS

Over the years, research has shown that naturally outgoing people tend to be happier people. But a new series of studies at Wake Forest University reveals that simply *acting* extroverted can actually cause a person to become happy.



In a study headed by psychologist William Fleeson, 46 men and women kept a log of their activities and emotions five times per day for 13 days. During the study they would report how talkative or outgoing they were in different situations. **Without exception, "outgoing behavior" and "feeling good" correlated**, regardless of whether the person scored as introverted or extroverted on earlier personality tests.

In another study 47 people were told to act either shy or outgoing in a particular conversation. The ones who were faking their outgoing behavior not only felt just as content as the natural extroverts, but also received high personality ratings from other participants. Choosing to act more outgoing and assertive appears to influence one's sense of well-being.



Delicious Holiday Treats!

2 packages OR 20 squares of Semi-Sweet Chocolate, divided.
1 package (8 oz.) softened Cream Cheese.
Chopped nuts or multi-colored sprinkles.

Melt 8 chocolate squares in microwave.
Beat cream cheese with mixer until creamy, and blend in melted chocolate.
Refrigerate until firm. SHAPE into 36 balls.
Place on waxed paper-covered baking sheet.
Melt remaining chocolate. Use fork to dip balls in chocolate. Return to baking sheet.
Decorate with sprinkles & nuts, and then refrigerate one hour.

For more recipes, visit www.kraft.com.



Gratitude Journal



Dr. Brenda Shoshanna, author of *365 Ways to Give Thanks*, says that one of the best antidotes for depression is gratitude. She recommends that people keep a journal of 10 things every day for which they are grateful. "Depression and gratitude cannot co-exist in the same mind. When your day revolves around being grateful, it is impossible to be depressed." Plus, research has found that being able to put experiences into words is good for physical health: It strengthens your immune system and reduces your blood pressure.



How Did Planets Get Their Names?

Like the names of days of the week, planets were named after Roman and Greek gods. For example...

- Mars**, with its angry red color, was named for the Roman god of war.
- Mercury** was named for the winged Roman deity of travel because it moved through the sky so rapidly.
- Venus** is the namesake of the Roman goddess of love because it was considered the brightest and most beautiful heavenly body.
- Jupiter** was given the name of the king of the Roman gods because it is the largest planet in the sky.
- Uranus** bears the name of the Greek god of the sky.
- Saturn** was the Roman god of farming and the father of Jupiter.
- Neptune**, a blue planet, was named for the Roman god of the sea.



Riddle me this...

They call me a man,
but I'll never have a wife.
I was given a body,
but not given life.
They made me a mouth,
but didn't give me breath.
Water gives me life
and sun brings me death.



What am I?

(Answer on page 4)



Clean-Cut Kitchen Safety

The U.S. Department of Agriculture states that glass cutting boards are safer than wooden ones. Glass cutting boards are nonporous and less likely to harbor bacteria when cutting meat and poultry. Wash all cutting boards thoroughly after each use to avoid contamination. Run them through the dishwasher or soak them in hot, soapy water, rinse, and then let air-dry. Older boards should be replaced, because deep grooves can be hard to clean properly. If you choose to use wooden boards, wash your board with hot, soapy water after each use. Then, disinfect it by spraying with a solution of one-tablespoon chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.

Entertainer's Secret



Poinsettias are a beautiful holiday tradition and can add the perfect amount of color to your home. Try cutting a single blossom and putting it in a simple vase. Change the water every few days, and you can expect your flower to last for a couple weeks!

Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint on it you can.

~Danny Kaye



Happy What Holidays?

We are fortunate to live in a country where so many cultures can celebrate without fear. What holiday do YOU celebrate?



On December 8th, Buddhists celebrate Buddah's enlightenment, also referred to as **Bodhi Day**.



The Jewish holy season, **Hanukkah** is celebrated sundown on December 11th (called the festival of lights), and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah celebrates the victory (165 BC) of the Maccabees over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus IV and the subsequent reclamation of Jerusalem.



On December 18th, **Al Hijra**, the Muslim new year is celebrated.



On December 25th, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ or **Christmas**. Christmas traditions vary by culture, but most include decorating evergreen trees and Santa Claus bringing gifts to children who were good during the year.



Kwanzaa, meaning "first fruits," is an African-American cultural festival beginning on December 26 and ending on January 1. Dr. Karenga established the holiday in 1966 to facilitate African-American goals of building a strong family, learning about African-American history, and developing unity.

Whatever holiday you celebrate, it is our wish that you have a joyous one, filled with family, friends, and love.



Green Tips for the Holidays

Did you know that Americans throw out **a million extra tons** of garbage each week between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day? The National Geographic News has a few tips to make our holidays more eco friendly and less wasteful.



Recycle your holiday gift wrap, or give gifts that need no wrapping – i.e. tickets to a baseball game, a homemade meal – These seem to be gifts that are most memorable anyway!



Consider a one-time purchase of a fake fir tree. Even though they do use a significant amount of energy to produce, it is the lesser of two evils when considering the amount of fuel it takes to run the large trucks to the tree farms.





If you absolutely love the smell of a fir tree in your home, then recycle your tree after Christmas is over. For recycling information, visit <http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/treerecycling.html>.



Using LED lights as opposed to traditional holiday lights is a major energy saver. Not only are these new LED lights brighter than traditional lights, but they are 90% more efficient and last much longer. You can purchase LED's anywhere regular lights are sold.

We Appreciate Your Referrals!

Did you know I can help you or any of your friends, family or acquaintances save time and money when buying or selling a home **ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD?**   sells more real estate than any other company, and we have over **100,000** agents worldwide – resources and experience we can make available to YOU! Thanks for keeping me in mind with your referrals...and spreading the word!



Did you know that a full refrigerator uses less electricity? If you can't fill your fridge with groceries, put gallon jugs of water inside to fill.

Send in your GREEN TIPS, and if I publish yours, you'll win a gift certificate to Ruggle's Green!



Riddle Answer:
A snowman

Name that Tune Answers

1. Silent Night
2. We Three Kings
3. Carol of the Bells
4. You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch

THANK YOU for reading my Service For Life![®] newsletter. I wanted to produce a newsletter that has great content and is fun and valuable to you. Your constructive feedback is always welcome.



Outstanding Agents.
Outstanding Results.

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Who Wants To Win a \$25 Gift Card to Subway?



Congratulations to Clay Colvin, Elizabeth Eikenburg and Kristi McClellan, winners of last month's trivia question.



The Native Americans who were invited to the first Thanksgiving were of the Wampanoag Tribe. Who was their chief?

- a) Massasoit b) Pemaquid c) Samoset d) Squanto

The answer is letter "A," Massasoit. And now, for this month's trivia question.

In the Ukraine, if you find a spider web in the house on Christmas Morning, what does this mean?



- a) A relative will marry soon b) Bad luck c) Unusually cold winter
d) Your house is messy e) Good luck

The first 4 people to text me with the correct answer will win! 713-302-6543

Real Estate Corner...

Q. We're planning to move to Seattle in a few months and really don't know the city very well. How should we go about finding the right area and home?



A. When moving to a new city, it's often difficult to know your ideal area to live. Many personal factors contribute to the "right" home or neighborhood. They include schools, housing costs, home styles, population density, crime rates, convenience of location to your workplace, recreation, and more.

If you are completely unfamiliar with the city, you may want to consider finding a short-term rental so that you can learn the city prior to making a home purchase. But if you would prefer to purchase, the first step is to start with the big picture. Some families like to live in rural areas, whereas others like the city. Don't forget to consider proximity to your work. Once you have decided what is important in your surroundings, you can contact local school districts for information about schools, libraries, recreation, and local law enforcement agencies for crime rates. This will help narrow the general parameters of your ideal area to live.

You also can research specific cities or neighborhoods at www.realtor.com. The site will help you search for a neighborhood similar in characteristics to your current neighborhood, or search by specific criteria such as home pricing and specific features or styles of homes.

It's also a good idea to spend time in areas that interest you and see where you feel most "at home." Talking to long-time residents of the city where you are moving is always helpful. They usually have insights about housing style, amenities, schools, and other factors.

And of course, a Realtor familiar with the city can be an invaluable resource. Realtors experienced with "relocations" are accustomed to working with buyers who are new to their city. I am a member of the vast worldwide RE/MAX network as well as the Employee Relocation Council, and I routinely provide names of experienced agents in other cities whenever someone is buying or selling outside Houston. If you or anyone you know would like a referral for an agent **anywhere in the world**, please call me at 713-302-6543.

Get Free money-saving home tips at my web site: www.NoPlaceLikeHouston.com