

HouseCALLS

YOUR GUIDE TO GREATER WASHINGTON LIVING

Revealed!
10 STEPS TO A
30
YEAR VACATION

ARTICLES INCLUDE:

**Winter Wonders In
Greater Washington**

**Sell Now Or Sell
IN SPRING?**

**Four money saving
WINTER HOME
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Dearest Reader,

This year is another awesome year for Exterior Medics thanks to the overwhelming and continued support of homeowners like you here in Greater Washington!

What started as a simple vision between two men who had a passion for home improvement and customer service, evolved into today's Exterior Medics -- Greater Washington's best roofing contractor and exterior home improvement company, winning Angie's List Super Service Award in multiple categories for 5 consecutive years to date, receiving Guildmaster's prestigious outstanding service and customer support award, becoming NARI's contractor of the year and being recognized as one of the nation's Big50 remodeling companies this year.

With your support and our passion for service and commitment to your home, Exterior Medics has received a number of industry accolades and grew significantly in a short period of time.

We owe our success to you, and we are deeply honored and thankful for welcoming Exterior Medics into your home.

None of these achievements would be possible without the incredible loyalty of

customers, exemplary service of our hardworking employees who are always willing to go the extra mile to learn, quality products and support from our wonderful dealers, and of course, lots of love and support from our family and friends. You are the reason for our success and we'd like to express our deep gratitude to you for helping us get to where we are now, and joining us in our future endeavors.

As a token of our appreciation and commitment to you and the Greater Washington community that has nurtured us, we are proud to give back and shine a light on the amazing people, places, homes, and culture our community has to offer!

House Calls was created especially for you! We hope you find inspiration and pride on every page!

Many thanks to everyone who made this publication possible! We hope you enjoy reading House Calls!

Thanks!

Mark Watson and Joe Levecchi
Founders/Owners
Exterior Medics





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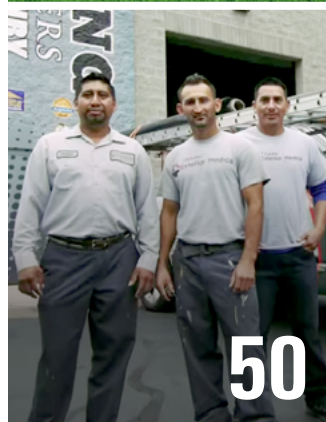
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How a mother's love is fueling compassion for our troops



Winter Wonders

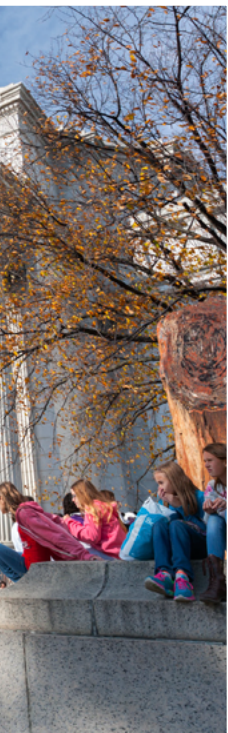
IN THE GREATER WASHINGTON AREA



Winter packed a powerful punch in 2014, slamming the Greater Washington area with 13 accumulating snow events, well above average for the region. This year, predictions point to much of the same as above-normal snow falls and colder-than-usual temperatures are expected to blanket the region in late January. But a metropolis as stoic and vibrant as the Capital City doesn't slow down for the winter months. Whether you live in the Greater Washington area or plan to visit, here are 4 wintertime activities you won't want to miss:

Museums

The Greater Washington area is home to an impressive collection of museums. In Washington D.C., visit the National Museum of Natural History, the National Air and Space Museum, The National Museum of American History, The Bureau of Engraving and Printing and more. For kids of all ages, the International Spy Museum in Washington will undoubtedly deliver hours of entertainment. In Virginia, bundle up and tour George Washington's 500-acre estate and 14-bedroom mansion; a spectacular winter-scene. Maryland residents and visitors can escape the cold by visiting the College Park Aviation Museum or Glen Echo Park, a rich arts and humanities center.



Outdoor Ice Skating

Collectively, Washington and its Northern Virginia/Southern Maryland suburbs play host to eight beautiful and diverse outdoor ice skating rinks. The Sculpture Garden ice rink sits on the National Mall, surrounded by majestic national museums and monuments. Washington Harbor is home to Washington's largest outdoor ice rink, an 11,800 square foot venue that out-sizes even New York City's Rockefeller Center rink. Tyson Corner Ice Rink is the center of Northern Virginia's Winterfest, which remains open until mid March.





INDOOR PLAYGROUNDS AND AMUSEMENT

When temperatures become too cold for comfort, take the kids to visit one of the 18+ indoor amusement centers and playgrounds in the Greater Washington area. Adventure Park USA in Maryland offers indoor attractions like laser tag, a high-ropes course, bumper cars and more. Virginia's Alexandria Coliseum showcases a soccer themed moon bounce, a 22-foot tall slide and a two-story cross-over obstacle course. Children as young as 9 months or as old as 14 years will love the imaginative play inspired by Children's Playseum in Washington D.C. and Maryland.

Winter Wonders

CENTERS



Winter Events

The Greater Washington area also sponsors several winter-friendly events and festivals, including numerous shows at the Washington Convention Center, commemorative celebrations and rallies at various sites in Washington D.C., and this year, a special 150th anniversary programming that will be held January through May at the Ford Theatre to honor the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.



Winter Wonders



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Congratulations

*We congratulate exterior medics on the launch
of their new magazine and wish them many
more years of continued success.*



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A Holiday-Inspired Home Assessment:



How Well Did Your Home Perform?

There's nothing like hosting a holiday event with friends and family to suddenly bring out every spacial flaw in your home's layout. Many houses surrounding the Northern Virginia/Washington, D.C. area date back to the 1940's and 50's. They are beautiful and unique, well constructed and historic, but they aren't necessarily designed to meet the demands of a modern-day family.

In some cases, we realize our home's idiosyncrasies and without thinking, adapt to work around them. In other instances, it takes some chaos like a holiday gathering to shed light on inefficiencies. Curious whether there's room for improvement within your own home? Here's a hint — if you or your guests had to turn sideways to get around one another, your home's layout may not be working to your advantage. Here are six of the most common home hang-ups and tips on how you can fix them to prepare for a less cramped holiday gathering next year.

1. Kitchen Choke-Points

Kitchens (especially in older homes) frequently present what we call choke-points, or area that hinder the flow of traffic. As the kitchen's cook, these choke-points can be frustrating to work around and may even create dangerous situations during the transport of molten-hot foods. The two most troubling kitchen choke-points include the doorway and the working triangle.

Doorways are notorious for attracting guests, who lean against the already-too-small door frame to spend time with the cook. Without realizing, they are simultaneously blocking all other traffic from entering or exiting the kitchen. The cook's flow within the working triangle (space between the cooktop, sink and refrigerator) also gets clogged every time Uncle Jack enters to grab a 'cold one' from the fridge.



The Fix:

Consider removing the wall between your kitchen and dining room to open the floor plan and alleviate congestion. You may also want to install a kitchen peninsula or island, which will shift the working triangle away from the refrigerator. Without the confines of an encroaching wall and with a more thoughtful work-zone layout, guests will have enough room to stand in the kitchen or access the refrigerator without blocking passage or disrupting the cook's mojo.



2. Crammed Dining Room

The dining room is another space modern families have outgrown. Like a game of dining room furniture Tetris, we arrange folding card tables, leaves and an eclectic collection of chairs — determined to squeeze everyone in. But instead of a cozy, intimate meal, what your guests actually experience is something comparable to a holiday sardine tin. The seating arrangement doesn't leave enough elbow room and makes serving hot food mission impossible.

The Fix:

This dilemma comes down to size. If you've got too many people sitting in too small a space, you must expand. However, dining room expansions must be approached with care. Removing a wall can simultaneously eliminate necessary separation between the dining room and adjoining rooms, jeopardize the intimacy of the space. Consider also adding a modulated ceiling to dissimilate the dining room from other areas. A floor rug and proper lighting may also help distinguish the look and feel of a formal dining room from other, more casual rooms.

3. First-Floor Hallways

First-floor hallways in older homes are already architecturally constricted. Pile in countless shoes, winter jackets and snow apparel and suddenly, there's barely enough room for one person to pass through. Lighting is also problematic in these spaces, requiring that your guests squint and fumble to rediscover their belongings upon leaving.

The Fix:

To prevent someone walking off with the wrong pair of shoes, consider removing a wall and using a book case to divide the hallway from an adjoining room. Pillars are also an excellent way to expand hallway space while maintaining separation. In addition to creating more space, you'll brighten the area by enabling it to share light from adjoining rooms.

4. Non-Existent First Floor Bathroom

In older homes, it's not uncommon for there to be only one bathroom. This lone lavatory is typically located on the second floor, which means guests must journey into uncharted territory to use it and if stairs are involved, this situation may not be ideal for all. Being limited to one bathroom also creates a unique challenge for overnight guests, as they may need to compete with multiple people for a turn in the coveted water closet.



The Fix:

Install a first floor bathroom, but take heed! First floor bathrooms should be somewhat tucked away to provide ample privacy for users. Find a location away from the kitchen or dining room with accessible plumbing. Don't be afraid to get creative with the space to make it memorable. A first floor bathroom will deliver greater convenience for your guests and will enable you to keep certain areas of your home private, like upstairs bedrooms. The addition of a restroom will also increase your home's resale value, making it a wise investment.



5. No Entryway

Homes that lack a proper entryway create an awkward entrance for guests as they are immediately thrown into the middle of a social situation without time or space to unsheathe and set down the items they've brought. Furthermore, it can be stressful for the host if inclement weather means guests accidentally track muddy shoes throughout the family room.



The Fix:

Create a mudroom or designated entryway space. Doing so can be tricky because of zoning restrictions and homeowners should do their research before plotting any construction projects. That being said, the easiest way to resolve awkward and messy entrances is to create an extension to the front of the house or carve out a welcoming area from existing space. Mud rooms are invaluable when hosting a holiday event but also come in handy for every-day living, providing storage space for shoes, coats, sporting equipment, cleaning supplies and more.

If you need help brainstorming improvement ideas for your home, look online. Resources like [houzz.com](https://www.houzz.com) will offer a variety of ideas on how to redesign and reinvent clustered spaces. You may also want to consider hiring an interior designer; someone with practiced experience using creative organization to capitalize on space. When the time comes, work with a licensed, professional home improvement contractor like TriVista. The right contractor will have the expertise and creative genius to resolve flow issues within your home via a customized approach. Furthermore, we handle design, logistics and implementation with certified proficiency to deliver aesthetics and function that will transform your everyday living.

Michael owns and operates TriVista, an award-winning design and build company, with his wife, Deborah. Before launching his family owned business, Michael was a professional guitarist. The love he and his wife share for art and the environment heavily influences how they develop and create ideas for their client's home improvement projects. When Michael and Deborah aren't hard at work, they can be found spending time with their children, rock climbing, hiking and visiting area museums.

Michael Sauri TriVista





Sell NOW ^{-or-} Sell IN SPRING ?

The Real Estate market changes year to year, even month to month. Here's sound advice from a one of Greater Washington's top realtor.

The weather has turned colder. At this time of year, we often get the question, "I want to sell my home, but should I wait to go on the market until after the winter?" or "My home is on the market now, should I take it off during the winter?" This is a question I get every year at this time. This year, it seems to be coming up more than usual. With many sellers downsizing and a slower market, it appears that sellers are trying to figure out whether to put their house on the market this Fall, or will the market be better next Spring. It's taken a few years, but sellers do understand that the prices of the mid-2000's are gone and they aren't coming back any time soon. But like anyone, if waiting until the Spring will get them more money, obviously the choice would be to wait. There are many factors that need to be looked at to answer that question effectively.

It is true, that during the Fall there are fewer sales than during the Spring market. However, it is also a fact, that there are fewer homes on the market. Apparently, 30% less homes on the market, so with the lower competition it would be easier for buyers to find your home.

Now, the fact of the matter is there are typically fewer sales during the Fall but once the Spring season gets in high gear, there is also 30% more sales in the Spring. So, it is pretty much a wash.

The Fall market inventory is made up of a lot of homes that, for one reason or another, did not sell during the previous Spring and Summer market. Thus, a nice house or what I call a "perfect home", can sometimes have a better chance of selling in the Fall than in the Spring market when there is a lot more competition; the fact is homes sell each market. But what if your home is currently on the market? Most of the time, it is best to keep it on and not take it off. I always say if you're not on the market, you may just miss that perfect buyer. Also, even as the traffic is lower the people that are looking at this time of the year are more serious. You get less, but better traffic. Let's think about it; buyers who are braving the elements and interrupting their commitments to view houses are serious about finding their next home. Winter house hunters usually fall into two camps: they either plain old need a place to live, fast, or they need to close on their new home by year's end for tax reasons. Today's

buyers seem to have an almost stunning lack of urgency, so by having your home on the market over the winter, you can try to capitalize on the urgency of this season's tax-buyers. So the old adage that "it won't sell if it is not on the market", works well.

There are exceptions to this. If your home backs to a large road and/or when the leaves come off the trees, it accents a negative, well then maybe you are better off waiting until the leaves grow on trees again. Then there

FACT **30%↓**
homes on the market
during the winter

are people whose plans change and they do not need to move for some time. You should always do what works best for you and your family.

Contrary to popular opinion, the housing market does not come to a grinding halt during the final quarter of the year, this can be some of the best quarters of the year. With Summer relegated to memories and photos, and another year dawning, many sellers begin to wonder if it is time to make the move to the next phase of their housing life whether it be buying smaller, building, upgrading and staying local or making a move to a new locale such as job transfers, children leaving home, and changes in financial situations do not vanish during the final month of the year either. Lucky for sellers, there are always buyers with housing needs at this time of year.

So, with all that said, selling during the winter months can be rewarding. Smart sellers approach it knowing it won't always be great. Go in with realistic expectations. Some buyer is

highly likely to track rain, mud or snow into your house, at some point. This may be your reason to wait. Avoid the irritation by expecting these issues and chalking them up as par for the course. It might not hurt to invest in a hand-held carpet cleaner, either! Expectation + preparation= elimination of irritation.

Today's real estate buyer is a shopper and has in mind exactly what they are looking for in a home. Therefore, if your home meets the home of their expectations, you have a sale. So what better way can you create the perfect home than by making it feel warm and "homey" with winter decorating.

Buyers want a good value. A good value to a buyer means that they will be firm negotiators and will try to get more bang for their buck. Buyers are known to ask for the moon, but when they love something they will pay a fair price also. Most buyers in today's market just don't have the money or the time to shell out in making major repairs or tackling huge remodeling projects. They want a house to be move-in-ready and in superior condition. So if this is your home, you have what they want.

Knowing that buyers are picky, you need to make sure a buyer can envision themselves in your home. This is getting to the next issue in selling during the winter. And no, you are not too late. Here are some tips for showing and selling your home during the season of peace, love and joyous overeating!



I know during the winter you have many things to do, but there is no faster way to lose a potential buyer than to make it difficult for their agent to schedule a showing for your home. Sellers seem to forget that most often, buyer's brokers are scheduling multiple properties to be shown in a couple of hours of showings. Since Washington DC is an international city, many of our buyers are from many parts of the world and/or from many different cultures and with that have different days for winter than yours. If the other homes for sale in your area and price range are easy to show, and yours is not, you risk the fact that they will just write yours off and never show it.

This gets us to decorating for each winter. Well, I say, "bring it on"! There is nothing more heart warming than a happy home dressed for the winter. Some agents would say that you should not decorate your home at all and continue to keep it as neutral as possible. The fear is that you would turn off potential buyers due to their preconceived notions about your celebratory traditions. I believe that decorating a home during the winter makes a home feel warm and inviting, so although you do not want to offend anyone, I truly believe that as long as you follow a few simple rules that most people will like the "feel" of a happy, festive home and that it will only help.

You need to capitalize on the spirit of the winter season. People are thinking family, friends and entertaining! Create this life style element in your home. Show people that your home works well for entertaining. Keep it tasteful. Remember less is more here and I do not recommend plastic inflatables or other commercial decorations. They make the home appear cluttered and cheap. Think elegance, simplicity and hospitality and you won't go wrong. Over-the-top decorations distract buyers from the task at hand; buying your home. A few small arrangements strategically placed in your home will add a tasteful elegance and add to the desirability instead of detracting from it.

A Real Estate expert who knows the market well can give you personally-tailored advice for selling your home.

Remember, Experience Is Everything!

Maybe the most important is to engage in safe, sensory staging. Winter food smells like spiced cider, pumpkin pie, baked apples and cinnamon and that is about as universally comforting as smells can get. It certainly wouldn't hurt to do some sensory staging to create a sense of comfort and cheer. Also, remember that dreary winter weather can make even the loveliest house take on a gray cast; counter act this by making sure your home is well-lit and heated. One thing, if your winter home is a candle-lit home, make sure you leave no candles burning if you clear your family out for a showing.

For being someone who has been in home sales for a long time, one thing that bothers me, is if you're going to be open for business,

you need to think of your home as the product; it needs to be accessible to be able to sell it. I see homes, mostly vacant, that weeks after a snowfall you still can't get to the house. You must remember to remove snow and ice from the driveway and all walkways. Keep them neatly shoveled and sanded.

Perhaps this seems too obvious to mention, but EVERY winter we see it! If buyers can't safely enter your house, you've lost the sale and if someone slips on ice and gets hurt, you could have a lawsuit on your hands. If your home is vacant, I feel that this is the agent's job to help you arrange having this important job done by someone



else. I have someone on staff that helps our clients. Be sure to also remove snow and ice from patios and decks. These are important selling features that you don't want overlooked simply because they're typically not used in the winter.

Many parts of the home are hard to showcase in its best light during the winter months. Things like pools, hot tub, or the garden. Now, this is not as good as the real thing and may be a reason to hold off until Spring, but there are things you can do like, displaying an attractive photo album with pictures of how beautiful the flowers look in your yard in the Spring; the clean and refreshing water in the pool during the summer; the vibrant colors of the trees in the fall. (Be sure to keep the photos of the scenery and not so much of your family.)

So I think that is about as much as needs to be said about selling for this year. You need to make up your mind about what is best for your home and your family. If you are the kind that just doesn't want to deal with buyers' muddy feet and scheduling intrusion while they are at home on vacation or hosting dinners or guests,

then maybe for you the wait is best. Whatever you decide, when the time comes to put your house on the market make sure you hire a very good agent. Because in the long run, a good agent will help you get more money with less hassles.

The Real Estate market changes year to year, even month to month, and you need good sound advice from a top professional. Your best bet for making the most money in the shortest period of time, regardless of the current market, is by having a Top Professional who knows the market and can give you personally-tailored advice work for you. ***Remember, Experience Is Everything!***



For Bob Dane and his wife, Linda Wilkens, choosing to rehab their 2,000 sq ft Dutch Colonial home was an emotionally charged and necessary decision. Decades of exposure to Virginia weather had begun wearing on the home's exterior. The couple knew in order to maintain its value and integrity, they would have to renovate, risking many of the exterior characteristics they'd grown to love. It was an intimidating endeavor.



TOTAL EXTERIOR RENOVATIONS:

A FAMILY'S MISSION TO PRESERVE AN HEIRLOOM

Located in a cozy enclave just outside Washington D.C., Bob and Linda live in the only timber-framed home in the Alexandria region. A unique testament to the area's vibrant 18th and 19th century architecture, their home is constructed of large, exposed wood beams, resplendent gables and rustic cedar roofing and siding— a style highly unusual for the mid-atlantic territory. As a native of Maine, Linda was immediately drawn to its northeastern allure, which prompted the couple to move into the home nearly 20 years ago.

Bob and Linda considered replacing the cedar siding and shingles with other materials that would be durable and function, but could not be swayed from their fondness for its original architecture.



“ It has the charm and the comfort of a Maine timber framed home.” Said Bob. “We wanted to preserve that look and feel.”

Western Red Cedar was the perfect compromise; hardwearing and utilitarian, yet naturally beautiful and rustic in appearance. With a definitive direction in mind, the two began their search for a qualified contractor. What happened next was a surprise to them both.

Bob and Linda are hands-on, do-it-yourselfers. They performed their own due diligence on cedar products and installation best practices and knew exactly what they were looking for in a contractor.

Both were shocked to find that their high standards could not be met by many of the contractors they spoke with.

They searched top national help sites like Angie’s List, acquired leads by word of mouth and even called Western Red Cedar manufacturers for recommendations. The couple investigated a dozen different contractors and ran into the same dilemma.

Because Western Red Cedar is uncommon in the area, almost all the contractors they spoke with were either unfamiliar with it or unwilling to work with it given their low level of expertise with the product.

After months of searching, Bob and Linda found Exterior Medics.

As the couple discussed their vision for the project, Exterior Medics appeared to be undaunted and highly competent in cedar products. The company was also affiliated with several reputable home improvement associations, a qualifier that stood out to Bob and Linda. But the deciding factor to hire Exterior Medics surprisingly resulted from something, or rather, someone Bob and Linda hadn’t anticipated.





Mark Watson, Co-owner of Exterior Medics, personally met with the couple to discuss the home renovation and from the instant the couple met him, they felt their confidence in the success of the project begin to climb.

“Mark had respect for our vision,” explained Bob. “He seemed to take a personal interest and he had an inexhaustible level of patience for the endless amount of questions we had.”

After several meetings in which, Bob and Linda became familiar with the team of people that would lead their renovation, they decided to move forward with the installation of Western Red Cedar siding and

shingles. They also decided to install a new gutter system, new windows and skylights.

As Bob and Linda prepared for the nearly \$90,000 undertaking, so did the Exterior Medics team. The contractors studied for months in advance, brushing up on cedar woodworking to close any informational gaps. By the time they were ready to put hammer to nail, they knew as much information about cedar application as possible to guarantee expert craftsmanship.

“Exterior Medics understood our emotional attachment to this house,” said Bob. “From the very beginning, they understood that this was a home, not just a project.”

Renovations launched in January of 2014. Despite freezing temperatures, snow, wind and ice, the crew remained steadfast to their mission, revitalizing the Dane-Wilkens residence while preserving the charm and beauty of its original form.

Three days into the project, the couple was congratulating themselves and high fiving each other on a decision well made.

Boris Cardenas was the production manager assigned to supervise and oversee all elements of the project. Bob described Boris as highly professional but more importantly, the couple's psychologist and official hand-holder throughout the process. The couple knew that challenges were inevitable. What they didn't know was how impeccable Exterior Medics would be at resolving them — always within a 24-hour time frame and always without skipping a beat.

The home's multiple gables posed a unique challenge for the crew, requiring time consuming mathematical craftsmanship to fit siding around the corners of each. Bob described it as "old world craftsmanship" and marveled at how the workers measured complex angles against the house. But what impressed the couple most was a particular incident involving the delivery of their new windows. After much anticipation, the distributor sent the wrong color. Without hesitation, Mark assured Bob and Linda it wouldn't be a problem and shortly thereafter, the correct windows arrived.

"To this day, I see the devil is in the detail," said Bob as he described a sort of recreational challenge wherein, he tries to find a flaw in Exterior Medics' craftsmanship. "I can find none on the house, inside or outside — completely flawless. They exceeded my expectation for the project, the perfection and the craftsmanship by a factor of 100-percent. "

Bob can't speak highly enough about his experience working with Exterior Medics. The couple developed a deep respect for the company's professionalism and an affection for everyone involved.

"There is something special — very genuine, that sets them apart from virtually any other company." He said in closing. "They have a bedside manner that i've never seen before in the professional trades."

The project was completed in April of 2014 and both Bob and Linda agree, had they known the process would have been as smooth as it was, they would have renovated years ago.

"There is something special — very genuine, that sets them apart from virtually any other company."



4 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR TAX SEAS

Tax season is notoriously stressful and made worse by the growing complexity of the filing process. Most homeowners realize there are a number of credits and deductions available to them but aren't sure where to begin. Tax programs like TurboTax or TaxACT undisputedly simplify self-filing. However, there is no substitute for the expertise of a professional accountant. CPAs quickly identify the most beneficial credits and deductions on your behalf and dramatically reduce your risk of misfiling. Regardless of which filing approach you take, here are 4 things you can do to prepare for tax season this year:

1 Complete Form 1098

If you paid interest on a mortgage less than \$1 million in 2014, your lender will send you a Form 1098, which allows you to deduct 100-percent of your mortgage interest and property taxes. This deduction works across multiple loans but should not be claimed on home equity loans that were not used to improve the property.



2 Apply The Residential Energy Efficient Property Credit

If you made specific energy-efficient home improvements in 2014, you are eligible for the Residential Energy Efficient Property Credit, worth up to 30-percent of the total cost of the upgrades. Qualifying energy-efficient home improvements include solar water heaters or panels, geothermal heat pumps, small wind turbines and fuel cells. To file this claim, retain the manufacturers credit certification statement, which can be found on their website or with the product's packaging and complete Form 5695.

3 Take Advantage of the Nonbusiness Energy Property Credit Extension

The Nonbusiness Energy Property Credit provides a 10-percent reimbursement for qualified energy-efficient updates (up to \$500), including energy saving doors, windows, insulation, roofing, furnaces, air conditioners and more. The tax credit was set to expire on December 31, 2013. However, an extension was granted through December 31, 2014, making the credit available to homeowners for the 2014 tax year. To file this claim, retain the manufacturers credit certification statement, which can be found on their website or with the product's packaging and complete Form 5695.

ON



4

Consider Deducting Your Home Office

To qualify for home office deductions, your home office must be separate from the rest of the home and used exclusively for business on a regular basis. There are two types of deductibles related to your home office claim. One enables you to write off 100-percent of costs associated with your home office, including office supplies, equipment and the cost of maintaining the space. The second is more indirect, covering pro-rated expenses based on the size of your office compared to

the total area of your home. These deductions may include property insurance, mortgage, home alarm systems and utility bills. However, homeowners beware; mistakes made on this claim are infamous for attracting the attention of tax authorities and may elicit an audit if done incorrectly. Working with a qualified CPA will help you avoid such issues.

Written by:
Dawn McGruder



3 HOME MAINTENANCE MUSTS

WHY YOU NEED THEM, HOW TO DO
THEM AND WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR



NANCE

*With
Mark
Watson*

HOME MAINTENANCE —

an umbrella term that encompasses a list of chores specially reserved for and popularly avoided by homeowners. That is, until an issue creates enough of an inconvenience or threat to suddenly warrant priority. The problem is, the longer issues go addressed, the larger they become and sometimes, “I’ll do it later” is too late.

There are numerous reasons why homeowners neglect routine home maintenance. They may not realize an issue exists, or they may not know how to approach the task. Sometimes, required maintenance is in a hard to reach or dangerous area and homeowners avoid the risk. But none of these exonerations will prevent small issues from escalating into big problems.

OVERCOME HOME MAINTENANCE HANG-UPS, WITH A QUICK GUIDE ON THESE THREE COMMONLY MISSED CHORES.

WINDOWS

Caulking Windows

Why: Cracks in the sealant or framing around your windows will contribute to hot or cold air penetration/loss and water damage, resulting in rotting wood. Inspect and caulk your windows to properly protect interior comfort from exterior elements.

Tips: Do not use oil-based sealants; they dry and crack. Instead, select a sealant with elasticity, such as a silicone-base sealant. These sealants expand and contract as temperatures rise and fall, providing lasting protection. Use a caulking gun (it makes a big difference), remove any old, loose, deteriorating sealant before applying new product and don't caulk over weep holes (holes that are purposefully placed in the window to allow drainage).

Warning: If caulking your windows requires a ladder, follow OSHA guidelines, do not extend your reach beyond arms length and if possible, use a ladder brace.



Cleaning Gutters

Why: There's good reason why every single home in existence is equipped with a gutter system — they are imperative to preventing water damage. Clogged gutters attract pests like nesting birds or squirrels but more importantly, they fail to navigate water away from the walls and foundation of your home. Especially after ice and snow build-up from winter starts to melt, this can create serious drainage issues.

Tips: Inspect and clean gutters at the start of each season. Bring a construction-grade trash bag up the ladder with you for cleanup. Regular kitchen bags are not durable enough to withstand sticks, twigs and saturated litter.

Warning: We recommend that homeowners wear gloves to protect their hands from getting cut or punctured by twigs and sticks; however, most homeowners are more concerned about working from a ladder. OSHA has stable ladder guidelines to help educate you on best practices. In addition, never reach beyond your arm length and instead, climb down from the ladder and move it along with you as you work. Do not step above the gutter line and if possible, use a ladder brace for added stability.



GUTTERS

Painting Trim

Why: Many people view painting as an endeavor for aesthetic appeal only, but when it comes to trim, paint also acts as an important protectant against moisture, keeping water out and preventing the wood from rotting. If your trim is without paint or peeling, apply a new coat.

Tips: Before applying new paint, scrape off any old paint with a stiff putty knife and clean the trim with a specialized cleaning formula or mild dish-washing soap and water. Note: you should not paint the trim the same day you clean it — the wood will require several days to dry.

When you're ready to paint, be sure to use the correct brush type size and style. We recommend a 1- to 2-inch

wide chisel, square or angled brush, depending on what type of trim you're painting. A chisel trim brush is ideal for painting corners and edges, a square trim brush provides the best coverage to flat surfaces and an angled brush makes painting window trim easier. As for style, we suggest angle sash or trim bristles, which are specifically designed for trim painting.

Stabilize all equipment before you begin and use a primer on bare wood. Painting is best done in temperatures above 40-degrees and the surface must be entirely dry. Lastly, take your time. A quick paint job will create a bigger mess to clean and may not yield the best results.



Warning: As charitable sponsors of Lead Safe America, we are strongly committed to educating others on the dangers of lead-based products. **Exposure to lead can cause the following:**

SYMPTOMS

- Behavior and learning problems
- Brain and nervous system damage
- Liver and kidney damage
- Poor muscle coordination
- High blood pressure
- Nerve damage

To protect yourself and your family from lead poisoning, follow these steps:

- Maintain a clean, dust-free home
- Regularly clear away debris from outlet screens or faucet aerators
- Frequently wash your children's hands, toys, bottles, etc

Visit www.leadsafeamerica.org for a free lead test kit. Call an EAP certified contractor to have your home professionally inspected.



Bedford, England-born and travel bug Mark Watson, is the co-owner of Exterior Medics. Mark has lived all over the world -- from Norway to Mississippi and even Hawaii -- prior to settling down with the love of his life, Mandy. Together, the couple calls Northern Virginia home along with their two lovely daughters, Cara and Evelyn Watson. Outside of his passion for home improvement, you'll catch Mark enjoying a glass of scotch and handmade cigars while loyally rooting for the Redskins with his friends and listening to David Gray's haunting tunes.

Mark Watson
Co-owner Exterior Medics





TURNING TRAGEDY INTO SERVICE

How A Mother's Love Is Fueling Compassion For Our Troops

When Vanessa Adelson, a Virginia mother of four, lost her 21-year-old son, Stephan in the Iraqi War, she realized she had a choice in how his death would redefine her life. She could lay his tale to rest alongside his headstone at Section 60 of the Arlington National Cemetery, or she could immortalize his bravery and influence greater support for American troops by sharing with others the story of that fateful day. A story so laden with tragedy and valor, it inspired a critically acclaimed novel entitled, “The Outpost” by White House Correspondent, Jake Tapper.

“If people like me are silent, then who else will speak?”

-Vanessa Adelson

Since Stephan's death, Vanessa has helped numerous soldiers and veterans during and after their tours of duty, but even more remarkable than her ability to turn personal tragedy into public service is her influence for garnering support for the troops by talking about Stephan, his bravery in service and his final hours.

Stephan Mace of Leesburg, Virginia was a Specialist in the Army. He deployed in May of 2009 to Combat Outpost Keating in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Keating was a small base just 11 kilometers from the Pakistan border — in the heart of the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. The outpost, manned by 53 soldiers, was highly reclusive and heavily surrounded by Taliban. American

soldiers were subject to daily incoming hostile fire and Stephan was well aware of the inherent risks.

Vanessa recalled the last time Stephan was home during a Rest and Reprieve visit in August.

“He hung out with a bunch of his high school buddies,” she recounted. “He told all of them that he did not think he would come home alive.”

On October 3, 2009 at around 5:30 AM, Keating was attacked. Despite being off duty, Stephan raced into combat to help five of his fellow soldiers, who were trapped under heavy fire in a humvee. Stephan was hit multiple times by an RPG and machine gun fire. Staff Sergeant Ty



Picture of COP Keating, where the battle took place. The picture is taken on high ground where the Taliban attacked from.

Carter, who was later awarded the Medal of Honor, retrieved Stephan from the line of fire. Through heroic efforts, Stephan was brought back to the outpost's aid station, where Captain Christopher Cordova administered extensive medical aid, including five blood transfusions.

Stephan regained consciousness while awaiting a helicopter, which would take him to Forward Operating Base Bostick for further treatment.

“He had so many wounds no one around him could explain how he remained alive for as long as he did,” said Vanessa.

Despite the incredible efforts of the men and women who worked hard to save Stephan, his wounds proved to be too severe. Stephan passed away during surgery at Base Bostick. He was one of eight soldiers who gave their lives that day. Twenty-seven other brave soldiers suffered injuries from the attack.

“It was 8:00 in the morning on Sunday, October the 11th. I went up to Dover Air Force Base and I escorted my son’s body back to Leesburg because I thought it was my job... I brought him into this world and I was his mother...I thought I needed to bring him back.”

Vanessa fondly remembered the small airport in Leesburg being packed with thousands of people from surrounding towns who had come to show their respect.

Over 700 people attended Stephan’s funeral and the outpour of support from the community was unexpected and deeply heart-felt.

“It was natural for me as soon as this happened, that I needed to start taking care of the soldiers he was with.”

Although she received dependency and indemnity compensation from the government, it felt like blood money to a mother who lost a most beloved son. It felt wrong to Vanessa and she refused to spend it for herself.

“I was always very involved in my children’s lives. Stephan knew that first of all, I would look out for him, but also his friends. It was natural for me as soon as this happened, that I needed to start taking care of the soldiers that he was with.”

Vanessa reached out to Stephan’s unit (still deployed) via Facebook and used the compensation to purchase and send supplies to them until they returned home.

Veronica Rodriguez of Exterior Medics, was familiar with Vanessa’s outreach efforts because her brother, Daniel Rodriguez, served alongside Stephan

at Keating. She wanted to contribute to the cause and spoke to her employers about setting up a volunteer project. She reached out to Vanessa, and together, the group decided to start a tradition of assembling care packages for the troops.

Joe LeVecchi and Mark Watson, owners of Exterior Medics, were already invested in efforts to support US troops. The company actively participates in Wreaths Across America, an annual charity that raises money to place holiday wreaths on the graves of those laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. The company also honors a five-percent military discount on all services.

“Regardless of how my day is going, the highlight is always when I can make someone else smile.”

Stephan Maze





Memorial for the 8 soldiers killed at COP Keating. Took place at FOB Bostick, where Stephan died during surgery.

The company helped fund supplies for the care packages and donated their warehouse space to host the assembly. On a cold day in November of 2014, more than 20 volunteers, including Vanessa and her youngest son, Christopher (who also served in the Iraqi War) gathered and put together nearly 50 care packages that were sent to soldiers in the Middle East.

“It was a very proud moment.”
Recalled Vanessa.

Vanessa continues to share her son’s story, frequently speaking in organizations like the Permission To Start Dreaming Foundation, which funds drug-free programs to help veterans suffering from Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She believes America has become too disconnected from the war in Iraq. “The reason I feel it’s so important to tell my son’s story is because... I grew up in the Vietnam era, when you would turn on the news, that’s all they would talk about -- what was going on in the war, what was happening to these soldiers. We’ve cleaned up everything so much in today’s media that I don’t think people really understand the struggles these men go through anymore.”

She explained that only one-percent of the US population serves in the military and feels it is our patriotic duty to take care of this elite group

of volunteers, both during and after their service.

“Our soldiers are not Republicans. They are not Democrats. They are soldiers... These guys believe in one thing and that one thing is to protect this country.”

Exterior Medics will host another care package assembly project in 2015 and passionately invites all members of the community to join. Vanessa also recommends searching for local organizations to contribute to or volunteer with.

She said large foundations like the Wounded Warrior Project provide excellent programs, but small localized organizations can be more gratifying and generally, a larger percentage of contributions reach the soldiers.

If you're interested in sending your own care package to a unit in need, you can visit www.allsoldiers.com to find a specific troop, review a list of their realtime supply needs and procure an address. According to Vanessa, packages only cost \$15 to ship.

For Vanessa, supporting the troops is as much a civil duty as it is a cathartic endeavor. She plans to continue helping service men and women as much as possible. Through this endeavor, Vanessa enables Stephan's spirit to live on.

Vanessa Adelson resides in Purcellville, Virginia with her husband, Richard Adelson. She is a Licensed Veterinary Technician and mother of four boys, including Stephan Mace, who lost his life in the Iraqi War in 2009. After her son's death, Vanessa became an advocate for U.S. soldiers, working to generate more support for military persons during and after their tours of duty. She has become an influential advocate for our troops, quoted by politicians in their speech, including President Barack Obama in his 2010 Memorial Day speech. To this day, Vanessa continues to speak out, inspiring outreach programs and community participation to better care for US troops.

Vanessa Adelson



Stephan

*A funny, saucy little boy with mischief on his mind,
Adorable in every way, so very sweet and kind.
Always laughing at himself and making us laugh too
Was very much a part of him and what he loved to do.
Of all the things he liked the most there was one special trophy,
Unlike all the others... A gigantic dog named Sophie.
He deeply loved most animals, each litter, flock and herd,
But there was one he hated... Mom's big, white, noisy bird!
He adored his grandparents and knew they loved him too,
For often he would speak of them and all they would do.
A strong appreciation for the beauty in this world,
Especially upon the face of a pretty girl.
Hunting game in Africa, fishing, sports, cold beer...
This kid became a true man's man and lived without fear.
He drove a great big Hummer... Just as it should've been...
For big is what this man's life was... Right up to the end.
A dedicated soldier who'd do anything he could
For those guys he loved so much... And they all knew he would.
Stephan's eyes were big and blue and in them you could see
A heart so full and tender, a soul that is now free.
Upon his back a tattooed cross with L. V. M. B. C.,
Which means love is forever and you'll always be with me.
Amazing, strong, courageous... A true and loyal friend,
So dearly loved, so sadly missed...
Until we meet again.*

Through the heartfelt thoughts and words of Cheri Miller
composed by Lana Heaslip



A HEARTFELT RESPONSE FROM OUR TROOPS

THANK YOU

The 1st Infantry Division (THE BIG RED ONE) and the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command (CJFLCC-I), Iraq, thank you for your contributions and gifts to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians currently stationed in Iraq. We are working with our coalition partners from around the world to make Iraq a safer place for generations to come.

A taste of home, reminding us that the American people are behind us 100%. We took the care packages, cards, stockings and other gifts - combined them together and made gifts for everyone. By doing this, we were able to distribute the "Christmas goodie bags" and stockings all throughout Iraq, ensuring that all Service Members received something from home. One Soldier even remarked that this was the only mail and gift he received this year - THANK YOU for making that possible and for being a blessing to so many.

During the last few weeks we geared up for the Holidays and the New Year. We all agreed that being in Iraq is not the same as being back Home. During these tough times, we rely on each other for the encouragement and support. And the Christmas gifts, letters, packages you sent helped put a smile on each face and reminds us that you remember and recognize our service and sacrifice.



“Thank You for making that possible and for being a blessing to so many.”





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Written by: Jessica Smulski - Lee

THE GOOD SIDE:

HOW A COUPLE'S RE-SIDING PROJECT TOOK A TURN FOR THE BETTER

Couple Anna Davis and Mark Allen finally found the home of their dreams. But the very thing that attracted them to purchasing the home -- a Redwood Siding exterior full of character -- became quite their nightmare when they realized the exterior's deteriorated condition and just how difficult it is to find a contractor able to deal with the complex repair and architecture of their unique home

Nearly a year and a half ago, Anna Davis and her boyfriend, Mark Allen purchased one of the most unique homes in Alexandria, Virginia. Tucked within a peaceful and eclectic alcove just outside Washington D.C., their 2,300 square foot contemporary residence features dramatic angles and striking straight-lined architecture unlike any other home in the area. The previous owner intentionally had the home built at the far end of a one-acre lot to allow for ample gardening — sheer fate considering Mark's passion for horticulture. Additionally, the home's single level layout was

ideal for Anna, who uses a wheelchair. Unlike every other one-story home the two visited, this home possessed a large upper loft area that inspires an inimitable facade, differentiating it from the ranch-style architecture Anna and Mark disfavor.

"When we saw the exterior of this house, it looked so modern, so cool. And from the front, it doesn't even look like a one-story house!" Said Anna.

But the horticulturally inspired landscape, contemporary architecture and distinctive facade isn't what made this home one of the most exotic structures in Alexandria. It was the material in which the home was enveloped — endangered redwood.

Besides being a heavily protected species of tree, the redwood siding was clear in quality, meaning it was completely absent of knots and imperfections. Anna and Mark fell in love with the way its finish accented the a contemporary allure and despite noticing some weather damage, they decided it was the perfect home for them.

Shortly after moving in, it became apparent that the redwood siding Anna and Mark so loved was rotting beyond salvation. The couple saw noticeable holes in the wood and many dark spots where the material was decaying. It would need to be entirely replaced — a reality no new homeowner wants to face.

“We were concerned with energy efficiency,” explained Anna. “And we of course wanted to keep the integrity of what the original house design was.”

With only a few months before winter, Anna and Mark set out on an internet search, determined to find a home improvement contractor that would replace the rotten wood with new, healthy redwood siding before temperatures dropped. That’s when they met Tom Green, a sales consultant with Exterior Medics.

“WHEN WE SAW THE EXTERIOR OF THIS HOUSE, IT LOOKED SO MODERN, SO COOL. AND FROM THE FRONT, IT DOESN’T EVEN LOOK LIKE A ONE-STORY HOUSE!”

Tom was the first home improvement specialist to meet with the couple and from the get-go, Anna and Mark appreciated that he didn’t use high-

pressure tactics to persuade them. Tom was very much aware, and explained to Anna and Mark that redwood would be nearly impossible to procure. After an exhaustive search, his suspicions were confirmed.

The news was disappointing to the couple and it was difficult to accept that they would have to change their home’s most prominent feature. Tom empathized with their disappointment and endeavored to devise an alternative plan to mimic the look and feel of the redwood as closely as possible. He suggested the couple consider clear Western Red Cedar, which possessed a similarly flawless finish, could be stained to match the rich, redwood color and would provide lasting protection.

To help Anna and Mark feel more comfortable with the idea, Tom educated the couple on the manufacturing process and performance traits of clear Western Red Cedar. He also brought a variety of stain samples to pair with the existing redwood siding.

The project would cost tens of thousands of dollars, no small feat for the couple. Wanting to protect their investment, Anna and Mark inquired



ANNA AND MARK WERE ASTOUNDED BY THE CREW’S LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE, BUT WHAT REALLY CAUGHT THEIR ATTENTION WAS THE CREW’S INTRICATE CRAFTSMANSHIP

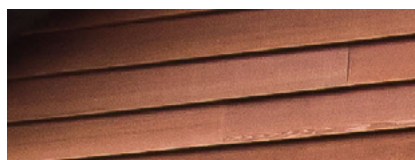
Before



After



Original Redwood Siding in deteriorated condition



Stained Clear Western Red Cedar Siding replacement proposed by Exterior Medics



about sealants and other defensive measures that would increase the siding's lifespan. Tom had extensive knowledge regarding the latest housewraps and provided the couple with several options.

"We wanted to make sure that the wrap underneath the siding was going to be the best one we could afford to keep the wood healthy and in good shape." Said Anna.

Despite feeling confident in Tom's expertise and intentions, Anna and Mark used the internet to verify everything they learned and searched for a second opinion.

"We checked all over Virginia to find a company that could give us as much information on cedar siding as Exterior Medics did, but we couldn't find anybody." Realizing that Exterior Medics was

CLEAR WESTERN RED CEDAR POSSESS A SIMILAR FINISH & CAN BE STAINED TO MATCH THE RICH, REDWOOD COLOR.

their best choice, Anna and Mark closed the deal and decided to move forward with a hydro-wrap sealant and clear Western Red Cedar siding. The couple also wanted wider-than-average cedar panels to match the

exact measurements of the original redwood planks. The estimated cost of the project was \$60,000.

The renovation began in October of 2014. With little time to spare, the Exterior Medics crew worked well into the early dusk of fall each day and even reported for duty on Saturdays, determined to have the home winter-ready before the first snowflakes began to fall.

Anna and Mark were astounded by the crew's level of discipline, but what really caught their attention was the crew's intricate craftsmanship. Each exterior outlet was impressively framed, each exterior lighting fixture was removed, outfitted with wood leveling and replaced perfectly.

"I don't know how they did that!"



Davis and Allen's home before the siding replacement project



Davis and Allen's home after the siding replacement project with Exterior Medics



"I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY DID THAT!"

- Anna, describing little details in Exterior Medics' artistry that made a big difference in the overall appearance of her home's exterior.



Explained Anna as she described little details in their artistry that made a big difference in the overall appearance of the home's exterior.

The crew was also respectful of Anna and Mark's property, careful never to leave supplies in disarray. Boris Cardenas, the project supervisor, remained in close communication with Anna and Mark throughout the duration of the project.

"Boris was really easy to get in touch with. He would email us, he would come by during the installation to see how things were going and he would ask if we had any questions," said Anna.

The re-siding project was unfolding flawlessly until one day, near the end of the installation, Anna and Mark discovered a problem that had them immediately concerned. A spigot in

the rear part of the house had been damaged, presumably maimed during the siding installation.

Without question, Boris called an expert to examine the spigot and upon closer examination, it was determined that the spigot head and some of the copper piping had indeed been damaged. Exterior Medics handled the repair and Anna recalled the damages being fixed quickly, professionally and without hesitation. It was a level of customer service the couple did not expect and deeply appreciated. The re-siding project was finalized a few weeks ago, just in time for the changing season.

"It was a big deal for us to decide to do this but we're really glad we did," said Anna. "If you are going to pay

for something to be done you want to trust that it was done right. With the quality of work performed by Exterior Medics, I'm not worried."

Anna is anxiously awaiting the springtime to see how Mark's gardens unfold around the new siding. She said when she pulls into the driveway now, the home looks completely different and she loves it. **Anna Davis**

Anna Davis is a resident of Alexandria, Virginia and owner of one of Fairfax County's most unique contemporary homes. She was drawn to the area nearly a year and a half ago because of its diverse architecture and close proximity to Washington, D.C., where she works as an attorney for the United States Government.

Written by:
Jeffrey Kubn



Revealed!

10 STEPS TO A 30 YEAR VACATION

IMAGINE TAKING A 30-YEAR VACATION?

IT'S POSSIBLE: IT'S CALLED RETIREMENT. AND YET, MOST PEOPLE SPEND MORE TIME PLANNING A TWO-WEEK VACATION THAN THEY DO PLANNING THEIR RETIREMENT. WITH MORE THAN 15 YEARS IN THE FINANCIAL PLANNING BUSINESS, I'VE GOT A FEW TIPS ON HOW TO GET YOU STARTED PLANNING THAT VACATION OF A LIFETIME



1. GOT CASH?

This first step is the most important step. **You must start.** First build up a cash reserve for those unexpected emergencies. Start by **setting aside 3-6 months worth of living expenses.**

2. AWAY WITH THE BAD DEBTS!

Pay off the credit card debt that costs you the most to borrow. **There is good debt and there is bad debt.** A mortgage can provide some tax deductions on interest you spend allowing a lower actual cost of borrowing. Credit cards do not. **Pay the minimum on the lowest interest cars and focus on the highest one first.** It costs you the most, Get rid of it first. If you have a high interest car loan you should consider doing the same.



3. CREATE A SEPARATE SAFETY NET

Open a separate checking account, one that is separate from the account where you pay bills. Each pay period have a small amount, roughly 5%, taken out of your paycheck and moved directly to this account. Use it only for an emergency or as a safety net.



4. FATTEN UP YOUR PIG!

Increase your deposit every three months. Raise the amount in this separate account by about 1 percent and see how it feels.

With small steps you will barely notice any change and will adjust your spending without knowing it. **Before you know it you have accumulated more than you thought you could.**

1%

5. DON'T FORGET YOUR 401K

This can be used in your 401k as well. Start with just a match if you have one. **Every 2-3 months add another 1 percent.**



6. CRUNCH THOSE DIGITS

Calculate how much you will need based on inflation and growth. You can talk to a Certified Financial Planner (TM) or you can find some good calculators online if you simply Google search “retirement savings calculator”

7. START EARLY!

Most people that end up retiring with a comfortable nest egg are mostly living off of the earnings of their contributions.

I often remind someone of the rule of 72. Divide your rate of return by 72 and that is roughly how long it takes for your money to double. **It is easy if you start saving. It is not if you never start.** I have heard plenty of people say that the wished they had started sooner or they wished they have saved more. **I have never heard anyone say I saved too much.**

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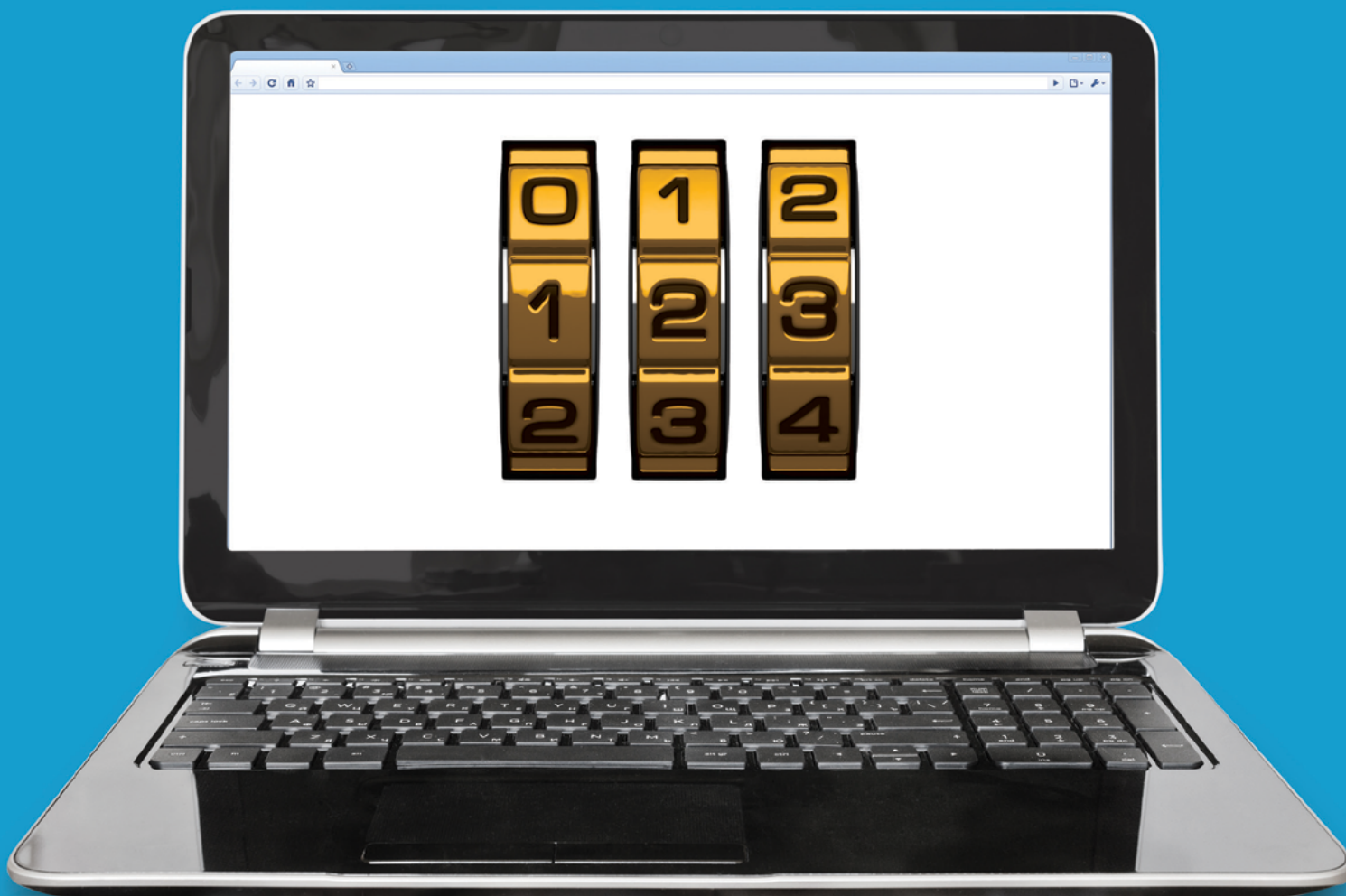
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What makes a great company?

A Look Inside Exterior Medics

With Co-Owner, **JOE LEVECCHI**



Despite co-founding one of the most successful and philanthropic home improvement companies in the Greater Washington area, Joe Levecchi isn't the type of guy to claim rectitude. **His formula for success is simple — lead with a big heart, run with good people.**

Joe and his best friend/business partner, Mark Watson started Exterior Medics in 2008 as a two-man team operating out of a basement.

"We literally started at nothing. It was just me and Mark. That wasn't that long ago..." Joe reminisced.

Since then, the team has grown into a 24-person, award-winning home improvement company with GAF Master Elite recognition and a championed community presence. Without hesitation, Joe and Mark credits their staff for their success.

From inception, Exterior Medics was to be a completely different breed of home improvement company. Joe and Mark wanted to re-affirm lost expectation for craftsmanship and accountability while at the same time, redefining customer care well beyond current industry standards to deliver a level of service neither expected nor forgotten.



The business partners knew if they wanted to create the next generation of home improvement, they needed a team with next generation qualities. People with initiative, drive and a vision for success that aligned with their ideals.

“You realize really quick how tough it is to find good people.” explained Joe.

Eventually, Joe and Mark discovered the secret to successful employment — hire personality, train skill. They believe it’s not just about talent, it’s about potential and finding people with insatiable ambition. Those are the people capable of doing anything they set their minds to and those are the people that will convert opportunity into success.

This is where Ernesto Lopez, the company’s property inspector, enters the scene... Ernesto “Neto” Lopez moved to the United States from El Salvador in 2001. He did not speak English and he did not know construction, but he had gumption and to Exterior Medics, that was a quality worthy of recruitment. Recommended by a friend, Daniel Sanchez, who is the company’s repair technician, Ernesto was hired in 2011 as a laborer.

Within the first two years, Ernesto absorbed every possible thing he could about the trade. He learned roof repairs, basic siding repairs, carpentry and interior repairs. Despite the overload of new information, he was always hungry for more knowledge and responsibility.

Ernesto’s potential was obvious to the team, but his inability to speak English was an unavoidable limitation to his career. With the help of an interpreter, Joe explained this hindrance to Ernesto, whose response was nothing less than what Joe expected. Tell me what I need to do and I’ll do it.

“Rarely do you find a person that is as eager to succeed as Ernesto. Someone that comes to you and says ‘teach me, I want to do better’. That’s what Ernesto did.” Said Joe. “So we put him in English classes, and he learned.”



Fast-forward two years to present, and Ernesto speaks English well enough to meet and collaborate with customers on a daily basis. Even more impressive is his current position with the company. Ernesto now works as the company’s property inspector — a responsibility that was once solely shouldered by Joe.

Before Ernesto, Joe conducted up to 20 inspections per week, which entailed meeting customers on site to evaluate structural issues as well as drafting proposals and recommendations for each case. The responsibility was as important as it was time consuming, which left Joe struggling to find enough time to run the business side of his company.

“It’s so hard to find people who can do this [inspections] and do it right.” Explained Joe. “Ernesto nailed it and for me, this is huge. He goes out, he meets with the customer, builds rapport, inspects from inside and outside, diagnoses the problem, brings the information back to the office and together, we develop an inspection report and recommendation.”

Ernesto is living proof that the company’s hiring strategy works.

“He’s just a really smart guy.” Said Joe. “He wants to learn. He wants to become certified and he wants to be the smartest



guy in the room. He feels that’s the best way to represent the company and serve clients.”

When asked about his success, Ernesto enthusiastically gives due credit to the company’s leadership style.

“I always wanted to grow up and learn different things.” said Ernesto. “Joe and Mark give me the opportunity to do that. I went from laborer to technician to roofer. Now I’m an inspector. Joe even gave me a laptop so

I could learn computers, and they paid for my English classes.”

Ernesto further explained that this type of support is extended to all Exterior Medics employees.

“They give opportunity to everyone they work with, from the lower-level positions to the higher-up ones. Everybody is like family here, and I like that.”

Joe couldn’t agree more. He speaks of his entire staff in the same way a person describes their

kinsfolk, with adoration and pride. Ernesto’s journey is living proof that potential is a wise measure for hiring.

“If they give me the chance, I’m never going to stop learning,” said Ernesto. “Not until I learn everything I can about the company.”

With support from model employees like Ernesto, Exterior Medics is delivering a new kind of service to the Greater Washington community. Comparable to paramedics for the home, they treat customers with

a kind of bedside manner never before seen in the home improvement industry. They respond to emergency calls, approach projects with consideration and sensitivity, and execute plans with the steadiness of a surgeon's hand.

Inarguably a new breed of home improvement, their success stems from their loyalty to one another and their belief in the company's values.

“I don’t have it all figured out, yet,” admits Joe.

“I stumble every day but I learn. It’s easy to get caught up in what you do, but roofing isn’t everything. When employees like Ernesto are succeeding, that’s what makes us feel good. That’s what gets us through the day. This is much bigger than us and those are the lessons I bring home to my family.”



CRANBERRY

Mascarpone

Tartlets

As the cold rolls in, bringing overcast skies, crunchy leaves and maybe even some snow, our thoughts tend to turn to visions of sugarplums. Or, if not exactly sugarplums (does anyone even know what those are?), then at least pumpkins, apples and that holiday staple, the cranberry.

One of the prettiest ways to highlight this jewel-bright fruit's seasonal appeal is cranberry mascarpone tartlets. The elegance of filo dough combines perfectly with the savory taste of butter, baked into bite-sized cups in a mini-muffin pan. Fill the cup with a creamy combination of Italian mascarpone cheese, tangy goat cheese and dried thyme, and topped with an onion, cranberry and red wine vinegar reduction. **The result is heaven.**



Ingredients

1 package filo dough, thawed in the fridge for several hours

1 stick plus one tablespoon butter, divided

1 red onion, halved and cut into thin strips

½ cup dried cranberries

¼ cup red wine vinegar

1 8-ounce container of mascarpone cheese, room temperature

1 4-ounce log of goat cheese, room temperature

3 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves stripped and chopped

2 tablespoons heavy cream

Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation Instructions

1 Preheat oven to 425°F

2 Melt a tbsp of butter then caramelize onions over low heat, stirring in the cranberries and vinegar.

3 In a separate bowl, combine cheeses with cream and thyme. Blend with an electric mixer and add salt and pepper to taste.

4 Once the cranberries plump up leaving only a syrupy glaze, the relish is done. Refrigerate along with the cheese mix in separate containers and let chill.

5 Melt a stick of butter over medium heat and set aside.

6 Unroll the filo and slice the sheets in half. Butter each sheet liberally with a pastry brush, then stack them in groups of five without buttering the top layer.

7 Slice the sheets into 3-inch squares, placing one square in each cup of a mini-muffin tin. Press the sheets down to form cups, leaving the edges sticking straight up.

8 Bake for 6 minutes and cool on a rack.

9 Fill each cup halfway with a small scoop of the cheese mixture, topped with an equal-sized scoop of the cranberry relish.

Serve with a glass of your favorite wine and enjoy!





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Brooke LeVecchi

a story of strength & survival

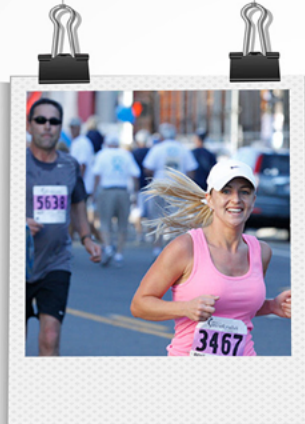
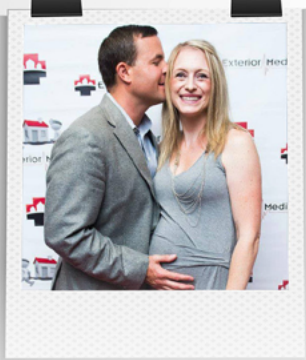
Medics On The Walk: Fighting Ovarian Cancer

When Joe LeVecchi, Co-Owner of Exterior Medics, delivered the news that his wife, Brooke had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, the company was shocked. She was a beloved member of the group, always willing to volunteer her time to help out and the team was deeply saddened by the gravity of the situation. To show their support, employees began participating in the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition's (NOCC) annual 5k Run/Walk to Break the Silence on Ovarian Cancer. Each year the company makes t-shirts, raises funds, recruits supporters and forms a team to walk or run in honor of Brooke's fight for survival.

"Being active in the fight against Ovarian Cancer has always been an emotional labor of love for our Exterior Medics family." Explained Joe. "Hitting so close to home, we support and embrace the efforts put forth by the NOCC and have made the 5k walk/run to Break the Silence an annual Exterior Medics event. Walking with my beautiful wife, our family and all our friends is something we look forward to all year!"

This year marks the 13th annual NOCC 5k run/walk and the company is once again, encouraging members of the community to join in and show their support.





BROOKE'S STORY

When I was in high school, my dad was determined to make me a great hurdler. I realize now that the hurdles he pushed me to conquer then would prepare me for the unforeseeable hurdles I would face in life.

I'll never forget the day I found out I had ovarian cancer. While today, I can look back and appreciate that unlike so many others, my cancer story is one of survival; hearing for the first time that you have a rare and life threatening tumor makes you instantly grateful to be alive.

In September of 2009, my husband, Joe and I decided to begin trying for our second child. I was 30 years old at the time and seemingly healthy until suddenly, I stopped menstruating. Aware a disruption in my monthly period wasn't normal, I scheduled an appointment with my doctor. When my doctor couldn't figure out the reason for the sudden change, I was sent to another doctor, and another doctor after that. Over the course of a year, I underwent numerous tests and multiple CT scans, none of which provided any answers.

Six to eight months after my menstruation stopped, a number of other odd symptoms began to surface. Physical changes that could not be explained by any doctor I'd visited.

Reluctantly, I agreed to a sixth CT scan and I'm thankful I did — it was the test that finally revealed a malignancy. It's a memory that will remain with me forever, the way the radiologist walked into the room, apprehensively looked at me and expressed how extremely concerned he was that I may have cancer in my right ovary. As terrified as I was to face the possibility of ovarian cancer, I felt relief in that moment. Relief that finally, there may be an answer to so many questions that had gone unanswered during that year.

I was ordered to see my gynecologist the next day and shortly thereafter, a diagnosis was made. I had a rare, testosterone-producing tumor in my ovary called a Sertoli Leydig Cell Tumor. Sertoli Leydig Cell Tumors are so rare, they constitute less than .5-percent of all ovarian tumors.

I underwent several surgeries to remove the mass before a final procedure was done to determine if the cancer had spread to my lymph nodes or other areas in my uterus. Luckily, the cancerous cells were contained inside my ovary; however, I was still prescribed a round of chemotherapy as a preventative measure to ensure the cancer did not come back.

“My overwhelming thankfulness to be alive overpowered my fear of chemo. **I had stage one cancer** and my prognosis was promising. I was going to survive unlike so many other women who have fallen victim to this cancer.”

I received chemical treatments once a week for eight weeks and was required to take steroid medication the day and night before each treatment. Each chemo session lasted six to eight hours. While receiving my treatments, I was

surprised to see so many older women also battling cancer. I was the youngest patient each week by about 40 years!

People often ask what it was like to endure the recovery process. For me, I was a mother and I had a job working at an elementary school. Those parts of my life wouldn't cease to exist just because I was fighting cancer. I continued working and I continued to be a wife and mother — always with the hope that soon, we could resume our normal lives.

There was a fourth grader at my elementary school battling Hodgkin's Lymphoma. She was also receiving radiation and chemotherapy. I observed that she was always smiling and in a big way, she was a role model for me. A reminder that it is possible to stay positive, no matter how hard things get.

Two to three weeks into chemo, my hair started falling out by the handful. It was an awful experience to deal with and when I finally reached a breaking point, my husband, Joe went to Walgreens and purchased a pair of hair clippers. I poured myself a glass of wine and watched as he shaved the remaining hair from my head. It was shocking to see myself in this new way, but having an incredibly supportive family and an amazing husband helped me remember how privileged I was.

So many people lose their loved ones to cancer but I'm one of the lucky ones — I'm still here. My hair has since grown back and nine months after my final treatment, Joe and I were able to have another baby without any fertility treatment. She is now a happy, healthy two year old girl named Leighton.

As I reflect on the experience of surviving cancer, I relate best to this quote:

"With everything that has happened to you, you can either feel sorry for yourself or treat what has happened as a gift. Everything is either an opportunity to grow or an obstacle to keep you from growing. You get to choose." — Dr. Wayne W. Dyer

Now, I try to be a positive person. I try to inspire others to reach for the stars and achieve their dreams. You cannot allow life and the hurdles it presents to bring you down. You must rise above.

For those interested in showing their support for Brooke and countless other women still fighting for their lives, join Exterior Medics in this year's 5k walk/run for ovarian cancer. The event is scheduled to take place on Sunday, May 17, 2015 at Fairfax Corner and all proceeds will be donated to ovarian cancer research.



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4 MONEY-SAVING WINTER HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The Capital City and its surrounding suburbs could face another long, cold winter this year as climatologists predict the second consecutive season of above-average snowfalls and below-average temperatures. For area residents, this forecast puts a damper on more than just their anticipation for spring. Harsh winters can spike heating costs by 10-percent or more. Luckily, there are a number of quick, low-cost tricks to keep your home's heat in and the winter chill out. Fight the freeze with these 3 money-saving winter home improvements:



ELIMINATE DRAFTS

1

Out-dated windows and doors are the primary producers of noticeable cold drafts in your home.

Caulk and seal cracks in the framing around your windows and apply plastic weatherproofing to block the transfer of heat and cold. Likewise, outfit exterior doors with weatherstrips. Both projects are inexpensive, can be done in an afternoon and can save up to 30-percent on heating bills. For the ultimate fix, consider upgrading your windows and doors with new, energy-efficient replacements. The

investment will increase the value of your home and may qualify you for certain tax credits.

INSULATE

2

The other major cause of heat loss in the winter is poorly insulated attics, crawl spaces and wall fixtures. If your attic possesses less than 12 inches of insulation, more is needed for proper heat-proofing. Crawl spaces require insulation against the exterior masonry walls and drafty electrical outlets or light switches can be insulated by shutting the electricity

INSULATING THESE AREAS
PROPERLY CAN SAVE AS
MUCH AS 10 - 30% ON
HEATING BILLS



off, removing the fixture plate and situating insulation squares inside the fixture. Properly insulating these areas can save as much as 10- to 30-percent on heating bills and depending on the grade of insulation used, may last as long as 100 years.

UPDATE ENERGY CONSUMING APPLIANCES

3

One of the most effective ways to cut utility costs is to replace utility guzzling appliances with new, energy efficient models.

The most high-consuming appliances include heating and air systems, hot water heaters, dehumidifiers and refrigerators. If you can't afford to replace your heating or air system, you can install a programmable thermostat

that better regulates temperature settings to save money. For a more dramatic savings, replace out-dated appliances with new, Energy Star-certified appliances, which can save 50-percent or more on heating costs and may qualify you for certain tax credits.

SEAL DUCTS PROPERLY

4

Studies show 10- to 30-percent of heated (or cooled) air escapes from improperly sealed ducts. Have a professional test your duct system and address any inefficiencies to reduce wasted air circulation. Doing so could save over \$100 per year in addition to improving interior air quality. Regularly changing furnace filters will also help to reduce energy consumption.





THE GOOD SIDE: HOW A COUPLE'S RE-SIDING PROJECT TOOK A DISAPPOINTING TURN – FOR THE BETTER

Couple Anna Davis and Mark Allen finally found the home of their dreams. But the very thing that attracted them to purchasing the home -- a Redwood Siding exterior full of character -- became quite their nightmare when they realized the exterior's deteriorated condition and just how difficult it is to find a contractor able to deal with the complex repair and architecture of their unique home

Nearly a year and a half ago, Anna Davis and her boyfriend, Mark Allen purchased one of the most unique homes in Alexandria, Virginia. Tucked within a peaceful and eclectic alcove just outside Washington D.C., their 2,300 square foot contemporary residence features dramatic angles and striking straight-lined architecture unlike any other home in the area. The previous owner intentionally had the home built at the far end of a one-acre lot to allow for ample gardening -- sheer fate considering Mark's passion for horticulture. Additionally, the home's single level layout was

ideal for Anna, who uses a wheelchair. Unlike every other one-story home the two visited, this home possessed a large upper loft area that inspires an inimitable facade, differentiating it from the ranch-style architecture Anna and Mark disfavor.

"When we saw the exterior of this house, it looked so modern, so cool. And from the front, it doesn't even look like a one-story house!" Said Anna.

But the horticulturally inspired landscape, contemporary architecture and distinctive facade isn't what made this home one of the most exotic structures in Alexandria. It was the material in which the home was enveloped -- endangered redwood.



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