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Better Home Living

The Newsletter that's Both Informative and Fun!

Six ways to serve others during the holidays

- * Decorate a tree with a family in need and help put some things under the tree that you can afford.
- * Take a parent or guardian and their children out shopping. Buy each of them a gift, whatever fits their needs and your means. Show kindness and caring and the children will feel comfortable and happy with you.
- * If you aren't spending the holidays with your family, you could help to serve at a free holiday dinner hosted by a church or organization. You'll find that filling plates with holiday food can be a joyful experience for you as well as the recipients.
- * Call the Salvation Army or other non-profit organizations in your area. Many need extra help during the holiday season and can gladly find something worthwhile for you to do.
- * Volunteer at a hospital or senior center. Many individuals don't have a family and would love to have someone to talk to during the holiday. Visiting can brighten the lives of others and even start friendships.
- * Find a food shelter and help distribute food or clean up after dinner is served. Shelters rely on volunteers, and regular volunteers may not work during the holiday.

Holiday greetings, best wishes, and thanks!

It's hard to believe that another year is almost ended. But it's true, holiday time is here again!

We're thinking about you and wishing you a wonderful holiday season. But more than that, we want to express our hearty appreciation for both our clients and employees in 2013. Holiday festivities are more special when an organization is connected to people like you.

There are many ways for individuals to celebrate this season. Gathering with family is one central theme, and it may include music, kids who still believe in Santa Claus, gifts and plenty of good food.

If this is a season of faith for you, we hope you have a beautiful gathering and celebration.

Many of our people also celebrate in a secular way. They observe their own traditions which are equally joyful and satisfying.

To you, and especially you, we say:

Merry Christmas.
Happy Holidays.
Happy Hanukkah.
Happy New Year.
Best Wishes.



DECEMBER

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

Mari & Staff

Toe the line if you want happy feet

If your feet are happy, you are going to be happy -- and walking, too. But if you are feeling pain or tingling, it could be a symptom of a bigger problem.

"Daily foot or ankle pain is not normal, and there is generally something you can do about it," says Dr. Holly Johnson, an orthopedic surgeon and instructor at Harvard Medical School.

* **Your toes.** When shoes are too tight, they can cause Morton's neuroma, a nerve problem. It feels like you're standing on a pebble. Treatment ranges from better shoes to steroid injections, to surgery. And a bunion is caused by an alignment problem called hammertoe. Surgery can help.

* **Your Heels.** You can avoid or treat heel pain by increasing flexibility.

Stretch by stepping away from a wall, and leaning in with your hands on it, one leg bent forward and the other holding back to stretch the ligament.

* It's also caused by overuse, leading to plantar fasciitis. The plantar fascia is a strip of tissue that creates the arch of the foot and becomes inflamed when it meets the heel bone.

* Try resting, elevating and over-the-counter (OTC) anti-inflammatories. If they don't help, you'll need physical therapy, steroid injections or custom arch supports.

* **Your ankles.** Pain behind the ankle may be caused by a tight Achilles' tendon resulting in tendinitis. If rest, ice, and OTC anti-inflammatories don't help, physical therapy and cortisone shots may do it.

* If pain is in the ankle joint, it may be arthritis, often caused by previous trauma to the foot or ankle. Treatment ranges from footwear changes and cortisone shots to surgery.

* If you can't walk at all on an ankle, it's more likely that it's broken.

* **Your arches.** If your foot bows outward in the middle, you may have fallen arches. They're caused by the main tendon in the foot losing its elasticity. Pain in the arch can run up the back of the ankle and leg. Custom arch supports (orthotics) will help, but you may need physical therapy.

* **Your midfoot.** The metatarsal bones in the middle of your feet connect to your toes. The bones are prone to fractures, especially in people with osteoporosis. A break can cause swelling and tenderness. It's treated with immobilization in a walking boot for six weeks, says Dr. Johnson.

Gift Certificate

It's the season for giving! Having a hard time finding a gift? Look no further! Cleaning gift certificates make the perfect gift. Buy a gift certificate for \$100 (covers 4 hours of cleaning) or customize a gift certificate.

Individuals to consider

- Mother
- Grandmothers
- Expectant mothers
- Aunts
- Best friends
- Mother-in-law

I have had many services over the years. I can't even explain to you the difference. From the professionalism of Mari and her staff to the incredible detailed cleaning that they provide that I have never seen. She also has a Supervisor that does random Quality Checks and she was so sweet and even left me with some cookies. You have to give these gals an opportunity to blow you away.

-Lynn
Arizona

Peanut Butter Balls Recipe

25 Days of Christmas: Day 17 Pete Schweddy over at Season's Eating's inspired me to make these peanut butter balls. The dynamic duo of peanut butter and chocolate is irresistible, especially with the sweet and salty combination going on. The balls' smooth chocolate finish perfectly complements the salty peanut butter. With only 5 ingredients, they are easy to make and simply delicious. Peanut butter balls will surely satisfy all your holiday guests!

Time: 20 minutes

Yields: 40-50 balls

Ingredients:

- One 16 ounce jar creamy peanut butter (2 cups)
- 1 lb confectioner's sugar
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 2 cups Rice Krispies
- About 20 ounces chocolate chips for dipping

Instructions:

1. In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, combine peanut butter and butter. Slowly add confectioner's sugar and then Rice Krispies. Mixing just until combined.
2. Place mixture in refrigerator until firm, about 45 minutes.
3. Take chilled mixture and scoop a full tablespoon. Roll into 1 inch balls and place on baking sheet. Place in freezer for at least an hour to prevent misshaped balls.
4. When ready to dip balls, prepare a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Melt chocolate in a double boiler or microwave.
5. Dip balls in melted chocolate and transfer to lined baking sheet. Sprinkle immediately. Once all the balls are covered in chocolate, place in fridge to firm up. Store in an air tight container in the



Can you grow new teeth?

Maybe someday soon...

No more root canals? Maybe no dentures? Maybe no more tooth implants?

Could be. A new study shows how dentists might use laser therapy to regenerate tooth structure.

The laser therapy can prompt human stem cells to form dentin, the calcified tissue that provides most of a tooth's core structure, according to Duke University.

The new approach (detailed in Science Translational Medicine) could eliminate the need procedures such as root canals.

The technique uses a low-power laser to stimulate a natural growth factor already present in the dentin and pulp of the tooth. Once activated, the growth factor appears to cause stem cells to form dentin.

Human trials are underway, but currently the best way to preserve teeth is to brush and floss regularly.



"It's a real pet, Andrew. You don't press a button to play with it."



Thwarting hackers; securing passwords

You may have already noticed that your bank or credit union asks you to authorize a computer for login and then provide a password.

This two-step process means that a bad guy would have to know your password AND be at your computer or have your phone.

You'll be seeing more varieties of 2-step verification in coming months.

Google already leads the way with 2-step verification in which Google sites can be authorized and a one-time password installed. You don't have to remember the password. If you ever need it, you use your regular Google password to log into your account and generate a new password for uses with email or other Google uses.

Google has also developed a physical key, a USB plug that you can buy for \$20. You then are required to use the USB key to log in.

Researchers are also experimenting with squiggly line access to tablets. A user can devise a certain line design to login instead of a number combination.

Then there is fingerprint verification, eye recognition and more technology on the way -- all an attempt to thwart hackers.

In the short term, password managers are one good solution.

The big players in this field are 1Password, Dashlane, LastPass and PasswordBox.

The most sophisticated so far is Dashlane, according to the Wall Street Journal. It employs two-step verification and will sync across devices. However, it costs \$30 per year for that trick.

1Password is the only one that doesn't employ a server for your data.

LastPass is compatible with the most devices and uses fingerprint readers and other biometric sensors. It also captures WiFi passwords.

Rent a room, and pay off your home

If you could find someone you trust with your property and your privacy, would you rent a room in your home? What if you could pay off your mortgage sooner or just have extra spending money?

The hitch there is usually trust. But, as you might expect, the Internet comes to the rescue.

According to the census bureau there are more than 6 million people who share housing space (that number doesn't count kids who are living with parents.)

The arrangements can be a long commitment or a short one. On the short side of things there is the website wonder Airbnb.com. The site connects vacationers and travelers who want to stay in someone's extra room, in a favored location, for one night or 10 nights.

Airbnb is the middleman for payments and connecting. Hosts may browse people who want to stay in their area, verify IDs, email them securely through the Website and decide if they want to take the person as a guest. The process is designed to help establish trust with renter and host.

Airbnb operates in 35,000 cities around the world and offers more than 800,000 listings. It served more than 10 million guests in the first eight months of 2014.

It's a lucrative arrangement for those who have the right home, in the right place, with the right amenities. If the homeowner rents out a room for \$25 a night for 10 nights a month, it brings in \$250 a month. That income could be used to make extra payments on their mortgage. The added equity could add up to \$3,000 a year or \$15,000 in five years.

Most travelers are looking for exotic locations.

On the other hand, renting a room in your home for a longer term can also be lucrative and enriching. The website sharinghousing.com gives tips to homeowners to find housemates, with instructions on how to write an ad, what to charge, and how to interview.

Sharing housing can be one way for people to expand their friendship and support their lifestyles.

Trivia Teaser - Clark Bar

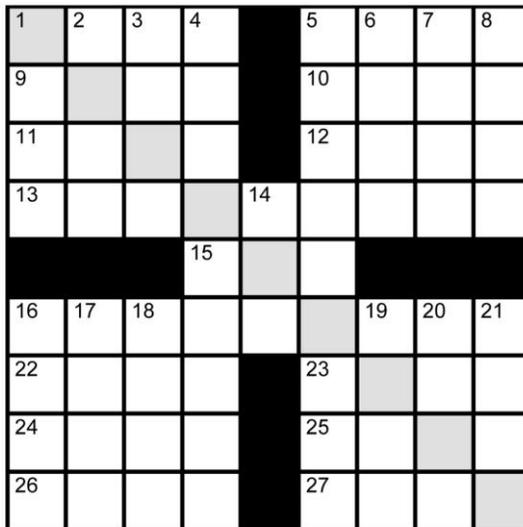
- Clark Gregg stars as the leader of a government team of heroes on what TV series? a-"The Champions," b-"Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.," c-"Misfits of Science," d-"Heroes."
- Who starred as family head Clark Griswold in the 1983 film comedy "National Lampoon's Vacation"? a-Dick Van Patten, b-Chevy Chase, c-Bill Murray, d-Harold Ramis.
- Marcia Clark was a lead prosecuting attorney in whose murder trial? a-Oscar Pistorius, b-O.J. Simpson, c-Phil Spector, d-Lyle and Erik Menendez.
- Dick Clark was the longtime host of which TV game show? a-"Concentration," b-"What's My Line?," c-"The \$10,000 Pyramid," d-"Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."
- Mary Higgins Clark and her daughter, Carol Higgins Clark, are authors in what literary genre? a-Romance, b-Science fiction, c-Young adult, d-Mystery.
- Which U.S. President had Clark as a middle name? a-Herbert Hoover, b-Calvin Coolidge, c-Abraham Lincoln, d-James Garfield.
- Claudine Clark was the singer and composer of what top ten hit from 1962? a-"I Can't Stop Loving You," b-"Party Lights," c-"Let Me In," d-"Break It To Me Gently."
- George Clark, Dutch Clark, and Monte Clark were all head coaches for which NFL team? a-Detroit Lions, b-New England Patriots, c-St. Louis Cardinals, d-New Orleans Saints.
- The Lewis and Clark Expedition was commissioned by which US President, shortly after the Louisiana Purchase? a-John Adams, b-Thomas Jefferson, c-James Monroe, d-James Madison.
- According to a 1967 Petula Clark hit song, where shouldn't you sleep? a-Under the apple tree, b-In the hallway, c-On the stairs, d-In the subway.

Answers to 'Clark Bar'
1-b, 'Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.'
2-b, Chevy Chase
3-b, O.J. Simpson
4-c, 'The \$10,000 Pyramid'
5-d, Mystery
6-a, Herbert Hoover
7-b, 'Party Lights'
8-a, Detroit Lions
9-b, Thomas Jefferson
10-d, In the subway

Holiday gifts, small and large

Across

- Emollient
- "Cast Away" setting
- Hip bones
- Castle defense
- "___ here long?"
- Talking bird
- Frames for the night
- "Acid"
- Like some magicians
- DVR button
- Wild ox
- "___ on Down the Road"
- License plates
- Porcelain piece
- Heroic tale

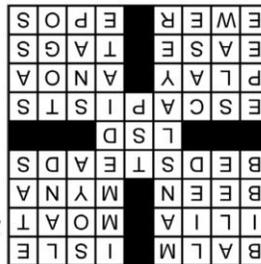


Down

- Kind of lettuce
- On the safe side, at sea
- Emulated Pinocchio
- Murderer
- Straightaway
- ___ bean
- Capture, as a fish
- Flight data, briefly

14. Cooking meas.

- Fencing sword
- Cole ___
- Beer buy
- Become unhinged
- Like some orders
- Be rude to



The title is a clue to the word in the shaded diagonal.

In a friend's time of need, talk less, listen more

In her Wall Street Journal article, Elizabeth Bernstein speaks of a friend who was despondent after the loss of a loved one.

She also tells of a veteran friend who confided that he was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Bernstein advises that emotional support after a loss or during depression can be an essential element in the healing process.

Here are some ways to be somebody a person can lean on:

- * Start by asking the person how he or she is.
- * Listen. Don't say what you think is wrong.
- * Don't analyze or say something you think will minimize his pain or make him feel more isolated.
- * Don't wait for your friend to contact you. Invite him or her to meals. Send texts or leave a message.
- * Tell your loved one she can trust that you will be there to talk. And be available if she calls you.
- * Don't offer help if you aren't willing to really be there for the person.
- * Share your own experiences with depression or tough times. It can help your friend feel less isolated.
- * Ask if he has thought about seeking professional help. Encourage him to do so. Offer to make an appointment and drive him to it.

* It's important to ask your friend if he has thought about hurting himself. If he says he's had suicidal thoughts, don't keep it to yourself. Call a doctor, a therapist or the emergency room. Never leave it to the depressed person to call.

Jonathan Rottenberg, professor of psychology at the Mood and Emotion Laboratory at the University of South Florida and author of *The Depths: The Evolutionary Origins of the Depression Epidemic*, says depression is "intensely painful, confusing and frightening, both to the depressed person and those around that person."

When he asked a woman what type of help was beneficial, she said the best help came when people treated her as if she was normal, listening and trusting her to make up her mind.

'Exercise snacks' are good at controlling blood sugar

Studies described by the University of California, Berkeley, show that brief bursts of intense exercise before meals may control blood sugar better than a single longer session of moderate exercise.

Nicknamed "exercise snacks," they were also described in Diabetologia. People with insulin resistance did six one-minute workouts that alternated high-intensity walking and resistance exercise. They were interspersed with one-minute recovery periods.

Compared with continuous exercise, the workouts of brief bursts led to lower post-meal spikes in blood sugar. The effects lasted over the next day.

The less-successful continuous exercise periods consisted of 30-minute treadmill workouts at 60 percent of maximum heart rate before dinner, or six one-minute, high-intensity bouts at 90 percent maximum heart rate with one-minute recovery periods before breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Dining out: Fewer menu choices boost food quality; customers still have a multitude of choices

Will you even notice if the menu at your favorite restaurant lists 125 choices instead of 150?

Maybe you'll notice if the food quality is better, the service is faster and the food is hotter. Restaurants say "Less is More" for customers.

Tony Romas cut its menu from 92 items to about 60. Chief operating officer Bradley Smith told USA Today, "I don't think customers are out there counting the number of items. It's about producing better-quality products."

In fact the first Orlando Tony Roma's Fire Grill opened recently with just 32 menu items.

In the burger categories, you'll find many fewer selections, but choices in condiments.

Five Guys now has just five core entrees: burgers, hot dogs, grilled cheese, a veggie sandwich and a BLT. But 15 free toppings make them customizable in more than 250,000 possible combinations, says USA Today.

Burger King cut back on the number of new products and focus on fewer but better roll-outs. Burger King North America president Alex Macedo says you can launch less and deploy better marketing support behind fewer products, to make sure people are paying attention.

At iHop, most of the items eliminated over the past few years were entrees, like biscuits & gravy, pot roast and three tilapia dishes. Those complicated dishes were also slow sellers at a restaurant where waffles and pancakes are the main offering.

Still, menu cutters have to be careful. When BJ's took Crisp Potato Skins platter off the appetizer menu, fans came in wearing, "Bring Back Potato Skins" T-shirts. They brought the selection back.

**Merry
Christmas**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

-Romans 15:13