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Better Home Living

The Newsletter That's Both Informative and Fun!

Spring: Time to Clean the Gutters

You really have to do it before the spring rains come. Just make time, get your mind in the gutters, and clean them.

One reason you want to get the stuff out of the gutters is to make sure rainwater flows away from the house. In a cold climate, it could break your home's foundation when it freezes.

Another reason to do it now: If the gutters are clogged, rainwater will spill over and rot the fascia board, the soffits, and the plywood under the roof. It could cause a wall or ceiling to crack.

The most important factor in the project is safety. You might not like the idea of moving the ladder every few feet, but getting up on the roof to do the cleanout is a lot more dangerous. If you don't have a ladder that's high enough, rent one.

On a single-story house, you might chance going up on the roof, but only if it doesn't have a steep pitch and you have shoes with good traction.

Place the ladder on a secure base. Put it against the house, not the gutter, which can break loose.

Get a helper to hold the ladder and climb up until you can look down into the gutter. Be careful to avoid any power or electrical lines. Use glove-covered hands to scoop out the muck or use a garden trowel to clear horizontal run areas. You can empty the leaves into a plastic bag or bucket or fling them down onto a tarp.

Clean the downspouts so water has a place to go. Scoop stuff out of the top, then run water down the hole. Water pressure will remove almost anything. If necessary, remove the clog with a wire hanger or a broomstick.

Run a hose along the gutters to remove anything you missed.

How having a mentor helps predict a child's future success

Educator Stephen Gray Wallace, writing for the American Camp Association, says having a mentor at camp has been shown to enhance later school performance, improve relationships with parents and peers, reduce initiation of drug and alcohol use, and decrease incidents of youth violence.

Mentoring, he writes, is closely linked with other important psychological/sociological constructs, such as positive youth development, resiliency and risk/protective factors.

Also important are individuals they learn to rely on, informal mentors like teachers, coaches, neighbors, aunts, uncles, and camp staff.

Young people with mentors are significantly more likely than those without to report frequently feeling happy and less likely to report being bored or depressed.

Mentor characteristics identified by 3,000 kids include: trustworthy, caring, understanding, respectful, helpful, dependable, fun, compassionate and responsible.

They also want someone who is a good listener.



We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

Mari & Staff

Happy Mother's Day!

"A mother is not a person to lean on, but a person to make leaning unnecessary."

These words by Dorothy Canfield Fisher remind us of how our mothers worked to prepare us for our adult lives. Their lessons on common sense, the difference between right and wrong, and the value of hard work are among the principles that helped us grow up and be able to earn a living.

Though she was born in 1879, most of her thoughts still apply today. She was an educational reformer and author. She strongly supported racial equality, women's rights and lifelong education. Fisher was named by Eleanor Roosevelt as one of the ten most influential women in the United States. She presided over the country's first adult education program.

Your own mother probably was, and maybe still is, the most influential person in your growing up years. Spoken or unspoken, one of her primary lessons was about love, which she demonstrated to you and taught you to recognize in others.

As you celebrate Mothers' Day this year, take a moment to thank your Mom for everything she did to help you become the person you are right now.

Whether you do it by phone or in person, you will be making this May 11 one of the most important days of her year.

Do You Know...

... Someone that could use our services? Perhaps a friend, family member, co-worker, or someone from church?

When a new client signs up for regular cleaning services at your recommendation; you will receive \$50 off your cleaning after their 3rd cleaning!

If you would think of 3 or 4 people that could use our services, then don't hesitate to call them and give them our name and phone number. Be sure to have them mention your name when they call so we can send your Bonus!

Have a disability? Your boss wants to know

About one-quarter of the American workforce will soon be asked a personal question: Are you disabled?

U.S. regulations that went into effect in March require for the first time that federal contractors, a group that includes Boeing, Dell, AT&T, among some 40,000 others, has to ask their employees if they have a disability.

Companies that don't employ a minimum of 7 percent disabled workers, or prove they're taking steps to achieve that goal, could face penalties and, in extreme cases could lose their government contracts. The target applies to contractors with 50 or more employees or more than \$50,000 in contracts.

The Labor Department issued the rules as part of an effort to reduce the high jobless rate among people with disabilities. A similar initiative calls for an 8 percent hiring target for military veterans. Government officials, however, say the targets aren't rigid quotas.

The Americans with Disabilities Act forces companies to gather information on disability status, but the Equal Employment Commission has made an exception in this case.

One problem: People don't want to admit they have disabilities. If not enough of them come forward, the company will have to focus on hiring more disabled people.



"Sorry the doctor is running behind. You can keep today's appointment or I can fit you in tomorrow...whichever comes first."

Thanks a Bunch!

"Reliable. Honest. Prompt. Best service we have ever had. Best pricing as well. Tried several before Mari and nobody has the customer service like she has."

*-T. Kyle
Arizona*

Bicyclists are on our roads and city streets again

The warmer weather stokes a desire to get outdoors to enjoy the greening of our world.

May is National Bike Month. Established 58 years ago by the League of American Bicyclists, the observance has inspired the creation of bike clubs, organized excursions, races, and more.

The group advocates for the interests of over 57 million cyclists and its 300,000 member affiliates, which include 40,000 individuals and 600 organization associates. Fun, fitness, exercise and transportation are some reasons why adults are taking up bicycling.

Boomers are loving it too! It has become the new walking for those who can't undertake the rigors of jogging, especially when the pace is slow and steady and spent leisurely enjoying an hour or two of activity.

Since 1960, the League has sponsored Bike to Work Week and Day. On May 16 this year, workers are encouraged to save gas and peddle to the office as a commuting alternative. Bicycle-friendly communities saw an 80 percent growth in commuting between 2000 and 2011, while non-friendly communities saw only a 32 percent growth.

Could you bike to work? According to Bicycling magazine, over half our population lives less than 10 miles from work. The average cost of a 14- and 16-speed road bike is between \$600 and \$1,500. The average price of a new compact car is \$17,000-\$25,000.

The number of commuters on bikes is expected to grow as more cities create safe bike lanes and counties and states bike safety a priority.

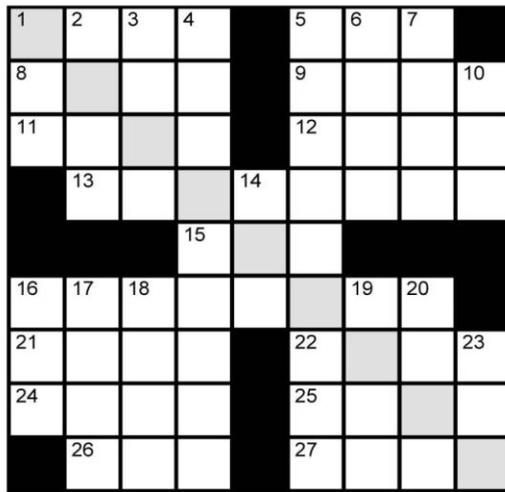
In 1985, the editor of the New York Tribune wrote: "The discovery and progressive improvement of the bicycle is of more importance to mankind than all the victories and defeats of Napoleon, with the First and Second Punic Wars ...thrown in."



The Star of the North

Across

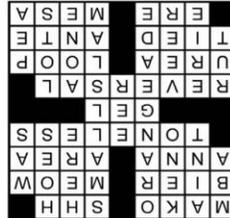
1. Type of shark
5. "Be quiet!"
8. Rathskeller quaff
9. Garfield talk
11. "___ and the King of Siam"
12. Field of study
13. Lacking in inflection
15. Come together
16. About-face
21. Ammonia compound
22. Aerial maneuver
24. 20-20, e.g.
25. Add to the pot
26. "Maid of Athens, ___ we part": Byron
27. ___ Verde National Park



Down

1. Wharton degree
2. "___ it the truth!"
3. Atlantic City attraction
4. Fruit drink
5. Bridge coup
6. "Catch!"
7. Works in the garden
10. Is no longer
14. Always, in verse
16. Same old, same old
17. Lake near Niagara Falls
18. Swerve
19. Blue-ribbon
20. Gobs
23. Princess tormentor

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



Unusual claims homeowner insurance will pay

Remember the commercial where the boss is telling new agents about the company's coverages? As a huge object crashes through the ceiling, he says "falling space junk, we cover that too," as a monkey in a parachute floats down.

It was funny, but the fact is that most other homeowner's policies do cover damage by falling satellites, according to AAA Nevada.

According to MSNBC, an insurance company once covered the cost of jewelry swallowed by a dog but not before the company claimed salvage rights to the dog and the jewelry within. After the dog owner sued, they paid for the jewelry and didn't take the dog.

Damage from the weight of snow on your roof is covered as is weather related cleanup to trees and gardens from violent weather.

Less known is coverage of vandalism of grave markers and mausoleums. Chris Hackett, director of personal lines policy with the Property and Casualty Insurers Association of America, says that homeowner's policies cover loss and vandalism to personal property and grave markers are considered personal property anywhere in the world.

Exploding things are covered. If something explodes and damages your house, your policy has your home covered but your auto policy probably covers your car.

If you are worried about damage from volcanos -- and who isn't? -- remember that if your house is hit by fire, ash, shockwave, lava flows or volcanic dust, you are covered. But if the volcano causes an earthquake, flood, land slide or mud slide that damages your home, you are on your own. Homeowner's insurance never covers flood or earthquake damage.

On the other hand, if the volcano causes electricity to go out and all your food spoils, you could get reimbursed. And it really doesn't have to be caused by a volcano. Any power outage will do. Of course, if you have a deductible of \$500, \$1,000 or higher, filing a claim could be pointless.

1. What toy was based on empty pie tins thrown by Yale University students?
a-Hula hoop, b-Frisbee, c-Yo-yo, d-Super ball.

2. In 2000, who had a hit with a cover version of the Don McLean song, "American Pie"? a-Lady Gaga, b-Fergie, c-Madonna, d-Fiona Apple.

3. Who starred as a pregnant, pie-making waitress named Jenna in the 2007 movie "Waitress"? a-Keri Russell, b-Lea Michele, c-Ashley Johnson, d-Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

4. How many wedges fill the pie piece in the game of Trivial Pursuit? a-4, b-5, c-6, d-8.

5. What letter follows pi in the Greek alphabet? a-Upsilon, b-Rho, c-Sigma, d-Zeta.

6. The Pie Hole was the name of a pastry shop on what TV series? a-"Men in Trees," b-"Pushing Daisies," c-"Northern Exposure," d-"Wonderfalls."

7. "I Think I'm Having a Relationship with a Blueberry Pie!" and "My Granddaughter Has Fleas!" are compilation books of what comic strip? a-"The Family Circus," b-"Marmaduke," c-"Garfield," d-"Cathy."

8. What actor played dimwitted jocks in the movies "American Pie" and "Election"? a-Chris Klein, b-Ashton Kutcher, c-Matthew Bomer, d-Chris Pine.

9. Tamara, the Queen of the Goths, is served a meat pie made of the flesh of her own sons in what Shakespeare play? a-"The Tempest," b-"Titus Andronicus," c-"Coriolanus," d-"The Winter's Tale."

10. Which character on "The Big Bang Theory" was nicknamed "Moon Pie" by his grandmother? a-Howard Wolowitz, b-Sheldon Cooper, c-Rajesh Koothrappali, d-Leonard Hofstadter.

- Answers to 'A Slice of Pie'
- 1-b, Frisbee
 - 2-c, Madonna
 - 3-a, Keri Russell
 - 4-c, 6
 - 5-b, Rho
 - 6-b, "Pushing Daisies"
 - 7-d, "Cathy"
 - 8-a, Chris Klein
 - 9-b, "Titus Andronicus"
 - 10-b, Sheldon Cooper

New Policies Regarding Wood Floors and Carpet!

Wood Floors

One of the most sought after decor elements in a home these days is hardwood floors. The natural and warm appearance of hardwood flooring never looks dated and the beautiful feel can be timeless. Recently the National Wood Flooring Association surveyed real estate agents regarding the impact of hardwood floors. Of those agents surveyed 82% said homes with hardwood floors sold faster and often for more money.

Many of our clients are particular (and with good reason) as to how their Laminate and hardwood floors are cleaned. In the best interest of our clients and to better serve our customers we have changed our policy effective immediately on cleaning these floors.

Please note that after meeting with several flooring companies and finding different procedures for different types of woods, we have decided to implement a program where each homeowner provides us with a cleaning procedure and product that is approved by them. The professionals general rule for cleaning was vacuum only, or use a dry dust mop (with a product like Endust) or a dry swiffer.

Please email us at Mari@CleaningSolutionsByMari.com with what procedure you would like used and what product you will be providing and where it will be kept. We consider this program as another positive step towards customizing your cleaning service.

If we do not receive any instructions we will always vacuum your wood floors with a soft brush as we have been doing and use a lightly damp cloth with water to wipe up any soiled areas but we will not be mopping.

Note: We will mop with your product but you must provide us with your written approved procedure & product.

It is very important for you to provide us with this information and it will then print on the job ticket each and every time.

Berber Carpet

If your home has Berber carpet, due to the type of care needed with this type of fibers, we are requiring that you provide a vacuum cleaner.

Many clients have been remodeling and we may not have been updated on proper procedures that need to be followed at your home.

Please provide any additional information that is pertinent to your home such as: Using your vacuum cleaner only, only using your products throughout the home, do not use Ajax/Comet, never clean the etc.

Please always feel free to contact me with any concerns or special requests.

Thank you so much for your business and we look forward to providing you with the great service you deserve.



Exercise and fun for people of all ages

No need to envy the kids, trampolines are fun for adults, too

Sky Zone Indoor Trampoline Parks claims to have been the world's first such venue.

Their clientele includes preteens, teens, young adults, people who want to get exercise and burn 1,000 calories in an hour, and grandparents who always envied their kids' having all that trampoline fun.

Park operators and their dedicated staffers say people in any kind of shape, or physical condition, and of any age, can enjoy the fitness and fun of using a trampoline. Some grandpas and grandmas come with their grandchildren and rent a trampoline for themselves too. Of course, many grandmas are beautiful and in beautiful condition as well. Grandpas are pleased to take the challenge (holding teen birthday parties there is a popular choice).

Their patented safety-driven park design spreads over 25,000 square feet. Trampolines cover most of the floors and some of the walls. Each one is surrounded by a thick padded separator.

At many facilities, there's more to do than use the trampoline independently. Many have aerobics classes and activities like trampoline basketball, where the two sports are combined.

The International Association of Trampoline Parks says its mission is to provide a safe experience, success for park owners, and exercise options.

Take the Trivia Challenge!

May is "National Bike Month"

How many years ago was it established?

A – 38 B – 48 C – 58 D – 68

HINT: The answer is hidden somewhere in this newsletter.

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

-Matthew 6:33