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Bowers in the Community: Gift Wrapping for the Red Cross

DURING THE HOLIDAYS IN DECEMBER, BOWERS INSURANCE EMPLOYEES VOLUNTEERED TO WRAP GIFTS AT THE VALLEY MALL IN HAGERSTOWN AS PART OF AN ANNUAL RED CROSS FUNDRAISING EFFORT.

Shoppers made donations in exchange for having their gifts wrapped. "The Red Cross received many donations and I'm proud of the great job our employees did," said Jeff Bowers. The effort was organized by Bowers staff member Heidi Hendershot.



A NEW LOOK

It's a new year, and we're happy to introduce a new design for this newsletter. We continue to feature informative content you'll find useful, and we've improved the design and layout for a cleaner, easier-to-read look. The new design is also reflected in our website, so be sure to take a look there as well:

www.bowersinsurance.com
We welcome your comments, and hope you enjoy this issue!

Bowers in the Community: Giving Back to the Little League

JEFF BOWERS WAS RECENTLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE VALLEY LITTLE LEAGUE, A POSITION HE NOW HOLDS IN ADDITION TO COACHING A TEAM AND ALSO SERVING AS AN UMPIRE.

"Both my brother John and I played in the same Little League as kids," said Jeff Bowers. "We're passionate about the Little League, and we love watching how the kids react when they make a good play. They're not stoic and unemotional like the pros." Jeff's involvement is one of many ways Bowers Insurance tries to give to the community whenever possible.

Property Tax Credit No Longer Automatic for Maryland Homeowners

NEW LEGISLATION ENACTED IN 2007 BY THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY REQUIRES HOMEOWNERS TO SUBMIT A ONE-TIME APPLICATION TO CONTINUE THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR THE HOMESTEAD TAX CREDIT (THIS WAS AUTOMATIC IN THE PAST).

The credit applies only to primary residences, and the law was passed to prevent some homeowners from improperly receiving credit on vacation and rental homes. County and municipal governments were losing revenues to provide much-needed services to their residents.

One-third of each county will be reassessed this year, and those homeowners will receive an application in the mail. Remaining owners will receive applications in 2009 and 2010.

If you have any questions or concerns, we're happy to answer them. Just give us a call at 301-791-7910. You can also go the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation online at www.dat.state.md.us.



Sole Proprietors Have Unique Insurance Need

IF YOU ARE SOLE PROPRIETOR OF A BUSINESS, YOU'RE IN A UNIQUE SITUATION BECAUSE THERE IS NO LINE SEPARATING YOUR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL ASSETS.

Your general liability limits need to be sufficient to protect your business assets and your personal assets. Personal assets can be brought into a defense judgement situation if your insurance coverage is not enough to cover a serious claim.

As with any other business, it is imperative as a sole proprietor that you do everything possible to keep your property safe and secure. If you're a contractor for example, remove small-to-medium size tools from jobsites overnight, lock toolboxes during break time and when

you're away from the job site for more than a few minutes. If your business is in your home, make sure your property is well-secured at night or when you're away.



Bowers Insurance can review your coverage to ensure both your business and personal assets are adequately covered. Just give us a call at 301-791-7910.

Check Your Beneficiaries!

A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE NEW YORK POST TOLD THE SAD TALE OF A BROOKLYN MAN WHO WAS LEFT DESTITUTE WHEN HIS WIFE'S PENSION – WORTH ALMOST \$1 MILLION – WAS AWARDED TO HIS SISTER-IN-LAW.

How did this happen? They never checked their beneficiaries. In this case, a document signed before the couple ever met indicated the man's inlaws should collect.

It's a cautionary tale, and regardless of who you think should collect benefits, it's important to check the actual documents and update them as necessary. This applies to pensions, life insurance, health insurance—everything. In the case of IRA beneficiaries, there are three important decisions to be made:

1. The selection of your beneficiary.
2. The choice of life expectancy.
3. The election of an IRA distribution method.

If you don't be sure to make these decisions, someone else can...and they may not make the same decision you would. Choosing a beneficiary is like creating a will for your IRA, and since IRA's are a significant part of people's estates, it could be even more important than your actual will. Put differently, an IRA should not pass through your regular will...or it could be subject to legal complications.

Selecting a life expectancy determines how long your IRA will continue after your death, and the distribution method can also impact how long your beneficiary can take advantage of your IRA. It's important to choose a secondary beneficiary,



and make sure your heirs know where the IRA beneficiary forms can be located.

Bowers Insurance can answer your questions and help you through the process of making these important decisions. Feel free to give us a call at 301-791-7910.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE AN AUTO ACCIDENT

1. Protect your vehicle and any other property from further damages.
2. Promptly call the police if: someone is injured, damage is extensive, your vehicle has been stolen, or if you need their assistance.
3. Never admit liability or sign a statement unless authorized by your insurance provider.
4. Note as much information as possible at the accident scene, including:
 - date, time, and location of accident
 - all information on the other vehicle, e.g. make, model, damage, the other driver's insurance company, policy number, and contact information
 - whether there were witnesses and if so, their names and contact information
 - any property damage other than to vehicles
 - any personal injuries, description of injuries, and whether they were wearing a seatbelt
5. Report the accident and claim as soon as possible to your insurance agent or nearest branch office; failure to do this promptly could jeopardize your coverage.

Business Auto Insurance Considerations

IF YOUR BUSINESS OWNS A SINGLE VEHICLE OR AN ENTIRE FLEET, IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES REGARDING AUTO INSURANCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

When you purchase auto insurance for your business, there are several questions to consider, such as...

1. Which vehicles do you need liability coverage for? Those owned by the business? All vehicles owned, hired, or leased? Or all vehicles, including those not owned, hired or leased?
2. Which type of physical damage coverage do you need? Your choices are collision (damages from a collision), comprehensive (covers other losses than collisions), or specified peril coverage (specific perils such as fire, theft, etc.)?

Businesses that own a fleet of vehicles are generally at greater risk and require more coverage. Vehicles all parked together at the same location could all be

lost at once to a fire, for example. One way to decrease this risk is to allow employees to take company-owned vehicles home at night. Other important considerations include driver safety. Pre-employment driving record checks and pre-employment drug testing can help reduce risk.

Bowers Insurance offers periodic Fleet Safety Seminars, and we encourage you attend to learn more about issues that affect your business auto insurance. A seminar is scheduled for April XXrd, so contact Bowers at 301-791-7910 if you'd like to attend, or if you have any questions regarding insurance for your business vehicles.

Grilling Weather is Almost Here

AS THE WEATHER WARMS, YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT FIRING UP THE GRILL.

GRILLED SALMON WITH LIME BUTTER SAUCE

- Center Cut Salmon Fillet (about 1 inch thick) with skin
- 1 ½ teaspoons finely grated fresh lime zest
- 6 Tablespoons lime butter sauce

Prepare grill for cooking: Set gas grills to medium heat or let charcoal grills burn down to medium heat. Cedar planks for grilling make this recipe delicious!

Season salmon with salt and pepper, then grill flesh side down, on a lightly oiled grill rack (covered only if using gas grill) for 4 minutes. Turn fillets over and grill (covered only if using gas grill) until just cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes more. Sprinkle fillet with zest and top each portion with 1 Tablespoon of lime butter sauce (see below).
Lime Butter Sauce

- 1 large chopped garlic clove
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, melted

Mix garlic, lime juice, salt and pepper until smooth in blender. Add melted butter and blend for about 30 seconds.

Just the thought of grilling steaks, veggies or corn is enough for many to top off the propane tank or stock up on charcoal. We've included a few important grilling safety tips below, as well as one of our favorite recipes. Enjoy!

GRILLING SAFETY

According to a 2002 study by the National Fire Prevention Association, gas and charcoal grills caused an average of 900 structure fires and 3,500 outdoor fires in or on home properties, resulting in a combined direct property loss of \$30 million. Avoid being a statistic by keeping these safety tips in mind:

- Designate the grilling area a "No Play Zone" and keep kids and pets away until grill equipment is completely cool.
- Before using, position your grill at least 3 feet away from other objects, including the house and any shrubs or bushes.
- Only use starter fluid made for barbecue grills when starting a fire in a charcoal grill.



- Before using a gas grill, check the connection between the propane tank and the fuel line to be sure it is working properly and not leaking. If you detect a leak, immediately turn off the gas and don't attempt to light the grill again until the leak is fixed.
- Never bring a barbecue grill indoors, or into any unventilated space. This is both a fire and carbon monoxide poisoning hazard.



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OUR OFFICE HOURS ARE:

Monday - Thursday
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Friday
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