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Volume IV, Issue 17
Thursday, 8:35 PM
Batavia, IL

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Spirit Realty, Inc.

Service For Life![®]

"Insider Tips For Healthy, Wealthy & Happy Living..."

Secrets For Saving A Bundle On Your Auto Insurance

Did you know that you could be saving hundreds, perhaps thousands per year on auto insurance? It's true. According to a survey taken by American Express, most Americans don't take the time to find the best deal on insurance. In fact, only 32 percent shopped around for the best deal on auto insurance. Yet, 64 percent shopped an average of 29 days to find a good deal on a car. Estimates show that people who shop around – even for just a few hours – save an average of \$301 per year. That computes to be a bundle of cash over the long haul. Here are tips to help you get best deal on auto insurance.

First, go to insurance.yahoo.com/auto.html and take the insurance savings quiz. It'll help you identify areas of your current coverage you can adjust to save money. Some suggestions include installing an alarm, carpooling to reduce mileage, taking a defensive driving class, or including your car on the same policy as other family cars, getting a multi-vehicle discount. Also, call your insurance agent to review your policy and ensure you're getting any age or student discounts that may apply.

Next, conduct a little research. Insurance can be confusing, luckily www.moneycentral.msn.com is a great resource for information on a variety of insurance related questions. It can help you decipher the exact coverage you need. Get educated about the various types of insurance *before* you spend the time getting quotes.

Once you know what coverage you need, you can begin to comparison shop. Most large insurance companies have web sites where they will give you a personalized quote. A few user friendly sites are statefarm.com and farmers.com. If you prefer to get a quote over the telephone, they are available from most major insurance companies. You can call Geico at 1-800-861-8380 or Progressive at 1-800-AUTO-PRO. Progressive claims that, if they can't save you money, they will tell you who can.

Surprisingly, Americans spend more time shopping for household electronics than for auto insurance. In fact we shop an average of 13 days to save about \$203 on that electronic purchase, but we spend less than one day researching our auto insurance purchase. Take a little time and shop around. It will save you a bundle in the long-run.

Visit our web site today: www.SpiritRealtyHomes.com

Don't You Just Hate Pushy Salespeople?

If you're like me, you can live without the pressure and hassles from aggressive salespeople. That's why I treat my friends and clients with helpful, healthy respect. So if you or someone you know ever has questions about real estate, please feel welcome to call me at 630-482-9610. There's never any pressure or hassles – I'm here to help.

Word Of The Month...

Studies have shown that your income and wealth is directly related to the size and depth of your vocabulary. Here is this month's word, so you can impress your friends and colleagues. You may even be able to fatten your wallet!

prodigal \ˈpra-di-gel\ (adjective)

Meaning: recklessly extravagant, characterized by wasteful expenditure

Sample Sentence: The bankruptcy proceedings were a sad realization of the man's **prodigal** life.

U.S. Government Web Site Of The Month...

Did you know the U.S. government is on-line? In fact, there are over 20,000 government web sites covering nearly every topic you can imagine. Here's one that could help you:

Start your own business with assistance from the Small Business Administration. The site provides counseling, educational courses, and information about loans. It also provides a database of federal, state, and private contracts that are available to small business owners. Simply log on to www.sba.gov to access all of the information for your small business.

You Never Know Who May Be Listening...

An elderly man who was very hard of hearing went to his doctor to be fitted for a hearing aid.

With his new aid, his hearing improved 100 percent. When he returned to the doctor for his monthly check-up, the doctor asked how the man's family felt about his new and improved hearing.

The man smiled and replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Thanks to *YOU* the word is spreading. Thanks to all of our clients and friends who graciously referred us to your friends and neighbors last month! See, rather than pester people with unwanted calls and visits, we build our business based on the positive comments and referrals from people just like you. We just couldn't do it without you!

Spirit Realty Team!

Tips For Choosing Wireless Service

Today, there are so many wireless plans available, making the right choice can be a real challenge. Here are a few simple tips to help you make the best decision:

1. Choose a wireless plan that best meets your needs. It's important to consider how many minutes you will be using each month. Also, consider if you will be using the phone for long distance calls and if you will be using the service when you are traveling. For example, a business person using the phone on a daily basis will need a different plan than someone just using the phone for emergencies. At www.point.com, you can state your individual wireless needs and compare different plans. These side-by-side comparison checksheets are very helpful.
2. Consider prepaid plans if you are new to the wireless world. These plans guarantee a certain number of minutes for a set prepaid price. If you are unsure of your cell phone needs, this is a good way to figure it out without running up a huge bill. Most cell phones are equipped with a function that will keep track of airtime. This is a tool that all cell phone users should utilize.
3. Don't sign a long contract for cellular service. With special deals being constantly offered, it's not a good idea to get tied to a long-term contract. If you decide that a deal is too good to pass up, be sure that the contract is for no more than one year. Also, be sure that you have at least 30 days to test the plan to ensure that you have the airtime and service area that you require.

Four Paws Help You Perform Better!

A study of married couples shows that when given an unpleasant task, pet owners performed better when their animal companions were near than when their spouse or human friends were around. What's going on here?

Doctors say we try to perceive people are supportive, but instead we think they are evaluating us – causing greater stress during unpleasant tasks. Your pet loves you no matter what!

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Brain Teaser Of The Month

A pregnant woman is preparing to name her seventh child. Her children's names so far are Dominique, Regis, Michelle, Fawn, Sophie and Lara. What will she name her next child -- Jessica, Katie, Abby or Tilly?
(answer at the bottom of last page)

The Real Thing

Just in case you wondered what was in that frosty mug of Coca-Cola, here are some other uses.

- You can put a T-bone steak in a bowl of Coke and it will be gone in two days.
- To loosen a rusted bolt, apply a cloth soaked in Coke to the bolt for several minutes.
- To clean corrosion from car battery terminals, douse them with a can of Coke.
- To remove rust from a chrome car bumper, rub the bumper with crumpled aluminum foil that has been dipped in Coca-Cola.

Why Swap Now?

Sarah was reading a newspaper while her husband was engrossed in a game on TV. Suddenly, she burst out laughing. "Listen to this, there's a classified ad here where a guy is offering to swap his wife for season tickets." "Hmmm," her husband said, not bothering to look away. Sarah said teasingly, "Would you swap me for season tickets?" "Absolutely not," he said, "season's more than half over!"

Helpful Kitchen Tip

Microwave unpeeled garlic cloves on high for 10 to 20 seconds. Cool, and store in a self-sealing plastic bag in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Microwaving makes the garlic easier to peel and lessens the garlicky smell on your hands. The garlic is best if used within two weeks.

Quote of the Month

"I care not what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do. That is character!"
--Teddy Roosevelt

How To Slash College Tuition Costs

Whether you're a parent sending your child to college or an adult wanting to return to college, there are great tips to help you afford the high cost of tuition. College costs are rising at a rate faster than inflation. In fact, tuition and fees at private schools now average \$16,332 per year. And public schools average \$3,510 per year. One of the easiest ways to cut the cost of college is to take advantage of several tax programs currently available.

If you are paying tuition for yourself, your spouse, or a dependent you may be eligible for education tax credits. Tax credits allow you to deduct your expenditures from the federal taxes that you owe at the end of the year. The **Hope Credit** gives a 100 percent deduction for the first \$1,000 and 50 percent of the second \$1,000 during the first two years of undergraduate studies. The student must be working toward a degree and going to school at least half-time. The **Lifetime Learning Credit** goes into effect after the second year of study. It allows you to claim 20 percent of \$5,000 and does not carry the restrictions of the **Hope Credit**. These credits are not available if you are single making over \$40,000 or married making over \$80,000.

Other options to help you save money are state sponsored tuition plans. **Prepaid Tuition Programs** allow you to purchase tuition credits to be used at a later time. **Tuition Savings Plans** allow you to begin an account at a higher rate of return for future tuition use. To find out if either of these programs are offered in your state call 1-877-277-6496 or log on to www.collegesavings.org.

For more information on other types of college tax savings visit www.IRS.gov keyword education incentives, or go to www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf.

Do You Have A Tough Real Estate Question You Want Answered?

I love hearing from all of my good friends and clients who enjoy reading my monthly letter. And I'm always looking to answer pressing questions you might have about *anything* relating to real estate or home ownership. If you have a question, tip, or idea, please feel free to call me at **630-482-9610**. Perhaps I'll feature you in a future issue!

Short-Term Antibiotic Discovery

With so many bacterial infections becoming immune to commonly prescribed antibiotics, the medical community has been testing new short-term antibiotics to treat infections.

The new short-term antibiotics are given in a higher dose than the old-fashioned antibiotics. Thus, it is more difficult for the bacteria in your body to become resistant. In fact a common ear infection can now be treated with a three day antibiotic or a single shot instead of the traditional dosage. The shorter course of antibiotics is as effective and is less expensive than traditional antibiotics.

They've also been found to have fewer side effects. This new break-through in medical treatment allows patients to have an alternative to the typical seven to ten day course of antibiotic care.

Visit our web site today: www.SpiritRealtyHomes.com

Thanks for Thinking of Us!

Did you know we can help you or any of your friends, family or acquaintances save time and money when buying or selling a home? Thanks for keeping us in mind with your referrals...and spreading the word!

Save Money On Flowers

Whenever you need to send flowers to a friend or family in another city, call a florist in the city where the event is taking place, rather than calling one in the town where you live. Using a shop in your town requires payment of \$10 or more just in wire transfer fees. This also applies to using on-line florists like 1-800 Flowers or FTD on-line.

Instead, you can use an on-line yellow pages to look up the phone number for a florist in the other town and use a credit card for payment. This may require a little extra effort, but the savings will be worth it.

Alternative Medicine Database

A new federal Internet database on alternative medicine offers free access to more than 220,000 articles, abstracts, and references on everything from meditation to magnets. The database was developed by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the National Library of Medicine. This useful information is available at

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nccam/camonpubmed.html>

Answer To Trivia Tease...

Teeth

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

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Carrie, Lee, Stacey, Ken

“Who Else Wants To Win A \$300 Transferable Gift Certificate??”

Your chances to win could be better than you think!

Sorry! No right answers from last months Trivia Challenge...The trivia question was:

What was used to erase lead pencil marks before rubber came into use?

a) bread b) newspaper c) cotton d) flower petals e) egg shells

The answer is letter “A,” bread. So let’s move on to this month’s trivia question...

What is the most plentiful element in seawater?

a) hydrogen b) chlorine c) oxygen d) sodium e) magnesium

The first 3 people to call us with the correct answer will win! 630-482-9610

Real Estate Corner...

Q. We are planning to make major home improvements. I am worried about getting our investment back when we decide to sell. How do we know if we are spending wisely?

A. When remodeling, you must weigh the cost of the remodel versus the value of the finished product. When I say “value,” I am not only talking about resale value, but I am talking about the value of the remodel to you personally. Some important questions to ask are how long you will be staying in your home and what benefits will the remodeling project bring to your daily life.

Regarding resale value, your remodeling project needs to be assessed based on your neighborhood. The best home improvements are cosmetic improvements. Minor updates to the kitchen and bathrooms, or a new roof are always valuable. Aesthetic additions such as new carpeting or paint are another type of remodeling project that returns almost 100 percent of their cost to the value of your home.

For larger projects, the average return within one year after the remodel varies. Major kitchen remodeling gives an average return of 87 percent, a family room addition at 84 percent, a master suite averages 82 percent, and window replacement 68 percent. As you can see from these examples, your remodeling project will always add some degree of value to your home.

When remodeling, it is important to remember that you will be selling your home someday and you need to make wise remodeling decisions. You must weigh the up-front cost of the project versus the usefulness to you and added value to your home. If you are thinking of selling or buying soon, and require competent and caring representation, please call me at **630-482-9610**.

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