

What's Going On At Nash Nash Bean & Ford

This Month's Firm Focus

Good planning lessens the effect of a natural disaster

Natural disasters have been making headlines this spring, from the earthquake and tsunami in Japan to the path of killer tornados in Missouri and Alabama to near record-breaking flooding on our own rivers. While most natural disasters do not give advance notice to their impending destruction, you can prepare for both short-term and long-term difficulties.

To prepare for an evacuation or disaster-related property damage, the Red Cross and FEMA both recommend families prepare a quick-to-find and easy-to-carry emergency bag containing the following items:

- A week's supply of all medications along with a list of medications and prescription information
- Photocopies of personal documents including passport and/or birth certificate
- Financial information including insurance policy numbers and contact information for mortgage lenders, standard bills and insurance companies
- Cell phone with charger
- Family contact information including telephone, email and address information
- Extra cash
- Extra set of car and house keys

In addition to your short-term emergency kit, it is important to complete your long-range planning in the event a natural disaster becomes a personal tragedy. Having your estate plan prepared and ready to execute can ease a difficult time for family members. Some tips:

- *Plan* – No one wants to contemplate their own death or disability, but a clear plan can provide great comfort to your family during a stressful time. A living trust not only provides for your heirs, but also gives

direction to the distribution of your assets and can speed the settling of your estate by avoiding a time-consuming and costly probate process.

- *Share* – Your estate plan documents provide a road-map to your wishes. A living trust can protect your assets from your heirs' creditors or divorce, but don't create your own disaster by springing a surprise on your family after your death.
- *Revisit* – Once your plan is in place, it is equally important to keep it up-to-date with your current wishes and assets. Plan to review your plan every three years or whenever a major milestone occurs, such as a marriage, divorce, birth of a child or major property purchase.

We never know when a disaster may roll into our lives, but by being prepared in both the long and short-term we can lessen their effect and provide a safer and clearer path for our families.

Do you know a child who has "aged" out of an important safety net?

As much as our teenagers crave their independence, they may find this new-found freedom limits your ability to assist them when they need it most – during an emergency. Your 18-year-old may still live in your home, eat your food and drive your car, but, once your child turns 18, she is legally an adult, and while she gains several rights, you lose a few, including the right to access her medical records or direct medical care in case of an emergency.

To help both parents and their children, we offer a Student Packet of Legal Directives:

- *A HIPAA document*: Designed to prevent anyone from abusing another person's medical information, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act prevents medical personnel from releasing patient information to unauthorized individuals, including parents, once a child turns 18. The HIPAA Authorization Form allows

parents' access to their young adults' medical records – from something as simple as obtaining vaccination records for school to transferring healthcare records during an emergency.

- *A Health Care Power of Attorney:* In addition to the HIPAA Authorization, a Health Care Power of Attorney legally allows you to act as an agent in a medical emergency if your son or daughter is incapacitated.
- *A Property Power of Attorney:* This document allows you to act as an “agent” for your child if he is unable to make a request himself on any property in his name, including a car, apartment, student loans or bank accounts. This is especially helpful if your child travels abroad or attends school several hours away from home.

Although these documents provide a level of protection to your child once he turns 18, they do not supersede his ability to make his own medical or financial decisions. They are simply measures to protect him in an emergency.

Protect your online identity

The digital age has added exciting new methods of communicating with friends and family and conducting business, along with establishing an expanded means of shopping.

To safely take advantage of these ventures, it is important to know how to protect yourself online. A few easy tips to ensure your online safety include:

- *Manage your “cookies.”* Cookies are tidbits of information websites store on your computer. Most cookies are useful but some are managed by a third party for the sole purpose of sharing your online actions with other companies. To better control who sees your online activities, you can manage your cookies through your web browser (Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc.). Listed under options, preferences or set-up, you may select to block all cookies

(which will make some websites inoperable), block third-party cookies or select to ask about each cookie.

- *Keep a “clean” email address.* It is a best practice to keep one email address for your personal correspondence – such as emails with family and friends – and a secondary email for postings to public sites, such as message boards, newsgroups, chat rooms, etc. Addresses that are posted on public sites can easily be discovered by spammers (online junk emailers). If your “public” email becomes compromised with spam, simply shut it down and start a new one.
- *Think twice before revealing personal details online.* It may seem like an innocent question, but by revealing your full date (including year) and place of birth, identity thieves may have enough information to compromise your information and “borrow” your name and credit for their own uses.
- *Avoid sites that offer a large prize in exchange for your contact information or personal details.* In many cases, a sweepstakes or contest site is gathering your data simply to sell your information to other marketers.
- *Do not reply to spammers, for any reason.* Even with the best filters on your email accounts, spam (or junk email) can slip through to your “in” box. When it does, simply delete the email or forward it to your email provider as “spam.” Do NOT reply with “Remove” in the subject line or click on the unsubscribe link. In most cases, all these actions do is let the spammer know that they have hit an active email account which they can sell to other spammers.
- *Understand web security.* While it is always best to only shop on trusted and familiar websites, you can also safely visit new sites if you understand web security addresses. In any browser, a secure address line will begin with “https” instead of “http”. Never submit a credit card number or other highly sensitive personal information

without first making sure your connection is secure.

- *Understand the security of your home computer.* If you access the internet using a DSL line (usually through your telephone company) or broadband cable modem, your connection is open 24 hours a day, compared to a dial-up modem, which accesses the internet only at each connection. To safeguard your computer, turn it off when you are not using it. With DSL or cable, your internet connection is open whenever your computer is on, even if you are not logged on to the internet.
- *Remember, YOU decide* what information you reveal. Don't give out your personal information too easily. Just because a site asks for your information, that doesn't mean you have to give it to them. While it is important to give accurate information if you are purchasing something over the internet, you can, in many cases, provide a non-address, for example, 123 No Name Street, NoTown, DC 00000. Occasionally the terms of service require your real address, but you can still decide if you feel their service is worth sharing your information.
- *Don't reply to any unexpected emails* from financial or governmental institutions. While you may receive regularly scheduled email alerts from your financial institution, you should never receive an email from them asking for your personal information, including account numbers and/or passwords. In addition, if an email asks you to call regarding your account information, it is a best practice to not use a telephone number listed in an email but to use a number from your statement or the telephone directory.

Continuing Education efforts of our attorneys:

Tyler Lutz and **Bob Nash** both participated in the 54th annual Estate Planning Short Course, sponsored by the Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education. Over the two

days, Tyler and Bob attended sessions on recent changes to Federal estate taxes, new case decisions and trends in Illinois law and impact and changes to the Illinois Powers of Attorney Act taking effect in July, along with sessions on advanced estate planning techniques including valuing gifts and international issues for foreign property, planning for retirement benefits, and apportionment of estate taxes.

Jim Nash and **John Bean** attended the American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys Spring Summit in New Orleans May 12-15. Conference topics included: Funeral Trusts: Step by Step Process to Fund, Opportunities with Insurance under the New Tax Law, Medicare Supplement Success Stories, Client Engagement Standards, Getting Medicaid and VA Benefits, and Getting the Best of Both Worlds: Assets Separate During Life, Together at Death.

Congratulations to **Jim Nash** on being named to the Education Advisory Board of the American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys!

Speaker's Connection

Thanks to the Alzheimer's Association of Galesburg, the Hennepin Retired Steelworkers - with a special thanks to Agnes Dunn for the invitation - and Alternatives for the Older Adult for asking us to speak at their organizations' meetings this quarter.

We regularly work with professionals, churches, non-profit organizations, clubs and other groups to help educate their clients and members on the principles of Estate, Tax and Business Planning. We also speak to elder organizations, such as Alzheimer's Associations, assisted living facilities and senior citizen organizations on Medicaid planning, care giving and retirement planning topics.

If you would like us to provide information at your next meeting, please contact our office at 309-944-2188, 309-762-9368 or 1-800-644-5345 and ask for Joni Conrad.

For additional information, you also may log onto our website at www.nashbeanford.com, and under "Our Firm" click on Speaker Connection to view all the topics available.

Nash Nash Bean & Ford Happenings

It's a boy! *Henry Andrew Pratt* was born on March 31, 2011, weighing 9 lbs., 5 oz. and 21 inches long, to Andy and Rachel Pratt. Henry is joined at home by older brother, Carson. Henry is the grandson of Mary Pratt, Curt Ford's assistant and elder law paralegal.

Graduation! *Austin Conrad*, son of Joni Conrad, our firm's Marketing Coordinator, graduated from Geneseo High School. He plans to attend Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota to major in Physics or Chemistry and minor in Philosophy and Music.

Recipe:

Strawberry Pizza (from Shirley Gradert)

1 package refrigerator cookie dough

1 8-oz package cream cheese

1 c. sour cream

1 c. powdered sugar

Strawberries, hulled and cut in half

2 c. water

1 ¼ c. sugar

¼ c. cornstarch

1 small box gelatin

1. Spread cookie dough on two 9" round tins or on one 13" to 14" pizza pan for crust. Try to pinch the crust up as high as you can so the glaze does not run over the side. Bake and cool.
2. Whip together the cream cheese, sour cream and powdered sugar and spread on crust.
3. Arrange strawberries on top of cream mixture.
4. To make the glaze, in a saucepan, mix together the water, sugar and cornstarch. Boil until clear, then stir in the gelatin.
5. Cool and pour over strawberries. Glaze should be thick or it will run over the side of the crust.

Should we be helping someone you care about? Don't keep us a secret!

Here at Nash Nash Bean & Ford, LLP, we are very proud of the level of service we provide to our clients, especially the added benefits we're able to provide, including our free newsletters, free 3-year reviews and free initial consultations in the event of death or incapacity, and more!

It's our goal to continue providing you with that same level of service year after year – and we're asking you to help us do just that! We encourage you to tell your friends and family about our firm and please tell us about them as well. Referrals are important – primarily because they are a reflection of your confidence in our ability to provide high quality service, and that your experience was a positive one.

If you would like to refer someone you know to our firm, please share the name and address by calling 309-944-2188/309-762-9368, emailing info@nashbeanford.com or mailing to Nash Nash Bean & Ford, LLP, PO Box 63, Geneseo, IL 61254.

Join our Email Club!

We are happy to offer you:

- eAlerts filled with timely and informative articles about estate planning related topics.
- Notice of upcoming FREE public seminars.
- NNB&F law firm news and events.

It's easy to join...

Visit our website at www.nashbeanford.com and click "Contact Us" in the upper right corner.

It's that simple! Please tell your friends! AND--

The Nash Nash Bean & Ford law firm will NOT share your information with anyone...ever!

Coming Up! Our next issue will include information on a new report on the growing problem of financial abuse against the elderly.