

6	9	8	3	2	1	5	7	4
3	7	4	5	9	6	1	8	2
1	2	5	4	8	7	9	3	6
7	5	6	1	3	9	4	2	8
4	1	9	8	6	2	3	5	7
2	8	3	7	4	5	6	9	1
9	3	2	6	7	4	8	1	5
8	4	1	2	5	3	7	6	9
5	6	7	9	1	8	2	4	3

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Leaving on a Jet Plane?

3 Essential Packing Tips

Many people are considering traveling this spring for the first time since the pandemic started. A lot has changed since 2020, but packing for vacation remains a hassle, and baggage fees haven't gone anywhere. Here are some essential tips to keep your load as light as possible — physically and mentally.

Make a list. It's just as easy to forget things as it is to overpack. Solve both problems at once by creating a packing list in advance. Consider in detail what you'll need, and put it in writing. As each item gets added to the suitcase, check it off. Writing everything down creates a system to prevent leaving anything behind. And when it's all on paper, you're more likely to notice that you probably don't need that many pairs of sandals.

Use your personal item for extra storage. Airlines generally allow travelers one carry-on bag and one personal item. The dimensions allowed vary by airline, but the general rule of thumb is that the personal item needs to fit



under the seat in front of you. Don't bring a small purse or a laptop bag when you can take a large tote or backpack. With the extra room, you can avoid checking another bag.

Never check essential items. Lost luggage is the worst way to start a vacation, but it happens. If your luggage is misplaced, you probably won't get it back that same day. So, you need to pack all essential items, like prescription medications or glasses, in your carry-on bag. Some experts even recommend tossing an extra shirt or pair of underwear in your carry-on in case your bag gets lost. You'll be glad to have them if something goes awry.

Packing smart will make for a less stressful journey. You can kick back, relax, and enjoy the trip knowing that everything you need is right there in your suitcase, and everything you don't need is safe at home.

MARCH 2022

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Understanding Qualified Retirement Accounts

Those of you who like to watch basketball are familiar with a strategy referred to as a “full-court press.” The idea is to cover every inch of the court with a defensive player — and our firm is doing a “full-court press.” We are using every tool and every opportunity to communicate some vital information regarding qualified retirement accounts such as IRAs, 401(k)s, Roth IRAs, etc.

Unfortunately, there is a tremendous amount of misinformation and misunderstanding as to who to name as your beneficiary. Starting last month with our monthly Q&A, we discussed the options and the various consequences of each option. A recording of the monthly Q&A presentations can be seen by going to our website and logging in as a member. In addition, we are sending all of our Life Plan Members a new set of “funding instructions.” Please pay special attention to the changes in Article IIIA that is entitled “Qualified Retirement Accounts.” This month the primary topic of the newsletter is how to properly select the beneficiary of your qualified retirement account. Like I said, it’s a “full-court press.” It’s *that* important!

First and foremost, your trust should never be registered as the owner of your trust. No exceptions. This is considered an early withdrawal and will trigger serious penalties and unnecessary income tax consequences. The problem stems from the thought that everything should be registered in the name of your trust. For the most part, that is true — but retirement accounts are an exception.

If you are married, you are required by law to name your spouse as the primary beneficiary of your retirement account. The only way to get around this is to obtain a waiver from your spouse.



So far, the rules are pretty simple. The challenges become who to name as the alternate beneficiary if your spouse does not survive you or who to name as the primary beneficiary if you are not married.

For non-spouse recipients, there are three options for beneficiary designations.

Option No. 1

Name a person (or persons) as a beneficiary of the retirement account. The advantage of this choice is that each named beneficiary will have 10 years to withdraw the funds from the retirement account(s) allowing the income tax consequences to be deferred for that period of time. However, the disadvantage of this option is that the retirement account is exposed to the liabilities of the named beneficiary. If there is a judgment against the beneficiary, the retirement account can be attached to satisfy the judgment. If this were to occur, the beneficiary not only loses the money from the retirement account but is also responsible for the income taxes on the funds that were taken from the account to satisfy the judgment.

Option No. 2

Name your living trust as the beneficiary. If you have asset protection language in your trust, the advantage of this option is that it will prevent the retirement account from being exposed to the beneficiary’s judgments. The disadvantage of this option is that each beneficiary has only five years to withdraw the funds from the retirement account. This will result in adverse income tax consequences for the beneficiary.

Continued on Pg. 3 ...

It's More Than Just Tidying Up

4 Health Benefits of Spring-Cleaning

Sunday, March 20, is the first day of spring — which means it's time for some spring-cleaning. Did you know that cleaning is not just about tidying up a physical space? It's also about improving overall well-being. Here's how organization and cleanliness can help you in more ways than you might expect.

Spring-cleaning reduces stress and depression.

Tidiness and mental health are actually connected. Studies have found that having a clean home is directly correlated to happiness and your ability to focus. Anxiety can spike when laundry is piling up, items are strewn everywhere, and papers get scattered on various surfaces within the home. Clearing the clutter is a great way to boost your mood and increase those feel-good hormones.

It prevents illnesses.

Doorknobs, refrigerator handles, light switches, countertops, and remote controls are all things we touch many times a day. Cleaning anything that's used often is one way to reduce the spread of germs.

By keeping household surfaces clean, we help thwart the spread of viruses and illnesses.

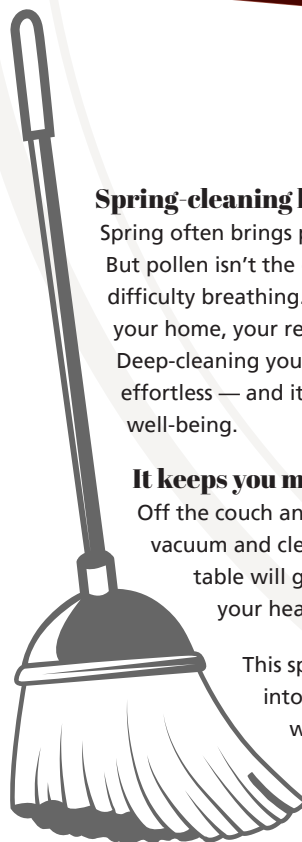
Spring-cleaning helps you breathe better.

Spring often brings pollen that triggers allergies for many. But pollen isn't the only thing to blame when people have difficulty breathing. When dust and pet dander build up in your home, your respiratory system is greatly affected too. Deep-cleaning your air filters and vents can make breathing effortless — and it's truly amazing how this can improve your well-being.

It keeps you more active.

Off the couch and on your feet! Even just running the vacuum and clearing the clutter from the dining room table will get you up and moving, which is healthy for your heart and body.

This spring season, putting some elbow grease into your cleaning will benefit you in more ways than one. Trust me, you'll thank yourself later!



Make a 4-Leaf Clover Keepsake But Find the Elusive Good-Luck Charm First

One of St. Patrick's Day's most popular symbols is a four-leaf clover. In Ireland, these clovers represent luck and good fortune. Each leaf on the clover has a different meaning — faith, hope, love, and success. It's a tradition to find a four-leaf clover on St. Patrick's Day and do activities involving this lucky leaf. So, how do you find these good-luck charms, and what can you do with them?

How to Find a 4-Leaf Clover

Although it may seem difficult, it's easier than you might think. First, find a dense patch of white clover — near it is where four-leaf clovers reside. They are different from the rest and are often smaller, so keep that in mind when you look for the lucky green clovers.

Instead of staring at the patch in close detail and counting leaves, search the patch without focusing on the tiny details. This increases the odds of eyeing a four-leaf clover because the different patterns, shapes,

and sizes of these clovers will jump out at you. If you find one, keep looking! There's a chance another one might be nearby.

Clover Craft

Once you find your clover, preserve the luck in it all year by placing it in a picture frame. First, gently press the clover leaves between the pages of a large book for several days to flatten them out. After pressing, you can add green food coloring to your clover to enhance its color. Once it's dry, clean it and let it sit overnight. Then, place your clover onto acid-free paper, cut to fit the size of a picture frame of your choice. Next, use acid-free glue to keep your clover in place, and finally, seal your frame shut. You now have your personal good luck charm!

Searching for a four-leaf clover and creating a keepsake will be a great bonding experience for you and your family. We wish you luck! Happy St. Patrick's Day!

... continued from cover

Option No. 3

Create a retirement trust, and name the separate trust shares created under that retirement trust as the beneficiary of the retirement accounts. The primary advantages of this option are that the beneficiary (or beneficiaries) can receive *asset protection*, like the living trust, and that the *withdrawal period is 10 years, not 5 years*.

The retirement trust then creates separate trust shares for the children, grandchildren, or whoever you choose as the beneficiaries. In fact, the beneficiaries of the retirement trust can receive the distributions just as they could if they were named as the direct beneficiaries (over a 10-year period), but they can also receive asset protection through the retirement trust. No restrictions need to be placed on the beneficiaries. **The retirement trust is a completely separate document from the living trust and is specifically designed to deal with retirement accounts.**

Naming a retirement trust as the beneficiary is also advantageous when you are uncomfortable giving the beneficiary of your retirement accounts the authority to withdraw the funds from the retirement account (either because the beneficiary is too young or too anxious). In the retirement trust, you can appoint a trustee to control the withdrawals from the retirement accounts. The terms of the retirement trust can, for example, specify that the trustee will distribute the proceeds outright to the beneficiary or hold the proceeds in accordance with your directions as specified in the retirement trust.

Whether you choose to let your beneficiaries be in charge of their shares of the retirement trust or choose a more restricted option, the retirement trust provides the same benefits of postponing the distribution from the retirement account up to 10 years and prevents the "overanxious" child or grandchild (or even the creditor of the beneficiary) from prematurely withdrawing the funds, thereby triggering an unnecessary, premature income tax. Either way, the funds are better protected.

Another situation in which you might consider using a retirement trust is if you are married and have children from a prior relationship. If you name your spouse as the primary beneficiary there might be some concern that after you die your surviving spouse will name a new set of beneficiaries different than your intended contingent beneficiaries. To alleviate this problem, you can name the retirement trust as the beneficiary, with your spouse listed as the primary beneficiary of the retirement trust. When your spouse dies, the retirement trust designates your contingent beneficiaries. This will prevent your spouse from changing the contingent beneficiaries. The only drawback of this arrangement is that your surviving spouse cannot use the spousal "rollover" option; the funds must be withdrawn over 10 years.

If you choose to use a retirement trust for your retirement account(s), a retirement trust must be created if you don't already have one. **In addition, our office should prepare the necessary paperwork designating the retirement trust as the beneficiary. Do not change the beneficiary until you have first consulted with our office.**

If you are interested in establishing a retirement trust as the beneficiary of one or more retirement accounts or if you have questions about properly designating the retirement trust as the beneficiary, contact our office. Please be aware that the rules governing the retirement trust are complicated and should not be attempted by you without advice and assistance from an attorney in our office.

-John Preston

Sudoku

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		4		9		1		
	2	5		8				6
7				3		4	2	
				6	2			
		3			5			1
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8							6	
5			9					

Solution on Pg. 4

Inspired by MyRecipes.com

Easy March Madness Chili



Ingredients

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp Creole seasoning
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 2 16-oz cans diced tomatoes
- 2 16-oz cans small red beans
- 2 8-oz cans tomato sauce

Directions

1. In a deep pot, brown the beef, stirring often.
2. Once beef is cooked, add chili powder, Creole seasoning, and cumin, cooking for 1 minute.
3. Stir in diced tomatoes, beans, and tomato sauce and bring the mixture to a boil.
4. After the mixture boils, reduce the heat to low and let chili simmer for 15 minutes.
5. Serve with toppings of choice, like cheese, sour cream, or chives.