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News ON THE HOUSE

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Be sure to talk to your real estate professional on how you can protect your home & budget with First American

"The Jones & Lara Team, Your Realtors for Life!"



Happy Holidays!

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter which is full of tips and ideas for you as a homeowner.

As an experienced real estate professional, I have an in-depth understanding of my clients' needs and challenges. I want you to know that my experience is at your disposal, so please feel free to call me for any of your real estate and/or home warranty needs.

Get Organized for Holiday Entertaining

As you start preparing for holiday guests, take a look at your home. Is it crowded with clutter? If so, you might want to think about getting your home in order. After all, you need to make room for a Christmas tree, gifts and stockings!

Not sure how to start? Here are some tips from Shelving.com, where folks have been making space work better for almost 50 years. If you need more efficient storage space, they have the answer:

Maximize your space. If you have an old-fashioned closet with just one shelf and one hanging bar, install shelves and use all the vertical space you have. Most closets only utilize about 50 percent of their storage capacity. With a properly designed shelving system, you can use nearly all of the available space.



Make items easy to find. You don't want to waste time pawing through closets or searching under beds to find what you need, so don't just jam clutter out of sight. Create a more efficient storage space. Use labeled bins in your closet. Box up and store off season items. Use

shelves and drawers to categorize items.

Decorate with storage space. Put ottomans in the living room, and use them to store magazines or board games. Hang attractive shelves to decorate along your walls. Instead of end tables, use antique chests or drawers that also provide useable storage space.

Keeping calm during the chaotic holiday season starts at home-clutter creates stress and will certainly disrupt the peace and joy of the

holiday season. Start with one project (say, a single room or closet) before tackling another.

DID YOU KNOW...

Having **the right home protection plan** helps ensure that **your home & your budget is protected.**

Call your Real Estate Professional today to find out how you can **save time and money** on home repairs.



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Help Your Home Ward Off Winter's Chill

Winterizing your home will not only keep you more comfortable, but also minimize your heating costs. In some cases, winterizing can also help improve your home's safety.

Before curling up with some spiced cider, take the following steps to winterize your home:

Check all windows and doors for drafts. A poorly insulated home lets warm air out and cold air in, making heating systems work harder to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. All that extra energy translates into higher heating bills. If you notice gaps or cracks, buy a caulking gun or home insulation kit at your local hardware store, then put it to use.



Clean all ducts and vents. Clogged vents increase energy costs and can pose fire hazards. Take your dryer - clogged dryer vents cost homeowners an extra \$18 to \$24 every month and cause 15,500 fires each year. Most manufacturers suggest that you clean your dryer vent once a year, so make it part of your winterizing process.

Check your pipes. Pipes that lack proper insulation can crack and leak, damaging your home. Thoroughly drain all garden hoses before putting them in storage. Drain air conditioner pipes, and turn off your air conditioner's shut-off valve. Hot water composes a hefty chunk of your utility bill, so consider purchasing a water heater blanket for your water heater. Make sure that all hot water pipes are insulated. You can purchase heat tape or pipe insulation at hardware stores.

Clean your heating system. If your HVAC has clean vents and filters, it will produce more heat more efficiently. Consider hiring a professional service to make sure that your HVAC runs efficiently this winter.



Winter Pledge: Clearing Garage Floors Gets Cars Indoors

When a chill is in the air and clutter is in the garage, your car is often forced out in the cold. Whether its colors are fading or it's taking even longer to "warm" the car on those chilly winter mornings, Mother Nature's elements take their toll on your car. As the mercury drops, now is the time to get the car back in the garage.

"Getting the car in the garage starts with getting the garage in order," says do-it-yourself expert Karl Champley. Champley points out that the first step to organizing the garage and getting the car back inside requires lifting the junk up off the floor and organizing it on the walls. The walls are storage space too often left unused. Plus, many people leave items on the floor, loosely stacked against the walls with no support, leaving the chance that if you bump them getting in or out of the car, they may fall onto the car and scratch it or cause other damage.

To clear the mess, get the car inside, and avoid damaging the car when it's in the garage here are some tips:

From Garage Floor Sprawl to On the Wall. Clear floor space to make it clutter-free. Modular hooks, shelving and storage cabinets allow you to organize what you have on the wall. You can even hang your bike, wheel barrow and ladders to clear additional floor space and prevent damage to the car when parked in the garage.

Organize the Place with Tailored Space. Once you know what needs to go up on the wall, it's time to create zones for your sports equipment, your workshop projects, your gardening center or other hobbies you're passionate about.



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Holiday Spiral Ham Recipe



P Lauren Fay-Neri,
www.tasteofhome.com

With its tangy cranberry-apple relish and the pineapple wedges on the side, this moist, festive ham makes a striking centerpiece for any special-occasion meal.

Ingredients

1 fully cooked spiral-sliced ham (8 pounds)

1 fresh pineapple, peeled, cored and cut into four wedges

1 package (12 ounces) fresh or frozen cranberries

3 medium apples, peeled and cubed

1-1/4 cups sugar

1 medium navel orange, peeled and cut into chunks

3 tablespoons lemon juice

Directions

Place ham on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Arrange pineapple wedges around ham. Cover and bake at 325° for 1 to 1-1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, combine cranberries and apples. Cook over medium heat until the berries pop, about 15 minutes. Add the sugar, orange chunks and lemon juice. Cook and stir until sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat.

Spoon half of the cranberry relish over ham. Bake 30 minutes longer or until a meat thermometer reads 140°. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Cut pineapple wedges into large chunks; serve with ham and remaining relish.

Yield: 12-16 servings.