

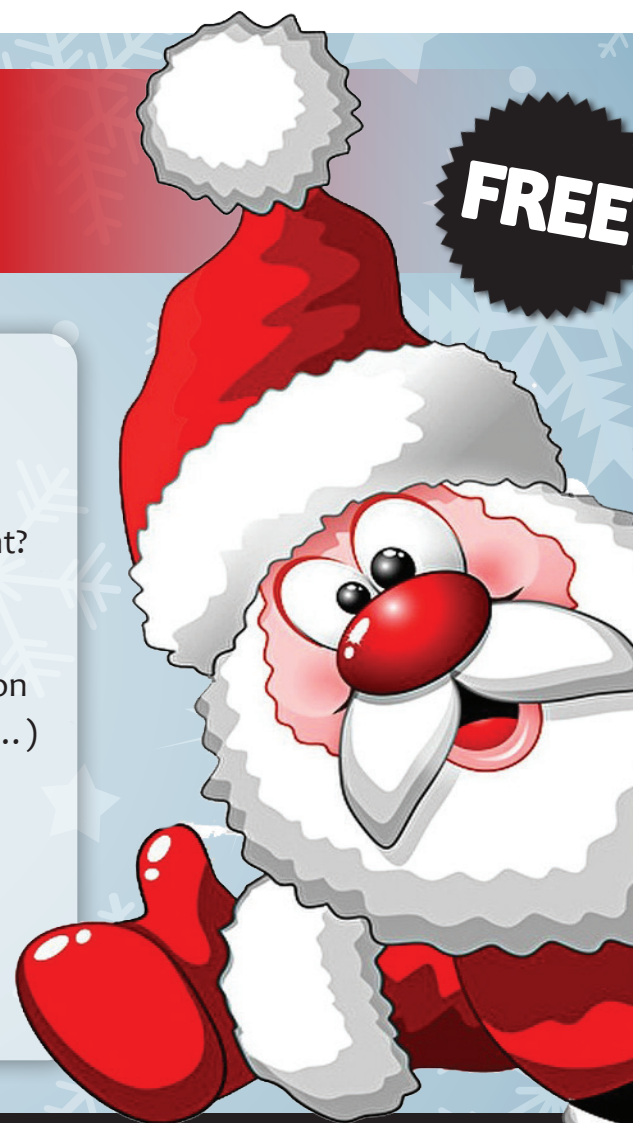
senior review

December 2023

FREE

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A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Eau Claire

It's Respiratory Illness Season – Take Action & Protect Yourself!

By the Eau Claire City-County Health Department

Many respiratory illnesses with similar symptoms circulate more in the fall and winter season. Certain viruses, like the ones that cause COVID-19, flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection, are more likely to make people very sick.

Anyone can get a respiratory illness, but some people have a higher risk of getting very sick from it. These people include:

- **Older adults:** As we age, our risk of getting very sick from respiratory illnesses increases. As people get older, their immune systems don't work as well.
- **People with chronic health conditions:** People who have certain underlying health conditions, like chronic lung disease, heart disease, or obesity, are at higher risk of getting very sick from respiratory illnesses. These health conditions can cause important body systems to struggle. While their body is under this strain, it can be harder to deal with the additional stress of a respiratory illness.
- **People with weakened immune systems:** people taking necessary medications after an organ transplant or people with certain cancers have a greater risk of getting very sick from respiratory illnesses. Their bodies have decreased defense against infections and may have a harder time building long-lasting protection from past vaccinations or infections.

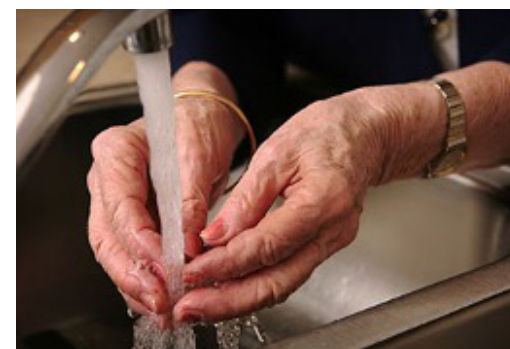
There are actions you can take to protect yourself and others:

- **Getting vaccinated** is one of the best ways to decrease your chances of getting sick with the flu or COVID-19. If you are 60

or older, talk to your healthcare provider to see if the RSV vaccine is a good fit for you. It takes about two weeks after getting a vaccine for your body to build up protection against the disease. The sooner you get your vaccines, the sooner you'll be protected. We can't predict the timing or intensity of the spread of flu and RSV in any given year, but we know the COVID-19 levels already are increasing.

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Washing your hands will help protect you from germs.
- **Keep physical distance from people who are sick** or have cold-like symptoms, when possible.
- **Wearing a high-quality mask** can help reduce the amount of germs you breathe in. You can also wear a mask to help protect others you're in close contact with if you have a respiratory illness.

Whether or not you are at higher risk of getting seriously ill, consider getting vaccinated and using these tools to decrease your chances of catching or spreading a respiratory illness and lower your likelihood of getting very sick if you do catch one. Don't wait – protect yourself now!



Plan Today for Tomorrow

Planning and pre-planning our funerals is never an easy conversion to have however being prepared can ease the grief of our loved ones.

The funeral planning section in the following pages gives information, education, and advice from local professionals who are ready to help in your time of need.

Plan your memorial. Preserve your legacy.

Planning your memorial in advance ensures you are remembered exactly the way you want. Decisions you make today will reduce the emotional and financial strain your family experiences in their grief.

Plan ahead. It's what's best for everybody.



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Editor/Publisher: Arwen Rasmussen
Offices:
3315 Nimitz Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701
P: 715-831-0325
F: 715-831-7051
E: seniorreviewnewspapers@gmail.com

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WHY IS PRENEED FUNERAL PLANNING IMPORTANT?

A Wise Financial and Emotional Decision *by Lenmark-Gomsrud-Linn Funeral Home*



No one likes to think about death, let alone plan for it. In many families, discussing one's mortality is an extremely uncomfortable topic. But it is a topic that should be discussed and planned for well in advance of your death.

By pre-planning your funeral, you relieve your family of having to make important financial decisions during a period of great stress and grief – a time when people aren't thinking very clearly and may not know what to do because you never made your wishes known.

It's easy to say, "Don't make a fuss. I don't want a ceremony. Just bury me and be done with it." But it is important to realize that the ritual of a funeral and/or memorial service isn't for the deceased, but for the living. It is a time when friends and family can gather together to grieve openly and to provide support for one another.



Pre-planning your funeral can be very informal, and as simple as following our pre-planning checklist and sharing your wishes with a family member. More formal arrangements in the form of a preneed contract can be set up with a funeral home and pre-funded through a funeral trust, bank trust agreement, or another method.

Pre-planning, when done properly, can give you peace of mind because you know that your arrangements are ready and pre-funded. Meet with your funeral home to discuss preplanning.

By pre-planning your funeral, you can:

- Make all the arrangements during a time of peace and not leave them to your family during their time of grief.
- Make your wishes known.
- Control the cost of your funeral and protect from inflation.
- Ensure that personal records are organized and easy for your survivors to locate.
- Protect your insurance so that it provides for your survivors and not for funeral expenses.
- Provide protection in case the need arises before it is expected.

Sources cited: Aurora Casket Company 2002-2003; FDLIC 2012

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- Plantar fasciitis
- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Flat feet
- Sports injuries and ankle sprains
- And others

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Reservations are requested as seating is limited.

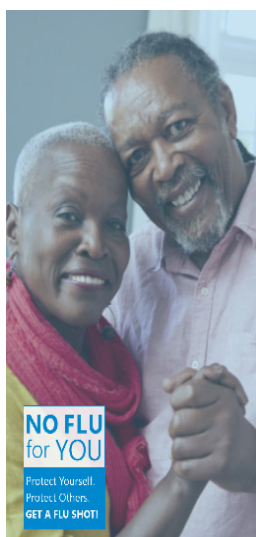
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The Importance of the Funeral Ceremony

By Randall Mundt, Stokes, Prock & Mundt Funeral Chapel

Funeral ceremonies have long held significant importance in many cultures and societies worldwide. They provide an opportunity for grieving individuals to express their emotions, offering a sense of closure, and facilitating the process of mourning and healing. Whether it's a full traditional (casketed) service, or a celebration of life after cremation, the impact is very powerful.



surrounded by others who share the same feelings can provide immense emotional comfort. It lessens the sense of isolation that often accompanies grief.

Everyone's life deserves to be celebrated, and funerals provide that opportunity. They allow for the recounting of achievements, memories, and the positive impact the person had on others' lives. The gathering provides a formal way for individuals to pay their respects to the departed

Funerals provide a structured environment where people can openly express their grief. Sharing sorrow with others who are experiencing similar emotions can be incredibly cathartic. A funeral ceremony marks the reality of the person's passing. Seeing the body and/or participating in rituals can help attendees acknowledge the finality of death, which is crucial for the grieving process. Rituals often help people accept the loss, making it easier to cope with the absence of the deceased.

soul, reinforcing the value and significance of the person's life. Many times laughter can be heard during a time of sharing, or the time of gathering following the ceremony, as people share stories about their loved one. Your loved one may have even stated that they don't want a ceremony. However it's important to remember that funerals aren't for the deceased; they're for the living.

The ritual of a ceremony brings together friends, family, and community members. This support network plays a vital role in helping the bereaved cope with their loss. Sharing stories and memories can create a sense of unity among mourners. Being

Different cultures and religions have specific funeral rituals and traditions. These ceremonies often have deep symbolic meaning and are essential for honoring the beliefs and customs of the deceased and their family. For religious individuals, funeral ceremonies offer a way to seek spiritual solace and comfort. Prayers, hymns, or other religious practices can provide a sense of peace and hope. In recent times however, there has been a shift in how funeral ceremonies are carried out. No longer do you have to feel bound to tradition. Taking the time to personalize a service to fit the life of your loved one is becoming more commonplace. Park their favorite fishing boat or motorcycle out front, serve their favorite food, play music that they loved; the options are endless. Take the time to make it meaningful and memorable. Tell the story of their life.

Funerals, especially for younger individuals, can be educational. They help in understanding the concept of mortality and teach valuable lessons about life and death. Sometimes parents try to shield their children from death and do not allow them to attend funerals. However this can actually make it more difficult for them to accept and understand death when they are older. Funerals are therapeutic, aiding in the grieving process for people of all ages. They can teach children how to express their emotions and start the healing journey.

Funeral ceremonies play a vital role in the human experience, offering a way to navigate the complex and challenging emotions that come with the loss of a loved one. They provide a space for healing, remembrance, and the eventual acceptance of the reality of death.



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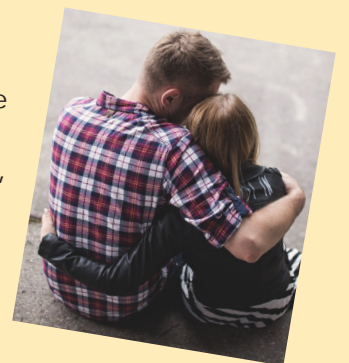
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Do you need help paying for burial or cremation expenses for your loved one?

Helpful Hearts Foundation was created by the staff of Cremation Society of Wisconsin and Stokes, Prock & Mundt Funeral Chapel, to help low-income families who have experienced the death of a loved one, to pay for funeral expenses. While the primary purpose is to help with the loss of a child, the application process is open to anyone in financial need, for final expenses in Eau Claire and surrounding counties. We are reaching out to help our community, during their time of greatest need.

For more information on the application process, or to make a monetary donation to this 501(c)3 non-profit organization, please visit **www.helpfulheartswi.org**.



**Helpful Hearts
Foundation**

End of life discussions can be emotional, but necessary. One of the topics you should always discuss is funeral and burial preferences. Making arrangements in advance can save money and be emotionally relieving for the family, while also ensuring you receive exactly what you want in order to celebrate your life. Below are a few things to consider when pre-planning your funeral and burial.

- 1. Research a funeral director.** Visit and meet with the staff at the funeral home to make sure they are a good fit for you and your loved ones. A funeral director will prepare many of the documents needed at the time of death. They will obtain the appropriate signatures on any paperwork, including the death certificate, and also notify Social Security. They often act as a liaison between family members, church clergy and cemetery staff.
- 2. Determine your wishes for your funeral.** Do you want a service? Choose clergy to preside. Discuss with family members who might want to speak. If desired, select any meaningful music to be played and find musicians (perhaps in the family) to perform. Also make note if you would like donations to be made to a charity or foundation in your memory.
- 3. Choose burial or cremation.** If you want a casket, put money down on one now or pre-pay completely. It can be as elaborate or simple as you want. If you wish to be cremated, record your wishes for your ashes—be sure to check environmental laws before asking your ashes to be spread in a certain location. You can also pre-purchase an urn if that is important to you, otherwise

the family will usually be presented with your ashes in a cardboard box.

- 4. Purchase cemetery property.** Choose a cemetery with a convenient location if your loved ones plan to visit. Determine if you would like to be buried next to a spouse, or have extra plots for children and their families. Decide what kind of marker or headstone you would like—design and pre-purchase this as well, checking with the cemetery staff that any necessary accommodations can be made.
- 5. Talk with your family.** Discuss with your family if they have any specific ideas for your funeral or burial. Keep in mind that part of these rituals is to provide comfort and a sense of closure to those you leave behind. Something might seem superfluous to you, but have immense meaning to a loved one.



Source: Kay, Jennifer L.C.S.W. "Let's Not Talk About That Now..." *Today's Caregiver*. <https://caregiver.com/articles/lets-not-talk-now>.

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- Energy saving repairs
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- City of Eau Claire resident
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- HUD income guidelines apply: not to exceed 80% of area median income



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Vision Changes & Dementia

Many believe that Dementia is just “Memory Issues”, but it is more than that. The Occipital Lobe which is in the back of the brain, is where vision is processed. As dementia progresses, this part of the brain is affected too. This can result in misinterpretation of what they are seeing. For example, a dark gray rug may appear like a hole in the floor to them, or a coat rack in a poorly lit corner may appear as someone standing there.



This also comes with safety concerns to consider. A can of air freshener may look like a can of hairspray or a bottle of peroxide may look like a bottle of mouthwash. As dementia progresses, people can start to lose their peripheral vision too. This would be similar to looking through toilet paper roll tubes. The person will lose their visual fields on the right and left of center, but also top and bottom. This can create safety hazards in the home if it is cluttered as they cannot see the floor unless they are looking down.

If you are caring for someone that has dementia, look at their environment through a different lens. Think about what might be confusing or harmful in their environment. Imagine what might be scary or confusing from their perspective. Make only 1-2 changes at a time, so both of you can adjust slowly.

Find yourself at the library.



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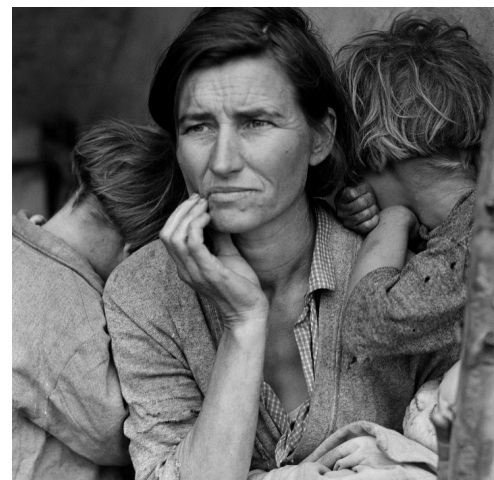
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Christmas During the Great Depression

By Ken Anderson, *The Mayberry Guru*, themayberryguru@gmail.com

How would your child or grandchild react on Christmas morning if his only gifts were an orange, a few nuts, and perhaps a small toy? It would be a feeling of great disappointment. After all, Christmas is supposed to be a time for children to experience great joy and excitement when opening much-anticipated presents.



Back during the time of the Great Depression, this is what Christmas was like for most children. And it wasn't just for one Christmas because the Great Depression lasted ten years from 1929-1939. However, children during the Depression were excited to find an orange in their stocking on Christmas morning because oranges were so expensive they rarely had one at any other time.

Christmases during the Depression were nothing like Christmas today. There wasn't the abundant gifts to buy nor the mad rush of shopping and commercialization we experience each December. There were no lavish parties, with a wide assortment of food and gift exchanges. Many gifts were homemade and were desperately needed items of clothing.

If a family were fortunate enough to have a Christmas tree during the Depression, families decorated their tree with handmade ornaments and food such as popcorn and cranberries. It was during the Depression that tinsel icicles were first introduced as they were an inexpensive way to add beauty to a Christmas tree.

It was during the Depression years when several iconic items were introduced. In 1931, the image of Santa Claus in Coca-Cola advertisements first appeared. Sears introduced their Christmas "Wish Book" during the Depression, and in 1935, the board game Monopoly made its debut at Christmas. It was also during the Depression when Putz Houses became very popular. Putz Houses were small, inexpensive cardboard buildings that would be assembled and placed under the Christmas tree.

Despite the terrible economic conditions during the Depression, Christmas could still be joyful. People were able to enjoy the true meaning of Christmas. Without all the commercialization and shopping for perfect gifts, families could spend time together. They could gather around a table and read the story of the first Christmas when baby Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem. They could attend a Christmas worship service and caroling with family and friends.

Whether celebrating Christmas during the very challenging years of the Great Depression or the affluent hectic year of 2023, the hope of Christmas remains the same. Peace on Earth and good will toward man. This hope is even more essential today with the terrible wars in Ukraine and Israel. May we all find some peace on Earth during this special time of year.



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Joy Even When There's (No Home For...) The Holidays

by Kristi Gay, freelance writer

Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Years can be times of joy with busy family get-togethers, loud parties with alcohol flowing, cookie and present exchanges, and overall excitement.

This article is to appreciate and love the opportunities for JOY even when you DON'T have large family or friends gatherings to fill your otherwise clean and free calendar. The holidays can be a dreaded time of intense loneliness for people that may be grieving what they've lost at an even larger scale than normal. But guess what?? That's okay and you're not alone, there are millions of people that feel the same way.

However, a couple things my dad used to say are "You can't be sad if you're grateful" and "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it! (actually that quote was sung based on the church hymn). Here are some things to do alone (or with a friend if you have one!) to still find joy this holiday season with or without the traditional festivities.

- Volunteer! This not only reminds you there are ALWAYS people struggling worse than you, but it usually can be fun as well and there are thousands of opportunities especially this time of year. Stuck for ideas? Call the Senior Center and ask, visit the local food pantry or shelter and ask if they need help, or my favorite is call an elementary school and see if they need help with book buddies or a guest to come lead a fun craft!
- Music! Music is joyful and makes us feel like we have company even if we are home alone. Stream holiday music from Youtube (free!) or if you have an Amazon Alexa, or depending on your cable provider there are often all-music channels at the high-numbered channels. Or even better, ask around about a caroling option or a church choir (they will take you even if you have a bad voice, which I know from personal experience!). Or buy a single ticket to a musical at the Pablo Center. Can't afford it? Give plasma if you're able (a physical at the plasma center pre-qualifies you) but there are always many seniors when I go, and it's the easiest money you can make just relaxing for an hour and helping someone else.
- Color! This is not just for kids, I have been full-on enjoying paint-by-number kits that make beautiful art without having to have an ounce of artistic ability, just the ability to see the numbers and

follow directions! Or adult-coloring books with gel pens or colored pencils are joyful. And pair it with streaming holiday music and a cup of hot chocolate with a candy cane and that's what I call a raving Saturday night!

- Nature! Fresh air is the key to a healthy mindset. Whenever my family or I feel like our mental health is taking a decline, we go back to the basics that includes a healthy dose of fresh air. Yes, I know we live in Wisconsin and it will likely reach near zero degrees soon. But that's why they invented coats, hats and mittens! Even just a 10 minute walk around the block will clear your mind, especially if you notice details that you appreciate about the present moment (to help your mind stay away from the negative thoughts). "Wow that snow is so glistening with the sun!" or paying attending to the sound of your boots crunching, or being observant about your neighbors' Christmas lights and just having wide-eyed wonder at the world around you gets you out of your house and sometimes blesses you with a little Vitamin D if we are lucky enough to get some sun. Of the times that I have not been motivated to go for a walk but forced myself to, 10 out of 10 times I've felt better. Try it, but be careful of the ice. They make little ice-cleats you can put around your shoe if needed!



Overall, this message is you can ALWAYS take positive steps to do something that will make you feel better. Challenge yourself to try some of these and even journal afterward how you felt about it. If nothing more, a journal helps you look back and pat yourself on the back for the things you've tried this year to enjoy the season rather than wallowing in grief or loneliness. Remembering that however you feel is OKAY and allowed, but if you don't like to feel that way try as many things as it takes to feel better, and you may even find some newfound JOY. Happy Holidays!

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Difficult Conversations That Move Us

By Shelley Krupa, Business Operations Coordinator at Lake Hallie Memory Care

When I was a young girl, I remember hearing my mom say, “Don’t you ever dare to put me in a nursing home.”

Many years later, I evaluated if my mom was safe in her home. A friend said, “If you’re worried about her safety and can’t stop thinking about it, it’s time.”



An unfortunate fall of hers led to hospitalization. Then a rehab stay. Neither could stop the need for difficult decisions. Her doctor said, “Your mom isn’t safe alone anymore - it is time to look for placement in a memory care setting.” I had to move mom from her home to keep her safe.

The big move day came. The words from my growing up years rang in my ears, resonating with new words that were harsh words that I never thought I’d hear my mom say, “I hate you, you ungrateful daughter.” As my mom shed her heart-wrenching tears of sadness, I replied, “You’re right, Mom. I’m sorry you’re here because I failed you. I couldn’t keep you safe at home. I love you. I hope you will please forgive me.”

A short time later, a day to rejoice when mom walked into the door of the assisted living and said, “I’m Home!” She was safe, she was happy, and she called it home.

A day to let go, “Mom, thank you for being the best mom ever, it is okay, we’ll be okay, you can go now, I love you. Goodbye.”

The choices we make for goodbyes in our lives are never easy. They come with blessings, curses, and lessons to learn. Our best is all we can do when faced with making difficult decisions.

Some choices seem right, and some seem wrong.

My sincerest advice to you is, “Don’t wait to have difficult conversations so when the time comes to make tough decisions, the process is as easy as possible. You won’t know when it will be, but eventually, you will know you’ve made the right decision the day your loved one says, ‘I’m home.’”

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Homeowners and Homebuying Advice By Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices

HOMEOWNERS, HOMEBUYERS, HOME SELLERS, HOME VALUES, HOMEBUYING ADVICE

6 External Influences That Lessen Home Values

Home prices are still near record highs, so if you’re purchasing your next home in a cheaper or unfamiliar area, be aware of outside influences that can lower your property values.

- **Noise.** Traffic noise, sirens, construction, and other noise pollution can impact home values. Areas to avoid include next to a freeway, on a busy thoroughfare, or across the street from a school.
- **Danger.** Crime statistics can be found at USA.gov. You can search the Office of Justice Programs for known sex offenders living in your area.
- **Industrial pollution.** Builders often look for land in industrial areas where the parcels are cheaper and larger to construct apartments and houses. Visit The Environmental Protection Agency and enter your address to learn how emissions and releases from industry are impacting your neighborhood.
- **High number of rentals.** If you’re buying a condominium or house managed by a homeowner’s association, you have the right to see all governing documents and financial records. High turnover rates make it more difficult to get mortgage loans and expose you to transients who may not care about their neighbors since they don’t own the property.
- **Bad neighbors.** You’ll have to introduce yourself to potential neighbors and ask them what the neighborhood is like, but you can also tell a lot from the state of other properties near your next home. Rundown homes around your home make it less desirable.

Your Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices network professional will be able to help you research the home and neighborhood.

HOMEOWNERS, HOMEBUYERS, HOME SELLERS, LANDSCAPING, CURB APPEAL, PEST PREVENTION

How to Prepare Your Outdoor Spaces for Fall and Winter

Fall and winter can be hard on your grass, trees, and flowers, so here are six ways you can make your landscaping more attractive whether you’re selling your home, moving into a new home, or simply want to protect your landscape from fall and winter weather



According to the National Association of REALTORS®, late October to mid-November is the perfect time to plant, weed, prune, and mulch, so your yard looks nicer and your plants will be protected during the winter.

1. Trim trees of dead branches for your own and neighbors’ safety. From November to March is an ideal time to prune trees to give them a better shape and prevent branches from blowing against the house.
2. Now is the time to get rid of leggy shrubs and plant new ones. Plant new shade trees with leaves that change color. Few fall sights are as beautiful as a maple tree with flaming red leaves or a ginkgo with golden yellow leaves.
3. Clean out flower beds and re-mulch with a layer of “wood chips, tree bark, leaves or other organic material.”
4. The Oklahoma State University extension office advises that October and November are the ideal times to plant bulbs before the ground gets hard. You can also plant pansies, ornamental kale, ornamental cabbage, and other cool-season annuals.
5. Pull weeds from the lawn after a rain so they’ll be easier to remove by the roots. They’ll be less likely to crop up again in the spring.

HOMEBUYERS, MARKET CONDITIONS, HOME SELLERS

What to Consider When Selling a Home “As Is”

It’s no secret that homebuyers prefer move-in ready homes that have been repaired and updated. The Wall Street Journal reports that fewer homebuyers want fixer-uppers because of high mortgage interest rates and construction loans. Since the seller has disclaimed the home, the cost of repairs and updates are unknown. Some mortgage guarantors like FHA and VA have certain safety and home integrity requirements, which means that if the seller doesn’t make the improvements needed, the homebuyer won’t be approved for the mortgage loan.

Yet, there are times when the seller simply doesn’t have the financial or practical means to make repairs and improvements. So, what can the seller expect from the marketplace?

Selling a home “as is” means selling the home in its current condition to relieve the seller of most of the responsibilities and costs associated with selling a home. As-is sellers still need to meet minimum state and federal disclosures, such as filling out a seller’s disclosure that declares known defects and problems in the home, but this can have a sobering effect on homebuyers. A balanced market, or one in favor of buyers can reduce the selling price of an as-is home as much as 15% to 20% below market value and takes longer to sell, exacerbated by carrying costs such as mortgage payments, HOA fees, utilities, and more.

Lower offers can also be expected from investors who pay cash, as they have purchase and resale formulas that must be met before they’re interested.

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Scrooge Was Old When He Decided to Change

By Carl A. Trapani, MA, MS, LPC, Chippewa Manor Campus Chaplain

I was at my computer going over some ideas for this article when a thought flashed through my mind: "Ebenezer Scrooge was old when he decided to change." This then led me to my next thought, "It's never too late to change."

Ebenezer Scrooge, the legendary character in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," had devoted his life to making money and "bah humbug" to the rest. He had no time or regard for love, generosity, family, or Christmas. Yet in one night, this mean-old tightwad, reclusive as an oyster, became a warm, sociable, generous, laughing, loving and beloved patron of humanity.

How did he make such a dramatic change? Scrooge lived before the age of scientific mental health assessment and treatment. He didn't have access to meds to alleviate anxiety and depression. There were no bookstores with shelves filled with self-help books for him to plunge into. They hadn't yet been thought of.

What changed Scrooge was a spiritual experience. Through a series of spectral visions, the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge was allowed to review his life and to change its outcome. The Ghost of Christmas Past revealed vignettes of Scrooge's early life as a schoolboy, an apprentice, and a young man in love. The Ghost of Christmas Present showed Scrooge how empty his life was compared to others.

They visited the homes of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's much-abused clerk, and of his generous nephew Fred, who had married for love. There Scrooge witnessed the joy, love, and pleasures others enjoyed from being part of a family. He saw the stark contrast between his isolated, empty life of hoarded wealth, and the happiness and enjoyment of others who were rich only in the things money can't buy. This ghost led Scrooge to see there is more to life than money.

Finally, The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come allowed Scrooge a vision of what his end would be like if he continued on his present course—he would die despised and without mourning. When Scrooge was confronted with the reality of his own death, he instantly recognized the error of his ways. Realizing that his time was running out, Scrooge asked

the Ghost if there was any way he could change the outcome of his life. Suddenly he wanted to change his ways and become a different person.

When he awoke on Christmas morning, Scrooge changed. He was a new man. He immediately set about mending his ways. "It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night . . . Hallo! Whoop! Merry Christmas!" He laughs, he is generous and thoughtful, and joins in the merriment of the season with others. In doing so, Scrooge found redemption and joy.

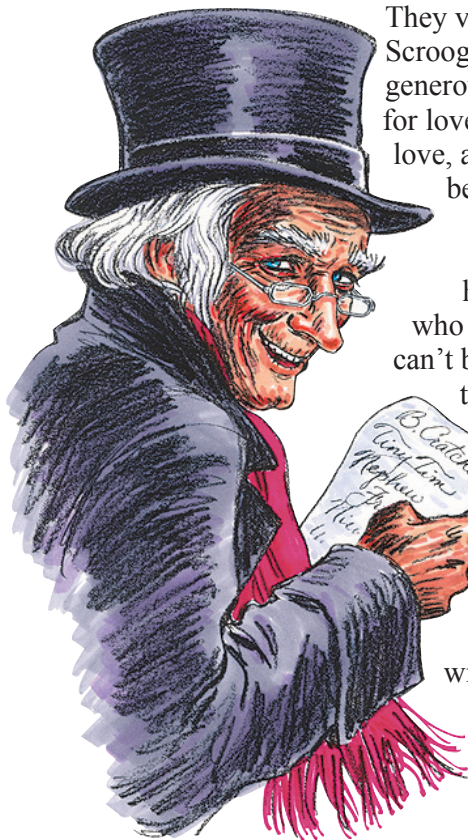
Dickens' story shows that if someone as miserly and mean as Ebenezer Scrooge can change; anyone can change.

A visit by Scrooge's ghosts is not likely for most of us, but realizing that time may be limited motivates many people to change their lifestyle. A close brush with death, the loss of a parent or spouse or child, or the diagnosis of a life-threatening disease such as cancer or a heart attack, causes many people to change their lives for the better.

Scrooge was old when he decided to change. Age is not a factor in this decision. It's never too late to change if you really truly want to. Change is hard, only when you resist it. Change is easy, when you truly want it.

So, what do you need to change? What do you want to change? Whatever it is, don't let your age stand in your way.

Carl Trapani, MA, MS, LPC serves as campus Chaplain at Chippewa Manor. He has more than 50 years of pastoral service and professional counseling experience. For more information please call (715) 723-4437 or email him at carl.trapani@chippewamanor.com.



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Dusting Off Some Local History: "The Christmas Fire of 1881"

By Greg Kocken, Archivist, UW-Eau Claire, Kockeng@uwec.edu

Around 1:00 p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, December 25, 1881, a fire emerged from a defective flue in a hotel building in downtown Durand, Wisconsin. The community, still reeling from other tumultuous events of that year, could not imagine the devastation that would follow. High winds, coupled with the matchbox of wood-frame buildings lining the business district, allowed this fire to spread quickly. Within an hour, according to several of the varied accounts of the event, the fire was out of control spreading quickly from building to building. A report appearing in Eau Claire newspapers the following weekend, claimed the fire destroyed "twenty-eight buildings out of third-one" in the community. While no one perished in the fire, the loss was devastating for many families and businesses.

In the days following the fire, rumors quickly circulated in newspapers throughout the Midwest connecting the Christmas Day fire to other events in Durand which took place during the preceding months. Charles Coleman, Sheriff of Pepin County, and Milton Coleman, a deputy Sheriff of Dunn County, were shot and killed by the notorious Maxwell Brothers (alias Williams) on July 10, 1881. The Maxwell Brothers were wounded in the gunfight, but ultimately escaped to Nebraska successfully eluding a large manhunt. Eventually, Edward was arrested and brought to Durand in November to face justice. Appearing before a judge on the afternoon of November 19, 1881, Edward pleaded not guilty and proceeded to claim self-defense in his statement.



Following the fire, the Durand community quickly set out to rebuild. Within ten years, as seen in this ca. 1890 image, the community was re-established within many new, brick buildings in the business district.

Meanwhile, a crowd of onlookers grew larger and more agitated with some chanting "hang him." In a flurry, the crowd of several hundred seized Edward and, as detailed in 1919 history of Pepin County, a rope had "...made its appearance as if by magic," and his face was, "as pale as marble..." as he was removed from the courthouse. Soon, Edward's body was hanging from an oak tree standing nearby. The lynching of Edward Maxwell would reverberate within the Durand community for decades.

The Christmas Day fire is overshadowed by the lynching of Edward Maxwell.

Although investigators do not connect the two events, speculation was rampant among the pages of regional newspapers. On December 27, 1881, the Wisconsin State Journal ran a short article stating, "...threats emanating from his friends were published in the St. Paul papers to the effect that the village would be burned down if the lynchers were not hunted out and punished..." Officially, the fire was not incendiary in its character and the events are not connected, but it is easy to understand why many people assumed a connection between the events. Regardless, the events of 1881 remain significant in the history of Durand and produced a Christmas no one in the region could soon forget.

Is there a local history mystery or topic you want to know more about? Do you have a suggestion for an upcoming column of "Dusting Off?" Please contact Greg at the UW-Eau Claire archives. He would love to hear from you.



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