



Ready to buy or sell, give us a call...

*"We Love 'Home' Work,
Let Us Do Yours"*

August, 2009

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Courtesy of Brett & Donna Hilsmeier

Real Estate News!

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

Is Your Child Safe In Cyberspace?

I remember when surfing use to involve the ocean and a surfboard. Not anymore. For most kids today, surfing is a way to navigate on the web. Chances are your kids or grandkids may know more about the computer than you do. They email their friends, play computer games, download software, and they even talk to strangers—sometimes without knowing any better. But are they as safe as you think?

Parents and guardians need to take an active role in monitoring Internet usage. The Internet is like a double-edge sword...on the one hand it's a fantastic research and educational tool right at your fingertips. On the other hand, it's an additional avenue for tricksters, predators, and con artists. This can put kids at risk. Keeping kids safe on the Internet is everyone's responsibility. Here are **eight important online safety rules** to keep you and your family safe:

1. Use filtering tools available on most web services and browsers. Go to <http://kids.getnetwise.org/> for more information on filtering tools.
2. Children should never give out personal information such as name, address, telephone number, parent's information or school information without the parent's permission.
3. Children should never agree to meet or get together with someone they meet online.
4. Children should never send anyone their picture or anything else without parent's permission.
5. Children should never respond to email messages from people they don't know, or that make them feel uncomfortable.
6. Children (and adults) should never give anyone their Internet password.
7. Teach your kids about the risks of revealing personal information, and their email address online.
8. Discuss and post online rules near the computer as a reminder.

Stumble Upon An Interesting Home?

No need to guess its features or wonder about the price. No need to expose yourself to some high-pressure salesman or unwanted obligations. Just call us at (713) 582-3275 and we'll tell you...with no hassles and no obligation.

Be involved in your kids' online activities. Just as you know their neighborhood friends, where they go, and what they watch on television, make sure you get to know your children's online friends and their favorite online sites.

Visit our web site: www.DonnasRealty.com

Air Bag Alert!

Here's a driver's precaution. If you have a car with air bags, make sure you drive with your hands on the *RIM* of the steering wheel, not in the center of the wheel. Severe injuries have occurred when air bags deploy knocking your hands into your face. *Hmmm...We know they're supposed to save lives, but all these negative reports are starting to make me wonder!*

A Fog-Free Bathroom?

Everyone likes a nice warm shower. But it can be annoying when you look into your bathroom mirror and you feel like you've been time-warped into foggy old London!

So here's a handy tip to keep that annoying fog off your bathroom mirror. Simply moisten the corner end of a bar of soap, and rub the soap on your mirror. After the soap has been applied, wipe the mirror with a dry cotton towel. Presto! No more foggy mirrors.

You're Getting Old If You Can Remember These...

- Candy cigarettes
- Wax Coke-shaped bottles with colored sugar water inside.
- Coffee shops with tableside jukeboxes.
- Blackjack, clove and teaberry gum.
- Home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers
- Newsreels before the movie.
- Telephone numbers with a word prefix: Raymond 4-601).
- Party lines
- 45 RPM records
- S & H Green Stamps
- Hi-Fi's
- Metal ice cube trays with levers
- Mimeograph paper
- Roller-skate keys
- Drive-in movies
- The Fuller Brush Man
- 35 cent a gallon gasoline
- Penny Candy
- Reel-to-Reel tape recorders
- 15 cent hamburgers
- Your mom wore nylons that came in two pieces.
- All girls had ugly gym uniforms!

\$\$ Are You Eligible to Receive \$8,000? \$\$

Who says you can't get a break when you buy a new home? *The Recovery & Reinvestment Act* may give you the break you're looking for – a tax credit of up to \$8,000 if you're a first time homebuyer.

That means you haven't owned a home in the past three years and your spouse hasn't either if you're married. The credit amount starts phasing out if you make more than \$75,000, or \$150,000 if you're filing a joint return.

So you can buy now, before December 1, 2009, and get cash back on your tax return. "*Home Sweet Home*" never sounded so good. www.IRS.gov/recovery

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

Thanks to *YOU* the word is spreading. Thanks to all of my clients and friends who graciously referred me to your friends and neighbors last month! See, rather than pester people with unwanted calls and visits, I build my business based on the positive comments and referrals from people just like you. I just couldn't do it without you! If you have a referral, please give them our number **(713) 582-3275**.

Has Your Workout Routine Fizzled?

Have you been working out regularly, but haven't seen the results you want? You may have hit what they call "the plateau." There can be two reasons. Your body may have become accustomed to your routine. What can you do? It's time to change it. If you're use to running or swimming, try walking. If you do aerobics, try light weight lifting. And if you're feeling tired, take a break. Let your body rest and renew itself.

Second, look at your diet. To see results, you must change something. You may need to cut back on your calories to see the results you want. Or you may simply need to change what you're eating—eat more fruits, veggies and salads...and reduce fats, refined sugars and carbs.

"It's not about what happens. It's about perspective. I may not be able to change what takes place, but I can always choose to change my thinking." --Michelle Sedas

Amazing Facts!

- ✓ Most lipstick contains fish scales.
- ✓ The first product to have a bar code was Wrigley's Gum!
- ✓ The average person laughs 13 times a day.
- ✓ Baby Robins eat 13 feet of worms each day!
- ✓ You blink 10,000,000 times per year.
- ✓ Fingernails grow nearly four times faster than toenails.
- ✓ Chewing gum while peeling onions will prevent you from crying!
- ✓ 166,875,000,000 pieces of mail are delivered each year in the U.S. (*so that's how so many get lost!!*)
- ✓ Every human has a distinct tongue print.

Lighting Birthday Cake Candles? Try This...

Have you ever tried to light the candles on a beautiful birthday cake, only to be disappointed by dripping wax and burning fingers? Here's a quick and easy solution: Simply find a piece of raw spaghetti, light the end, then light the candles on the cake. You can easily light all your candles with no burned fingers or wasted matches.

Easy Energy Saving Tips!

If you have Venetian or other horizontal blinds in your home, did you know that the direction of the blinds can directly affect the heat and energy loss?

Believe it or not, there is a right way and a wrong way to slant the blinds during the colder months.

During cold months, the horizontal blind's slats should be slanted from the indoors to the outdoors (up). Plus, make sure your horizontal blinds are fully lowered so they touch the windowsill. Slanting the blinds this way will trap the cool air between the window and the blinds and will keep your room cooler.

Do just the opposite for warm months. Slant the blinds from the outdoors to the indoors (down).

"The history of our race, and each individual's experience, are sown thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill and that a lie told well is immortal." (Mark Twain)

Five Simple Fire Safety Tips That Can Save Your Life!

A house fire at any time can put you and your family's lives in great danger. Yet, fire experts say you can dramatically reduce the risk of injury or death by just following these five simple safety tips:



1. **Make sure your house number is visible** from the street so emergency vehicles can find you. Consider using oversized reflective or illuminated numbers at the curb, preferably next to your mailbox.
2. **Install smoke detectors** in places where they will activate in time for you to save yourself and family. This is usually within a foot of the ceiling. Make sure you test them *monthly* by pressing the "test" button, and *replace batteries at least once a year*. Don't rely on the alarm to make an intermittent "beep" to change batteries.
3. **Create a fire escape plan** with an emergency route for each family member's bedroom. If bedrooms are on the second floor, purchase a simple chain ladder for escape from windows. Arrange for a safe family meeting place outside the home in the event fire strikes. This way you can account for each family member instantly.
4. **Place an adequately sized fire extinguisher near the kitchen area** of your home. Also, place one at the opposite end of the home. Most homes use undersized extinguishers. Even if a small fire breaks out, you will want all the suppression you can get.
5. **Remove all weeds, tree branches, leaves, and litter** away from the perimeter of your home. Put a screen on your fireplace and keep it closed at all times. It's best to sleep with your bedroom door closed to give yourself more time to escape in case of a fire. And teach your children what to do if their clothes catch fire: *Stop, Drop, and Roll*.

Creamy Corn and Potato Chowder

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 rib celery, finely chopped
5 1/2 cups chicken stock
1 1/2 cups frozen corn kernels
1 large potato, peeled and diced
1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon salt, to taste
1 cup heavy cream
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
Black pepper, to taste
Fresh dill or parsley for garnish, chopped

Melt butter in a large saucepan or medium soup pot. Stir in the onion and celery. Partially cover the pan and cook the vegetables over moderate heat for 9 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken stock, corn, potato, and salt and bring to a low boil. Lower the heat, cover the pot, and simmer for about 7 minutes, until the potatoes are just tender.

In a small bowl, whisk together the cream and flour. Stir the mixture into the soup along with the pepper. Bring the soup back to a low boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 8 minutes. Garnish with herbs and serve hot.

A Thought For The Month...

"What life means to us is determined not so much by what life brings us as by the attitude we bring to life; not so much by what happens to us as by our reaction to what happens."

Lewis Dunning

Are Two Really Better Than One?

"How was your golf game dear?" asked Jack's wife. "Well, I was hitting it pretty well, but my eyesight's gotten so bad that I couldn't see where the ball went." "You're 75 years-old," admonished his wife, "why don't you take your brother Scott along?" "He's 85 and doesn't even play golf," protested Jack. "But he's got perfect eyesight and can tell you where the ball went," his wife pointed out.

So the next day Jack teed-off with Scott watching. Jack swung and the ball disappeared down the fairway. "Did you see it?" asked Jack. "Yep," answered Scott. "Well, where is it?" yelled Jack peering off into the distance. "I forgot!"

THANK YOU for reading our Real Estate News! 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. **AND...** whether you're thinking of buying, selling or financing real estate, or just want to stop by and say "Hi," we'd love to hear from you...



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Energy Saving Tip - With the change of seasons fast approaching, it is a good time to check your weather stripping to be sure it doesn't need replacing. This can give you big savings on your heating and cooling bills.

Shop Smart on the Internet

Are you looking for ways to stretch your hard-earned dollars? Get discounts on the products and services you use by harnessing the technology of the Internet. Check out these tools and become a smart, frugal shopper:

- Find the cheapest gas in your neighborhood by visiting gasbuddy.com, [gas prices](http://gasprices.com), mapquest.com, or gaspricewatch.com. Simply enter your zip code to quickly find the closest and cheapest place to fill up your tank.
- Visit billshrink.com to find the best credit card based on your spending habits, or the best cell phone plan.
- MyGroceryDeals.com shows local grocery store discounts and features printable coupons. Search for coupons by category using Grocerycoupons.com.
- When shopping online, comparison shop before you buy with Google Product Search, Yahoo Shopping, BizRate.com and PriceGrabber.com.
- If there's a spot to enter a coupon code at check-out for an online purchase, do a quick Internet search. You may just find one, and save some moolah with very little effort.

Real Estate Corner...

Q. What is your "Maximum Home Value Audit," and how does it differ from what other agents will offer me?

A. If you're thinking of selling your home in the next year, you need to know about my exclusive "*Maximum Home Value Audit*." Our audit is much more than a simple home valuation you'll get from another agent. It's a complete top-to-bottom analysis not just of the value of your home, but *EVERY* aspect of your home.

It's designed to specifically maximize the money you'll get selling your home and in a time frame that meets *YOUR* agenda. And there's absolutely no obligation for you to list your home with me or any other agent. My audit will show you how to:

- ✓ Learn not just area values, but total market value so you know how to price your home for top dollar!
- ✓ Avoid the costly mistakes when selling your home. I'll give you a free report revealing all of them.
- ✓ How to dress your home so it shows the best and commands a higher price and faster sale!

Our analysis will take only about 45 minutes of your time...time we promise will be well worth it. It's a special *Free* service I provide to my clients and close friends. To schedule your *Home Audit* at a time convenient to you, please call our direct line at **(713) 582-3275**.

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