



# News You Can Use

Brought to You By Bill Humphrey

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## How Smaller Resolutions Can Get You Bigger Results

On Jan. 1, many people pledge resolutions of titanic proportions. By the time February rolls around, though, about 75% of those people will have given up.

People fail on resolutions because big goals aren't realistic. So instead of making big goals, make smaller, more realistic goals that are not only doable but also rewarding. For example:

**Play More:** Get involved in a fun recreational activity like a cooking class. Try out a new hobby or rekindle an old one. That way you'll be carving out more time for yourself and doing something relaxing. Stepping away from what you normally do most of the day also makes you a more creative thinker.

**Get Social:** Find out what's going on locally. Go to local events like fairs and markets. This is a great way to meet the people in your community and strike up new friendships.

**Work on Your Body:** Instead of making a big plunge into working out, start by making a commitment to doing something active for 20 minutes each day. Even 20 minutes of stretching a day can make a big difference toward a leaner, healthier you.

**Start Saving:** Saving can be hard in tough economic times, but you can start off on the right foot by tossing all your daily change into a bowl. For an extra boost, start putting all your \$1 bills in a savings jar. You'll be less inclined to break a big bill and will quickly save up to go on a special trip, pay off a bill or save for a rainy day.

## Thinking of Selling Your Home? Get My Free Guide



Did you know that you can make at least 3% more on the sale of your home if you stage it correctly? In many cases, you can make a lot more

Learn how to do it right by getting my free guide, "50 Essential Tips to Prepare Your Home for a Speedy, Top-Price Sale."

Just call me at **845-226-8057** and I'll send it right out to you.

## Tips for Tapping Into the Student Rental Market

Savvy investors have created a boom in residential investment properties. Historically low interest rates and a surplus of rental properties are driving the charge.

Investors who have rental properties in a college town have an opportunity to tap into a stable source of long-term residential tenants by focusing on features that attract the student population. Transit, amenities and favorable lease terms are key factors in attracting good-quality tenants in a college town. Following are some tips for residential property investors:

### **Consider Offering Short-Term Leases:**

Although some students are looking for year-round accommodation, many are in town only for the school year. Students can be attracted with a lease term that more closely matches their school schedule. As a property owner you can often charge a rental premium for the shorter-term lease option over your average rent, to offset the risk that units may be vacant more often.

**Location Is Key:** Students are looking for more than just the normal college experience. Being close to school, entertainment, food and other amenities is almost as important as the cost of the unit. When purchasing a rental property, consider what is appealing in the area to potential tenants.

**Access to Transit:** With limited income, many students require access to a transit system in order to get around.

### **Know How to Reach Potential Tenants:**

Advertising on websites such as CampusRent.com will give you the competitive edge when tapping into the stability of the student rental market.

**Contact me for more information on available rental properties.**

# Surprising Stories From the World of Facebook

Using Facebook has become part of daily life for many people, but it does have its drawbacks.

Journalist David Plotz took aim recently at Facebook's iconic birthday greeting, something he felt was devoid of personal feelings. He created three birthdays for himself on Facebook, all in July. The first one resulted in 119 birthday greetings from "friends." The second, two weeks later, resulted in nine skeptics and lots of "friends" wishing him happy birthday for the second time. By the third birthday, a mere three days later, he had 16 skeptics and somewhat fewer but still significant greetings from "friends."

If there is a moral to this story, it might be not to send David birthday wishes on his real birthday, which is January 31. He's suffered enough.

Meanwhile, another journalist, Joanna Geary, picked one Twitter update at random and was able to find the Twitter user's entire family on Facebook in nine steps, while Stanford University's Jure Leskovec found that adding "friends" isn't as random as we thought.

Studies have also indicated that:

- Students who checked Facebook at least once during a 15-minute study period got lower grades.
- Facebook users were narcissistic.
- Kids using technology daily were prone to anxiety and depression.

And the final moral to all these stories? Facebook is still huge, so get over it.

## Worth Reading

### More Evidence That Exercise Is Key to Brain Health

By Karen Pallarito, *health.com*, in *Time Healthland*

Worried about cognitive decline? Get busy. Yes, exercise is important, but lab tests indicate that everyday activity, not just at-the-gym exercise, may help maintain brain health.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/44aff49>

### The End Is Always Nigh in the Human Mind

By Michael Shermer, *New Scientist*

Doomers and gloomers will have a field day with this opinion piece by Shermer, publisher of *Skeptic* magazine. Let's just say some cope with a senseless world by looking for redemption through an apocalypse.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/3wszald>

### Can a Playground Be Too Safe?

By John Tierney  
*The New York Times*

Those of us of a certain age know bumps and scrapes are part of growing up, but it's taken awhile for others to come around. New research shows that kids who have fallen off high playground equipment are less, not more, likely to fear heights later in life.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/3nu55xn>

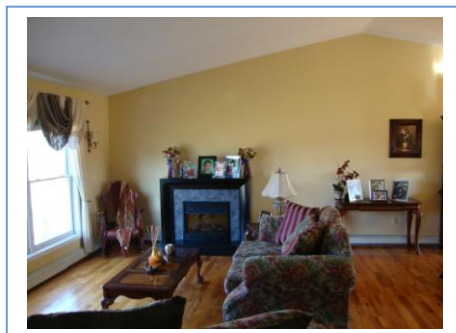
### How to Live the Maximalist Life

By Peter G. James Sinclair  
*DumbLittleMan.com*

Many questions here: How to live the best, most productive life possible by becoming a maximalist (as opposed to a minimalist)? How to think, read and associate maximalist? And is the Dumb Little Man website aptly named?

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/62ctfds>

## Town of LaGrange



## New Listing

### 1996 Contemporary Raised Ranch Listed at \$339,900

- 4 Bedrooms & 2.5 Baths
- Large Family Room
- Formal Dining Room
- Play Room / Office
- Gleaming Hardwood Floors
- Located on a cul-de-sac
- Arlington Central Schools
- Only 1 Mile To The Hudson Valley Rail Trail

**Call for more information  
(845) 226-8057**

# Term or Perm: Which Life Insurance Is Best for You?

If you're looking for life insurance, you'll probably want to ask yourself an important question.

That question usually is: What type of life insurance is the best fit - term or permanent?

Both types of life insurance have their uses.

The one you choose will depend on a number of factors.

There are some very important differences between the two.

Term life insurance, for example, provides coverage over a set period of time, such as 15 to 30 years, then expires.

Permanent life insurance lasts until death.

Term life insurance may appeal to many people because it is the easiest to understand and often is the most affordable.

It might be a good choice if you're trying to ensure that you've provided for specific expenses, such as a mortgage or your child's college education.

Permanent life insurance may be more expensive, but it also often builds a savings account that grows tax-deferred.

It might be a good option if you're trying to ensure that you've provided for your beneficiaries.

Some term life insurance policies have what is referred to as a "conversion option".

This option allows you to convert all or a portion of a term life insurance policy into permanent life insurance at a later date.

Such policies might be useful if you develop a chronic health condition that makes it difficult to qualify for new coverage after your term expires.

I can help you determine which type of policy is best for you given your individual circumstances and goals.

Moreover, whichever type of life insurance you choose, it's important to check rates and ratings.

**Visit our website and get instant online term life insurance quotes.** If you would like quotes for permanent insurance, give me a call or send me an e-mail.

## If You Can Think It, You Can Print It

Imagine a world where you can literally print anything. Need a wrench for your toolbox? You can print it. Are you in the market to replace the handles on your dressers? Go right ahead and print them off. If you can think it, you can print it.

That will soon be the law of the land with the release of 3-D printers to the average Joe.

3-D printers aren't all that new. In fact, they've been on the market for roughly two decades, but they're just now becoming available to consumers. As all technological tales go, when something is as innovative as a 3-D printer, it costs an arm and a leg to have one of your own ... until now.

U.S. company MakerBot Industries recently secured \$10 million in financing to bring its 3-D printers to everyone. The printers sell for roughly \$2,500.

So how do the printers work? It's like a technological puzzle. First, you choose the computer-programmed pattern, and then your printer lays down thousands of layers of rubber, plastic or acrylic-based resin to form the object of your desire. The printing possibilities are endless.

## Five Great Tech Tips for the New Year

Tech toys and gadgets are popular gifts at Christmas.

Following are some tech tips to help you in the new year:

- Did you receive an Apple product for Christmas? Visit the Genius Bar at an Apple retail store to learn the ins and outs of your product.

Toys and gadgets eat through batteries. When you toss them out, they can contaminate soil and water. Ask

your local municipality where you can recycle your old batteries.

- Don't let unwanted gift cards go to waste. Log on to [www.swapagift.com](http://www.swapagift.com) to sell your card for cash or a more desirable card.

- Protect your phone or laptop from theft with Prey Project software. The free-to-download program allows you to track your computer or phone remotely and trigger certain actions.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

**What information is contained in a home appraisal report?**

A home appraisal report provides an estimate of the current value of a particular property in an open and competitive real estate market. The appraisal contains information about the property such as location, lot size, square footage, upgrades and year built. Following are four things you should know about appraisals:

1. The buyer pays for the appraisal, which can cost from \$250 to \$500.
2. Appraisers are licensed by individual states.
3. An appraiser compares the features and amenities of a property to those of at least three other comparable properties sold in the area.
4. Lenders require appraisals to be done when a buyer wants a loan for a home purchase or refinance.

Negotiate an appraisal and loan contingency when you purchase a home so you can get your deposit back if the home appraises for lower than the sales price.

# NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Window of Opportunity Closing on Transfer Tax Exemption & Rates

On December 17, 2010, President Obama signed a bill that extended many of the Bush era tax cuts for an additional two years (2011 and 2012). It also included some new (and far more generous) reductions of the federal estate, gift, and generation skipping taxes. Notably these changes are:

- **Lower maximum transfer rates (35%) versus 45%**
- **An increase in exemption for estates from \$3.5 million to \$5million**
- **An increase in the gift tax exemption from \$1 million to \$5 million**
- **The \$13,000 / donee annual exclusion remained the same.**

These lowered rates and increased exemptions are scheduled to expire on 1/1/2013, and the old transfer tax rate of 55% and exemption of \$1 million will then take effect (unless Congress changes its mind!)

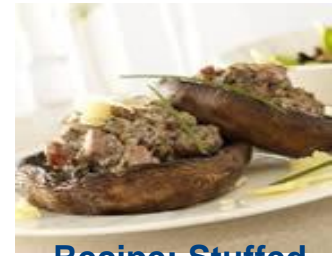
Given the uncertainty in our country's economic future and the over whelming debt our country has incurred, there is a good possibility in 2013 that the increased exemptions & lower transfer rate will be long gone. As a consequence, many clients are revisiting their lifetime and testamentary planning to take advantage of this potentially short lived opportunity.

Many people aren't aware that all of the proceeds from the life insurance policies that they own at death will be included in their estate for estate tax purposes. Life insurance owned by a trust can be a valuable planning tool that can help reduce your estate's exposure to taxes.

Contact me if you would like some more information or resources on this topic.

### Health Insurance Update

Wells Fargo, General Electric, American Express & John Deere are just a few of the large companies that only offer High Deductible or Consumer Driven health plans to their employees. One of the most common ways employees fund their deductibles is by opening a Health Savings Account. These accounts can be funded by the employee, the employer or both. **Health Savings Account contribution limits for 2012 are as follows: Individuals with self-only coverage may contribute up to \$3,100 and families may contribute up to \$6,250.**



### Recipe: Stuffed Portabella Mushrooms

Serves 6 as a side dish

- 6 portabella mushrooms, insides carefully scooped out, chopped and set aside
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 zucchini, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1½ cups cooked rice or quinoa
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Gently rub scooped-out portabella mushrooms all over with a little sunflower oil and place on a lightly greased baking sheet, scooped-out side up. Melt butter in a frying pan over medium heat and sauté the chopped mushroom with the zucchini until soft and the mushrooms have released their water, and then add the thyme. Cook for a minute and then add the mixture to the rice or quinoa. Mix and season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon about ¼ cup of the mixture into each portabella cap and sprinkle with ground walnuts. Bake for about 20 minutes.

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