

# HOMEXPERT

Simple ways to improve your home comfort, safety and value.

Spring 2010 \$3.00

## MY WORD

### Our Best Foot Forward

By Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler



Dear Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and ready for the first signs of spring. We're enjoying a breath of fresh air ourselves after a very busy season of keeping our customers comfortable. There's nothing more important to us than the work we do for you.

Put this in the category of news you'd expect. The Better Business Bureau recently issued a list of the top scams and rip-offs from last year. It was full of schemes involving work-at-home offers, job-hunting, debt assistance, very "pricy" sweepstakes winnings, and government grants. Sadly, many of these schemes have at their heart the worst possible motives – taking advantage of people who are having a tough time in a tough economy.

There are a couple of lessons here. One is the one our parents taught us: if it sounds too good to be true, it is. And the other is this: it's best to do business with people you trust.

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- Is Your House Breeding Germs?
- Chore-Free Upgrades?
- Prevent Heart Attacks With Food

## MONEY WISE

### What to Do About Water Damage

Water is the sort of thing you can't live without that can turn your home unlivable in a matter of moments. It's the most common source of home damage – whether from big storms or leaking pipes, roofs and appliances.

The preferred way to deal with water damage, obviously, is to prevent it from occurring at all. For example:

- Check **household appliances** regularly, including water heaters, washing machines, dishwasher, refrigerator and air conditioner. Inspect hoses. Look for leaks and signs of wear.
- Check **doors and windows** to see if water is able to seep through.
- Check the **plumbing**, including sinks, showers, bathtubs and toilets. Are pipes leaking? Is water collecting in any place? Are there cracks or holes?
- Inspect your **pipes**. If they're behind walls, under floors or above ceilings, look for signs of water stains on walls, floorboards and ceiling panels. For a thorough review, schedule a professional plumbing inspection annually.
- Inspect the **roof** for lost and cracked shingles or other signs

of deterioration. Keep gutters and drains clear of debris.

If significant water damage does occur in your home, you'll need the help of professionals for repairs, as well as an insurance adjuster to file a claim. But there are several things you can do in the meantime to contain the damage:

- 1– **Stop the source of the water.** If it's coming from a pipe or hose, shut off your home's main water valve. If it's coming from the roof and you can access your attic, use something to catch the water like a large plastic sheet or pans and buckets.
- 2– **Beware of the risk of electrical shock.** Turn off the breaker, and unplug or remove any electrical devices in the water-logged area.
- 3– **Open windows and turn on fans** or heating and air conditioning systems to prevent the growth of mold and mildew and also to promote drying.
- 4– **Remove furnishings** or items that may rust or stain carpet or break during restoration. Lift draperies away from wet carpet.
- 5– **Take photographs of the damage.**

**Your Quick Call Comfort Hotline:**

**410-268-7191**  
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## Is Your House Breeding Germs?

Where will you find the most germs in your household? There are hotspots all over, including these areas:

**Commodes** Flashes of the commode can send germs airborne, settling on various surfaces in the bathroom. Close the lid before flushing.

**Toothbrush and Holder** Protect your toothbrush from commode flushes and other germ transfers. For example, if you use a toothbrush holder for several family members, don't let the toothbrushes touch each other. Replace brushes every few months.

**Contact Lens Case** These can be breeding grounds for germs that cause eye infections. Rinse your case in hot water after use and replace the case every three months.

**Laundry** A load of laundry can be loaded with germs and bacteria from undergarments and other clothing, as well as towels and linens. The hotter the water, the better chance to kill germs. Add laundry disinfectant when loads at lower temps are necessary. Also, move clean clothes straight to the dryer; dampness breeds bacterial growth.

**Beds** Dust mites are microscopic creatures that commonly take up residence in your bed. Wash linens regularly and in hot water to kill germs.

**Computer Keyboard** The computer keyboard sees quite a bit of our hand activity. Wash your hands before and after using your computer, and use alcohol or bleach swipes to keep it disinfected.

## Chore-Free Kitchen and Bath Upgrades?

We want our homes to be a retreat from the pressures of life, not just another constant source of work. That's why low-maintenance is the new wave in home upgrades.

**1) Kitchen Countertops** – The trend in kitchen countertops is for materials that are durable, easy to maintain and look good. Accordingly, quartz is gaining popularity as a countertop material that offers a natural stone look while reducing upkeep. The countertops can be used for multiple purpose, without risking stains and scratches.

Home renovation expert Bob Vila, in an interview in *BottomLine Personal*, gave a few pointers about low-maintenance kitchen and bath features. Among his recommendations, Vila says that homeowners should choose plastic laminate or solid surface countertops if seeking less maintenance. But, he says, engineered quartz countertops are an alternative. When the look of natural stone is preferred, granite is the best choice for durability and less

maintenance.

**2) Flooring** – Some folks would really like less grout lines in flooring because of the time needed to keep it clean. For the lowest maintenance flooring option, Vila recommends sheet vinyl for the kitchen or the bath. If you do prefer porcelain or ceramic tile, however, he suggests that you select a large-style format for less grout and a dark color grout for less grime visibility.

**3) Bathroom Skylights** – Windows in the showers have been popular, but they're hard to keep clean and can breed mold or develop rot. Installing a skylight is a lower-maintenance choice for bringing in natural light.

**4) Bathroom Walls** – While tile's not the easier floor material to clean, it's actually easier in a vertical format than paint or wallpaper. That's why bathroom walls with tile, even with grout as a nemesis, is easier to wipe clean.

## DID YOU KNOW

- ◆ A leech has **32** brains.
- ◆ Close to 50% of Internet shoppers spend **over five hours a week** online.
- ◆ *Honey* is the only food that does not spoil. *Honey* found in the tombs of Egyptian pharaohs has been tasted by archaeologists and found edible.
- ◆ Months that begin on a Sunday will always have a "**Friday the 13th**."
- ◆ Every day, **7%** of the U.S. eats at McDonald's.
- ◆ In every episode of "Seinfeld" there is a **Superman** picture or reference somewhere.

## Serving Up Foods that Prevent Heart Attacks

Most times, when you think of heart-healthy eating, you think of what you can't have. It's a good idea to skip that ladle full of gravy, dose of cream sauce and extra slab of butter. But there are also some foods that serve to improve heart health.

### Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other healthy substances. Soluble fiber's a good thing because it can help lower cholesterol. Antioxidants help fight free radicals in your body, which create oxidative damage, a contributor to heart disease. And, because fruits and vegetables are low in calories, they can replace higher-calorie foods while satisfying hunger.

Choose from a variety of colors to get a mix of benefits, and remember to eat them fresh or barely cooked in order to retain nutrients.

### Low-fat Protein Sources

You need protein for your muscles, one of which is your heart. But choose lower fat options, such as lean meat, poultry and fish and low-fat dairy products and egg whites or egg substitutes. Skinless chicken breasts prepared with low-fat methods – roasting vs. fried – are among these options. Turkey's another lean protein and also contains tryptophan, which has a relaxing effect and can help keep stress levels lower.

Fish selections often have less total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol than do meat and poultry, and some types come with omega-3 fatty acids – a heart-healthy substance that can

lower triglycerides. Cold-water fish, such as salmon, mackerel and herring, have the highest amounts of omega-3 fatty acids. Tuna's a great food too; fresh is best, but canned will do.

### Whole Grains

When choosing whole grain over refined grain selections, you're making a choice that can lower total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and insulin levels – all of which impact heart disease. Your choices will look something like this: brown rice over

white rice, whole-wheat pasta over regular pasta, high-fiber cereals over sugar-heavy cereals and breads made from 100% whole grain instead of refined white flour.

### Beverage Selections

A glass of red wine is said to benefit the heart and vascular system. But a glass of orange juice also has heart-healthy benefits, thanks to the vitamin C, other vitamins and minerals and antioxidants. Skim milk is low in fat but high in nutrients that help the heart function properly. And very importantly, water keeps you hydrated.

### “Quotable”

*Science has never drummed up quite as effective a tranquilizing agent as a sunny spring day.*  
— W. Earl Hall



## Three Ways to Drown Your Debt Instead of It Drowning You

THE UNITED STATES – WELL, more accurately, the entire world – has just faced the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And finally, there's a light at the end of the tunnel. One problem? Paying down debt when you may still be strapped for cash. That doesn't mean it's impossible, though:

- 1. Pay off credit cards with the smallest balance.** The immediate sense of victory keeps you motivated to stick to your debt-reduction plan for the long-term.
- 2. If income drops, drop your spending.** Many people try to maintain the same standard of living on a lower income – and that means more debt. Instead, if your income is cut, cut your spending too. Living within your means now is less stressful than paying off piles of debt later.
- 3. Fight fees.** Learning to negotiate with credit card and other companies can save you hundreds of dollars in fees a year – and that's cash you can put toward your other debts.

## MY WORD (...from page 1)

Every day, we work hard around here to put our best foot forward for you, and we place a very high value on the trust you place in us. Thank you for that. So as you enter this new season and look forward to warmer days, let us know how we can help.

Hopefully your plumbing is in top working order, but if you're having any problems, just give us a call, and we'll get right on it. In fact, sometimes an inspection of your system can help you ward off very messy problems later on. So let us hear from you. We're here to help, whenever you need us.



Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler

P.S. Please pass along our name – and even this newsletter – to your friends, and we'll give them our best service and value too.

### HomePoints

At \$400-\$600 annually, heating water is the second largest energy expenditure in the home.



## "If Only"

If you'd only give us a call to schedule an inspection and service of your plumbing system, you could enjoy peace of mind before times of increased use hit. When you think about it, the only thing worse than a water disaster is knowing it could have been prevented. Save time, hassle – and thousands of dollars in unwanted repairs. Call **Heidler, Inc.** at 410-268-7191.

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## Need to Undo What the Do-It-Yourselfer Did?

We know how it is. All you have to do is jiggle this, juggle that... and *voilà!* It's worse than before. A question crosses your mind: "Now what do I do?" The answer is simple. Call us, and we'll send out one of our trained professionals.

We'll re-do what your do-it-yourselfer did – and help you out of your plumbing mess as quickly as possible. Just give **Heidler, Inc.** at 410-268-7191 a call.

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## Tired of the Lake In Your Basement?

One simple, inexpensive way to stop the water *before* it destroys your basement is a sump pump. When water reaches its sensor, the pump activates and carries it away to run-off safely away from your home's foundation. The only thing worse than a flooded basement or soaked crawl space

is knowing that the thousands of dollars in damaged, flooring, walls, and belongings could have been prevented.

So call **Heidler, Inc.** at 410-268-7191 today. You'll get \$25 off sump pump and battery back-up sump pumps when you mention this ad.

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