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Inside this Issue

Starry, Starry Ride

Perhaps you weren't thinking of Holland for your next great escape, but aside from windmills, the land of milkmaids and honey also happens to be the birthplace of one very unique artist — Vincent van Gogh. You simply cannot mention van Gogh without envisioning his iconic Expressionist painting, "Starry Night." The enduring favorite only serves to grow in popularity as the years go by, and the piece is a popular favorite the world over.

Surprisingly, the painting was created in 1889 during van Gogh's stay in a Saint-Remy asylum, a painful moment of physical and psychological captivity that makes for a stark contrast to the exuberance seen in the classic piece. Only a year later, the Dutch master met his end, but the vibrant beauty of his canvas creations lives on in museums, popular culture, and even bike paths here and there.

Van Gogh's posthumous fame (and the composition's striking beauty, of course) made "Starry Night" one of the most popular paintings on the planet, and has turned van Gogh into a favorite son of his native Holland. To bring the 19th century masterpiece into the 21st, and to commemorate its larger-than-life creator, the Dutch city of Nuenen has even built a glowing bike path that translates canvas to public works like never before.

The luminescent roadway is both high-tech tribute and artistic installation, bringing van Gogh's stellar substance to every traveler who happens upon it. As the brainchild of innovative artist Daan Roosegaarde, the pathway takes urban beautification to a new level by creating a safe nighttime riding experience through idyllic parkland van Gogh himself might be tempted to capture. Art lovers and cycling enthusiasts alike have been drawn to the one-of-a-kind glow along the perfect evening path, making a starry, starry ride (or stroll) an essential part of your next great adventure!

Attorneys At Law
The Ward Law Firm
Newsletter
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From the Desk of
Dave

Hi, Everyone!

Happy New Year! I hope everyone survived the holidays! I love this time of the year because it is one of the few times my whole family comes together. As some of you may recall, last year we were in New Jersey at my brother's home. This year the destination is Raleigh! (I am writing this in mid-December.) Raleigh is home to my parents, my sister and her family, and my grandmother. I can't wait to see them all.

Well, Aimee and I returned from our trip to Antarctica safe and sound. The official verdict: It's a place of unimaginable beauty! The picture I included is from the night we camped out. No tents. Just sleeping bags. Really good ones! We had great weather the entire trip, but definitely that night. It was hard to sleep because we didn't want to stop taking in all of the natural beauty.

If you want to see more picture and some videos, check out the firm's Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/TheWardLawFirm). See you next month!

–Dave

Six Ways to Keep Your Kids Safe on the Internet

The Internet is one of the big perks of living in the 21st century. The good ol' World Wide Web gives us the ability to share information unlimitedly, communicate instantly with people continents away, look up any fact we could ever want to know, meet new people, and even get a date! The Internet has opened up some great options for stay-at-home parents to get back into the workforce while still spending most of the day with their kids. Skype lets deployed soldiers share in special once-in-a-lifetime moments with their families, and Facebook connects us all (come on, who isn't on Facebook these days?).

Yes, the Internet is a wonderful thing … for adults. Unfortunately, the Internet opens up all these same options for kids, and allowing them to navigate their way unsupervised through all of the "interweb" muck is really no different than allowing them to walk around a large city at night with a sign that says "Kidnap me, PLEASE" taped to their chest. Keeping your children, from toddlers (they're smarter than you think) to teenagers (way smarter than you think) safe from all of the not-so-great things on the Internet can seem like a tricky task. A good place to start is by educating your kids on exactly what is and isn't okay (and that the "not okay" stuff is off limits for their safety — not just because you feel like being mean).

Here are six effective tips that help ensure your children's safety while using the Internet:

1. ***Talk with your child about Internet safety.*** They're never too young to have this discussion, so even if it seems like you're jumping the gun, starting the conversation early ensures that they will grow into good "digital citizens."

2. ***Set up filters, page and app-blocking software, and use monitoring software*** on all Internet-enabled devices that your children may get their hands on (including your own smartphones and tablets). You can set up specific usernames/passwords for each one of your kids to access household computers, tablets, and phones, and match age-appropriate settings for each child based off of their username. This way, your 16-year-old doesn't have the same restrictions as your 8-year-old.

3. **Explain to your kids that they should never, under any circumstances, give out personal information online.** Be specific with them, and make sure they understand all the seemingly insignificant tidbits of information that fall under the umbrella of "personally identifiable information" so there is no confusion. For example, if you allow your children to have Facebook, explain to them why it's dangerous to let everyone in cyberspace know that they are "hanging out at the mall with friends." If they are ever questioning whether or not it is okay to post something, that usually means they should opt not to post it.

4. **Keep all computers in a central location in your home.** You don't need to stand behind their shoulders and watch as they use the computer, but the knowledge of knowing you could walk to the kitchen or the family room at any given moment will likely keep them off any questionable sites.

5. **Monitor your child's Internet and mobile phone usage.** Go through their Internet history and always check to see what photos they have downloaded or uploaded. You can also install software that will keep track of this kind of information and send you a daily/weekly report of Internet usage.

6. **Educate yourself.** You can't protect your kids if you don't know what you're protecting them from. Stay on top of the latest threats facing kids online (e.g. cyberbullying), and make sure you are informed about the ways to combat such issues.

At the end of the day, you can't protect your children 100 percent from the dangers of the Internet, the same way you can't guarantee they will never skin a knee or break a bone. The most effective tool you can utilize to keep your kids safe is to nurture an open and communicative parent/child relationship. If they feel comfortable coming to you and asking questions before potential problems turn into big messes, most issues can be neutralized before they do any real harm.

Put the "Good" Back in the Good Life:

What We Can Learn from Aristotle's Happiness

Define happiness.

Similar answers are harder to come by than you might think. For example, if we were to ask hip-hop/funk artist Pharrell Williams, he'd say happiness is a room without a roof. Meanwhile, contemporary rock group OneRepublic would say happiness is the act of taking everything in, even at our lowest points.

If we abided by the common definition, we might say happiness is more a physical state achieved by the influence of outside forces (e.g. I'm happy because I'm having a good hair day and the sun is shining). Our happiness is dependent overall on earthly pleasures without which we'd be miserable. However, if

we were to turn about-face from the culturally relevant crooners and our own physical perceptions, we might find Greek philosopher Aristotle and his definition of happiness.

According to Aristotle, happiness is the supreme or highest "good." It's what every human strives for on the most basic level. It's life's ultimate endgame. By Aristotle's reckoning, our "happiness" (his "eudaimonia") is not achieved through the influences that make us happy, but more simply through the act of "doing and living well." We misconceive happiness, because it's subjective. When we're sick, we think happiness is health, and when we're poor, happiness is wealth. We're equally unhappy when it's too hot or too cold. Aristotle's definition never changes.

If you're lost, know that attaining and maintaining happiness is very much a balancing act. To achieve Aristotle's true happiness, we'd have to do well and live well 100 percent of the time, which as humans, is nearly impossible (we're all prone to sneaking an extra cookie and occasional fits of road rage). Doing and living well is as much about appreciating your respective wealth, health, and other earthly pleasures in a physical capacity as it is leading a life of moral virtue by forming ethical habits, practicing justice and fairness, and constantly seeking improvement through study.

Need a little activity? Log on to www.happiness-survey.com to take the Oxford Happiness Survey and see where you stand on the satisfaction spectrum. As you take the time to ponder your own state of happiness, take it from the ancient scholars: "Happiness is an activity of the soul." Outside circumstances need not apply. So much for rooms without roofs.

Overcoming Overwork

7 Time-Saving Tricks for the Overworked

Fun fact:
35 percent of U.S. employees regularly work over the weekend, and another 43 percent don't use all of their vacation days. That's crazy! While it can be oh-so-easy to get sucked into the hustle and bustle of the weekly grind, it's important to make some time for yourself as well. These seven time-saving tips will not only boost your efficiency at work, but also present you with the rarest gift of all — free time!

Deal with Small Tasks Immediately: If a task takes less than two minutes to complete, do it now instead of throwing a sticky note into a pile of to-dos!

Fight off Distractions: Filter the unimportant things out! The average U.S. worker spends nearly an hour a day on Facebook. Save the fun stuff for your free time.

Prioritize: Figure out what the *most* important of the important things is and get it done! Did you know that 80 percent of the average workday is spent on non-crucial things? Adjust your focus to encompass only the important and reap the rewards!

Set Realistic Deadlines for Tasks: Most tasks take double the time they are planned for, so make sure to consider that when you are planning your schedule!

Finish One Thing at a Time: If you focus on the task at hand and don't let yourself get distracted by everything else on your list (or everyone else's lists), you'll stay on track! An interruption happens every eight minutes, on average. Don't let this knock you off your game!

Delegate: Don't be greedy with your workload; let someone else help with non-essential tasks. If you delegate just one 20-minute daily task, like returning emails or filing records, you would save almost two hours a week!

Get Organized: Keep everything in a system, not in your head. Being organized really allows people to delegate; it also keeps you from having to try to remember everything you are supposed to get done for the day! Thirty percent of workers don't use any to-do lists. Do you?

Cherry Cheesecake

Ingredients

- 1 package graham crackers
- ¼ cup melted butter
- ⅓ cup granulated white sugar
- 1 can Eagle Brand condensed milk
- 1 package cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 can cherry pie filling

Directions

1. Crush graham crackers and mix with sugar, and then melted butter. Press into bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie plate.

2. Mix together condensed milk and cream cheese until well combined and creamy. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla. Pour into graham-cracker-lined pie plate. Refrigerate until firm.

3. Serve topped with cherry pie filling.

Take a Break

WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN

GET IN THE CAR

Email *and* Bacon?! This car has everything!