



FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2

A Newsletter for the Residents of Legend Oaks II

Selling this Spring? Things to Be Doing Now

By Dianne Field, GRI

The winter months are the perfect time to be preparing your house to sell. Treat it like a business. Your house is no longer just your home, it's an asset you are trying to get top dollar for.

Make Minor Repairs

Patch holes in the walls, replace broken appliances and change burnt out light bulbs. No problem is too small in the eyes of a potential buyer. Small issues send the message the home has not been well taken care of. They could also indicate to a potential buyer that there is other more costly neglect taking place- like water or mold damage.

Depersonalize and Declutter

The more personal your space, the less potential buyers can imagine themselves living there. Get rid of a third of your stuff--stash it in a storage unit if you have to. Clutter includes family photos, collections, travel items, and keepsakes. It's hard for a buyer to imagine their things in the space with yours cluttering every room.

Remove Polarizing Items

Polarizing items are political and religious items and should be packed away with your other personal things. Many people have strong feelings about these types of things, and you don't want a buyer to pre-judge your home based on your political or religious beliefs.

Update the Kitchen

Kitchens are probably the most important room in the house. They are also the most expensive to renovate. Investing a few thousand dollars will get you an 86% return, while a dated kitchen could knock a huge chunk off of the asking price. The fastest and most inexpensive update is to repaint cabinets and update hardware.

Add a Fresh Coat of Paint

Neutral paint tones appeal to a wide range of tastes and look fresh. Paint also has the power to add light to a dark room. Just resist the urge to be bold (save it for your next home). If you must add a pop of color, do so with a blanket or flower vase, not the fireplace.

Clean the Carpets

If you have carpets in your home, they need to be clean before you show your home. You can save money and rent a carpet cleaning

machine or hire professionals — either way, the results will speak for themselves.

Improve Curb Appeal

You may not have the budget for a complete re-landscaping of your yard, but cleaning it up, including weeding and mulching, can make a big difference for potential buyers. Add some inexpensive flowers and clear out any excess to make a great first impression for an open house or showing. Ditto for power washing the exterior, especially stone and siding.

Fix Broken Items

If you have broken fixtures, it's time to fix them now, before a potential home buyer is turned off. Whether it's a stuck door handle or a broken toilet, now's the time to get it fixed.

Organize Closet Space

Every buyer is looking for a place to store all their things. Take half of everything you have in the closets and put it in a storage unit. Then, neatly organize what's left in the closets to highlight the home's storage space.

Listing your Home for the Right Price

Find out what your home is worth, then consider asking fifteen to twenty percent less. No, it's not crazy! You'll have bids from multiple buyers. Buyers don't want to let that kind of deal slip away and are sure bid it back up to its worth.

Work with a Top Realtor

A big sale killer is working with the wrong realtor. Work with a realtor who is informed and can provide helpful services through the entire selling process. They should regularly monitor the multiple listing service (MLS), know what properties are going on the market, and know the comps for your neighborhood.

Take Professional Photos

With the internet and social media, the first impression of your home is going to be online, so you'll want to hire a professional photography company to take the images. Your Realtor can help

(Continued on Page 2)

NEWSLETTER INFO

NEWSLETTER

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PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc.....www.PEELinc.com, 512-263-9181

Advertisingadvertising@PEELinc.com, 512-263-9181

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(Continued from Cover)

you choose a company and the final pictures, as they'll know what pictures sell the best.

Clean-Up for Walk-Throughs

Clean like you've never cleaned before, and then keep it that way. Keep your bathrooms and kitchen impeccable, dust and mop, and wash the walls and windows until the day your house sells. Professional companies that specialize in deep cleaning are also recommended.

Lights On!

A dark house is just sad. Maximize the light in your home. Take down the drapes, clean the windows, and swap the lampshades and up the wattage in the bulbs. Do whatever it takes to let the light shine down on potential buyers!

No Pets Allowed

Not everyone is an animal lover. If a potential buyer walks in and sees a dog bowl, smells a litter box, or is picking hair off their pants hours after the Open House, they will think the house is not clean. In fact, a potential buyer shouldn't even be able to tell if a four-legged friend lives there or not. Plan and get your furry friend to a pet hotel or leave with a friend on the days you plan to show the home.

Smells Like Home

You should be able to eliminate any unpleasant odors after a good clean. Even if it's winter, open the windows and give the home time to air out. To add a pleasing smell, bake before an Open House, or light a fresh-smelling candle. Keep it subtle because anything too overpowering will smell suspicious like you're trying to hide something.

Special Touches

Fresh flowers, accent pillows, a new welcome mat--these little touches can amp up the welcome factor of any home and go a long way with buyers. You don't have to go out of your way, either. Just a few here and there to make it feel more like home.

It's Always Show Time

Your house needs to be "show ready" at all times because you never know when a buyer will walk through that front door. You want your home to be available whenever they want to come and see the place. Keep the dishes clean and put away, beds made, and immediately clear clutter. It may seem annoying, but will get your house sold!

Leave Your House

Removing yourself is the ultimate depersonalization. You want to give buyers the freedom to open closets, inspect the rooms, and ask questions without feeling like they are snooping around. Before someone comes for a showing, open the windows, turn on all the lights and get yourself out!

Making First Impressions a Lasting Impression

Before they even walk through the door, buyers are judging your house. They should feel warm, welcome and safe as they approach the house. Do some inexpensive upgrades, such as adding light fixtures, replacing the mailbox, or sprucing up the landscaping with some colorful flowers. You can expect a 100 percent return on any money you put into your home's curb appeal.

LETTUCE RECYCLE!

by Dena Houston

THE RECYCLING JOURNEY

What happens to those items we carefully put into our recycling bins? We know they no longer go to the landfill, but what do they become? Below is the journey of eight items that we recycle. In some cases, these new items return to stores and store shelves within 30 days.

JOURNEY OF A CEREAL BOX - I BECAME A GAME BOARD!

Cereal box cardboard is sorted from other paper products into specific grades and types of fibers. At the paper mill, the fiber is fed into a hydropulper where it is mixed with water and turned into slurry that will be used in the papermaking process. The wet slurry is spread onto a cloth or wire web where it is formed into multilayered paperboard, similar to a three-layer cake.

Wrapped around drying drums like a ribbon, the paperboard is dried and then wound into rolls — 100 inches wide and five feet in diameter — weighing about two tons, ready to be shipped for converting into an end product like a game board.

JOURNEY OF A STEEL CAN – I BECAME A BICYCLE!

As material moves along a conveyor belt, the steel cans are removed by a very powerful magnet. They are baled and shipped to a steel mill, where they are mixed with other metal such as automobile parts. The steel is melted in a furnace at nearly 3000 degrees. It is then cast into slabs, cut into sections, and used for products like bicycle frames.

JOURNEY OF A STYROFOAM CUP – I BECAME THE INSULATION IN YOUR ATTIC!

Styrofoam cups, meat trays, egg cartons, etc. are collected in Austin at the Recycle & Reuse Drop-Off Center. The center has a machine that shreds the Styrofoam to condense it so it is suitable for shipping. The condensed foam is then sent to various manufacturing facilities to be made into baseboards, crown molding, and attic insulation.

JOURNEY OF A PLASTIC BAG – I BECAME A PARK BENCH!

Retail plastic bags, bread bags, flexible plastic packaging from paper towels and toilet paper, etc. are collected at the plastics collection bins at grocery stores. They are turned into pellets that are used to make more plastic bags, durable outdoor decks and fences, deck furniture, and a park bench.

JOURNEY OF AN OLD COMPUTER – I BECAME A WEDDING RING!

There are many ways to recycle old electronics. If they are still in working condition, they can be donated to various non-profits for reuse or returned to the manufacturer for refurbishing and reselling. The Recycle & Reuse Drop-Off Center will accept all electronics, whether or not they are in working condition.

Electronics that cannot be reused or refurbished can be disassembled. They contain valuable precious metals such as gold, silver, platinum, palladium, copper, tin, and zinc. These are recovered and used in a number of ways, including jewelry (a wedding ring), new electronics, and automotive parts. Plastic components can be used in new electronic devices or other plastic products such as garden furniture.



JOURNEY OF A PLASTIC SHAMPOO BOTTLE - I BECAME ANOTHER SHAMPOO BOTTLE!

Shampoo bottles made from HDPE (high density polyethylene) are ground into small chips of plastic called "flakes." The flakes are turned into pellets that are then melted, molded, and made into new shampoo bottles.

JOURNEY OF A GLASS BOTTLE - I BECAME A GLASS COUNTER TOP!

At a recycling facility, rotating metal discs on a conveyor belt break the glass. It is then placed on a vibrating screen and hit with gusts of air to remove dirt, paper, and other debris. After that, the glass is crushed into "cullets." Finally, the cullets are melted down and made into a new glass container or a glass product such as a counter top.

JOURNEY OF AN ALUMINUM CAN – I BECAME ANOTHER ALUMINUM CAN!

As aluminum cans move along a conveyor belt, a special machine creates a "reverse" magnetic field that pushes them off the belt and into a bin. The cans are crushed and shredded into walnut-sized pieces. The pieces are screened to remove any non-aluminum materials and are then passed through a blast of very hot air to remove any paint or lacquer.

The shredded aluminum is fed into a furnace where it becomes molten metal. It is then poured into a mold. This cooled aluminum is called a "brick" or "ingot" and weighs 36,000 pounds. It takes 1.5 million cans to make an ingot. The ingot is then heated just enough to be rolled into a coil that is nine miles long. Manufacturers use this coil to make new aluminum cans and lids.

QUESTIONS FROM OUR READERS:

IS THERE AN ISSUE WITH COMPOST CONTAMINATION?

Yes, compost collected curbside is sometimes contaminated with glass and other non-compostable materials. Below is a description of what happens with contaminated compost.

CONTAMINATED COMPOST

When the City collects the compost curbside, it is taken to Organics By Gosh to process. When it arrives, the Quality Assurance Team there sorts through the compost and pulls out glass, plastic, metal, and other contaminants by hand. This is a very difficult job. It is no fun for anyone to have to pick through someone else's food waste. After the initial sorting process, the compost material gets screened by machine. If the sorted pile is found to be contaminated (for example, glass is discovered in the pile), that pile will be abandoned and sent to the landfill. If the load the City brings in is so contaminated that the Quality Assurance Team can't even sort through it, the entire load goes directly to the landfill, rendering tons of material useless.

PLEASE REMEMBER – WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!!!

Here is a very informative City of Austin recycling website: <http://www.austintexas.gov/what-do-i-do>.

Stay tuned for future tips that will include creative ways to recycle or reuse. If you have any questions or recycling ideas, please send them to: recycling@hpwbana.org.

Adding Yoga to Workout Regime Can Improve Your Fitness Goals

Implementing yoga into a workout routine can provide unique health benefits, said a Baylor College of Medicine physician and yoga enthusiast.

Yoga is a broad philosophy containing many different paths to achieve the goal of physical, mental and spiritual well-being, said Dr. Bobby Kapur, assistant professor of medicine at BCM and associate chief for emergency medicine at the Harris County Hospital District's Ben Taub General Hospital. In physical fitness, yoga is the practice of physical postures and breathing exercises that allow a person to strengthen the body and at the same time enter a meditative and relaxed state of awareness.

Yoga entails various positions, stretching and deep breathing. Practicing yoga can help a person improve flexibility, balance, limberness, blood circulation, and it can also relax muscle tension and fight infection, Kapur said.

Why Not Host?

The decorations are packed away, gifts have been exchanged and life is back to normal once again. Why not bring a little excitement into your life by hosting a foreign exchange student!

Each of our students is fluent in English, comes with their own spending money and health insurance. Most importantly, they come with a dream to spend a year in the US so they can experience life as an American teenager!

Hosting is a very great way of bringing new cultures into your family, home, school and community. Speaking as the host mom to 14 different exchange students, I can say that this is one of the best decisions I've made in my life.

STS Foundation accepts all of host families – from single parents, newly marrieds, empty nesters and same sex couples. In order to host, you would need to meet the following qualifications:

- Host must be 25 years or older
- Pass a background check
- Provide food for 3 meals daily
- Ensure reliable transportation to and from school (bus is ok)
- A bed for your student
- A safe and loving home

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that places foreign exchange students with American host families. For more information about hosting, please contact Vicki Odom at 832-455-7881 or email at vicki.stsfoundation@yahoo.com.

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LEGEND OAKS

BAKED SPAGHETTI

Ingredients

- 1 package (16 ounces) spaghetti
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 jar (24 ounces) meatless spaghetti sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 cups Daisy 4% cottage cheese
- 4 cups part-skim shredded mozzarella cheese
- Chopped fresh basil, optional

Directions

- Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in spaghetti sauce and seasoned salt; set aside.
- In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, Parmesan cheese and butter. Drain spaghetti; add to egg mixture and toss to coat.
- Place half of the spaghetti mixture in a greased 13x9-in. or 3-qt. baking dish. Top with half of the cottage cheese, meat sauce and mozzarella cheese. Repeat layers.
- Cover and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Uncover; bake until cheese is melted, 20-25 minutes longer. If desired, sprinkle with basil.



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