



Workers' COMPanion

MARCH 2018

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WHEN CLIENTS BECOME LIKE FAMILY

When a new client comes to us seeking representation for their workers' compensation claim, they probably figure they're just hiring an expert to provide a service. Certainly, that's the primary reason behind the exchange. We do everything we can to make sure our clients receive every penny they deserve in the wake of a work-related injury. But for most of our clients, as we guide them through the hardships and complexities of the process, our relationship grows beyond a simple business connection. Day by day, month by month, we become more than just a lawyer and a client. We become friends. Often, by the time their case is closed and they no longer require our services, they're more like family to us than anything else.

Building and maintaining these relationships is perhaps the most gratifying and meaningful part of the work I do. Every few days, an old client calls me up just to chat and update me on the goings-on in their families. Usually, it has nothing to do with their claim; they simply want to see how we're doing and talk for a while. It makes my day to hear about the birth of a client's first grandchild or the engagement of their daughter.

Occasionally, these talks are a little less cheerful, but it's still good to hear from people. Maybe the family was forced to put the dog down, or a relative got into a serious accident. Sometimes during these difficult situations, a previous client may not have many people to reach out to. I consider it a privilege to listen to and empathize with their concerns, whatever they may be.

All of us around the office genuinely care about the well-being of our clients. When a worker suffers a debilitating injury, the ensuing months may be the most difficult of their entire lives. They may be out of work, struggling to pay the bills,

or experiencing undue strain on their marriage. It can get pretty bleak, unfortunately. But when we're able to steer a client back into a more stable place, and they go above and beyond by sending us a card, flowers, or posting something nice on our website, it means the world.

Just the other month, our clients Joe and Gina Stelzer stopped by the office to give us a box of Panera Bread pastry rings and say a quick thank-you. Besides being a delicious and kind gesture, the gift was just the perfect reminder of how many wonderful people we have the pleasure of working with. I'm grateful for every single person who places their trust in us — including you.



- Jim Monast

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPRING CLEANING YOUR UTILITY ROOM

DON'T FORGET TO CLEAN THE HEART OF YOUR HOME



The start of spring brings everyone's favorite seasonal chore — spring cleaning! As you dust, vacuum, organize, and declutter, don't forget about the one room that often gets neglected. This year, give special attention to the utility closet.

The utility closet houses your furnace, boiler, water heater, A/C junction, and other similar large appliances. Homeowners often forget about these appliances because they are out of sight and out of mind, and this can cost a lot in the long run.

Like all the other rooms in your home, this space needs to be kept clean. Dust, for instance, can be hard on HVAC systems. Over time, it accumulates in the HVAC intake and clogs the air filter, reducing its effectiveness and efficiency. This results in a short lifespan for your system, higher power bills, and a poorly heated or cooled home.

How Often Should You Replace Your Air Filter?

- **Homes with minimal foot traffic (single or double occupancy) and no pets or allergies: 6–12 months.**
- **Family homes (three or more occupants) with no pets or allergies: 3–6 months.**
- **Family homes with at least one pet or minor allergies: 2–3 months.**
- **Family homes with multiple pets or allergies: 1–2 months.**

In addition to changing the air filter, it's important to schedule a routine inspection of your home's HVAC system. This includes an inspection of the appliances themselves and any connecting ducts. Dust, dander, and mold can accumulate in the ducts and spread throughout the home, which can lead to health issues, including respiratory problems.

A routine inspection will identify potential problems in your HVAC system. On top of that, you can get these systems professionally cleaned and maintained. These are simple steps that will keep your home's air systems running smoothly for years to come. Plus, you'll be ready for the summer months ahead!

MEET WILMA SAMS



Monast Law's Director of Operations

Though we love connecting with our clients, learning their stories, and helping them get back on their feet, there's an intricate web of logistical considerations behind the scenes of all that we do. After all, workers' compensation law is a complicated field.

Luckily, our wonderful director of operations, Wilma Sams, has been keeping things running smoothly here for over 16 years. Besides having a hand in nearly every aspect of the office, she's the primary contact for all of our clients, guiding them down the often-overwhelming path to securing the compensation they need.

Wilma came to us after working for several law offices across Ohio throughout the years. In her previous roles, she's handled everything from bankruptcy to family law to criminal defense. After becoming frustrated with her previous firm, she began to look for an opportunity to have a greater positive impact on her client's lives. Eventually, this search led her to an opening at Monast Law, and the rest is history.

Although there's barely anything Wilma doesn't do around our firm, her favorite part is interacting with and helping our incredible clients. "I'm a people person," she says. "I love being there for them and directing them through the process. You have to be very understanding, compassionate, and in tune with what each of them are going through in order to truly relate to their situation."

Anyone who's worked with her can vouch for her empathetic attitude and eagerness to help in whatever way she can. Even five years after settling a claim, she'll often receive phone calls from old clients just looking to chat, all thanks to the genuine interest she takes in every one of our clients' cases. "It's strenuous, and sometimes you go home mentally exhausted," she says. "But it's a good kind of exhaustion, because you know you've been helping people who really need it."

When she's not at the office, Wilma can usually be found spending time with her husband, one of her eight grandchildren or two great-grandchildren, watching the Yankees, or attending every Ohio State University home football game.

Honestly, we can't imagine where we'd be without Wilma, and we'd guess our clients can't either. We're so glad she's stuck with us all these years, and we look forward to spending more time with her for years to come.

HOW PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS APPLY TO WORKERS' COMP

"Pre-existing condition" can be a vague and scary phrase. Many people are familiar with the term as it applies to health care, where insurance companies often seek to eliminate these conditions from their coverage to save money. But what effect will a pre-existing condition have on your Ohio workers' compensation claim?

First, What Is a Pre-Existing Condition? As it applies to workers' compensation, a pre-existing condition is a medical condition that an injured worker had prior to sustaining a work-related injury. This can include a wide range of injuries and diseases, from arthritis to tendonitis, and can include conditions that may or may not have been symptomatic. These pre-existing conditions are typically not covered by the workers' compensation system unless affected by a work injury.

Ohio Law and Pre-Existing Conditions While pre-existing conditions are not covered in most circumstances, there are two situations in which workers' compensation will provide benefits to address these issues.

1. The pre-existing condition is affecting the care or outcome of an allowed injury. This is known as a comorbidity condition, and it occurs when the pre-existing condition must first be addressed in order for the worker to recover from a work-related injury. In such situations, the pre-existing condition can be treated until the work injury is resolved.

2. The pre-existing condition is 'substantially aggravated' by a work injury or incident. In order to receive benefits for these pre-existing conditions, the law requires that a "substantial aggravation" be documented by objective diagnostic findings, objective clinical findings, or test results. This means that medical providers and injured workers must offer tangible evidence showing that the condition has worsened.

If you have been reinjured or have experienced worsening symptoms, it's critical that you seek medical care as soon as possible. Be upfront with your medical provider about all previous problems, and be sure to detail every symptom you experience and all past injuries.

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ANSWERS



ABBY'S APPETIZERS ZESTY ZUCCHINI ENCHILADAS

For a lighter take on enchiladas, go carb-free by swapping tortillas for zucchini!

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large zucchinis
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or ghee
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken
- 2 cups shredded cheese

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350 F. To make enchilada sauce, heat oil in a large skillet. Add onion, garlic, cumin, chili powder, and salt to taste. Stir to combine. Add chicken to prepared enchilada sauce.
2. Use vegetable peeler to thinly slice zucchini lengthwise. Lay out three slices, slightly overlapping, and spoon chicken mixture on top. Roll the zucchini "tortilla" and place on baking sheet. Repeat until all zucchini and chicken is used.
3. Cover the enchiladas with remaining sauce and sprinkle with cheese. Bake 20 minutes, and enjoy!

Adapted from delish.com.

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YOUR DINNER TABLE MIGHT BE THE KEY TO A **HAPPIER FAMILY**



The family dinner is a staple of years gone by. These days, the only time you see a family sit together and break bread seems to be at Thanksgiving. This is a shame, because regular family dinners are incredibly important! It's a time to bond with your loved ones that can have a positive impact on your kids' lives. A study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that kids who regularly partake in family meals are less likely to experience depression or engage in drug use. Furthermore, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University determined that kids who eat family meals five to seven times a week bring home better report cards.

Even when schedules are busy, you can make family dinners fit into your agenda with these tips.

for art club, why not break out the healthy snacks and make dinner happen a little later or earlier? Plus, the meal you share as a family doesn't have to be at dinnertime. If there's time in the mornings, sit down for breakfast. If you have the opportunity on weekends or during a school break, grab lunch together.

CALL ALL HANDS ON DECK Mom or Dad shouldn't be expected to cook by themselves for every meal. This is family time, after all, so call in the kids! Make sure their tasks are age-appropriate — leave sautéing vegetables to the high schooler and let your first-grader set out the cups instead. This is the perfect opportunity to teach kids valuable kitchen skills and to take some of the burden off your plate. Plus, if your kids are picky eaters, inviting them to be part of the cooking process can make them more inclined to try the finished product.

DON'T STRESS YOURSELF OUT It's okay if you're too busy on a Monday to cook dinner. There's always Tuesday. Or you can take a trip to your favorite family restaurant. Family meals should be fun, and that can't happen if you're stressed. Don't feel pressured to make each meal perfect or to prepare a three-course dinner every night. Chicken and rice can get the job done as long as you're all sitting around the table as a family.

No matter how hectic your schedule may be, making family meals a priority is always worth the investment. Who's in the mood for meatloaf?

BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT MEALTIMES Dinner doesn't have to be at 6 p.m. on the dot. If Kamala has a karate tournament in the evening or Peter needs to stay late at school