



DECEMBER 2018 PONDERINGS & MUSINGS: GIFTS & RESOLUTIONS

“No one has ever become poor by giving.”

- Anne Frank

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”

- Mohammed Ali

“Resolutions require only words. Results take action.”

- Tony Robbins

New Year's Resolution – Cut the Clutter and Save Some Trees

VWG's own elf, Lynette Jones, has a strong set of tools in her advisory vault that extend beyond planning and investments. This month she forwards a great recommendation which could benefit us all!

While many at VWG have complained of drowning in a holiday catalogue and junk-mail deluge, Lynette casually mentioned that she has no such burden. Her secret? Catalog Choice, a free non-profit service that she used to cancel specific catalogs and other types of paper mail.

It took some time and effort. She signed up online, which entails entering each sender's information into the system that then generated and forwarded a mailing opt-out request. For some very active (and sneaky) senders, it took a few mailing cycles for the opt-out request to kick in. Lynette cautions that even after her diligence, she is not fully immune from insidious mail marketers.

But for Lynette it has been all worthwhile. She is enjoying much less clutter at home, and less strain on her and her postman's backs. She has peace of mind, knowing she is doing her part to help protect our natural resources, reducing needless waste and energy.

Most of us can resolve to do a better job in protecting our environment in 2019. Catalog Choice may be a helpful tool in this effort, and could provide some nice side benefits.

[Cutting Down on Unwanted Junk Mail](#)



Save the Date!

The 7th Annual VWG Charity Casino Night is set for Saturday, March 30, 2019.

Woodmont Country Club, Rockville, Maryland 7:00pm – 11:00pm

The ultimate goal of our Annual Casino Night is to make charitable donations to organizations working to make significant positive change in our world. It also proves to be an entertaining evening shared by clients, friends and families. It's not too early to mark your calendars for our 2019 event!

This year we're moving back to the other side of the river, allowing our Maryland clients easier access. This by no means excludes any Virginia residents. We want everyone possible to attend! Please plan on joining us on March 30 for a fun evening filled with good company, food, refreshments, and raising money for great causes. As in past years, we hope to have some members of the IAVA join us. Please look for more details and RSVP information in January.

Managing Your Charitable Gifting

Attentive readers of our "Musings and Pondering" will be familiar with our discussion of Donor Advised Funds each December. Don't expect this to end, as the holidays and the end of the tax year are both great reminders to make gifts to worthy organizations and causes. There are a few nuances in understanding the workings of a Donor Advised Fund (DAF), and this year's tax law changes adds a new wrinkle.

A Donor Advised Fund is a simple and elegant way of setting up and managing one's annual charitable gifting. It is a single account, titled in your name and under your control, from which you can direct gifts (termed grants) to multiple charities on your demand. You make a contribution of cash, stocks or even real estate or private interests into your DAF, which is eligible for an immediate tax deduction at the time of contribution. You can then distribute donations to various charities over time, with no forced timeline or pre-designated recipient. And

you can invest, manage and potentially grow the fund over time while it awaits your direction of grants.

Using a Donor Advised Fund to manage your charitable inclinations automates and simplifies making gifts and keeping associated records. It helps you and your family establish a legacy of regular gifting to organizations and their causes that you deeply care about. In VWG's view, 2018's tax law strengthens the case for using a Donor Advised Fund. This is because new limits on allowable deductions will force many taxpayers into taking the standard deduction, thus removing the tax benefit of charitable gifts. One solution to combat this problem is by "bunching" three- or four-years of planned gifts into one tax year. The "bunch" will then be large enough to allow one to itemize their deductions in the year contributed, thus reducing taxable income. By contributing this "bunch" into the Donor Advised Fund, the gifts can be distributed over a number of years as originally planned (which can always be changed at the discretion of the donor).

We'll be happy to discuss this further with you, and help put it into the context of your overall long-term financial planning. Please give us a call. If you prefer some immediate on-line information, one of our preferred Donor Advised Fund providers is Fidelity Charitable. You can find them by clicking here: [Fidelity Charitable](#).

As a side note, the VWG Wealth Management Foundation is directing an annual grant from our Donor Advised Fund to our focus charity, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). We passionately support all of the women and men who have sacrificed so much in serving and protecting our country. IAVA's mission of connecting, uniting and empowering post 9/11 veterans soundly resonates with us.

Shareholder Benefits Have Come a Long Way

As long as humans can be swayed by greed, some actions and values exhibited by corporations will always be challenged by their shareholders. A current iteration of this questions the true benefit of corporate share repurchases, and the methods used to finance them (some which are unconventional).

We doubt that we're in the "golden age" of corporate governance, but one must conclude that we've come a long way, much to everyone's benefit. Consider the following short story of actions taken by the Dutch East India Company in the 17th century. Although extremely successful, heavy ongoing capital expenditures left little excess cash for distributions. When pressed by disgruntled shareholders, the Dutch East India Company began paying out dividends in physical spices – mace, pepper and nutmeg. This led to disastrous consequences.

[Spicy Distributions](#)

Preparing Your Holiday Feasts

We featured the theme "Giving Thanks" in our November issue of "Musings," but every day and every season gives us reasons to be grateful. As you plan for this year's holiday feasts and gatherings with friends and family, be thankful that we're currently living in "The Golden Age of Grocery Shopping." Attention to quality, healthy eating and diversification, focus on local sourcing, new technology enhancing ordering and delivery, and cutthroat competition are all combining to make our food shopping experience the best ever. Enjoy!

[A Golden Age for Grocery Shopping](#)

Making 2019 Travel Plans

If one of your 2019 resolutions involves travel, this should pique your imagination. It directly aligns with the "Mindful Travel" presentation made in October by Shirley Clark, as part of VWG's "Your Life" seminar series. With increasing global wealth and mobility, some of the pleasures of traveling are becoming tarnished. "Overtourism" is putting a handful of popular global destinations under siege, harming the culture, environment and spirit of these places. Locals are getting pushed out, and tourists are complaining about other tourists. Here's some great suggestions for some overlooked, but very rewarding, travel destinations:

[Overbooked and Overlooked](#)

It's Time For Your Flu Shot

Another seasonal harangue we won't cease is our reminder for everyone to get their flu shots. It's obvious that many have ignored our, and many other's heeds. Did you know that last year more Americans died from influenza than any time in the past 40 years? Quite sobering, but unsurprising, the Center for Disease Control also reports that in 2017 adults received the flu vaccine at the lowest rate in the last eight years.

Some of this behavior is understandable, as an influenza vaccination is different to others in that it must be administered every year. It may not prevent one from getting the flu, only lessening the intensity, duration and contagiousness of a flu episode. There is no guarantee of protection. Regardless, clinical evidence overwhelmingly supports the vaccination for children, elderly, high-risk persons and those expected to be repeatedly exposed to those carrying the virus. Of course, we recommend that you consult your doctor before taking definitive action.

[The Flu Shot Needs Fewer Stats and More Stories](#)

As a very busy 2018 winds down, the VWG team is well-poised to further enhance your client experience during the coming year. While preserving and growing your assets is always priority one, we are also committed to providing ongoing planning and additional services. These aim to further relieve you from some of the burden and complexity of numerous financial issues. Our ultimate goal is to assist in your attaining a more fulfilling life, and in your having more time to spend with loved ones.

We hope everyone enjoys a wonderful holiday season. Best wishes for a very healthy and fulfilling New Year!

Regards,

VWG Wealth Management

HighTower Advisors

Suzanne, Ashley, Lynette, Michelle, Rashmi, Kay, Christina, Justin, Sarah, Amanda, Patricia,
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