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WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO & GIVING BACK

WHY PERSONAL INJURY?

People often ask why I chose to focus so much of my practice on personal injury law.

For a long time, I had a difficult time conveying why I think what we do is so important. After all, many people stereotype us as unscrupulous ambulance chasers.

But recently, I found a way to convey my thoughts.

I recently finished a mediation where we settled a lengthy case. My client and I had been working together for two to three years following his wife's death in a car crash.

As we were in the parking lot, my client thanked me, and we shared a hug.

As we were hugging, the defense lawyer walked out of the building and looked at us funny.

On my way back to the office, it occurred to me that this story is the best way to explain to people why I do personal injury law.

I'm not surprised the opposing lawyer was looking at us funny; I can't imagine a defense lawyer and an insurance adjuster ever sharing a

hug or a meaningful moment at the end of a case.

But it's not uncommon for us.

And it happens because we make a difference. Unlike an insurance company, the case isn't just a file or a number. It is someone's life. And we often play a key role in helping them put that life back together.

GIVING BACK

Like others, lawyers use the holidays as a time to send friends and referral sources "thank you" gifts.

In the past, we've always played our part in the game by giving away wine, pies, or other goodies.

But this year, I did something different.

As you probably know, I was blessed to spend ten days this summer working with a school and health clinic in the West African village of Diecke, Guinea.

Instead of sending wine or other goodies, I paid a year's tuition for a child at the school in honor of each of my best referral sources.

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Giving Back continued

Overall, we ended up donating enough to pay the tuition for over thirty kids at the school.

It's exciting for me to know that I can team up with our friends of the firm and truly make a difference in the lives of these children half way around the world.

Happy Holidays to all of you.

— Brooks Schuelke



DON'T LET A CHRISTMAS TREE FIRE RUIN YOUR HOLIDAY!



Although Christmas tree fires aren't as big a problem as they used to be, they're still a huge issue. Firefighters throughout the country still experience a spike in home fires during the holidays. Every year, Christmas tree fires cause over \$16 million in property damage. And they're also particularly deadly. One out of every 18 Christmas tree fires results in death, compared to one death for every 141 total reported home fires. Christmas tree fires are serious business.

And I can already hear you thinking it. "If they are so dangerous, why are you warning us about Christmas tree fires now? We're almost at Christmas. Wouldn't this warning have been better a month ago?"

I'm doing it now because the timing is important. Over forty percent of the Christmas tree fires happen in a twelve day period beginning on December 23rd.

Why? Because by that time, the trees are starting to dry out and become much more flammable.

There are a number of factors that help reduce the risk of Christmas tree fires, such as making sure you have safe lights, keeping trees away from heat sources and candles, and making sure you don't have too many different lights or decorations plugged into the same outlet.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT AND EASY WAY TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FIRE IS TO KEEP YOUR TREE WATERED.

A dry Christmas tree can be entirely engulfed in flames in mere seconds, while a moist, well-watered tree takes much longer to ignite. Ideally, a live tree should be watered twice a day — once in the morning and once in the evening just before you go to bed.

Take a little precaution this year so your holidays don't go up in smoke.

NEW BIKE FOR THE HOLIDAYS? KNOW SAFE BIKING RULES

As the holidays approach, I know that a number of kids will receive new bikes as gifts this year. Some will get their first bike, and some will get a new bike with more capabilities than a prior bike. Whatever the case, it's always good to remind our kids the dangers of biking and to make sure that they know how to bike safely. Having represented a number of cyclists injured in various wrecks, we know the importance of good safety more than anyone.

Here are some bicycle safety tips from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration:

- 1. WEAR A PROPERLY FITTED BICYCLE HELMET.** Fortunately, helmets are increasingly common these days and kids don't feel the stigma to avoid a helmet like they used to. But far too many kids just use any helmet they like. To make it as safe as possible, it's important to make sure the helmet fits.
- 2. ADJUST YOUR BICYCLE TO FIT.** When you're standing over your bike, there should be 1 to 2 inches between you and the top bar of the bike. The seat height should also be adjusted to allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebar height should be the same as the seat.
- 3. SEE AND BE SEEN.** People think they should wear white in the daytime. This is wrong. Studies show that it's safest to wear bright colors — with neon or fluorescent colors being most noticeable. Also, use your lights. Wear a blinking light or put extra reflective tape on your clothes or bike.
- 4. CONTROL YOUR BICYCLE.** Always ride with at least one hand on the handlebars. My wife tells me that she passes a high school student every morning who flies down the bike lane with both hands texting on his phone and no hands on his handlebar. Don't let your kids be that guy. Carry books or other items in a carrier or backpack.
- 5. WATCH FOR AND AVOID ROAD HAZARDS.**
- 6. MINIMIZE RIDING AT NIGHT.** It is far more dangerous to ride at night than during the day because it is harder for others to see you. Make sure you have reflectors on the front and rear of your bike and that you use a light on the front of your bike. It's also a good idea to wear a flashing light in front and back to make sure others see you.
- 7. OBEY ALL TRAFFIC LAWS.**
- 8. BE PREDICTABLE.** Ride in a straight line. Don't weave in and out of cars. Signal your turns and moves to others.



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This newsletter is informational and not legal advice. If you need legal advice, feel free to call us to set up a consultation.

THANK YOU!

As we look back over 2012, we want to thank you for helping make it a success.

All of our success belongs to you. Referrals are the lifeblood of our firm, and your willingness to continue trusting us with your referrals is the only reason we can continue to do what we do.

We obviously hope you don't need us, but if you, your friends, family or loved ones are injured or embroiled in some other dispute, we hope you'll continue to think of us in 2013.

Happy New Year!!!

