

Pratt Connection

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Love Can Conquer All

Tips for a Long & Happy Marriage

On Love...

Holly's Household Corner: Making Chores Fun

Can Meditation Help Reduce Pain?

Gardens and Greenhouses: Gardening Guide for February

Happy Homeowners!

Welcome!

Successfully Sold!

Thanks for Your Referrals!

What Are You Waiting For?

Positive Thinking Corner

If You're in the Market...

Jan/Feb 2007
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Love Can Conquer All



In 1844, Robert Browning was an unknown poet and playwright when he first read Elizabeth Barrett's volume of poetry titled *Poems*. He was 32 years old. Elizabeth was a well-known poet - and an invalid. She was 39 years old.

Robert was so moved by her poetry that he wrote to her, "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett..." The two then commenced writing more than 600 letters to each other during the next 20 months.

Elizabeth had suffered from the time she was a teenager from uncontrollable spasms of pain and breathing difficulties. She had been a shut-in for years and a spinster as well, for her father was a very controlling, wealthy man who had forbidden all of his 12 children to marry.

Robert began to court Elizabeth, but at first she didn't take him seriously. She found it hard to trust his intentions because she'd been isolated for so long and because she questioned the treatment of women inside the institution of marriage. But despite these almost overwhelming obstacles, Robert continued to court her with passion.

Finally, with Robert's encouragement, Elizabeth left the room where she'd spent the previous six years of her life. She began to live an active life again, and she cut back on the morphine and opium the doctors had prescribed for her pain. In 1846, Robert and Elizabeth married in a secret ceremony to hide the fact that she was defying her father. When her father found out, he disinherited Elizabeth.

The couple spent the next 15 years together productively writing. Their courtship inspired some of the most beautiful and romantic poetry ever written, including the most famous line from Elizabeth's *Sonnets From the Portuguese*: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

Elizabeth died in her husband's arms in 1861.

Celebrate your own love story on Valentine's Day.

Tips for a Long & Happy Marriage

This is a list of communication dos and don'ts from the Academy of Matrimonial Attorneys:

- Stop trying to win arguments and work on solving the problem.
- Really listen to your spouse, and don't immediately jump into an argument before you hear him or her out.
- If you feel like your spouse is misunderstanding you, then take the time and energy necessary to explain yourself.
- If you can't solve your problem, respect the other person's opinion anyway.
- Discuss issues that are important to you both.
- Forget and move on. Be fast to forgive.
- Be sincere. If you say something, but your body language or tone of voice conveys another message, then it will be hard to build trust.
- Say what you mean, and say it clearly.
- Never go to bed mad. Stay with the issue and solve it before you go to bed.
- Don't speak in rude or disparaging ways to your spouse. Don't criticize your spouse in front of others.
- Don't let your emotions guide your behavior.
- Don't get into arguments about things that happened in the distant past.
- If your spouse disagrees with you, don't assume he or she is attacking you.

On Love...

Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful it has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings.

~ Diane Ackerman

Holly's Household Corner



Making Chores Fun!

If you're looking for a bit more free time in your day (and who isn't?), here's an easy solution: Get better organized. Here are some tips for spending less time on the things you'd rather not do (like housework and running errands), and more time on the things you enjoy.

Combine chores: Clean the bathroom while supervising the kids in the tub. Make phone calls while folding laundry or doing dishes. Complete your errands in one trip: library, dry cleaner, gas station, bank, and drug store.

Assign chores: House and yard work aren't just for Mom and Dad. Teach your children to be responsible members of the household by requiring they pitch in, too. Their future spouses will thank you someday!

Create a family chore chart: Just as every member of a sports team has an important job to do in order for the team

Gardens and Greenhouses



"Gardening Guide for February"

February may well be the toughest gardening month. Thank goodness it's short. Gardeners in cold climates have put the holidays behind them and just want to see the sun shine again. But that doesn't stop the true gardener from working on his garden. February is for planning and for seeing the first signs that spring is around the corner. And it is especially for pruning. So take advantage of those rare sunny days and get back in your garden. However since February weather is so unpredictable, you'll have to use some judgement.

- Finish up your seed and plant orders
- Keep an eye on houseplant pests
- Get your garden tools in order Prune trees and shrubs, both ornamentals and fruit
- Check flower beds for plants that may have heaved
- Replace mulch as needed
- Check outside plants and trees for animal damage
- Cut some branches for forcing indoors
- Rejuvenate holly bushes with a hard pruning
- Check evergreens for sign of desiccation
- Start seeds of cool season vegetables and flowers

~ <http://gardening.about.com/od/winterinthegarden/a/FebGarden.htm>

to be successful, every member of your family should contribute to a well-run household. A family chore chart will guarantee everyone plays a part.

Follow these tips before making your family chore chart:

- Get everyone's input beforehand to ensure fairness. Ideally, each person can choose some chores he/she prefers.
- Don't underestimate your child's ability. Three-year-olds can help set and clear the dinner table. Your nine-year-old can vacuum. Eleven-year-olds can do laundry.
- Provide specific instructions for first-timers.
- Rotate chores every month or two.
- Hang your chart on the refrigerator where everyone can see it, and check off chores completed.

Busy families can benefit from organizing their time as well as their home. But over-organizing can have its pitfalls; spur-of-the-moment, unplanned activities are sometimes the most enjoyable. Give yourself permission to break from your routine periodically. And remember - household dirt never hurt anybody. So, the next time the kids ask you to play Crazy Eights, take a break from your chores and join them!

~ Adapted from www.homemadesimple.com

Can Meditation Help Reduce Pain?

In a recent study, 12 healthy, long-term meditators who had been practicing meditation for 30 years showed a 40% to 50% lower brain response to pain when compared to 12 healthy adults who didn't meditate. The study, published in the journal *NeuroReport*, also found that when the 12 people in the study then learned and practiced meditation for five months, their responses to pain also decreased by the same 40 percent to 50 percent.

Researchers believe that meditation can reduce pain by producing a physical state that modifies the pain level. That's why meditation has been found to reduce anxiety, improve reactions to stress and decrease acute pain.

It's estimated that 50 million people in the world suffer from chronic pain, and it now appears that meditation can reduce that pain by half in many people. David Orme-Johnson, lead author of the study, says, "Prior research indicates that transcendental meditation creates a more balanced outlook on life and a greater equanimity in reacting to stress. This study suggests that this is not just an attitudinal change, but a fundamental change in how the brain functions."

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Congratulations!

Happy Homeowners...

Jesse & Genevieve Kilgore, Connie & Frank Gale,
Katie Gordon & Judy Gordon, Christie Miles,
Kay & Chuck Coughlin, Ricardo Vidalon, and
Cindy Manning & Bruce Rubino

Welcome...

Scot Willett, Vickie & Miquel Suarez', Pam Witt,
Andy & Renee Seal, Amer Bockari, and
Gordon & Shirley Stocker

Successfully Sold...

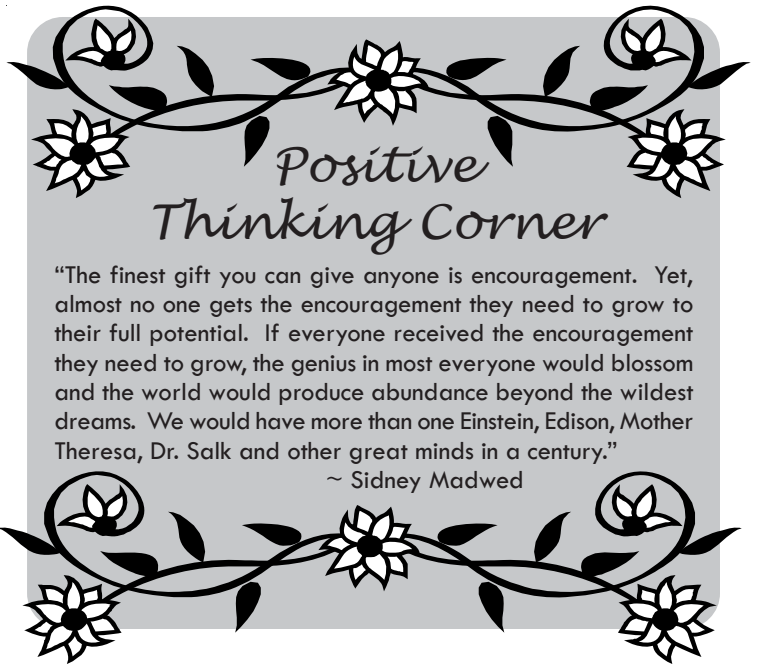
Mike & Mary Kelly, Kay & Chuck Coughlin, and
Monique & Art Zentgraf

Thanks for Your Referrals...

Beth Grayson, Kevin O'Malley, Nick Paul, Sue Myer,
Linda Campana, Rick Cyngier, Dan Coleff,
Janet Humel, Linnea Koskey, and Durand Hopkins

I have time right now to work with 2 NEW BUYERS!
Who is the next person you know that is paying too
much rent? Please give me a call with their names!

Referrals are the ♥ of my business!



23629 Woodhill, Brookpark - 1800+ SF colonial nestled on cul-de-sac lot overlooking Metroparks. 4 bedrms, 3 full baths, 2 half baths. Inground pool, sun rm, fenced yard. Startling price of \$198,900!

24137 Noreen, North Olmsted - Immaculate Split-level on quiet street. 3 bedrm, 1.5 bath. Beautiful hardwood floors. Brick and newly vinyl sided. Central air. Spacious Family room. \$159,900.

33612 St. Francis Dr, Avon - French country stone & stucco home built in 2000. Very warm, rich decor! 3 bedrooms, loft, den, 1st floor master with glamour bath. Charming! Priced below market at \$359,900.

25345 Country Club Blvd, North Olmsted - Well maintained 3 bedrm, 1.5 bath townhome condo w/sun porch. Within walking distance to mall, library, schools, pool, playground and more. Updated kitchen. \$97,900.

4123 Gifford, Old Brooklyn - Charming and well maintained 3 bedrm colonial with 2 full baths. Updated eat-in kitchen & baths, beautiful natural woodwork and refinished flooring. Close to highways. Priced below market at \$94,900.

If You're in the Market...

Did you know that Cuyahoga County is highest in the nation for foreclosed properties? It costs the city thousands of dollars for every home that is foreclosed on. If you are delinquent on your payments, you have options! BEFORE you receive that foreclosure notice (2-3 months after you stop paying), you can contact your bank to see if they can put you on a new program, try to refinance or contact a company that will negotiate a short sale with your mortgage company. You can also try to sell your home before you get to that point. If you are feeling financially strapped, swallow your pride, sell, downsize and regroup! You can buy again later. If you lose your home to foreclosure, it will damage your credit and that means years of rebuilding.

What Are You Waiting For?

The market is HOT with inventory! Visit my website at www.cleveland-home-finder.com.

24185 Wilderness Trail, Olmsted Falls - Clean 4 bedrm, 2.5 bath colonial on cul-de-sac. Built 1997, Huge kitchen w/dinette, formal liv/din rms., Family rm. great for entertaining w/ fireplace. \$239,999.

3587 Trailview Ct., Brunswick - Pulte home built 2000, 4 br, 2.5 bath, cul-de-sac lot. Immaculate! Master bath w/walk-in closet. 1st floor laundry. \$239,900

1670 Cedarwood, Westlake - 3 bedrm Condo by Crocker Park. Neutral Decor, appliances, etc. \$93,900.

689 Lafayette Rd., Medina - 1760 sq ft. Commercial building. zoned comm/retail. Needs work; lots of potential! \$119,900

11523 Pearl Rd., Strongsville - Move in condition! 3 bedrm, 2 bath townhouse, central air, Newer carpet and decor. 2 car attached garage. Priced below market! \$124,900.

7243 York Crescent, N. Ridgeville - Traditional 3 bedrm, 2.5 bath colonial, built 1994. \$179,777.

10311 Foxwood Dr., North Royalton - Bright 10 yr. young center hall colonial on 106 x 144 lot. 4 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths, Finished rec room and 3- car garage. \$294,900.

211 Clark, Berea - Darling century double on quiet street. Close to BW, 1 bedrm each unit. Many updates, needs some more. Built 1871. Beautiful wood floors, remodeled baths and kitchens! Only \$114,000.