Williams Allen Casey
Counselors at Law

LifeDesign Legal Services™
CLIENT CONNECTIONS

April, 2019

Healthy Things Grow!
From the Desk of Jennifer Allen, Esq.

Dear Clients and Friends:

Over the last few months, our firm has experienced some significant changes. We have a new firm name, a new team member (Jodi Wallace), a new website, new and improved venues for Annual Client Meetings, Client Update Programs, and our Holiday Party, new educational programs, a new event registration service, and a completely redesigned Client Orientation Program!

Each of these changes has been made with careful thought, planning, and wisdom shared by the Client Advisory Board and from direct input from each of you. Healthy things grow!

Our firm is growing because we have healthy systems and a dedicated team working to create plans that protect you and those you care most about. It is also growing because of the trust and confidence you have placed in us.

A year ago, we introduced our new Client Care Program™ and welcomed Kami Imes, our Client Care Coordinator, to our team. This was a leap of faith for us – there were no other firms we knew of that offered this type of a service and no existing model to follow. But we saw the changing needs of our client family and knew we needed to do more to protect each of you as your unique needs changed. I'm pleased to share this program has taken root, grown, and continues to exceed our expectations in providing caring services for our client family when they need extra special care. We will share more about the Client Care Program™ at our upcoming Annual Client Meetings.

In the midst of all these changes and newness, our core values remain constant and continue to guide us at each crossroad we encounter. We recognize there is comfort in the familiar and we recognize change can be unsettling at times. Yet each of you have chosen to be a part of our client family not because we do things like every other law firm but because we embrace innovation, we plant seeds where others do not and we are committed to creating a new standard in estate and family protection planning.

Thank you for being on this journey with us. We cannot do what we love to do without this committed client family. See you at our upcoming Annual Client Meetings – for more "new" to be announced!

Blessings! Jen

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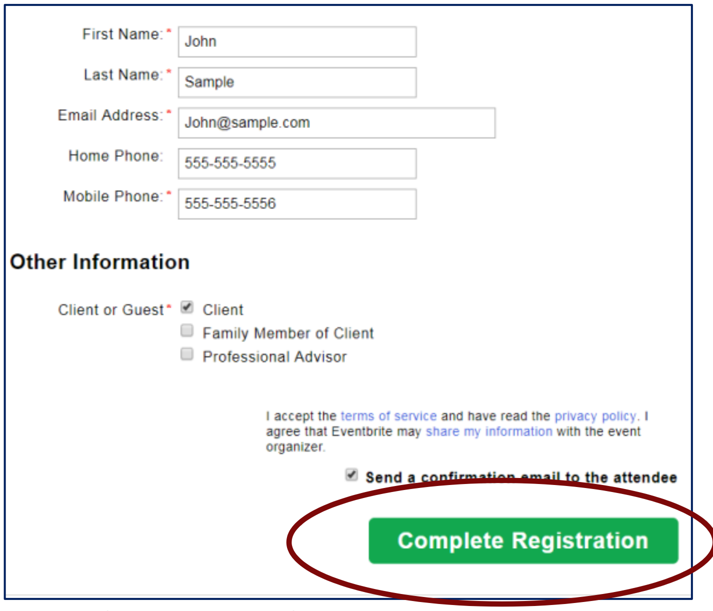
Registering for Events:

We have rolled out a new process for registering for all of our events. All registrations are now accessible through our website www.lifedesignlaw.com by selecting the client portal (password: success).



There are several advantages of the new registration service. First, you will receive email confirmations that we have received your reservation. You will also be able to see how many seats are available for any given program. The new service also emails you a map and the ability to add the event to your electronic calendar.

There are two important things to know about the online registration:

When registering for an event it is important to be sure to click on the green “Complete Registration” button after entering your registration information.

When you click on the "Complete Registration" button, you will see a message on your screen that you have successfully registered for the event and you will receive an email message confirming your registration.

If you do not receive a confirmation email from us within ten minutes of registering for an event, we do not have a record of your registration and you should call our office and ask to speak with Jodi or Pat.

Lastly, you will be instructed to print your ticket and bring it with you to the event. It is very helpful if you can print and bring your ticket with you. You will notice there is a code on your ticket that enables us to expedite the check-in process by simply scanning the code.

If you forgot to print your ticket please do **not** go back home to retrieve it. We can process the check-in without it!

New Event Locations:

If you have looked at this year's Calendar of Events, you will no doubt have noticed that many of the locations we previously used for various events (i.e. Holiday Party, Annual Client Meetings, Client Update Programs, What to Do Workshops, Specialty Education Programs, and Client Advisory Board Meetings) have changed.

We recognize that change can be difficult and it is our goal to minimize confusion as much as possible. We have already implemented protocols to send email and phone reminders of the new locations prior to various events. We will also utilize our workshop directional signs as well as some new large "sail signs" to help identify locations.

Save the Date and New Location for Holiday Party

Last year's annual Holiday Party was a huge success! Just under 200 clients and their advisors were in attendance. Last year was the first year we had live entertainment as we enjoyed the festive piano music of Evie Morris.

What is particularly impressive was the level of generosity extended by our client family to support the Food Pantry at Pilgrim Church in the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland. In addition to close to $1,500 in cash donations, we also collected a little over one ton of food and toiletry donations. We received a heartfelt letter from the coordinator of the Pilgrim Food Bank thanking our client family for their generous donations.

As our client family continues to grow in number, we are no longer able to utilize the Middleburg Heights Community Center for our Holiday Party venue. The maximum capacity of the Community Center is 200 individuals – we were 3 shy of hitting that mark last year and we are certain this year's Holiday Party will be even larger!

After several weeks of touring various venues, we have booked the New Orleans Party Center, located at 8111 Brecksville Road in Brecksville as the location for this year's Holiday Party. In addition to accommodating our growing number of clients, we were also pleased to see an abundance of parking and handicapped parking. We are excited to host the Holiday Party at this wonderful venue and we hope that the location will allow more of our east side and Akron area clients to attend.

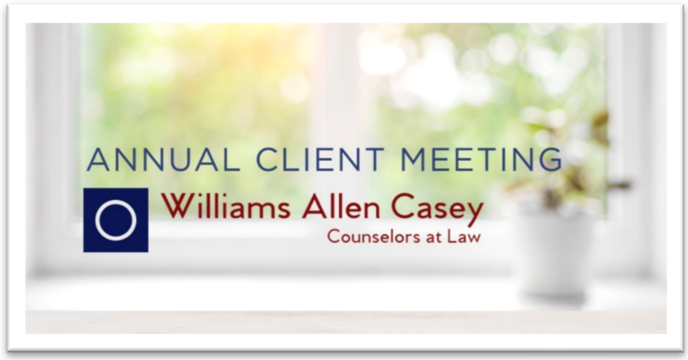
Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, December 4, 2019, from 5:30 to 8:00. Invitations will follow as we get closer to the event. You may also register early by calling Jodi or Pat at 216-236-6480 or you can register on the Client Portal of our website www.lifedesignlaw.com/holiday-party. (Client Portal Password: success).

Health Care Documents On Deposit at Your Hospital?

Many hospitals and physicians are providing client portals (i.e. MyChart, MyUHCare, etc.) that contain a person's health history, medical records, medications, and Health Care Power of Attorneys and Living Wills. If you have opted to store your Health Care Documents in one of these services, it will be important you check to make sure the Health Care Documents on deposit are the most recent documents signed in your red Estate Planning Portfolio.

If you find your Health Care Documents on your patient portal are not current and you would like to replace them with the most current version, please contact Jodi Wallace by calling our office at 216-236-6480 and she can email you an electronic scan of your most recent Health Care Documents.

New Format for Annual Client Meetings



Over the past year, our Client Advisory Board has taken a careful look at the format and content of our Annual Client Meetings (ACMs). Based on their recommendations, we have decided to make some changes to the traditional format we have followed for the past 20 years.

These changes are designed to enhance the level of practical instruction and training to empower our clients and their family members to know how to respond when assistance is needed. We will also be introducing some new self-assessment tools to identify how prepared you are for emergency situations.

With our recent name change, we will also need to distribute new Authorizations for people in the business world to release information for us to assist you with the ongoing funding of your trust.

Long time clients will also notice we will no longer expend presentation time discussing the state of the firm. Instead, Scott prepared a State of the Firm Report that was included with your Asset Review Reports in February. Copies of this report will be available at the ACM.

We are strongly encouraging clients to bring their helpers (i.e. the family members and friends they name in their estate planning documents) as well as invite their financial and tax advisors to attend ACMs going forward. As a reminder, all clients, regardless of how long they have been a client, should plan on attending an ACM. If you are not able to attend this year's ACMs, please contact our office by phone and speak with Jodi or Pat.

We look forward to seeing all of you and your helpers at one of our upcoming ACMs!

Asset Review Reports Due March 31st!

As a reminder, if you have not yet returned your updated Asset Review Reports please do so as soon as possible. We have received over 90% of the updated Asset Review Reports and we are working diligently on reviewing and updating this financial information in our records.

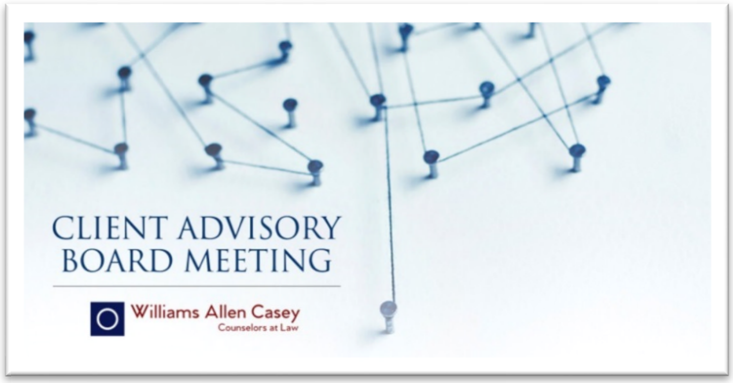
There were several observations we had in relation to the reports we received:

- **Please do NOT email us updated Asset Review Reports**. All email servers are susceptible to being hacked. If you are returning your Asset Review Report to us electronically, please do so by uploading it to your encrypted client portal through the DCS service.

- Please update all asset values to reflect current values as of the date the report was updated. Leaving the updated value box empty or writing "no change" does not provide us with current and accurate information nor does it enable us to monitor the growth rates of your assets.

If you have not yet returned your Asset Review Report, **it is not too late to do so**. Please contact Jodi or Pat if you need additional time to update your Asset Review Report.

Client Advisory Board Update:



As the current term of our Client Advisory Board comes to an end, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of the individuals who have served on our Board. The Client Advisory Board is a volunteer group of clients who meet twice a year with the firm partners to provide insights, suggestions, and reflections on the firm's services from a client's perspective.

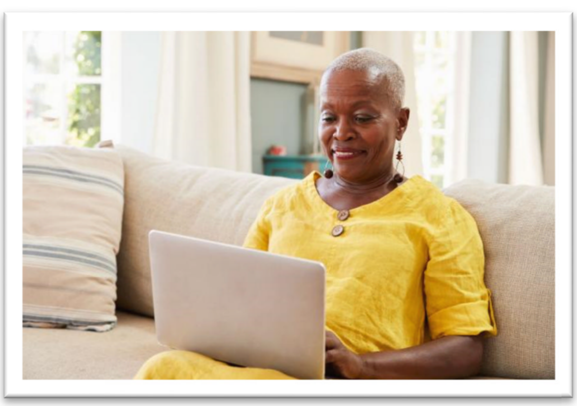
"I continue to be impressed with not only the diversity of people and insights on our Advisory Board, but also the incredible ideas they come up with" Scott recently said about our current Advisory Board. The Client Advisory Board has helped to shape and develop all aspects of our firm's services from professional fees, the rollout of new programs such as DCS and the Client Care Program, to the content of Annual Client Meetings.

Members of the Client Advisory Board agree to serve for two year terms. Any client – new or seasoned, young or mature, married, single or widowed – is welcome to serve on the Client Advisory Board. Interested clients will be able to volunteer to serve on the Client Advisory Board by signing up at an upcoming Annual Client Meeting.

Directive Communication Systems (DCS) Training Programs

At our most recent Client Advisory Board meeting, a number of board members indicated it might be helpful for some clients to have a training workshop on how to get started with the DCS service. Scott contacted Lee Poskanzer, CEO of DCS with our request and he immediately extended their personnel resources to make this request a reality.

We have two different dates set for this 30 to 45 minute Quick Start Training Program with DCS. Those dates are Wednesday, June 19th at 1:30 PM and Monday, July 15th at 1:30 PM.



We will be offering this program both live and in webinar format. For those of you not familiar with webinar, it is a workshop (or seminar) that is broadcast over the internet live. This gives participants the ability to watch and listen to the presentation in real time and even ask questions just as if they were attending the program live.

Finally, we will also be recording the presentation which we will include on our website as part of our video resources. You may register to attend this program (either live or on-line) by calling the law firm and speaking with Jodi or Pat.

Tax Law Update:
By Ray Casey

There have been a number of new changes to the tax laws that went into effect this year. Here is a brief summary:

Federal Estate Tax: The current Federal Estate Tax exclusion is set at a base of $10,000,000 and is adjusted yearly for inflation. The 2019 exclusion amount when adjusted for inflation is $11,400,000. Thus, an individual can distribute $11,400,000 on death to their beneficiaries before being subject to the 40% Federal Estate Tax. A married couple has the ability to distribute $22,800,000 tax free on death to their beneficiaries.

Only a fraction of one percent of the population will be subject to the Federal Estate Tax if they died under current laws. However, that doesn't mean the Federal Estate Tax is something we can forget about and no longer plan for. The current Federal Estate Tax laws are set to expire in 2025 at which time the exclusion amount will be $5,000,000 adjusted for inflation.

Federal Gift Tax: During calendar year 2019, an individual can gift up to $15,000 to another individual without any gift tax liabilities. As a reminder, gift tax liabilities apply to the donor, not to the recipient of the gift. If an individual gives more than $15,000 to a single individual this year, they are required to file a Federal Gift Tax Return (Form 709).

Note the filing of a Federal Gift Tax return does not mean the donor must include a check to the IRS with the gift tax return. Rather, the amount gifted in excess of the $15,000 exemption is deducted from the individual's Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount.

To illustrate, if Mary, a single woman, wrote a gift check to her sister Betty in the amount of $115,000, Mary has exceeded her Annual Gift Tax exclusion amount by $100,000. Mary will be required to file a Federal Gift Tax return and the IRS will deduct $100,000 from Mary's Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount (i.e. Estate Tax Coupon).

The amount of the gift in excess of the Annual Gift Tax exclusion amount is deducted from the donor's Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount. Thus, Mary's adjusted Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount has now been reduced from $11,400,000 to $11,300,000.

An interesting question arises when a person makes a gift of $11,415,000 to another individual and then dies after 2025. In our example, the first $15,000 of the gift is applied against the Annual Gift Tax exclusion with the remaining $11,400,000 being applied against the Federal Estate Tax exclusion. The result of this gifting strategy is not only a very happy recipient but also the donor completely exhausting his or her Federal Estate Tax Exclusion.

There is no issue if the donor cooperates and dies before the end of the 2025 when the Estate Tax exclusion remains above $11,400,000. But if the donor in our example dies <u>after</u> 2025 when the Federal Estate Tax Exclusion has been reduced to $5,000,000, the donor has utilized well over the $5,000,000 Federal Estate Tax exclusion through their lifetime gifting.

Some tax professionals were concerned the IRS could attempt to include lifetime gifts that exceeded the Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount at the time of the donor's death which would result in an additional 40% tax on at least $5,000,000 in our example above. Sometimes this strategy is referred to as a "clawback".

Fortunately, the IRS has issued regulations clarifying that gifts made in excess of the exclusion amount in effect at the time of death will be "sheltered" by the higher exclusion amounts that were in effect at the time the gift was made and thus have "grandfathered" those larger gifts.

For individuals with estates larger than $11,400,000 (or $22,800,000 for married couples) there may be some value in talking with one of the attorneys about utilizing this grandfathering strategy to protect against future reductions in the Federal Estate Tax exclusion amount.

Ohio Passes Legislation To Protect Against Elder Abuse

In September of last year, Governor Kasich signed new legislation into law that requires individuals employed in certain professions or jobs to report suspected elder abuse to the appropriate county's Department of Job and Family Services.

The list of jobs that are now "mandatory reporters" is quite extensive and includes attorneys, CPAs, financial advisors, physicians, chiropractors, nurses, firefighters, peace officers, building inspectors, coroners, Realtors, and members of the clergy, among others.

If a person subject to mandatory reporting requirements has a reasonable belief that an adult is being physically, financially, emotionally, or sexually abused, neglected, or exploited, the mandatory reporter is required to immediately report the suspected abuse to the local county's Department of Job and Family Services. The term "adult" is defined in the state statutes as an individual 60 years of age or older, living in an independent living arrangement, and unable to provide for his or her protection or care.

All reports remain confidential and individuals making the reports are protected from any civil liability arising out of the report or investigation, except if the report was made for malicious purposes. There is a $500 fine for mandated reporters who failed in their duty to report suspected elder abuse.

This new legislation will have several impacts on us. First, all members of our firm will be undergoing training to recognize situations that are covered within the new law. It also impacts our confidentiality requirements of attorney-client privilege. We will be obligated to report suspected abuse even if a client denies the occurrence of abuse or instructs us not to disclose incidents of abuse.

We take this responsibility seriously and want to ensure our client family is safe at all times. If you have any questions about this new legislation or how it impacts our client relationships, please contact Scott Williams by phone or email (scott@lifedesignlaw.com.)

Stuffed Dates Recipe

(Makes 24 appetizers, serves 6)

This recipe is from Ina Garten's new cookbook, "Cook Like a Pro." Here is Ina's introduction.

Lidey Heuck, who works with me, suggested this combination as an appetizer to serve with drinks. They're not the prettiest things in the world but they're so easy to make, and the combination of the sweet dates, sharp blue cheese, and salty prosciutto knocks everyone out.

INGREDIENTS:

24 large dried Medjool dates with pits (14 ounces)*
6 ounces sharp blue cheese, such as Bleu d'Auvergne
1/4 pound thinly sliced prosciutto (8 to 10 large slices)

DIRECTIONS

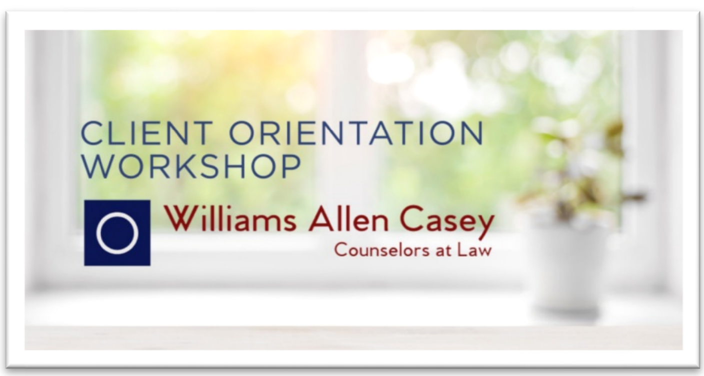
Preheat oven to 400 degrees

With a small paring knife, slit each date lengthwise and spread open just enough to remove the pit while leaving the date intact. Fill the cavity of each date with a small piece of blue cheese and fold the date over the cheese, pressing it back into its original shape.

Cut a strip of prosciutto as wide as each date is long and wrap it around twice, enclosing the date almost completely. Place the dates on a sheet pan and rack for about 8 minutes, until the prosciutto is browned and the cheese starts to melt.

Cool slightly and serve warm.

New Client Opportunities



We continue to offer our New Client Orientation Programs for prospective clients each month. These workshops are not only a pre-requisite first step in our planning process, but also provide a solid overview of both our planning and update process.

In January, Ray Casey and Scott Williams completed a "top-down" redesign of our Orientation programs to better use the time spent on addressing issues to consider prior to beginning the planning process. They also developed a new Client Counseling Workbook which will guide prospective clients through the counseling decision making process.

We would greatly appreciate if you would pass our name and contact information along to anyone you think could benefit from our services. Prospective clients may register for a New Client Orientation Program by registering online (www.LifeDesignLaw.com) or by calling Jodi at (216) 236-6480.