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## WHAT TO DO IN YOUR SPRING GARDEN

The best advice related to gardening in March in the upper Midwest is to act like a spring blooming crocus as you emerge from your winter hibernation, gingerly taking stock of the weather and proceeding with care. As our weather in zone 4 is fickle in March, we may see signs of spring emerging, but we know from experience that winter isn't through with us yet.



So we keep our garden tasks to a minimum — specifically to prepare. March is a good time to plan for your garden. It's the best time to prune back roses and most shrubs, and to cut back our ornamental grasses and early-blooming perennials. The sticks and debris from winter storms can be raked and added to our compost piles, and we can get a jump on pulling and digging out perennial weeds, before they have a chance to root in.

If you feel like planting, you can start some seeds indoors, but frost-free nights aren't likely until mid-May. Planting warm-season vegetables and annuals outdoors has to wait until nighttime temperatures are consistently 50 degrees. So we have to temper our excitement for spring by patiently planning what we will plant when the temperatures rise.

*Garden tips are brought to you by Kate Refine. Kate, who has previously worked both in public policy and landscaping, now works alongside the lawyers at Shannon Law Group, providing exceptional service to our clients. Feel free to ask Kate a question about your landscape when you speak with her on the telephone. When she is not at SLG, Kate will most likely be gardening.*

## REPRESENTING AMAZING PEOPLE

As attorneys, we work hard to stand up for our clients in every single case. Even so, there are bound to be cases that stick out in your mind, usually because of the difficulty of the trial and the incredible character of the people we represent. March is the anniversary of one extremely notable case at Shannon Law Group P.C. On March 20, 2009, 12 jurors rendered a Will County record verdict for our clients in a case that was arduous and time-consuming. Although the verdict was memorable, the real reason I remember it is because of the grace, determination, and class of our clients over the years of litigation.

Five years prior to trial, our client — a 30-year-old husband and father of two grade-school children — was involved in a serious crash with a truck delivering potatoes from Idaho to Chicago. The crash caused two fatalities, and our client was permanently injured. The truck driver plead guilty to fixing her driving logs in order to drive longer hours than the law permitted. When a company is delivering produce, every minute counts, but that is obviously no reason to endanger the lives of innocent people. The trucking company, the company who controlled the trucking company, and the insurance company argued about who was responsible for the crash, and just getting to trial was an exhausting and difficult process.

In our experience, every personal injury case should end in a settlement. Sadly, that is not always the case, and when no resolution can be reached, it is our job to make sure our clients receive a fair and just result. Our job is very simple — to stand up for and protect the most vulnerable and to even the playing field against companies with larger resources than our clients. One huge component of this job is making sure we completely understand the real life losses of our clients and their families. We need to learn these facts to be able to convey them to the jury. In my humble opinion, the greatest feature of our justice system is that



a jury of our client's peers decides the verdict of the case. Human beings are swayed not by legal might, but by the power of the evidence and the desire to make the right decision. It is our job to give the jury the information to do just that.

During the five years that it took for the case to get to trial, it would have been easy for our client and his wife to give up hope. That was not part of their DNA. Within months of the crash, our client was back at work in a wheelchair. With two young kids to raise and a mountain of bills coming their way, this young family fought back the only way they knew how — work harder. Our client worked during the day. His wife worked midnight shifts to contribute in whatever way she could. During my seven years of representing them, I never heard this young husband and wife complain about their situation once. Not once.

Given how remarkable these people were, at the time, we often felt inadequate at telling their story. Luckily, we had a great team and great witnesses to take on the defendants. Our clients and their family courageously told the jury the facts of the case, and a whole host of witnesses testified to how this senseless crash had altered our clients' lives forever. It was an honor and a privilege to represent these humble, classy clients.

Even after a three-week trial, the process was far from over. The defendants appealed, and when the verdict was affirmed, they filed another appeal with the Illinois Supreme Court. Only in 2011 did the Illinois Supreme Court refuse to hear the case. The total recovery on the case was 19 times greater than the offer in the case before the trial. Throughout the years, our clients remained steadfast, determined, and positive. Representing such wonderful people is a humbling and moving process. Their example of grace under pressure inspires us to do what we do. Thank you to all of our clients for entrusting us with your cases. We are also grateful for your referrals, friends, and family, and appreciate your continued support. Wishing everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day and St. Joseph's Day.

*— Joe Shannon*

Springtime is here again, and for many of us, nicer weather means heading back outside. This is especially true for the 7.8 million middle and high school students who enroll in school-sanctioned sports every year. However, while sports are a fun experience for growth and personal development, they are also the main cause of concussions in teenagers.

Concussions are **traumatic brain injuries** caused by the brain colliding against the skull with great force. The Brain Trauma Foundation estimates 3.8 million athletes suffer from a concussion every year. However, most of them will go untreated. Contrary to what you might think, it's not just football players getting hit in the head. Safe Kids Worldwide (SKW) studied emergency room data for kids aged 6-19, surveying over 14 sports, including basketball, football, cheerleading, and soccer. They found that 12 percent of all emergency room visits involved a concussion.

SKW noted female athletes were more likely to seek treatment, but that doesn't mean male athletes are less likely to suffer from a concussion. In fact, our habit of telling boys they should "man up" or "walk it off" may cause them to keep quiet when they aren't feeling well, making male athletes more inclined to ignore the signs of a concussion, which is incredibly dangerous.

During their teen years, your child's brain is still developing, and a concussion can negatively impact their ability to focus, alter their personality, and, if left untreated, may lead to long-term brain damage. If your teen athlete is hit in the head while on the field or court, it's never safe to assume they're just fine. Watch for the symptoms of a concussion, including:

- Glassy eyes
- Disorientation
- Headaches
- Slurred speech
- Clumsiness
- Vomiting
- One pupil becoming larger than the other
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in mood or behavior

Make sure your teen, their teammates, and their coach are all aware of the signs and dangers of a concussion. If you suspect your child may be suffering from a concussion, get them to the emergency room right away — even if that requires taking them out of the game. This can be a hard call to make, especially if your athlete has their sights set on a sports scholarship, but a parent's job is to make sure their child is safe. The sooner a concussion is treated, the better your child's chances are of making a full recovery.

# EXCEPTIONAL JOBS, UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

## Workers' Compensation in Illinois

It's easy to think of professional athletes as exceptional. They have a job that was a childhood dream for many people, and they are capable of feats most of us could never perform. When it comes to workers' rights, though, athletes should not be treated as a special case, as it sets a dangerous precedent. Separating one group of workers from another is a difficult line to draw and can lead to future divisions. A new proposed law in Illinois seeks to do that by ending disability payments to pro athletes at age 35.

While the provision has yet to be passed, it is being hotly debated in the Illinois Senate. The bill is tied to a number of other factors, as the governor and legislature work hard to negotiate a budget. Though it is only a small factor in the budget, it could have a huge impact on injury law in the state. Often, because of media coverage of the largest contracts, we think that all athletes make many millions of dollars. Not only is this not true, but athletes are also regularly out of work by their mid-30s, and can suffer debilitating injuries during their brief careers.

Disability protection should serve everyone equally and should seek to protect those in dangerous jobs. This bill would create an exceptional case based largely on public perception, rather than

a fair and equitable system. Given that the payouts to injured athletes are such a small portion of workers' compensation allocation, the precedent of treating all workers equally matters much more than any budgetary considerations.

Businesses have been seeking to limit workers' compensation costs for many years now, but they should not be allowed to jeopardize the safety and livelihood of any group of people to do so. All workers should be entitled to equal recompense for any injury that affects their ability to earn a living and provide for their families. Whether you are a machinist, a welder, or a football player, physical injury affects your capability to do your job.



## The Life-Changing Magic of Spring Cleaning

Houses get stuffy after a long winter. Once the sun makes its return, spring cleaning is the best way to freshen up your living space. While comprehensive cleaning can seem like a major chore, it can also liven up your home and give you a sense of pride and accomplishment. As Marie Kondo, the best-selling author of "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" puts it, "The objective of cleaning is not just to clean, but to feel happiness living within the environment."

A great way to begin the project of spring cleaning is to get rid of unwanted objects in the home. "To truly cherish the things that are important to you," Kondo writes, "you must first discard those that have outlived their purpose." This philosophy applies to all sorts of objects throughout your home, from clothes to books to appliances. Consider donating those objects that you no longer need to Goodwill or a similar charity. You'll free up space while simultaneously providing another family with something they need.

Once you have cleared your home of excess goods, it's time to get down to cleaning. Though lots of people organize their cleaning by room, another smart tactic is to divide tasks into categories. Schedule one day for windows, another day for carpets, and so on. This strategy makes it easier to assign tasks to each family member based on preference. Plus, it keeps you from having four people in the kitchen, cleaning on top of each other.

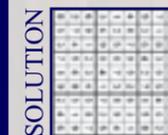
There are lots of tools in your house that can do double duty during spring cleaning. Your dishwasher works great for cleaning all sorts of glass fixtures and plastic objects like your toothbrush holder. You can use your vacuum not just for carpets, but also for couches and drapes. Spring cleaning is also a great time to clean those often-overlooked areas like your oven and microwave. Don't forget to clean your cleaning objects like brooms and vacuums.

A thorough cleaning in the spring makes your home easier to maintain for the rest of the year. It also provides an opportunity to make changes to decorations and put a new spin on your environment. Plus, nothing beats the feeling of putting your feet up in a freshly cleaned home on a beautiful spring day.



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## Quick and Easy Shepherd's Pie

March is the month of Irish pride, thanks to St. Patrick's Day. Celebrate the luck of the Irish with this savory shepherd's pie recipe!

### Ingredients

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 cups hot mashed potatoes
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
- 1 cup beef gravy

### Directions

1. Heat oven to 375 F.
2. In a large skillet, brown the beef, then drain.
3. In another bowl, mix together potatoes, cream cheese, ½ cup cheddar cheese, and garlic.
4. Add vegetables and gravy into the meat, then pour into a 9-inch square baking dish. Cover with the potato mixture, then sprinkle with remaining cheese.
5. Bake for 20 minutes.

Recipe inspired by KraftRecipes.com.