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GRIT AND GOALS

Fall has found its way into the Tennessee Valley, bringing with it cooler temperatures and rain. While cooler weather is a welcome change, the rain sometimes disappoints when planning outdoor sporting activities. Even my son's soccer league has experienced some disappointing rain outs, but on the clear weekends, it's been nice to get outside and watch them play.

I have always thought of athletics and extracurricular activities as being a crucial part of growing up and helping teach persistence and perseverance — to put the work in to get what you want. They teach kids to not give up when it gets rough — not every day is going to be sunny. Some days, it's going to rain, and it's how you fight through those tough and disappointing days that really matters.

I recently finished the book "Grit" by Angela Duckworth, and she writes about how important it is to learn to work hard from an early age — to find passion. It builds a good foundation. She describes NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young, for instance. His father wouldn't let him quit football, even when he was a fifth-string



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quarterback. But he was passionate. He worked hard and went on to be one of the NFL's most successful quarterbacks. This, Duckworth says, is because "what we eventually accomplish may depend more on our passion and perseverance than on our innate talent."

Just like my son, I played soccer in elementary school. I moved on to football and played it the rest of the way through high school. While I enjoyed athletic competition, I knew that I was not going to be the next Johnny Football. When I went to college, it was time to put my head down and focus on my education. The perseverance that athletics taught me was extremely helpful. That's the foundation I'm hoping my children will gain from their extracurricular activities — how to fight hard for the things that mean the most to them.

After finishing school, I knew that I wanted to help working people, but was not sure how to best use my law degree, so I worked and traveled as a construction laborer for a contractor. Not only was that how I fell in love with the rivers, lakes, and mountains of the Tennessee Valley, but it's what led me to a law practice that represents people and not large corporations. I noticed that hardworking people around me were constantly persevering through life-changing events, and with a law degree I could have the chance to help them. I am astounded every day at how much grit my clients have.

Angela Duckworth's book describes that kind of grit. It doesn't matter that you've fallen down. What matters is what goes through your head after being knocked down. It doesn't take luck or talent to get back up. It's not your IQ or genius that drives your success or failure. It's regular, old hard work. It's long-term perseverance that picks you up and keeps you moving forward. It's this drive and determination that I saw while working alongside men and women on construction sites, and it's the same drive that I admire in my clients. They've picked themselves up, they're moving forward, and I'm honored and humbled to help them along the way.

— John Colvin

FEAST OF FACTS

Thanksgiving is celebrated from sea to shining sea. For all the love — and hard work — surrounding this holiday, there are still some surprising facts about it that most people don't know. Before you sit down to your Thanksgiving feast this year, check out these flavorful fun facts.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

If you were to go back in time to the first Thanksgiving dinner with the Pilgrims and Wampanoag people in 1621, you might be surprised at the menu. For starters, you wouldn't find any casseroles, pies, or mashed potatoes on the table. Historians aren't certain about what was served at that first Thanksgiving, but we do know there were various types of fowl — likely including turkey — corn, deer, and fish.

A TASTY CRIME

In 1623, the Pilgrims celebrated their second Thanksgiving to mark the end of a long drought. Pumpkin pie was served at that feast and has been considered a Thanksgiving staple ever since. This tradition became threatened when Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, banned pumpkin pie in 1644, viewing it as a "pagan pleasure." This decree extended to the colonies, but the Americans did not throw in the rolling pin — they simply ate their favorite pie in secret until the ban was lifted in 1660.

3 Things You Didn't Know About Thanksgiving

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

Attempting to stimulate the economy during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to extend the shopping season a week by moving Thanksgiving from the last Thursday in November to the second-to-last Thursday. Most of the states refused to comply, and finally Congress stepped in and named the fourth Thursday in November the official day for Thanksgiving — a day that can be the last or second-to-last Thursday, depending on the year.



Ultimate Thanksgiving Time-Savers

3 Tricks to Make This Thanksgiving a Piece of Cake Pie

Thanksgiving — a time for good food, good friends, and giving thanks for what you have. Unfortunately, for many of us, it's also a time for spending hours in the kitchen. This year, don't be too exhausted to enjoy your own cooking. Save yourself some time by taking advantage of these Thanksgiving tricks.

PEEL POTATOES WITH YOUR BARE HANDS
If there's only one new trick you try this

Thanksgiving, let it be this one. The time you'll save not having to peel a mountain of potatoes is amazing.

Instead of peeling the potatoes before putting them in the pot, take a knife and carefully slice a line around the middle of each potato. Don't cut any deeper than the skin. Then boil them like you normally would.

When the potatoes are done, take them off the stove and pour the hot

water into a new pot, using a strainer to catch any potatoes that might fall out. Next, run cold water over the potatoes. Now you can slide the peels right off! Throw the peels away and drop the peeled potatoes back into the hot water to warm them up. After a little mashing and some butter, they will be ready for the table!

WARM BUTTER FAST

It can happen to the best host or hostess. In the chaos of preparing for dinner, you forget to set out the butter. Now everyone is sitting around the table, and the cold, impossible-to-spread block of butter is going to tear up your fresh rolls.

Don't even think about condemning yourself to the mess of popping it in the microwave, even for a few seconds. Instead, take a drinking glass and run it under warm water. Then place it upside-down over the butter. The heat of the glass will warm the butter quickly, leaving it the perfect consistency to spread with ease.

DON'T FIGHT WITH YOUR FRIDGE

You're going to need to store a bunch of things in your fridge on Thanksgiving Day. You really don't need that jar of pickles or bottle of ketchup taking up space. Drag out the cooler the day before Thanksgiving, fill it with ice, and use it to store all of the nonessentials in the garage. You can also take this opportunity to clean out your fridge — so it will take you less time to put everything back. And you'll have plenty of room for Thanksgiving leftovers!



David Versus Goliath: An 80-Year-Old Woman Proves She's Owed \$100,000

Wanda Witter, an 80-year-old formerly homeless woman, is settling into her new apartment after being awarded \$100,000 from the Social Security Administration, or SSA. Witter first moved to Washington, D.C., in 1996, where she hoped to start a new career as a paralegal. After years of trying and failing to find decent work, she decided to draw from her social security benefits in 2006. It was then that Witter's war started.

The checks she received were all over the place, ranging from \$300 to \$900, and when she asked why, no one knew. So Witter decided to take action. She wrote "void" across the checks and mailed them back. She knew the amounts weren't correct, and if she cashed them, no one would believe that they were the wrong amount. So she committed herself to making sure she received full and fair compensation and took to living on the streets of D.C.

From 2006 to 2008, Witter returned every check the SSA sent her. Without a current address or bank account, they had trouble contacting her — so they stopped altogether. Witter tried to get someone to listen to her. She went from office to office, sent letters, called the SSA's toll-free number weekly, and explained her situation at every shelter she stayed at. Instead of helping her, they labeled her "unstable" and sent her to countless mental counselors. That is, until she met social worker Julie Turner.

This past May, Turner convinced Witter to try her case with Legal Counsel for the Elderly, an AARP affiliation. On her first visit, her lawyer, Daniela de la Piedra,

determined that Witter is entitled to a very large sum of money. Witter had spent nearly 20 years sleeping on cots and concrete, and in that time, the money had grown to six figures. In June, a Social Security official finally acknowledged Witter's claim and wrote her a check for \$999 — the largest amount they are allowed to write on the spot.

Even though the SSA had committed to paying her the over \$100,000 dollars, Witter was dubious, never trusting that another check was going to come. That was the case until she received her first installment. \$1,464 bought her a small apartment, a blow-up mattress, kitchen essentials, and most importantly, a firm pillow. 80-year-old Wanda Witter waged war against a government behemoth, and through determination, grit, and perseverance, she won.



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:

Does Your Home Adhere to the Nursing Home Reform Act?

You trust nursing homes to treat your loved ones with quality care, but what happens behind closed doors still causes anxiety. In 1986, these fears came to fruition when Congress requested that the Institute of Medicine, or IOM, evaluate the quality of nursing homes. They found that a majority of residents were neglected, abused, and inadequately cared for. To solve these issues, the IOM proposed a series of reforms, brought into action the following year — known as the Nursing Home Reform Act.

This act established an in-depth list of rights for all nursing home residents. These focused on the right to information, safety, privacy, and the right to make one's own decisions. Since 1987, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services — CMS — have reviewed, revised, and built upon these rights, but stories of nursing home neglect keep popping up. Regardless of the strides the CMS has made towards the protection of nursing residents, improper practices still take place.

They revise and improve on these rights every four years, but critics think that the CMS's continued modifications to their activities and monitoring systems have greatly impacted their ability to accurately assess the quality of nursing homes. This means that things are falling through the cracks, and improper nursing practices are remaining unchecked.



If you feel like your family has been a victim of nursing home abuse and neglect, contact our office. For 20 years, we have been helping victims put their lives back on track. With our bold approach and client-centered focus, we are ready to help you and your family get the care you deserve.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies

Recipe inspired by foodnetwork.com

Ingredients

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 cups (12-ounce bag) milk chocolate chips, not semi-sweet

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 350 F.
2. Beat butter until smooth, then add in sugars until the mixture is light and fluffy.
3. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and pumpkin.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves.
5. Add the flour mixture into the pumpkin mixture.
6. Stir in chocolate chips.
7. Spoon cookie dough onto a greased cookie sheet and bake for 15–20 minutes or until cookies are browned at the edges.

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