

Happy Holidays to All Our Readers

Kemp Scales, CELA*

In the spirit of the Holidays, the focus of this month's article is about making the season a little bit brighter for our loved ones in a nursing home. Despite all of the festivities, this time of year can also be hard for those in long-term care facilities. They may be missing celebrating cherished holiday traditions with loved ones, or this may be the first year that they can no longer spend the holidays in their own home. It can also be hard for family and friends to find time to visit or to know what to give as a gift.

To help friends and family find meaningful ways to share the joys of the holiday season with a loved one in a nursing home, I am pleased to share the following suggestions, kindly provided by Cindy Godfrey, co-owner of Rolling Fields (www.rollingfields.com) in Conneautville, Pennsylvania:

"Sometimes it is hard to decide what holiday gift to get someone who is residing in a nursing home. Usually, the rooms are relatively small, so there is not a lot of space for clothing or "knick knacks." Some practical or useful items might include:

- *Writing paper*
- *Pens*
- *A roll of stamps*
- *An assortment of greeting cards*
- *A live plant*
- *A watering can*
- *A bird feeder (check with the maintenance department for any guidelines)*
- *Bird seed*
- *A blanket or afghan*
- *Slippers (check with the home for suggestions on the appropriate type of footwear to prevent falls)*

If you do purchase clothing or blankets, be sure to label these in some way. Many clothing items come in over the Holidays and it is usually a difficult task for the home to get them all labeled accurately.

Remember that Poinsettia plants are poisonous and may not be appropriate for people with severe dementia or in a home where there are animals. Consider a Christmas cactus instead.

The most important gift you can give during the Holidays is yourself. This time of year can be very hard on those who are remembering happier times and the family and friends they have lost over the years. Take time out from your shopping, baking, decorating and hustle and bustle to visit those who can no

longer do those things, but probably wish they could. Stop by for just a few hours and make new memories with the people that need you the most.”

Many thanks to Cindy for sharing these thoughtful ideas. And we should also not forget to thank the hard-working nursing home staff and caregivers, who do their best to make the Holidays special for the residents.

From all of us as Scales Law Offices to all of you -- Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Peaceful and Rewarding New Year!

* * * * *

Note: *Working with the long-term care system we have in this country, seniors and their families need to understand that despite the restrictions in the Medicaid law, there remain opportunities for most to protect a significant portion of their life savings, even when facing an immediate crisis, with no advance planning. Whether you are 75 years old and living alone at home, or you are 85 and have a spouse in a nursing home – there are steps you can be taking now to preserve a significant portion of your assets otherwise at risk of being spent on your nursing care. But it is more true than ever that “time works against you,” so it is important to contact a knowledgeable and experienced elder law attorney for advice sooner rather than later.*

Kemp Scales is a Certified Elder Law Attorney* who serves clients throughout western Pennsylvania from offices in Erie and Titusville. He can be reached toll-free at (888) 827-2788 or by e-mail at Info@ScalesLawOffices.com. Scales Law Offices, LLC has an Internet presence at www.ScalesLawOffices.com.

* Certified as an Elder Law Attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation as authorized by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.