

Renew What's Important to You

Spring is a time for renewal. Trees and plants will soon be blooming, and many animals will shake off the cold and become active again. As the winter doldrums end, you'll be ready to get outside with your family, too, and be part of this renewal.

It is also a perfect opportunity to take a few moments to consider your goals and what's important to you and your loved ones. Are you planning to welcome a new child or sending one to college? Are you looking forward to retirement? Will you have enough money to accomplish these goals? What would happen if something happened to you?

Whether or not you have life insurance with the Order, I'll be happy to meet with you and examine how you can meet your needs and goals. If you've had any life changes since you last bought a policy (new home, new child, new job, etc.), chances are your life insurance needs to be updated. Maybe an annuity or long-term care plan appeals to your situation. Whatever the case, I'll work with you to make sure you have the coverage you need at a price you can afford.

When we meet, you'll discover that the time we spend together will be a commitment to your future and your family's well-being. Let's get together soon to renew your financial goals with the stable backing of the Knights of Columbus.

I'm at 812-630-6656 or chad.lueken@kofc.org. Call me – let's talk.

Different Life Stages, Changing Needs

Paying for college for your children may be one of your family's current needs. You may be concerned about a comfortable, worry-free retirement. You may wonder if needing costly long-term care will deplete your hard-earned assets. You want to have something to leave for your wife, children or grandchildren.

At some point you may have had all of these needs on your mind. Over time, these thoughts make way for others as your needs evolve, your finances change and you get older. What is important to you at age 20, may not be at 30, or 45, or 65. What is the best way to be prepared for these changes before they happen?

One of the easiest ways to be financially ready for changes that come with different life stages is to meet annually with your professional Knights of Columbus agent, and address the needs that his analysis uncovers. This can help you be ready to face the financial challenges and issues on the road ahead.

During that annual visit, I'll take the time to review your needs, goals and budget. I'll update all beneficiaries on your policies and be sure your coverage meets your needs. I'll recommend a program of life insurance, long-term care insurance and guaranteed income annuities that will help you rest easy at night.

Whatever your needs, whatever your concerns, whatever your stage in life, I can help.

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Basic Knowledge on Insurance Products

For this month's column, I thought a little "Life Insurance 101" might be beneficial.

Whole life insurance is the most basic plan of permanent life insurance protection, and calls for premiums to be paid for your entire life, or to age 100. You may also consider another permanent life insurance product – one with guaranteed cash values – that offers a limited period of premium payments. The Knights of Columbus offers three permanent life insurance products for which premiums do not have to be paid for all of life.

"Twenty Pay Life" is exactly as the name suggests: a permanent plan with premiums payable for 20 years. After the premiums are paid for the 20 years, the plan is "paid up" and no more premiums are due. Unlike its term counterpart, however, the plan stays in force, the death benefit remains intact and the guaranteed cash value continues to grow.

Another such plan is our "Life Paid Up at 65." With this permanent product you pay premiums until you reach age 65. Then, premiums stop (just in time for retirement), but the plan remains very much in force.

Finally, the ultimate in limited pay is our Single Premium Life product. Imagine buying life insurance – permanent life insurance – and only paying one single premium? It's possible.

I have detailed information on all of these products. At your convenience, I'll meet with you and your wife to perform a free, custom-tailored needs analysis, to help determine which of our many life insurance products is right for you and your family.

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Membership Growth is Everyone's Goal

The membership blitz is a tried and true way for councils to increase their numbers. We see these pushes often in March, in celebration of Founder's Day, and again in October. These drives are successful because brother Knights are more visible than normal, during and after Masses and at special events. We remember to ask each and every Catholic gentleman to join our ranks for the good of the Church, community and Order.

At the beginning of the fraternal year, we set our eyes on the goal of achieving the Star Council Award. This means running many successful and varied programs throughout the year and using this activity to spread the word about the Order. This will bring in new members.

Don't forget the strength of our life insurance, long-term care and annuities products is also a selling point of membership. For more than 125 years, our insurance has been "making a difference for life." Our ratings are among the best in the business. For the 16th consecutive year, the Knights of Columbus insurance program has earned Standard & Poor's highest rating, and for the 33rd consecutive year, A.M. Best Company has given us its highest financial strength rating.

I can help not only in explaining to prospects our outstanding insurance products, but also on the many other benefits of becoming a knight. I am happy to be an advocate for the Order and for our council. Even better, I can help you feel more comfortable in making the membership "sale" to prospects yourself.

As your professional Knights of Columbus insurance agent, I look forward to helping us grow in fraternity.

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'Right to Apply' Helps Widows in Need

The laws and rules of our Order, as well as state (provincial) laws, specify that the Knights of Columbus may accept insurance applications only from Knights of Columbus members. As a member, you may apply for insurance on yourself, your wife and your dependent, minor children.

The Order's Board of Directors has taken action, though, to assure that a brother Knight's widow maintains the right to purchase additional insurance for a limited time. This can be of great benefit and comfort to those we leave behind.

This "right to apply" is available only to the widows of insured members. If a member has not availed himself of our top-rated life insurance program, or purchased an annuity or long-term care policy, this benefit is not available to his widow.

But if the Knight was an insured member, his widow has the right to apply for additional insurance on her life and on the lives of the member's minor children. This right can be exercised for up to one year following the Order's receipt of proof of the insured's death.

Know two things. First, I'll assist your widow and children in any way possible if you should die, both with your Knights of Columbus insurance and any other life insurance you may have. Second, I'll provide them my best professional advice and service to ensure that they continue to have adequate insurance protection.

As a professional agent and a brother Knight, I have no greater responsibility.

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Retirement Income You Can't Outlive

People are living longer today than in any other time in history. While this is certainly a good problem to have, it creates a new worry for those facing retirement: what if I outlive my savings? How does a retirement income that you cannot outlive sound to you?

This sounds pretty good to most members and this can be true if you open a Knights of Columbus annuity, which is designed to provide guaranteed long-term security. As a knight, you can open a retirement annuity for as little as \$300. Consistent and disciplined savings placed into this annuity over time can guarantee you an income at retirement that you cannot outlive. Couple that guarantee with the fact that no one has ever lost money put in a Knights of Columbus annuity (remember, absolute safety of principal) and you will have peace of mind.

Don't forget contributing money an annuity will allow you to save some money on your income tax return. And our annuities offer a very competitive interest rate, consistent with our primary goal of absolute safety of principal. These benefits are similar to those of an IRA or similar product, but ours is backed by the strength and financial stability of the Knights of Columbus.

At your convenience, I will happily to meet with you to explain in detail the benefits of selecting our annuity, along with the benefits of our top-rated life insurance and long term care insurance plans.

As you consider options as you proceed toward retirement, think about one thing guaranteed to help you and open a Knights of Columbus annuity.

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Strive for Star Council Status

As we welcome a new fraternal year, we congratulate Worthy Grand Knight {insert GK's name} and all the other dedicated Knights elected and appointed to lead this great council. The coming year will be full of triumphs and challenges, and I know you'll meet this with the strength and faithfulness of those before you.

I'm sure you have a list of goals and objectives that you intend to accomplish this year, building upon the success of previous years. You have my assurance that I'm eager to help.

Among these many goals is the attainment of the Star Council award - the most prestigious award the Order offers at the council level. While I'm committed to helping on the insurance side, I'm also very glad to help on the membership side as well.

If you know an eligible Catholic man who might be interested in joining the Order as many of us do, he's probably waiting to be asked. I can help you, either by approaching him myself, or by teaching you some sales skills that you can use to recruit him and other prospects. As always, I'm at your service.

Let's get an early start on attaining those goals and objectives that are so critical to the growth of any council.

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Poll: Success Linked to Ethics

A poll of Americans and high-level business leaders proved what Knights of Columbus insurance agents have known for generations: religious beliefs and values should be an integral guide to business decision making.

Those surveyed also revealed they believe personal and corporate gain drives executives' decisions. Overall, they believe, as do the majority of the executives polled, that the moral compass of corporate America points in the wrong direction.

Only 19 percent of Americans would award corporate America a grade of A or B for its honesty and ethical conduct. Forty percent of these respondents had the banking and financial industry in mind when answering.

The positive side is that 75 percent of Americans surveyed believe that it is possible to be successful and ethical in business. They also believe that high ethical standards strengthen a company's advantage over its competitors, in both the short- and long-term.

Additionally, more than 90 percent of people strongly consider a company's reputation for honesty and ethical conduct when considering whether or not to invest with them.

Nearly two-thirds of those polled believe corporate leaders should rely on their religious values for guidance in the business arena.

In this tough economic climate, it's of paramount importance that all Knights are reminded of the moral, ethical commitment of the Order to serve its members and their families. Earning just a passing grade is not acceptable to me or the other professional insurance agents of the Knights of Columbus.

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Only Having “Through Work” Insurance Doesn't Work

Do you know anyone whose life has been drastically changed by the recent recession and economic downturn? With unemployment numbers rising, (the jobless rate was 8.1 percent in Feb. 2009, the highest since 1983), it's very likely that someone in your immediate or extended family or group of friends is facing financial uncertainty now. With this uncertainty, there is a real possibility that you (or your spouse) could lose your job or change employers.

Too many people have often relied on group term life insurance as their only safety net. Often, this insurance is an employee benefit provided at low or no cost. The existence of this coverage might convince someone that a personally owned life insurance policy is not necessary.

Only having “through work” insurance doesn't work. This way of thinking should be a thing of the past for many reasons. Most forms of group life insurance are limited in amount, which may be tied to salary or some other benchmark. These numbers are often capped, and this cap may be dangerously low for your family's actual needs. In fact, without a detailed needs analysis, any employer-provided coverage may be completely unrelated to needs at death.

In addition, the amount of group insurance offered is almost always reduced, sometimes dramatically, when you retire.

With the possibility of these changes on the horizon, you could one day find yourself without coverage, and if your health has changed (which it has and will as you age), you might also find yourself unable to secure individual protection.

While group life insurance can help, it does not replace the need for individually owned life insurance. I'll be happy to meet with you and provide a no-cost needs analysis, so you'll know exactly where you stand.

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Retirement Balancing Act

Think of retirement as a three-legged stool. In order to maintain balance, you need all three legs... or there is a real possibility of a crash!

One leg consists of the benefits the government offers you. Debate rages about the viability of future benefits, and my best advice is to stay tuned to the discussion and make sure you are aware of what is planned for those benefits. Any change in future promises should be accounted for when we get to the third leg.

The second leg is your company's pension plan, either defined benefit (such as a traditional pension: you work so many years and the company provides you with so much monthly benefit) or defined contribution (such as the popular 401K plans). Some of these plans, particularly traditional ones, are under stress, have been frozen or pared back. Learn how yours works; read the plan description; stay on top of the news coming from the company. On the 401K side, become a good investor. Teach yourself the fundamentals of good diversification and know how much you have and when you will need it.

Finally, the third leg is the saving you do yourself, and this is the only aspect you can control completely.

Everyone needs this third leg. It consists of the money you personally set aside on a disciplined basis to help in retirement. You don't directly control government benefits and you don't directly manage your company's pension plan, but you must manage your money and your life.

Establish a retirement plan of your own. Here at the Knights of Columbus, you can open a retirement annuity for as little as \$300. Consistent and disciplined savings placed into that annuity over time can guarantee you an income that you cannot outlive at retirement. That's right – guarantee you an income you cannot outlive. That really will provide you with peace of mind.

As you ponder all the things that may not work out as you proceed toward retirement, think about the one thing you can do to help yourself. It's reasonably priced, guaranteed and controlled by someone you trust: you!

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Teach Your Children Well

Raising children is probably the hardest job you'll ever take. It requires you to wear more hats than you ever thought possible. Cook, chauffeur, nurse, counselor and many more... and that's often in one morning. One of the most important roles you accept as a parent is that of a teacher. Before they even get to school, you'll teach your children so much, and before they get out into the world, you'll instill values that they will carry with them.

Sometimes the values you want to impart (respect, compassion, accountability, financial responsibility, etc.) often run counter to what our instant-gratification driven society values. So, we strive to teach by example.

This is one good reason to carry enough life insurance to protect your family. This one simple act can show what you value. You'll show them that you love them and are concerned about their welfare. You'll show that you take your responsibility to provide for your family seriously, and that you want to make sure they're provided for even if you're not around. You'll show them that investing money in your life insurance protection is more important than the new set of golf clubs you might want, the newest and best home theater system you've had your eye on, or whatever else you might be sacrificing to pay the premiums.

It will teach them about priorities. Sure, it may not sink in at the time, especially if any of the sacrifices made prevent them from filling what they see as their immediate "needs" (really things they want, not need, like the newest DVD, video game or article of clothing). In the long run, they will learn from what you do and what you don't do. Only you can choose the lessons you will teach.

Let's meet to review your existing coverage. My needs analysis, provided free, will help teach you where your coverage may be lacking. We can plan today to secure your family's future and set in motion lessons that will last a lifetime.

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