

Edwards Group LLC

David O. Edwards, Counselor-at-Law

How Prepared Are You?

A story of a baby, her parents and the babysitter.



Let me tell you a story. It doesn't have a fancy name. I just call it "the babysitter story."

Picture in your mind a young married couple, counting the days until their firstborn arrives. Maybe they even have a funny nickname for the baby (so they don't have to tell the real name, which is a secret until the birth).

The big day finally arrives. The new bundle of joy is here and lots of changes happen. There is a lot less sleep, busyness beyond what they ever imagined, trying to figure out feeding, changing diapers, car seats, sleeping, and amazing amounts of laundry.

After a few weeks or months, finally the young couple decides maybe it's time to have a night out

without the little one. So, they make arrangements with someone to watch their precious bundle... maybe a good friend, a neighbor, grandparents, or a high school kid from church.

What do they do to get ready? Well, they lay out all the necessary supplies and equipment. After all the stuff for taking care of the baby is ready, they think through the details of what she will eat, drink and how to put her to bed. They have to be sure that the babysitter knows how the baby likes to be rocked, what music to play as she drifts off to sleep, what time they'll be back, how to reach them and on and on. Once the babysitter arrives, the mom gives her a long verbal list of the preparations she's made, but just in case there is any doubt, she also has a written list of instructions for what to do throughout the entire evening. And as mom and dad are heading out the door, they are still giving last minute instructions.

(continued on pg. 2)

From Dave's Desk

How do you know if you're too busy? Well, here's one way. As December ended, I was cleaning off my desk and getting ready for the New Year. It was Dec. 29th. I picked up my Far Side daily calendar (an annual Christmas present from my wife, Michelle) and guess what the date said? July 25th. Seriously. I had not ripped off a cartoon since July. How messed up is that? I had allowed myself to be so busy that I hadn't read a simple cartoon for the past 5 months! What did *you* miss last year because you were too busy? We always seem to have a list of things to do for that time when we aren't so busy. Well, when is that? Never, of course. We're always busy. So, we have to prioritize. What people and tasks are you making a priority in 2010? Will you make time for what's important this year?



ILLINOIS SUPER LAWYERS RISING STARS 2010

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Super Dave. He may not wear a cape to work, but for the third year in a row, Dave has been selected for inclusion in *Illinois Super Lawyers*® magazine, Rising Stars Edition 2010. The magazine, which has a readership of over 13 million chooses the top 2.5% of attorneys under the age of 40 and publishes their list annually. The attorneys are carefully selected through a well-controlled and strict nominating



process; research of professional accomplishments, honors and awards; and a thorough evaluation by the research staff of *Super Lawyers* magazine based on 12 indicators of peer recognition and professional achievement.

Congratulations, Dave, for being named one of *Super Lawyers* Rising Stars for 2008, 2009 and 2010!

HOW PREPARED ARE YOU? (CONTINUED)

Finally the parents are on their way, maybe to dinner, to a movie, enjoying the time alone. And what do they do a little ways into the evening? They call home and check on their little bundle of joy!

For most of you this is probably a familiar story, because just about everybody with kids has experienced it, but I have one question for you:

How many of us spend far more time writing out instructions for one evening out than they do preparing their instructions for eternity?

And from the other side, there's no calling back home to see how they are doing...

LAW FIRM OVERHEAD REDUCED BY CUTTING OUT NECKTIES

Free to a good home. Power ties in all colors and designs. Formerly worn by attorney. All must go. Contact Dave for more information.

A friend of mine, an attorney in Ohio, went to meet with a very successful and wealthy client for the first time. He showed up without wearing a suit. The new client looked him up and down and said, "Where's your suit?" My friend replied, "Same place as yours!" And they both laughed and got on with their meeting.

Some people may wonder why I don't wear the typical attorney's uniform of a suit and a tie, but it is an aspect of my practice that I've thoroughly thought through. I don't just do it because it's more comfortable for me. In everything I do, I'm trying to better serve my

clients, and I think it's more comfortable for my clients if I'm not in a suit and tie. Many of my clients have never met with an attorney before and find the process intimidating. There is no need to make the process more stressful for them because I'm all dressed up.

Oftentimes, we will be discussing some very private and difficult topics when we have planning sessions. For the sake of open and honest communication, I want my client's to be as comfortable as possible. I don't want anything to get in the way of making an excellent plan for dealing with these vitally important issues. I think something as subtle as the way I dress can have an impact, positive or negative, on our conversations.

I hope the next time you stop by the office, you'll see that we are

focused on the real needs of our clients, not just keeping up appearances. One day as I got ready to leave for work in my jeans, my daughter asked me why I wasn't wearing work clothes to work. Feeling clever, I responded that the boss told me I could wear jeans to work that day. To which Bailey quickly responded, "Mommy didn't say that!" Many times, I wear jeans to the office if I don't have a meeting or speaking engagement scheduled. But rest assured, it's not because I'm lacking professionalism. It's because I'm working so hard for you and the things that matter most in your life.



MEET THE TEAM: STEFANIE SIWAK, ESTATE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



Stefanie Siwak first met Dave over 10 years ago when she was hired as his secretary at Giffin, Winning, Cohen & Bodewes. After working with Dave for five years, she left to have her first daughter. While at home with her

daughters, (Stefanie now has two) she and Dave kept in touch. When Dave started the Edwards Group in December of 2008, Stefanie seemed like a natural fit for the team. Dave asked if she would be willing to work part time in the new firm, and Stefanie gladly agreed, "Dave, is the most wonderful person to work for. He is appreciative, open, honest, kind, respectful, intelligent and understanding. I feel so happy and blessed to be able to be working for him again."

With 15 years of legal experience, all of which have been in the estate-planning field, Stefanie has a lot to draw from when helping clients plan for the future. She especially enjoys being able to help clients attain peace of mind. "I really enjoy helping people know that if something were to ever happen to them, that they and their loved ones are taken care of." Stefanie believes that the group approach of the firm and the one on one attention given to each client is what truly distinguishes the Edwards Group from other estate planning firms.

Outside of the Edwards Group, Stefanie enjoys spending time with her whole family – husband, daughters, mom, dad, sister, brother-in-law and niece and nephews. She also loves to garden, write poetry and paint.

THOUGHTS ON PARENTING BY ELISA COTTRELL

The usual chaos had been encircling us all day beginning long before we even started to run our errands. Errands are really something I try to avoid doing with the children at all costs, but sometimes it's inevitable. On this particular day, I was hopeful that the presence of my laid back husband could have a positive influence and keep things sane.

The morning had started with us tearing up all 2,000 square feet of the house we're borrowing. Typically, this happens in conjunction with a lost shoe or a coat for one of the kids. This time, the stakes were much higher with a \$150 replacement fee on the line for the item that had gotten lost in the shuffle of our cross-country move. After a whirlwind of activity through the house and a momentary flash of brilliance, we found the item nowhere inside the upturned house, but in the glove compartment of the car – a logical place given we had lived out of it for two months during our move.

Unfortunately because of the search, the errand running started around lunchtime, which is never a good time to do anything, really, except eat. The post



office we were headed to was inconveniently located right next to McDonald's. As my husband ran in to mail our lost item by certified mail, my five-year old (and future attorney) started pleading his case as to why he should be allowed to go to McDonald's *immediately*. Starting with a detailed list of why he was in fact starving, he continued to argue his case to no avail as a neighbor walked out of the post office. I rolled down my window and chatted a little. Before I could even get my window rolled up, Jack started in again. The whole time this was going on, my dear, sweet daughter was hard at work quietly drawing in the back seat. She is quite often the calm in our storm and it takes quite a bit to get her feathers ruffled. As my husband chatted with the neighbor outside the car and my son, Mr. Relentless, still tried to argue his case for McDonald's, my daughter interrupted with a seemingly innocent question, "Momma, how do you spell *circus*?"

And I thought to myself, "**L-I-F-E.**"

You can read more of Elisa's writing at www.ThoughtsOnParenting.com.

Did You Know?



Wills are public documents. After a person dies, their will is filed at the courthouse where anyone can take a look at the document. If your privacy is very important to you, consider using a living trust which is not required to be filed at the courthouse.

DAVE'S FLASHBACKS

Beginning in the late 1990's, Dave spent years representing various Illinois counties in cases involving property tax assessments, property tax rates, zoning, charitable exemptions, farm assessments, industrial and commercial property, and tax deeds. Over the years, he represented over 50 different counties in various real estate matters, working with county officials such as Supervisors of Assessments, Boards of Review, County Clerks, State's Attorneys, and County Boards. He argued cases before administrative agencies (Property Tax Appeal Board, Dept. of Revenue), and various court levels (including state court and federal bankruptcy court). He even argued before the 7 judge panel of the Illinois Supreme Court, in a dispute involving \$1 million of property taxes.

In handling these cases, Dave spent time working with appraiser reports and presenting testimony of appraisers as to the value of property, and dealing with complex and unique pieces of real estate to understand how they were valued. In addition, working with county officials now helps him navigate the various ordinances and regulations that impact real estate and its value. Dave puts this experience to work helping families like yours protect and transfer their homes, farms, vacation timeshares, commercial property, and rental property, and properly handle each type of assets within a customized estate plan.

The Right Thing To Do

Nobody looks forward to estate planning. A lot of people put it off wanting to avoid the discomfort that can be involved in making hard decisions.

The *Truth About Estate Planning Workshops* at the Edwards Group are a perfect first step in doing the right thing. Stop putting off what you know you should do and start the New Year right!

Our workshops are a great time to learn about the unique philosophy and approach here at the Edwards Group. You will even have a chance to ask Dave some of the questions you may have about estate planning.

For a small investment of time, you could be taking a giant step in the right direction of protecting those you care about the most!

Download a workshop flyer at www.EdwardsGroupLLC.com.

Truth About Estate Planning
90-Minute Client Orientation Workshop
Presented By: David O. Edwards, Counselor at Law

Why most Wills and Trusts don't work and what you can do about it.
Erase any concerns about what your family may face after you're gone.

Thinking about your estate?
Get the facts with our 90-minute, practical, non-fattening workshop. That's never done exactly the same way before. Audience participation makes the discussion, so we always talk about the issues that are on your mind.

RSVP Required
Due to limited availability, pre-registration is required. This may require one of the three methods listed below.

By Phone:
Lynn Lynn, Client Coordinator
217-726-9200

By Email:
lynn@edwardsgroupllc.com

Online:
www.edwardsgroupllc.com

For more detailed information regarding the workshops, please refer to the back of this flyer.

Available dates:
Thursday, November 19
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, December 3
9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Tuesday, December 15
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 6
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Course Location
Edwards Group LLC
4340 Acer Grove
Suite B
Springfield, IL 62711
Phone: 217-726-9200
www.edwardsgroupllc.com

Directions
Go west on Wabash, past Veterans Park
Turn left on Macdonald
Turn right onto Acer Grove

Upcoming Truth About Estate Planning Workshops

Thursday,
January 28 at 1:30 p.m.

Thursday,
February 11 at 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday,
February 23 at 1:30 p.m.

*All workshops will be held in the
Community Room at Edwards
Group offices.*

RSVP at (217) 726-9200,
lynn@edwardsgroupllc.com, or
online at
www.edwardsgroupllc.com.

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