



November 2007 Newsletter

Happy Thanksgiving!

To newsletter readers in other countries, this is a day when we give thanks and celebrate our lives, families and freedom. Traditionally we get together with friends and family and share a meal. Usually a variety of food and a turkey is involved.

Yesterday, for the first time, I successfully smoked an 18 pound turkey! My family will over in a few hours and we will have time to celebrate another year together. .

As I have been fixing food for our meal today, I turned on the television and I was touched by an interview of a family that lost everything in the San Diego fires last month. They were asked to evacuate their home quickly and when they returned home, nothing was left except for the cement foundation. Several of my friends went to help as Red Cross volunteers and came back with amazing reports of the devastation.

There is hope for recovery and a new life in the future, but what an ominous road those folks have ahead of them. So many people did not have a *Get Away Bag* or even the simplest documents to prove who they were and what they owned. They had no idea that a fire would change their lives so quickly.

Losing ones home to a fire is such a graphic illustration why each family member (and pet) needs to pack a *Get Away Bag*. It's also vital to have personal, legal and financial documents in one place for a quick exit.

My prayers go out to each of the families and individuals who lost their homes as they recover and rebuild their lives.

Hawaii Trip

I just returned from a 3 1/2 week trip to Hawaii where I had the joy of speaking to six different groups of local people about *My Life in a Box...A Life Organizer*. Hawaii was once my home and it was a very special time to see old friends.

My message at the six workshops was *Be Prepared, Get Organized and Stop Procrastinating*. The two most dynamic groups that I spoke with were 65 members of MOPS (Mother's of Preschoolers) and a group of senior's at a church.

The young mothers were inundated with the pressures of little kids, diapers, feeding schedules, and no time for themselves. A couple of the ladies shared that they were raising their children alone as their husbands were in Iraq. Talk about multi-tasking!

The following morning I spoke to a group of people over 70 years of age. They had already raised their families and most of them were now alone. Amazingly enough, both groups were mostly women and aside from their age difference, they asked the same questions.

- "Where do I start planning for emergencies or natural disasters?"
- "What do I we need to pack if we have to quickly leave home?"
- "What must we have in our home if there is a disaster and the power goes off for several days?"

Last October, 2006 there was an earthquake on the Big Island of Hawaii that triggered a shock-wave disabling the electrical system throughout the island of Oahu. Some people were without power for 2 days.

How would you like to have several preschool aged children or even babies and have no power in your home for two days?

What would it be like to be 75 years old and live alone in a home with no power?

I began to think about when I was a young mom with two children under the age of 2. What would I have needed to survive?

I went back through notes from Y2K and other survival resources and put together a 4 month survival calendar. Since most people live on a budget, purchasing items on this survival list can be spread over 4 months. It is included as an attachment to this newsletter and I hope it is helpful to you.

My "Minor" Survival Story

Most people envision the beautiful beaches and warm weather when they think of Hawaii. Don't misunderstand me when I say that Hawaii at its best is an amazing place to live. However since Hawaii is a series of islands in the middle of the ocean, there are horrible storms that occur with little or no warning.

We had one of those storms during my visit and it lasted for several days. One Saturday night 14 inches of rain fell and the sewers overflowed. Two MILLION gallons of waste water flowed into the ocean near Pearl Harbor and 11,000 gallons flowed into Kailua Bay. At one point I realized that I needed to reevaluate my own safety plan.

When I awoke to the heavy rain I had no phone service, no TV (for news), and no Internet access. In order to get my cell phone to work I had to stand outside in the rain to get a signal. I DID have my *Get Away Bag* and a full tank of gas in my rental car however, my water and food supplies were limited, and I had no idea how long the storm was going to last.

It was 1:00 am when the worst part of the storm hit. I went outside to check my rental car and found that the water was 8 inches deep, so I waded through the water and moved the car to higher ground. I had my flashlight, batteries, tools, clothing and shoes. I began to make a list of the supplies that I did not have, including water for 2-3 days and food. Questions began to fill my head and I realized that I was NOT prepared if this storm turned into a hurricane or went on for a few days.

Thankfully, by morning the torrential rain began to slow down and although the streets were wet, and many roads were muddy, within 6 hours most roads began to clear. I found a grocery store and purchased items that I would need in case the storm worsened. The experience I had on my trip to Hawaii reminded how vital it is to be prepared in ANY circumstance... even on vacation.

Think about it and remember to plan for survival no matter where you are.

Life in a Box

During my trip I was invited to help a family put their *Life in a Box*. We went to the local office supply store and purchased cardboard boxes with lids, file folders and a couple of black markers.

Like most homes, there were piles of papers everywhere. As we began the process, we gathered all of the documents found in *My Life In a Box...A Life Organizer*. We then looked for the largest assortment of related papers and put them into storage boxes. Those papers included several years of income tax returns, real estate documents etc... Very quickly we began to see the piles disappear! Next we created the 6 file folders listed in the workbook.

Within three hours all of the 6 folders were created and filled. The next day when I arrived, the lady of the house had become so motivated that she had filled out all of the forms in the workbook and put them in her *Emergency Folder* and had thrown away enough junk mail and empty envelopes to fill a 30 gallon trash bag!

We were both amazed at how many empty envelopes and junk mail she found in her home. We sorted through all of the obsolete insurance policies, real estate documents and created a big bag of paper work that needed to be shredded.

*As a note...*Aside from having your own personal shredder, you can find companies who do nothing but shred documents. When you have large quantities as we did, you can either take your boxes or bags to them or they will come to your home with their industrial shredder.

Why shred?

A land surveyor told me that while he was at a site that was once a land-fill, he looked on the ground and saw bank statements, insurance policies and personal letters that were easy to read. He was stunned to see all of the personal documents just laying on the ground in plain view. What a shocking revelation that was!

From that moment on, along with old documents I now shred the back pages of the magazines and catalogs that contain my customer number and address.

I am now back home and will be preparing for Christmas and New Years in Texas with my daughter and her family. I will become a grandmother for the first time in January as my son and his wife are expecting. I am looking forward to getting to know this new little person that will someday call me "Gramma".

May our holidays be blessed with peace and a sense of gratefulness as we celebrate with our families and friends!

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