

# NEWS

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STEFFENS LAW OFFICE, P.C.

## A NOTE FROM BILL

*My wife and I are shameless foodies. We enjoy a great meal prepared to perfection and presented with flair — not every day, but occasionally. We recently visited our favorite Italian restaurant, Bella Italia in Cozad. Amazing food! The chef is an artist, I swear. The problem is, the owners have listed the place for sale: “Just not enough business in a small town.” Well, I began thinking about all our other favorite spots. You know, those special places where the owners are passionate about what they do, and they do it very, very well. You, like us, probably praise their work and thank them profusely, which I’m sure they appreciate. But what they really need is business income to survive financially. In this age of Amazon, where you can get the best price on just about everything online, we need to remember those special small businesses we cherish need our patronage ... or they’ll disappear. I hate to think of choosing between chain restaurants for a special night out. How about you?*

## SEEING IT THROUGH: *Dan’s Story*

Dan really loves football. You should see him talk about it — his eyes light up and he speaks with passion! Unfortunately, he may never be able to throw a football again.

Dan worked as a janitor in the North Platte School System for years before his injury. One day, as he was moving lunchroom tables around, he injured his lower back. Dan had never been hurt at work before; he’d never faced a situation like this. As a result, he struggled with the school system, trying to get his workers' comp payments and totally confused about what to do next.

One day, through a former client, he got his answer: go see Bill at Steffens Law.

We got involved and did a number of things for him right away. We filed a workers' compensation lawsuit to get him the medical help he needed, paid for by the school's workers' compensation insurance. But that wasn't the end for Dan's ordeal. Post-operation, the insurance company's chosen doctor gave him a 50-pound lifting restriction, which indicated that he could return to work. But 50 pounds is a heavy load for a man who can't stand for more than an hour without sitting. After three days, he ended up back in bed. We sent him to his personal physician, who gave him a 20-pound restriction. This limit was much closer to his true functional capacity, but it was one



the school couldn't accommodate. So they let him go.

The loss of his job was a major blow for Dan. We brought in a vocational counselor who tried to find him a job. He came up with many different possibilities, but Dan couldn't do any of them. Meanwhile, his finances were disintegrating, and his savings had disappeared. He could no longer make his child-support payments.

We refused to let things end this way.

So we helped Dan's divorce lawyer to modify his child support, and we continued to advocate for him in workers' comp. Eventually we were able to get him a significant monetary settlement and a large medical account set aside for the future. Along the way, we discovered his injury was life-changing and the settlement wouldn't be enough. Rather than abandon Dan, we helped him file a Social Security disability case. His newest case is still pending, but we'll be there for Dan, as we are for all of our clients, the entire way.

*-Bill Steffens*

# IS BUYING A HOUSE REALLY SMARTER THAN RENTING?

One of the most common nuggets of conventional wisdom in personal finance is the assertion that you need to buy a home to get wealthy — that renting is just throwing money in the garbage. While it's true that you don't own a house after 30 years of renting, as opposed to 30 years of paying a mortgage, it's too simplistic to suggest that buying is always a smarter financial move. Here are a few reasons why renting may make more sense.

## RENTING IS CHEAPER

There are always areas of the country — such as Seattle or New York City — where the going rental rates are lower than a mortgage payment, sometimes by a significant margin. Then there are the many categories of expenses you don't worry about as a renter. When you rent rather than buy a home, you owe rent and some utilities, but you don't have to cover homeowner's insurance, private mortgage insurance, homeowners association fees, home maintenance, or property taxes.

And those are just the ongoing expenses. Upfront, you have big expenses like closing costs, loan origination fees, appraisals, and real estate agent commissions that you either have to cover out of pocket

or roll into the balance of your loan. What's more, the bulk of each early payment goes to interest rather than equity!

Between all the upfront costs and the lack of significant equity accumulation for several years, homeownership really only pays off in the long run. That leads to another point, which is being able to move.

## STAYING NIMBLE

In today's economy, it can be hard to put down roots. Job security is nothing like it used to be, and with wages flat, sometimes the best way to advance is to jump to another opportunity. Owning a home means time spent trying to find a buyer. If it doesn't discourage you from looking altogether, homeownership can still be an impediment to moving to where the best opportunities are, and that could lead to real lost wages over a lifetime. Even if you decide to rent out your home, that means additional headaches having to manage a property long-distance.

Similarly, if you're not feeling secure about your income, buying a home could spell financial disaster for you in the long run. Losing your income while renting is a blow, but at least

you can downsize or move in with family until you get back on your feet. When you're paying a mortgage, you're stuck making that payment every month to avoid the loss of your home, the loss of equity you've built up, and a credit hit.

## BETTER RETURNS ELSEWHERE

You could sink your cash into a home, but if home values are flat or rising slowly, some of your money may earn you better returns elsewhere. Whether that's a business you're building or a handful of stocks, you may find that tying up your funds in a home costs you the opportunity to invest in faster-growing assets.

Homeownership definitely offers some intangible benefits, like a feeling of stability and the freedom to customize your living space without worrying about what the landlord thinks. But from a purely financial standpoint, it's not as cut and dried as you might think. Take the time to really analyze the numbers before you assume that homeownership is your only path to prosperity! To find out whether buying vs. renting is a better choice for you, check out Zillow's calculator at [www.zillow.com/rent-vs-buy-calculator/](http://www.zillow.com/rent-vs-buy-calculator/)

## INJURY CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

"After my accident, I was confused and had a lot of questions. Bill was able to walk me through the process and help me to understand my rights as a victim. I was able to get a settlement even when my own insurance company refused to help."

– *Sabrina, Wheat Ridge, CO*

"Steffens Law Office did a great job for me. I didn't know what to do first, and they led me through everything. They encouraged me to get the best medical treatment I could, and I did. Plus, my settlement check was better than I ever expected."

– *Andy, Sidney, NE*

"I just wanted to take a minute to thank you and all your staff for the wonderful job you did for us. You helped us with my wife's personal injury claim, and we couldn't be happier. You and your staff were extremely courteous and helpful in stressful times for us, and we also felt that you always had our best interests at heart. We now consider you and your staff to be our friends."

– *Francie, Guide Rock, NE*

"I feel that the Steffens Law Office was very diligent in their work. We were not pressured to make any decisions, and all of our questions were answered promptly. We felt as though the Steffens Law Office was truly working for our benefit. Thank you for all your help. We don't know what we would have done without your assistance."

– *Michele, Broken Bow, NE*





# PLAN AHEAD: *Picking a Personal Representative*



## ***What is a Personal Representative?***

A personal representative manages your estate after you pass. He/she works with your estate attorney to settle with creditors, inventory your assets, pay any inheritance taxes due, and distribute your assets according to the instructions in your will.

## ***What Should You Look for in a Personal Representative?***

The court requires this individual to follow certain ethical standards, including handling your assets responsibly and unselfishly. But the court doesn't know you personally, nor are they aware of your family dynamics. So choose someone you trust who is

able to make reasoned decisions, and cooperate effectively with the estate's lawyer and your beneficiaries. This way you can ensure everything goes as smoothly as possible during a difficult time for your family.

## ***How We Can Help?***

Estate planning can be a difficult process, but it's one that provides you and your family with clear financial direction and peace of mind, so you can focus on the things that matter most to you. We're here to help you navigate the ins and outs of estate law now so your family doesn't have to later.

For more information about personal representatives and estate planning in general, call us at 308-872-8327 or visit [www.steffenslaw.com](http://www.steffenslaw.com).

## ***Laugh Out Loud***



My nose has done more running this spring than I have.



someecards

## **LIME TEA COOKIES**

### **INGREDIENTS**

#### ***Cookies***

- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons lime zest
- 1 ¾ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda



#### ***Glaze***

- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- ¼ cup sugar

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Combine the 2 teaspoons lime juice with the milk; let stand for 5 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, cream together butter and ¾ cup sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, then stir in the lime zest and milk mixture. Combine the flour, baking powder, and baking soda; blend into the creamed mixture. Drop by rounded spoonfuls onto the ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, until edges are light brown. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.
4. To make the glaze, stir together the remaining lime juice and sugar. Brush onto cooled cookies.

*Recipe courtesy of allrecipes.com.*



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## GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH DISCOMFORT

### *The Art of Emotional Resilience*

In the spring of 2013, artist Emilie Gossiaux of Terrytown, Louisiana, won an Award of Excellence from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The award recognized a sculpture she created, which was also included in the In/finite Earth exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution. It's difficult enough, in a society that values sciences and commerce above all else, to establish a career as an artist, but three years before her immense success, Gossiaux, already deaf, was hit by an 18-wheeler while on her bicycle. She was left with massive brain damage and a shattered body. Gossiaux — blinded and presumed never to recover — now makes the kind of art that even the Smithsonian cannot ignore.

People the world over whose lives have been devastated by chance — leaving

their hopes in a scattered trail of debris — often find the most beautiful ways of weaving their broken dreams into beautiful new ones. How do they do this? Why is it that so often, the people who accomplish the most, and fill the world with the greatest innovations, technology, and beauty, are the ones who've suffered the deepest? Brene Brown, author of "Rising Strong," had this revelation: "I kept asking myself: What do these people with strong relationships, parents with deep connections to their children, teachers nurturing creativity and learning, clergy walking with people through faith, and trusted leaders have in common? The answer was clear: They recognize the power of emotion and they're not afraid to lean into discomfort."

The one piece of advice that echoes over and over again in the advice of

high-achievers to those wondering what it takes to succeed, is the need for perseverance. The endless inspirational quotes championing the idea of getting back to your feet after a failure all boil down to one simple concept: emotional resilience. The ability to accept a setback — whether a bad hair day, or the loss of a loved one — and not allow it to derail their sense of self-worth or purpose.

How can you become more emotionally resilient? It all boils down to getting comfortable with discomfort. We live in a society where discomfort is the exception, rather than the rule. And while this is an achievement for the ages, it decreases our tolerance to emotional discomfort. Accepting discomfort as a tool to push us forward, rather than fearing that it will hold us back, is the quickest road to the top.