



Harford Financial Group

Retirement Income Specialists

NEWSLETTER

THIRD QUARTER 2025

Create a Life of Meaning



Health and Wealth: Two Investments that Matter Most Living Fully in the “Go-Go” Years

When we think of retirement, it’s natural to focus on numbers, such as savings accounts, investments, and withdrawal strategies that sustain financial independence. But wealth isn’t just about having enough; it’s about living fully. And living fully requires more than money; it involves health.

In our work with clients, we see a powerful truth: the best returns often come not from the markets, but from investing in experiences while you can. Bill Perkins, author of *Die With Zero*, makes a compelling case that your real “net worth” includes the memories you create and the quality of life you enjoy.

That’s why we encourage you to maximize your “go-go years”, those early years of retirement when energy and health are still on your side. This is the time to travel, pursue adventures, and make memories that you’ll cherish into the “slow-go” and “no-go” years later.

I see this in my own life as well. Like many of you, I want to make the most of my active years. For me, that means getting out and traveling the world, continuing to play baseball and softball, and enjoying experiences at the beach with my kids, Jacob and Ava, and my wife, Donna. And one day, if I’m fortunate enough to be a grandparent, I want to stay active

and involved just as so many of our clients like you do with their own families.

The integration of health and wealth means using your resources with intention. It means aligning your financial plan with your physical vitality, so you’re not deferring joy until it’s too late.

Key Takeaways for This Season:

- **Invest in experiences, not just assets.**
Your money is a tool to unlock a fuller life.
- **Prioritize health like wealth.**
Time, energy, and mobility compound in value just like your portfolio.
- **Act in the “go-go” years.**
Don’t wait until circumstances narrow your options.

At its best, a retirement plan isn’t just about preserving wealth; it’s about spending wisely, purposefully, and joyfully to live the life you imagined.



Adam Freeland

Adam Freeland
President

Year-End Tax Planning: A Checklist for All by Bryce Harrison

As 2025 winds down, many of us are busy with the holidays, family gatherings, and wrapping up another year. But this season also brings an important opportunity: making smart financial moves before December 31st that can help you keep more of what you’ve earned. At Harford Financial Group, we believe year-end is one of the most valuable times to pause, review, and make sure your money is working as hard for you as possible.

Classic Year-End Strategies

Some strategies never go out of style when it comes to smart tax management:

- **Review Retirement Contributions.**
With tax rates at historic lows, many investors are choosing to pay taxes now and take advantage of Roth options – whether through a Roth 401(k) at work or a Roth IRA. This strategy can create tax-free income in retirement and help hedge against the likelihood of higher tax rates in the future.
- **Consider Roth Conversions.**
If you expect your tax bracket to rise down the road, converting a portion of your traditional IRA to a Roth IRA could lock in today’s rates while setting yourself up for tax-free withdrawals later.
- **Review Charitable Giving.**
For those over age 70 ½ and charitably inclined, Qualified Charitable Distributions from an IRA can lower your taxable income while supporting causes close to your heart.
- **Harvest Tax Losses (and Gains).**
If you hold investments that have declined in value, selling them before year-end may help offset realized capital gains elsewhere in your portfolio. A lesser-known strategy is harvesting gains in investments that have risen in value. If your taxable income is below a certain threshold, those gains could be realized tax-free.

(Checklist continues on next page) 



(Checklist continued)

A Few New Opportunities

Tax laws continue to evolve, and a few recent changes are worth noting. The One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB) introduced a new senior deduction. Starting this year, individuals over 65 will receive a \$6,000 deduction per person through 2028 (subject to income limits). This added deduction could make the strategies mentioned above more viable. Additionally, tip income can be deducted up to \$25,000 and overtime income can be deducted up to \$12,500 per person. For both of these income-specific deductions, phaseouts start at adjusted gross incomes of \$150,000 for single and \$300,000 for joint filers, with the deduction being reduced by \$100 for every \$1,000 earned above these thresholds.

For Business Owners

If you own a business, the final months of the year can be especially powerful for tax savings:

- **Accelerate Expenses.** Prepaying certain deductible expenses before December 31st can reduce this year’s taxable income.
- **Take Advantage of Section 179.** Purchasing qualifying equipment or technology may allow you to deduct the full cost this year, rather than depreciating it over time.
- **Retirement Plans for You and Your Team.** It may be too late to establish a plan for 2025, but you can start thinking about establishing a SEP IRA, SIMPLE IRA, or 401(k) plan for 2026. Retirement plans not only help you save for your own retirement but can also provide meaningful benefits for employees.

These strategies can help lower your tax bill while reinvesting in your business’s growth.

Don’t Wait Until April

The window to make many of these moves closes at midnight on December 31. Acting now gives you more control, more flexibility, and more peace of mind as you head into 2026.

At Harford Financial Group, we’re here to guide you through these opportunities and tailor them to your unique situation. If you’d like to review your tax strategy or explore last-minute planning opportunities, we invite you to schedule a year-end review with our team.

Die with Zero by Michael Clayton

As Oprah Winfrey once said, “All the money in the world doesn’t mean a thing if you don’t have time to enjoy it.” This quote gets to the heart of retirement planning: wealth alone is hollow if it’s never turned into meaningful experiences. Many diligent savers struggle to make the pivot from accumulation to purposeful spending/ distribution. To navigate this transition, it helps to understand a philosophy called Die with Zero and the three distinct phases of retirement.

Financial planners often break retirement into stages, each defined by changes in health, energy, and spending needs. Recognizing these phases can help you align your resources with your ability to enjoy them. The Go-Go Years begin when you first retire and are typically the most active period. This is the time to tackle your bucket list with overseas travel, new hobbies, and experiences that require stamina. You’ll likely spend more on travel and recreation, and you may feel guilty about dipping into your savings. However, planning ahead allows you to give yourself permission to spend earlier on while still safeguarding long-term needs.

By your late 70s or early 80s, you enter the Slow-Go Years. Health and mobility may decline, making travel less frequent and shifting social activities to local outings or more sedentary hobbies. Healthcare expenses often rise, making prudent management of your remaining resources critical. Finally, the No-Go Years may involve significant physical or cognitive decline, requiring support from family or professional caregivers. This phase often involves estate planning and end-of-life decisions and can last for many years. Understanding these stages underscores why front-loading experiences during the Go-Go period is so powerful. You’ll never be healthier or more energetic than you are at the beginning of retirement.

The book Die with Zero by Bill Perkins promotes a radical yet intuitive idea: our money is stored life energy, so unspent wealth at death represents missed opportunities. Perkins argues that the “real golden years” – when health and financial capacity are both high – come at the beginning of your retirement. Saving everything until late retirement risks spending your healthiest years working and your frailest years with unused wealth. His message echoes an old financial quip: “The last check you write should be to your undertaker, and it should bounce.” While this is tongue-in-cheek, it highlights the point that dying with significant unspent wealth may mean sacrificing experiences along the way.

Importantly, the Die with Zero philosophy does not advocate reckless spending. Instead, it encourages thoughtful planning that balances saving with life-enhancing experiences and timely generosity. Perkins suggests giving money to your children or other heirs when they can benefit from it most, rather than leaving a large inheritance after you’ve gone. Living a full life now does not mean neglecting future security; rather, it means matching spending to periods of peak health and making memories while you can.

At Harford Financial Group, we believe in helping clients translate these ideas into practical plans. Embracing your Go-Go years means budgeting for travel and experiences early, but it doesn’t mean ignoring the Slow-Go and No-Go phases. When setting your spending plan, consider allocating funds by phase, with higher discretionary spending in the early years but setting aside resources for healthcare and support in later years. If supporting children or charities is a priority, consider strategic gifting while you’re alive so you can witness the impact and potentially enjoy shared experiences. It’s also vital to reassess your plan regularly, as health, markets, and personal goals change over time.

Time is our most precious resource. Money is only valuable when it enables us to enjoy that time. By understanding the stages of retirement and adopting a thoughtful approach to spending, you can seize your Go-Go years with confidence.



Bob Bauer and his GTO

Our client, Bob Bauer, recently added a 1968 GTO Convertible to his collection of vehicles. As a passionate car enthusiast, this classic convertible holds special meaning for him and is a prized addition to his garage.



Dogs & Well-Being: Sue Ruby & Deb Peatt's Agility All-Stars

This quarter, one of our client spotlights is on Sue and Deb – and their incredible “big agility kids.” These three Great Danes are living proof that staying active can be joyful for both humans and their pets.

Sue and Deb’s dedication to training, traveling, and competing with their dogs is a wonderful example of how pursuing what you love – and keeping active while doing it – is a true investment in health and happiness. Pictures below are their pups in action!



Thunder

At 6 years old, Thunder is currently the #1 ranked Masters Great Dane in the country and will compete at the AKC Agility Invitational in Orlando this December.



Storm

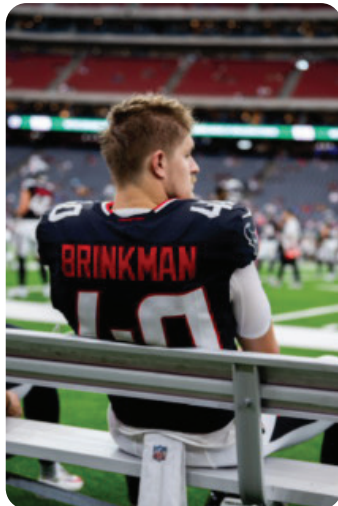
Soon to be 8, Storm made history as the first Great Dane to run in and QQ at the prestigious Westminster Agility Championship in New York City – and the first Dane to ever qualify for the finals.



Rayne

At just 2 years old, Rayne has already earned her AKC Novice agility title and is showing a real passion for the sport.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHTS



Congrats to Austin Brinkman!

We have some proud parents here at HFG – Deborah and Aaron Basler, valued HFG clients are cheering on their son, Austin Brinkman, as he begins his journey with the Houston Texans.

Austin Brinkman from Bel Air was drafted as a free agent by the Houston Texans as a rookie long snapper for the 2025-2026 season. Austin graduated from John Carroll and attended West Virginia University, graduating with a master’s degree in business administration. As a Mountaineer he received multiple recognitions honoring his work ethic, skill, commitment to excellence, and academics. As the 2025 NFL season begins, Austin is excited to have the opportunity to showcase his talent on the field, the place where he always knew he was working to be.



Steven & Sue Poole

We’re excited to celebrate with Steven and Sue Poole, who recently realized a longtime goal with the purchase of their Ocean City, MD condo! This summer, they enjoyed their very first season soaking up the sun, creating memories, and spending quality time with family.





Our team of advisors attended the Ignite Conference in National Harbor, DC. They were able to connect with industry leaders and gained insights to bring back to our clients.

While at the National Harbor, Bryan Angelilli and Michael Clayton participated in the 2025 Ignite Charity 5K in support of Luke's Wings – Lifting Spirits, One Flight at a Time. This trip was a true connection between Health and Wealth.



A BIG CONGRATS to Michael Clayton on earning his Certified Financial Planner™ (CFP®) certification. This designation is the gold standard in financial planning, representing years of dedication, rigorous education, and a commitment to always putting clients' best interests first.



Team Fun at Activate!

This quarter, our team took a break from our office chairs and desks and headed to **Activate** for some friendly competition. We played plenty of games, scored big points, and shared even more laughs. It was a great way to recharge, bond, and celebrate.



Mallory returns!

Mallory is back from maternity leave this quarter! We can't believe how fast baby Connor is growing – and his office visits are always a highlight of our day.

Welcome, Elie Fraiji 3rd – Our Newest Full-Time Team Member!

Elie earned his Bachelor of Science in Financial Economics with a minor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), graduating Magna Cum Laude as an America East Presidential Scholar Athlete. While at UMBC, he also competed as a Division I lacrosse player. Before joining HFG, he interned with the United States District Court for the District of Maryland as a financial intern. A proud graduate of John Carroll (Class of 2021), Elie has always demonstrated a strong work ethic both academically and athletically.



We knew right away that he was a great fit for our culture and our clients, and we're thrilled to welcome him back as a permanent member of the **service team, led by Mallory.**

Intern Spotlights

We are excited to introduce Drew Ophardt as our newest intern! Drew is in his senior year at Towson University, and he is eager to gain hands-on experience in the financial world.



As we say hello to Drew, we said farewell to Emma.



Emma Runyeon completed her summer internship with HFG in August. She is attending the University of South Carolina where she is pursuing Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. This is her senior year! We were so grateful to have worked with Emma this summer.



We are always open to client recommendations for future events. If there is a topic you would like to see covered in a future seminar or webinar, please reach out to Meghan Rafferty at meghan@harfordfinancialgroup.com. We would love to hear from you!



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