



Harford Financial Group

Retirement Income Specialists

NEWSLETTER

SECOND QUARTER 2023

Create a Life of Meaning

A Whole New World

by Jen Eyre

My family and I recently returned from a trip to Disney World. While this was not my first time there, it was my first time viewing the experience through an alternate lens. In the past, my husband and I were fighting through crowds while pushing a “Kingdom Stroller” stuffed with popcorn, toys, jackets, more toys, and one feisty red-headed daughter. Day after day, we were plagued with tunnel vision as we voyaged through a sea of Mickey-Eared people, all trying to get to the same place of relief and joy. All trying to survive the chaos.

Except, this time was different. For the first time in forever (see what I did there?), my Disney tunnel vision disappeared. As I walked through the parks, I finally looked around and found the happiness that everyone was creating. I saw moms with Mickey Mouse ears taking a break and sipping rose’ slushies at Epcot. I saw grandparents holding Pluto’s hand for family pictures. I saw little girls covered in pixie dust, believing they were Tinkerbell. I even saw Winnie the Pooh, with a net, chasing butterflies in a field. Everyone was creating their own magic, and it was lovely.

It was in these moments that the trip became less about survival and more about realizing that maybe all I needed to do was change my perspective. For example, instead of stressing about getting in line for Spaceship Earth, I could be grateful that my mother-in-law was there to ride it with us. Maybe instead of racing through Animal Kingdom to find the nearest air-conditioned gift shop, I could stop and wave to Donald Duck driving the boat under the bridge that I never noticed was there. Or maybe, just maybe, instead of trying to pack every second with scheduled magic, I could stop and stare at Cinderella’s castle with my beautiful daughter and create our own impromptu magic.

In today’s world of market volatility and unsettling global events, it’s easy to become lost in the chaos surrounding us. But, just like in Disney World, millions of us are running to that same place, all wanting that same thing. To get some relief. To find joy. To survive the chaos. This self-proclaimed high-maintenance woman with control issues learned a valuable lesson in Disney. There is a whole new world (I did it again) out there to discover if you take the time to adjust your lens, remove the tunnel vision, and find ways to discover magic and possibility, even among the chaos.



Jen Eyre

*Editor and
Registered
Assistant*

**Dedicated to life-centered financial planning
through the pursuit of inner wealth.**



Things Aren't Always What They Seem: How to Spot an Online Scam

By John Sieracki

Online scams have been around for as long as people have accessed the internet. There are over 174,000 Malware attacks each day. That's 120 attacks every minute or two attacks every second. Each year, these malware attacks and scams become more complex and are harder to spot. So how can you get the upper hand on potential hackers?

One of the most essential steps in being prepared to spot potential scams is to trust your gut. If something does not look right, it probably isn't right. Many scams appear through email, phone calls, pop-up ads, or websites. Any website could potentially have malware attached to them. However, some are less likely than others. Legitimate government websites, those ending in .gov, and websites for large corporations are typically safe to access with limited risk of malware. Websites that allow user-driven data (such as Facebook or Etsy) or websites that enable pop-ups, hold an increased possibility of malware being attached. The big thing to remember when accessing these websites is to not click on any pop-ups or links that appear. Some links or pop-ups could look harmless when they are not.

Have you ever seen an email that at first appeared legitimate? Here are some strategies to spot potentially dangerous websites or emails.

- Identify if the domain name or email address is legitimate. For example, SSA.com or amazon@gmail.com are examples of illegitimate domain names and email addresses.
- Spot misspellings or awkward grammar. Scams often come from countries outside of the United States and are more likely to contain errors.
- Look for suspicious links that attempt to redirect you to other websites. These links will often lead you to websites that contain malware.

Another scam technique to be aware of is phishing. Phishing is the fraudulent practice of sending messages that appear to be from reputable companies to steal your personal information. The content of the messages you receive through email or phone can help you determine if the message is phishing. One of the main factors associated with phishing content is establishing a sense of urgency. For example, "You owe the IRS \$10,000, pay by the end of the day, or you could end up in prison." Such messages are designed to make you feel panicked and cause you to make impulsive decisions. It is important to remember that messages like these are virtually always phishing attempts. Remember, government agencies, banks, and major companies will not ask for personal information or payments through emails. Requests for personal information through email correspondence should always be considered suspicious.

If you receive correspondence you believe to be legitimate, it is always best to verify that it is correct using the contact information you have sourced. What does this mean? If you receive an email from a company asking you to call and pay a bill, do not use the number from the email to contact the company. Instead, call the company using a number on their official website or other official publication. This step will allow you to determine if you have received an invoice from a legitimate organization or a potential scammer.

At Harford Financial Group, we want all our clients to be confident when accessing the internet. Using these tips and trusting your gut could prevent you from falling victim to these all-too-common threats in your daily lives.



Welcome, Bryan Angelilli!

The HFG team is thrilled to announce the most recent addition to our advisory team, Bryan Angelilli. Bryan was born in Georgia but raised in Maryland, where he lives with his lovely wife, Candice, and their three beautiful children. When you meet Bryan for the first time, it's his humor and quick wit that grabs your attention— plus the fact that our team learns something unique about Bryan every day. For example, he loves gospel music, owns an array of multi-colored socks, and is a licensed BBQ judge. He can also quote any line from the movie *Christmas Vacation*, is an avid gardener, and is a hard-core nineties alternative rock fan.

Before joining our team, Bryan taught history at Harford Community College, where he continues to work part-time. When I asked Bryan what drew him to the world of financial planning, he said, "I have always loved the concept of investing as a child, and I'm a natural saver. I used to help individuals with budgeting, debt reduction, and financial wellness but could not pursue it full-time until recently." His love for teaching compliments Bryan's desire to learn and grow within our firm. Since day one, he's been a sponge and has quickly become a role model for our interns. Bryan told me, "I love helping individuals grow as learners. I love to watch as people have that ah-ha moment. I've always been able to take complex ideas and break them down for people to understand." Bryan has applied this philosophy to his learning and teaching within the firm, making him a solid addition to our team.

Bryan has recently passed his Securities Licensing Exam and is studying to complete his Series Seven shortly. If you are lucky enough to have Bryan sit in on your next meeting, please welcome him to the team and maybe even inquire about his gardening and brisket-smoking skills. You won't be disappointed.

Welcome to the team, Bryan!



The Best Dirt Cake Recipe by Diane Kurek

Growing up, I requested dirt cake each year for my birthday. While it may look like actual dirt, it tastes like anything but. Yet, even as an adult, it remains one of my favorites. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

- 3½ cups milk
- 2 (3.4 oz) packages of instant Jell-O instant french vanilla pudding
- 1 package Oreo cookies divided
- ½ cup butter room temperature
- 8 oz cream cheese room temperature
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 8 oz cool whip thawed in the refrigerator
- Gummy worms (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Crush the Oreos in a food processor or by putting the cookies in a gallon Ziplock bag and hitting them with a mallet. You should have coarse crumbs when you're done. Set to the side.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together milk and pudding. Set aside in the refrigerator to solidify.
- In a large bowl, cream together butter and cream cheese with a mixer.
- Add powdered sugar and beat until smooth.
- Add pudding to the butter/cream cheese mixture (make sure it has set before adding). Beat on low speed.
- Fold in cool whip until the mixture is uniform throughout.

ASSEMBLE

- Layer the pudding mixture and cookies. Start by pouring two cups of pudding mixture into the bottom of a trifle dish and spread it until level.
- Sprinkle ½ cup cookie crumbs and ¼ cup chopped cookies evenly over the pudding.
- Repeat using 2 cups of pudding, ½ cup cookie crumbs, and ¼ cup chopped cookies for each layer.
- Add gummy worms to each layer as desired, or only add some to the top (this will change the taste of the pudding)
- Be sure the final layer is cookie crumbs!
- Refrigerate overnight before serving.



Shift Your Perspective to Cash Flow, Not Balance Sheet and Account Values

by Adam Freeland

There is a widespread belief in the financial world that you must reach a specific dollar amount to achieve success. Some pundits recommend acquiring an exact numerical net worth, such as one to two million dollars if you want to sleep well at night. As we work with clients, we see that many place a good deal of emphasis on their balance sheet or bottom-line account value. However, focusing on these values takes people away from the more important numbers, which is cash flow. Retirement cash flow is the relationship between an annual spending plan and annual income.

Why is cash flow so important? In short, money must be available when we need it. We all have lifestyles that we want to

$$\text{Retirement cash flow} = \text{Annual income} - \text{Annual spending plan}$$

maintain, and those lifestyles have varying costs. Some expenses are necessities such as food, shelter, and transportation. Other expenses are less crucial and would be less detrimental should we have to cut them back.

Having a general idea and range of your annual spending plan is best. The reason is that some can live comfortably and happily on more limited resources than others. In addition, people have different expectations of the lifestyles they want to live. It is not our place to tell people what that should be. It is our job to ask them if they have the resources to support it and,

if not, what valuable decisions they want to make.

On the income side, we begin with your floor, the guaranteed income source. Most people have Social Security as their guaranteed income. Some folks have pensions as well. We call all these sources promise-based and safety-first income because they are guaranteed. Studies have found that the more guaranteed income people have, the greater their peace of mind.

Ideally, one's safety-first income lines up with their essential expenses.



Harford Financial Group
Retirement Income Specialists

Reliable Retirement Income

The Bucket Plan[®]

Probability Based Income



**METHODS
TO RAISE
THE FLOOR**

Promised Based Income - Safety First, Guaranteed

- Social Security claiming strategies
- Private pension through insurance

Floor

(Foundation of Retirement Income)

**Guaranteed sources of income –
Pensions & Social Security**

*Money referred to as safe is intended to mean money held in a bank and subject to FDIC limitations.



We divide assets into three categories:

(1) Cash positions that are generally held in banks for peace of mind. We do not consider bank balances as income generators. They are there more for contingency.

(2) Assets such as income annuities that can provide guaranteed income. Such products fit both into promise-based and safety-first income.

(3) Stocks, bonds, and mutual funds provide reliable income but are not guaranteed and what we call probability-based income.

Remember, your assets come into danger if you're focusing only on the balance and account values. While these numbers are important, they do not tell the whole story. Instead, think of your assets as potential income-generating vehicles that can supplement the guaranteed income from pensions or Social Security. We feel this shift in perspective is beneficial in the long run. For instance, we are currently in a bear market where assets are down. Therefore, if you have a particular account value threshold, you may be unhappy seeing the assets fall below that threshold. However, many of our clients who have been retired for over twenty years have maintained sustainable cash flow and withdrawal rates even as their account values fluctuate up and down.

I hope this perspective helps you better understand retirement income planning and the many levels to consider. If you would like to review the retirement income process in greater detail, please feel free to reach out to our team.



Adam Freeland

Adam Freeland
President

Helpful Tips for Parents of College Freshman Living on Campus

by Donna Freeland

My son recently returned home after completing his first year at the University of Miami. This past year taught our family a lot, and I wanted to share some lessons learned with those parents in a similar boat.

Check Your Child's Medical Insurance Coverage if Attending an Out-of-State University

Many insurances will cover the student health center charges, but it's best to call and confirm beforehand. For example, I found that my insurance carrier covered urgent care visits but would not cover specialty doctor services. However, I learned that my plan offered "Away From Home" coverage for college students which has a partnership with a Florida-based insurance carrier at no additional charge. As a result, an additional insurance card was issued to my son and is valid through the end of each spring semester. You re-apply prior to every fall semester.

I also added my son as an authorized user on our family's HSA account, which he used to cover all co-pays he incurred while at school.

Prepare Power of Attorney (POA) and Medical Directive Forms

POA and Medical Directive forms are not typically included in the college packets but are very important. Should your child need medical care through a hospital and cannot make decisions on their own, these documents will allow the hospital to reach a designated party to discuss their condition and make medical decisions on their behalf.

In addition, the POA can help with financial or legal matters.

Public Transportation

Many universities do not allow freshman residents to have a car on campus. Take the time to research the public transportation options outside of campus and have your freshman download the apps.

Preparing for the Freshman Flu

Nothing is worse than getting a call from your sick child at midnight and being unable to help them. The term freshman flu describes that nasty cold or flu that hits first-year college students during those initial couple of months on campus. The combination of being around thousands of people, living in dorms, the stress of exams, not getting enough sleep, and the dining hall diet is bound to strain the immune system.

Unfortunately, my son's dorm experienced an outbreak of the freshman flu. Students have no choice but to walk to the health center on top of feeling miserable. Stocking your child's dorm with the following items will help ease their symptoms while recovering.

- Cough drops
- Vick's VapoRub
- Electrolyte drinks
- Pull-tab cans of chicken noodle soup, a spoon, and a microwave-safe bowl
- Saltine crackers
- Tea bags, honey, and microwave safe cup
- Instant oatmeal
- Applesauce cups or fruit cups
- Packs of peanut butter crackers or cheese crackers
- Thermometer
- Multi-symptom cold medicine
- Water filter pitcher

Having a child in college can be stressful, especially if they are far away from home. I hope these tips ease some of that stress and help you and your child have a successful, healthy, and fun-filled year.



Market Volatility: Friend or Foe?

It Depends on Your Perspective

By Melissa Mullan

Tuesday, October 20, 1987, newspaper headlines across the nation read Bedlam on *Wall St.*, *Wall St. Panic, Panic! Dow Plunges Through the Floor*; each in a frenzy over the events of the day prior, forever known as Black Monday when a global financial crisis unfolded quickly and severely. All major world markets were down 10 to 40%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 22.6%.

Our firm's founder, Matt Rehak, once spoke to me about the market aftermath following that day. He remembers, "By lunchtime, the market had lost most of what it would. By the end of the day, the Dow was down over 20%, a record disaster. To put that in perspective, that is an over a 7,000-point loss on the Dow. By 11 o'clock, I had a lot of concerned people calling. I had never seen anything like that volatility before." Matt recollects then going to lunch, filling his gas tank at the Exxon station, and getting a coffee at McDonald's. "It was crazy; Exxon and McDonald's stock was down 20% or more, yet their customers were still showing up. But how could that be? What was the difference? Fear." Matt explained that the most significant culprit of Black Monday was the lack of market confidence.

However, while most people were frantic with fear, Matt saw a buying opportunity and purchased both Exxon and McDonald's shares while the prices were low. "It paid off, having a calm, cool head and rationalizing why the market was going down. Interest rates were rising quickly, and people were afraid." Matt saw that Black Monday was all due to the perfect storm of rising rates, the declining dollar, deficits, and the overall lack of consumer confidence. Thankfully there are now strategies that prevent such a day from occurring again.

In 2016, the great Warren Buffett penned a letter to the shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. He wrote, "During such scary periods, you should never forget two things: First, widespread fear is your friend as an investor because it serves up bargain purchases. Second, personal fear is your enemy. It will also be unwarranted. Investors who avoid high and unnecessary costs and simply sit for an extended period with a collection of large, conservatively-financed American businesses will almost certainly do well." (you can read the full letter here: <https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2016ltr.pdf>)

Panic and fear-induced selling caused a market free-fall on Black Monday, and it took two years for the market to recover. I'm thankful to Matt for sharing his story with me. I enjoy passing along and often refer back to it when I need a little shift in perspective of my own.

Congratulations to Ava Freeland!

by Adam Freeland

My wife Donna and I are beaming with pride over our daughter's recent graduation. Ava graduated from John Carroll School and was the salutatorian of her graduating class. In addition to this accomplishment, Ava received nominations for the Black and Gold Award, one of the school's most prestigious awards. She is also recognized by the following organizations for her academic achievements:

- Archdiocese of Baltimore as a Distinguished Scholar
- Harford County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly Outstanding Scholar
- John Carroll Scholar
- AP Capstone

Ava is attending the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta this fall, where she will study Environmental Engineering with an emphasis on building sustainable cities. Ava drew a lot of knowledge and expertise from our founder, Matt Rehak's daughter, Elisa. "Elisa served as a tremendous role model and example for me. She showed me what women can achieve in the engineering field," said Ava.

Both Donna and I are so proud of her achievements because we know she was willing to put in the hard work. Congratulations, Ava, and good luck in the future!





Sometimes All a Dream Needs is Perspective: Once Man's Journey from Finance to Nursing

by Michael Clayton

As the famous saying goes, “The right perspective makes the impossible possible.” Perspective is the lens through which we view the world around us. Our own experiences, beliefs, and values shape it. Our life perspective can help us grow as individuals; when a significant event alters our view, it can give us the courage to challenge ourselves and take risks. If anyone is a true example of how an unexpected event can completely change our life perspective, it is our client, John Vincent Walker. John was generous enough to share his touching story with me.

On May 30th, 2002, the temperature was perfect, the sky was clear, and the breeze was gentle in Mount Hood, Oregon. It was the Thursday after Memorial Day weekend, and Vince was heading out to go skiing after it had just rained for three days. Little did he know he was about to witness one of the most notable and tragic incidents in mountaineering history.

That morning a group of nine seasoned climbers were in route to the summit of Mount Hood and fell into a crevasse called “The Bergschrund.” Unfortunately, the fall killed three climbers and left six seriously injured and in need of rescue. The Clackamas County Search and Rescue Department initiated a rescue effort with the help of the National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

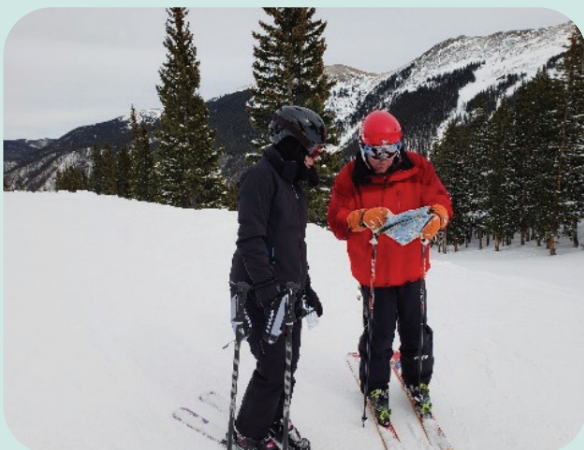
Vince vividly remembers watching the National Guard helicopter taking off and recalls the strong force of the wind generating from its blades. Vince said the temperature had changed dramatically that day, resulting in significantly warmer conditions. The increased heat impacted the atmospheric conditions, which caused the helicopter to lose lift while actively trying to rescue the injured. The aircraft crashed, but fortunately, there were no fatalities.

Vince quickly drove to the Timberline Lodge parking lot, where rescue efforts were centralized. He was in awe of the number of people jumping in to help in any way they could. Despite all the tragedy, Vince recalls the focus and determination of all involved. “They were not to be deterred,” he said. Witnessing such a level of human compassion and commitment that day is something Vince carries with him to this day.

Ironically enough, Vince was at a crossroads in his life around the same time as the Mount Hood accident. He was becoming burned out by his career, and he feared he was losing his professional drive and motivation. However, after witnessing those heroes work tirelessly to save others, Vince had a change of perspective and a premonition. Vince recalled his childhood dream of someday working in the medical field. He wondered if this was his true calling but had doubts surrounding the career transition, his age, and the timing of it all.

Vince embarked on some genuine soul-searching and turned to his pastor Reverend Jim Ditto of Fallston United Methodist Church, for guidance. Reverend Jim encouraged Vince to view this journey as not a long process but achievable through manageable steps. Vince took this advice to heart and graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Nursing three years later at fifty-five. For the next ten years, Vince worked in the nursing field, helping others just as he always hoped he would. He shared with me that he misses his time in nursing every day.

Vince's story is a heartwarming example of how a change in perspective can lead to a more prosperous, more fulfilling life, all while positively impacting the world around us. He exemplifies the meaning of inner wealth and service. We are proud to know him and want to thank him for making such a difference to those he's helped and us.



The HFG crew recently enjoyed an afternoon of friendly competition, sunshine, and shenanigans on the putt-putt course.



**WE HOPE THEY
LET US BACK!**

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 Diane Kurek at diane@harfordfinancialgroup.com. We would love to hear from you!



Harford Financial Group
Retirement Income Specialists

836 South Main Street • Suite 105
Bel Air, MD 21014
410-838-2992
www.HarfordFinancialGroup.com

Harford Magazine's award for Winner, Best Financial Advisor Company 2020-2022, is based on a poll of Harford Magazine's readers, results released February 28, 2023. This award is not based on investment performance.

Diversification and asset allocation strategies do not assure profit or protect against loss. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Investing involves risk. Depending on the types of investments, there may be varying degrees of risk. Investors should be prepared to bear loss, including loss of principal.

Securities offered through Registered Representatives of Cambridge Investment Research, Inc., a Broker/Dealer, Member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Cambridge Investment Research Advisors, Inc., a Registered Investment Advisor. Harford Financial Group and Cambridge are not affiliated.