

# ***The Guide to Good Divorce 2017 Winter Enews***

## **Your journey through divorce needn't be alone**

***By Trey Yates***

Welcome to the *Guide To Good Divorce Enews 2017* Winter edition, celebrating the five-year anniversary of the Guide to Good Divorce Program and Seminar Series. This is quite a milestone for us, I would like to congratulate all the hundreds of women we've helped over the years.



As a Board Certified Family Law Attorney who has been practicing in the area of divorce and related family law matters since 1986, I have had the professional and personal pleasure of working with many women over the years as they face one of life's greatest challenges – divorce. During these years, I realized that most women facing divorce could use more than legal assistance.

In 2011, I formed the Guide to Good Divorce to empower women to successfully navigate through divorce toward a fuller, healthier and happier life. The non-profit seminar program focuses on Five Keys I believe can unlock the door to a woman's next best life following divorce. These include securing the best legal representation you can afford, sorting out your finances, refreshing life skills, attaining a renewed sense of wellness and building new community.

At the seminar, attendees have access to experts in these key areas and have the opportunity to meet and share with other women facing the challenges of divorce.

Regardless of where you may be in the process of divorce, I invite you to sign up for our next seminar. We offer lots of resources and support as you embark on this journey.



Remember, the story of the butterfly. The butterfly, once the humble caterpillar, emerges beautiful, graceful, and endowed with wings. No longer crawling along the forest floor, the butterfly now soars above the trees – free, unrestricted and fulfilled as her true self.

What was discomfort for the humble caterpillar was truly divine discontent – a desire for a more authentic, soulful life. Her instincts told her that where there is true desire, there must be fulfillment. Join us at the next Guide to Good Divorce Seminar and claim your wings!

## **Finding hidden assets in a divorce may be just clicks away**

***By Patricia Barrett***

Over the years, I've often been asked to help divorcing individuals track down potential assets of a spouse during a divorce. This can be an arduous job. It usually requires careful sifting through boxes of paper records looking for irregularities -- bank statements, paycheck stubs, credit cards bills, tax records and lots of receipts. In the past, I had to rely on traditional tools of the trade and experience to sniff out hidden bank accounts, property or business interests. However, today, thanks to technology and online resources, this part of my job has gotten easier.



Now, we can apply our experience using computer and online technologies, enabling us to do our jobs a lot faster. Spouses who think they're being clever often forget one thing: electronic and online activity often produces a trail we can trace. For example, many people believe they have permanently deleted email, Facebook posts, files or other communication, when they haven't.

Uncovering mischief or lies in many cases just takes basic electronic detective work. Free public databases, such as those tracking real estate deals, often provide information on spouses who are less than honest. For example, one of my client's husband had disclosed 11 rental properties as community assets. However, with online resources, we were able to locate two additional properties not on his list.

Tax returns also provide a wealth of information for the trained eye. I have found offshore accounts, partnership interests, and bank and brokerage accounts previously unknown by the other spouse. In one of my client cases, I found that the husband had essentially "stashed" \$80,000 with the IRS in overpayments that he could have pulled out after the divorce was final.

Another area that I thoroughly review and investigate are paystubs and other employee records that may reveal undisclosed company benefits. "Restoration" plans may be overlooked by the spouse and attorneys who typically focus on 401(k) and pension benefits. If an executive earns above \$255,000 annually, the IRS rules state he or she must stop contributing to a qualified plan -- 401(k). However, that executive may have an option to contribute to a "restoration" or "top hat" plan which may go unnoticed. Legally, these funds are still considered community property that must be included in the list of marital assets.

Spouses are also doing basic detective work themselves these days by browsing online social network sites, and the URL history of the family computer, where they are finding things like visits to bank websites where the couple doesn't have an account. Many online searches on Google, LinkedIn and Facebook are legal.

I do advise clients to be aware of laws that make hacking into a smartphone, secretly installing GPS on a spouse's car, or installing keystroke monitors on someone's computer potentially illegal. Depending on the state and the details surrounding how the data is acquired, there are still gray areas about what practices are acceptable.

Remember, the best defense in these matters is a good offense. As a married spouse, you have a legal right to know all the details of your community property and finances, and

should always strive to understand what is going on in this area. Knowledge truly is power!

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### **Divorce Manual**

This guidebook is yours at no cost. It is published by the Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and offers a good overview of the divorce process.

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