

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

TWO SEMINARS!  
TWO CHANCES TO LEARN!  
MARCH 19—7:00 P.M.

### ESTATE PLANNING FOR SUCCESSOR TRUSTEES

LEARN WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU ARE A SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE

SHERATON ROCKVILLE HOTEL  
920 KING FARM BLVD., ROCKVILLE, MD

MARCH 25—7:00 P.M.

### ESTATE PLANNING 101

HOW TO LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN TREASURE, NOT TAXES!

SHERATON ROCKVILLE HOTEL  
920 KING FARM BLVD., ROCKVILLE, MD

TO REGISTER, CALL

**301-990-4395**

OR EMAIL [wsg@natplan.com](mailto:wsg@natplan.com)

Seminar locations and dates are subject to change, always check with our office for the most up-to-date information.

## WSG TRIP SPOTLIGHT

### Travel to Laos and Burma!

Join Patrick and Julie Carroll as they travel to Laos and then on to Burma with Overseas Adventure Travel.



#### Prices:

**Laos and Burma:** \$5790

Departs 2/9/2016

**Airfare from Dulles:** \$1300

If we are able to get at least 11 people to travel together, the discount will be approximately \$400 per person.

To view the itinerary visit :

**[www.oattravel.com/man16](http://www.oattravel.com/man16)**

OAT is holding the space for this trip until March 15, 2015. To reserve your space or obtain more information, please contact OAT directly at:



800-353-6262, press 2

Phone number:  
**800-353-6262, press 2**  
Group code: **G6-20960**



WEALTH  
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## REVOCABLE TRUSTS

### WHAT THEY DO AND WHAT THEY DON'T DO

By: *Stephen Zelcer*

So, you're collecting your thoughts about what's going to happen to all your stuff when you pass away. You want things to pass as smoothly as possible with as little expense as possible. You have a will, but you're not sure if that's enough.

Then you hear about another popular Estate Planning document – the Revocable Trust. What do revocable trusts do? And can one be used in place of a will?

#### What is a Revocable Trust?

A trust is a legal document that contains your instructions for what you want to happen to your assets when you die. If the provisions of the trust can be altered, amended or terminated, then it is a Revocable Trust.

#### What Revocable Trusts provide that Wills don't:

**Avoidance of Probate:** This is the largest benefit that Revocable Trusts provide over the will. All assets that pass through the will go through probate. Assets held in the trust don't pass through the will, but instead pass per the instructions of the trust. By avoiding the will you save your heirs the following:

**Time** – The probate process typically takes 9-12 months, so you will need to wait before you receive a probate-able distribution. Distributions from a trust usually go much quicker.

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**Privacy** – The probate process is a public affair. It needs to be, because the court needs to publicize your death and your estate in order that creditors or interested parties have a chance to make a claim against your estate.

**Multiple Probates** – If you have real property in multiple states, each property will be subject to probate in its state.

**Preserve ability to control assets even if incapacitated** - A trust grants authority to the trustee to handle and manage the assets of the trust even if the grantor becomes incapacitated.

#### Are trusts worth it?

The above advantages certainly indicate there is a value to Revocable Trusts. However, simply drafting a trust to save your assets from probate is not enough. A trust is funded by retitling the assets into the name of the trust. You should also make sure that your Successor Trustee understands your trust and the important part they play. Regardless of age or marital status if you own titled assets and want your loved ones to avoid court interference at your death or incapacity, you should consider a Revocable Trust.

For more information, consider attending one of our upcoming seminars on Estate Planning and Trusts. See the information at the bottom of this page for details on dates and times.



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Thursday, March 19—7:00 p.m.

## ESTATE PLANNING FOR SUCCESSOR TRUSTEES

Bring Your Children/Successor Trustees to this Important Event!

Location: Sheraton Rockville Hotel—Coffee and Dessert will be served

Wednesday, March 25—7:00 p.m.

## ESTATE PLANNING 101

Learn the Benefits of using a Revocable Trust in your Estate Planning!

Location: Sheraton Rockville Hotel—Coffee and Dessert will be served

SPEAKERS FOR BOTH SEMINARS: Patrick Carroll, CFP® and Francis Kreysa, Esq.\*

Call 301-990-4395 or email [wsg@natplan.com](mailto:wsg@natplan.com) to reserve a seat!

\*Francis Kreysa is not a representative of NPC

# ARE YOU READY FOR RETIREMENT?

## HOW TO THRIVE BEFORE AND AFTER THE TRANSITION

By Patrick Carroll, CFP

Retirement is about much more than money. It's also about finding a new path in life and a new identity as a retiree. For many investors, retirement is their primary financial goal. As financial professionals, we help our clients chart a course to get them to retirement. We work together to answer financial questions such as: *When can I afford to retire? How much money will I need to live comfortably?*

Surveys show that many Americans are woefully unprepared for retirement and financial worries can make the retirement transition stressful. Fortunately, working with a professional can help ensure that you enter retirement with confidence in your financial future. However, having the means to retire after a lifetime of hard work and smart financial decisions is not all it takes to enjoy the next phase of your life. Many people overlook the fact that retirement is a major life transition and that it can come with significant mental and emotional ramifications.

Many new retirees are unprepared for the psychological aspects of the transition. Studies show that retirement can improve psychological wellbeing by removing the strain of a demanding career. However, the corresponding loss of work relationships, career identity and daily purpose can cause retirees to feel adrift. Dr. Nancy K. Schlossberg, author of *Revitalizing Retirement: Reshaping Your Identity, Relationships and Purpose*, points out that a career "is such a part of your identity that people can feel very much at sea when they retire." This loss of a career-oriented identity is key, Schlossberg explains; "when you make a major change, your identity—who you are—is at stake." Until retirees find a new identity in retirement and develop a new sense of purpose, they may struggle with feelings of loss and depression. Reflecting on your own temperament and personality can give you insight on how to better manage your transition into retirement.

In *Revitalizing Retirement*, Dr. Schlossberg identifies three key guidelines to thriving in the retirement transition:

- ◆ Stay positive, reflect on what's most important to you, and focus on finding your new path.
- ◆ Recognize that you're going through a major life transition. Give yourself time to explore what's next and adapt to your new life.
- ◆ Prepare for surprises. Few things in life go exactly as planned and your ability to maintain positivity under uncertainty is key to success.

Don't be in too much of a rush to find the perfect retirement; what engages you at one point may no longer be practical in five or ten years. You may want to gradually ease into your new retirement lifestyle before making any drastic changes. If you find yourself itching to move or buy a vacation house, try it out temporarily before committing yourself, and your finances, to a serious life change.

Whatever path you take, it's critical to find a purpose and decide what role you want to take on as a retiree. Whether it's working part-time, volunteering for a cause, or pursuing a new passion, studies show that retirees who are actively engaged in their lives report greater levels of physical and psychological wellbeing. Experts suggest that retirees find alternative social outlets through church activities, community groups and hobbies. Building a substitute community and support network can help diminish the loss of professional relationships.

We hope that you've found this article interesting and that you've taken away some information to apply to your own life. Like many important life transitions, retirement can be both exhilarating and stressful.

As financial professionals, our job is to help you prepare for retirement and to give you the financial confidence to pursue your dreams in whatever form they take. However, we also want you to see us as a resource on other aspects of retirement. Though we are not psychologists, we have helped many clients negotiate important life transitions and can offer support as you work to pursue your retirement dreams.

Whether you are still preparing for retirement or you are already living in the next phase of life, there's no single solution that can guarantee a happy, successful retirement. However, we found that advanced preparations can help reduce the stress of retiring and help ensure that you are financially, emotionally and mentally ready to retire. Finally, we want you to remember that retirement can offer you the freedom to reinvent yourself and pursue new passions.

Retirement never ends, it's an ever-evolving process. Embrace it and enjoy the life you have created for yourself. And as always, please feel free to meet with us and review any concerns you may have.

Patrick Carroll, CFP is founder and CEO of Wealth Strategies Group, one of the most successful independent financial planning firms in Maryland. Patrick has over 30 years of experience in the financial services industry. He provides educational seminars on a variety of topics and is in the process of writing his first book. *Taming Your Money Elephant* will be published this spring. Patrick can be reached at [wsg@natplan.com](mailto:wsg@natplan.com) or 301-990-4395.



# 6 CRITICAL SOCIAL SECURITY FACTS

If you are like most Americans, Social Security may provide a significant portion of your income in retirement. According to Social Security Administration statistics, Social Security benefits account for about 36 percent of retirement income for the average American.

One of the biggest mistakes today's retirees can make is to underestimate the importance of Social Security in their retirement strategies. Here are a few facts to consider:

### Your Age Affects the Benefit You Will Receive.

62 is the earliest age that you can file for Social Security, but you won't be able to collect your full benefit then. You are able to collect 100 percent of your benefit at your full retirement age which is age 66, for anyone born between 1943 and 1954, 66 plus a two-month delay for those born between 1955 and 1959, and age 67 for anyone born in 1960 or later. If you can afford to wait longer, your benefit will increase by up to 8 percent every year until age 70.

### The Right Social Security Strategy Could be Worth a Lot of Money Over Your Lifetime.

If either you or your spouse expect to live past the age of 80, you are possibly better off waiting to claim as long as possible to receive a larger benefit.

### You Can Work and Collect Social Security.

The government allows you to work and collect Social Security benefits, however, your benefits may be reduced if you are below your full retirement age.

### Social Security Benefits are Taxable.

Social Security income is treated as ordinary income. The tax rate will depend on your overall income bracket.

### If You Are Married, Don't Forget About Spousal and Survivor Benefits.

Married couples need to think about how their Social Security claiming strategies will affect their spouse's benefits and income in retirement.

### Advanced Filing Strategies Can Help Boost Your Lifetime Income.

If you are married, there are some advanced claiming strategies that you and your spouse may be able to use to increase your lifetime benefits. No strategy can be right for everyone and it's important to consider your entire financial picture when making decisions.

For many retirees, Social Security benefits are the cornerstone of their income strategies and account for a significant percentage of their income. It's critical to plan ahead now so that you can identify and implement the best Social Security claiming strategy and make the most of this valuable resource. Call us today to schedule a complimentary consultation.



Patrick Carroll



David Shober



Stephen Zelcer

## QUARTERLY COMMENTARY

The last quarter of 2014 brought more volatility to the stock and commodities markets. The S&P 500 and Dow both gained more than 4%, outperforming quite a few of the major foreign indies. Oil prices took a dive, along with prices of other key energy futures. The pace of home sales slowed and year-over-year home price gains grew smaller.

Is downside risk increasing as we move into spring? Could a correction happen? Market analysts aren't ruling it out, as U.S. stocks didn't get a sustained lift from the latest Fed policy statement or the ECB's announcement of its stimulus. However, what happens in January does not necessarily foretell what will happen during the rest of the year. Oil prices have been rebounding and earnings have been decent. Those two factors alone may give investors a bit more optimism in the months ahead.

In 2013, we formed ACI Partners, LLC. ACI is a Registered Investment Advisor with the SEC. We have an office in Maryland and one in New York. One of the new services we can now offer is clearing through TD Ameritrade. We will also continue clearing with Pershing through National Planning Corp.

As we grow we are looking to hire individuals to join our team as financial planners—if you know of any family members or friends who currently work for a bank or other financial institution, who are customer service driven and who are looking for a great opportunity, we would be interested in speaking with them. Please have them forward their resume to [wsg@natplan.com](mailto:wsg@natplan.com).

Securities and advisory services offered through NATIONAL PLANNING CORP. (NPC), Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. Advisory services also offered through ACI Partners, LLC, a Registered Investment Adviser. ACI Partners, WSG, and NPC are separate and unrelated companies. Opinions voiced are for general information only. They are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. Please remember that investment decisions should be based on an individual's goals, time horizon, and tolerance for risk. Securities are not NCUA insured, have no financial institution guarantee and may lose value. Indices are unmanaged indicators of market performance and cannot be invested into directly. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. No investment strategy can guarantee a profit or protect against a loss.

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