



Upcoming Online Virtual Gatherings at Kirkridge

By Jean Richardson

In these times, to be fully human is not to excuse ourselves from the world. Rather it is to enter into the world's intensity from wherever we sit or stand. Our Leaders in government, medical systems, and educational systems are trying to guide the world through a storm that no one is sure how to navigate. Hard decisions have had to be made that have deep ramifications for many, in the spirit of trying to keep everyone safe. I believe, our task through it all, is to be fully human and treat one another with dignity.

In the past days, I have had to make tough decisions at Kirkridge. Early in March we suffered a series of cancellations and requests for refunds. In just two days we lost \$25,000. The Governor of Pennsylvania closed all non-essential businesses on March 13th. Given the loss in our revenue, our mandated closure, and every refund was only putting us further in debt, there was no option but to temporarily relieve staff of present positions and encourage all of us to apply for temporary unemployment.

Presently, Janet, Justine, Joyce (our new bookkeeper) and I are working very part time from home keeping the basic things running like paying bills, answering e-mails and voicemails, checking buildings, and setting up on-line gatherings.

As days now are moving quickly into weeks, we are trying to do the work we have always done, to "build community" and encourage each other on this life's journey. We are creating offerings of Zoom meetings and gatherings to try and help with the social isolation of our present lives. See below.

We live in faith that the day will come when we welcome you each home to Kirkridge. In the interim, please feel free to send us your stories of what it means to live "fully human" in this time.

Know for now, all the families of Kirkridge are safe and we miss each and every one of you.

Upcoming Online Virtual Gatherings

"We are all in this together": A virtual conversation about Kirkridge Retreat & Study Center, present realities and future dreams with Jean Richardson and Justine Johnson.

Friday, April 3rd from 2-3pm EST

"The space between dreams": A virtual Circle of Trust with Pat Mulroy and Jean Richardson is open and free to the Kirkridge community. Wednesday, April 8th from 4-5:30pm EST

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Beware of COVID-19-Related Investment Schemes

By Michael Ortoski

Bangor - The North American Securities Administrators Association and the state Department of Banking and Securities (DoBS) are warning investors to be on the lookout for investment scams specifically tied to the threat of COVID-19, such as:

Falsey purporting to raise capital for companies manufacturing surgical masks and gowns; producing ventilators and medical equipment; or manufacturing vaccines or other miracle cures.

Taking advantage of concerns with securities market volatility to promote "safe" investments with "guaranteed returns" including investments tied to gold and other commodities; oil and gas; and real estate.

Touting "get rich quick" schemes with quickly earned returns to be used for rent, utilities, and other expenses.

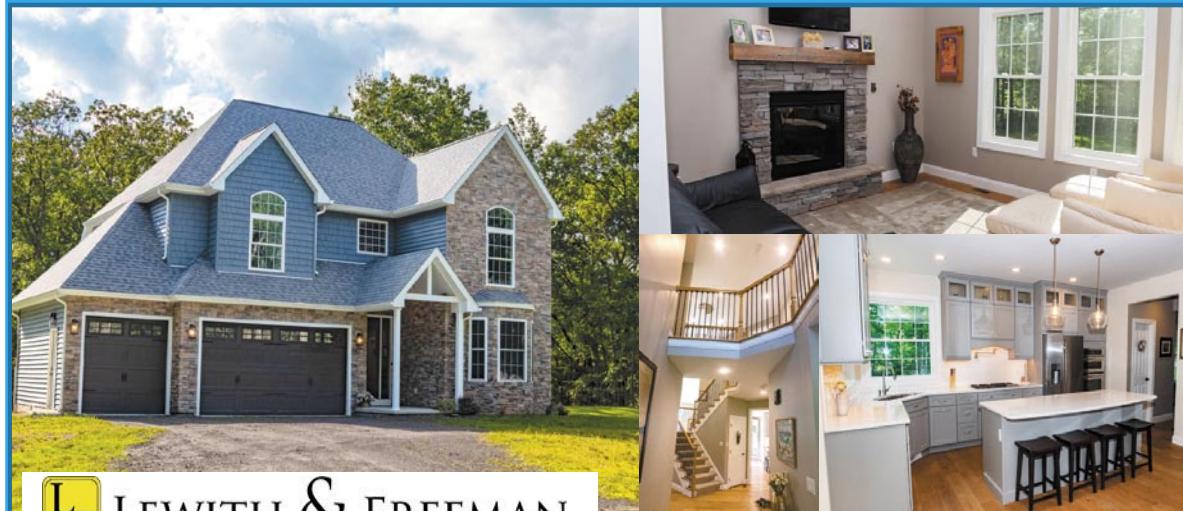
Targeting retirees and senior citizens, falsely claiming they can quickly and safely recoup any losses to their retirement portfolios.

For more detailed information related to schemes and tips for protecting yourself, DoBS has developed a guide for investors. More information is also available at COVID-19 information and guidance for financial Institutions and consumers.

Contact DoBS toll-free at (800) PA-BANKS or (800) 722-2657 for more information or to file complaints about financial transactions, companies or products.



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Price Gouging

Continued from page 1

of price gouging at a time when we should all be pulling together to fight this pandemic. Since the pandemic hit the United States and Pennsylvania, PBMs have cut reimbursements for a variety of drugs, including those that treat high blood pressure, depression, high cholesterol, ADHD and heartburn. For example:

PBMs cut the reimbursement for aripiprazole, a medication that treats depression and bipolar disorder, from \$86 to \$17.

A heartburn medication, omeprazole, reimbursed for \$9.11 as recently as Feb. 20. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been reduced to \$1.72.

Pharmacies are being paid less than \$1 for some blood pressure medications. Not only does this not cover the cost of the medication in many instances, it fails to consider that a pharmacy's overhead to fill a prescription is between \$12 and \$13.

These are just some of the frightening examples of how PBMs are pocketing Medicaid dollars. PBMs are supposed to negotiate lower drug prices for Pennsylvania families that rely on Medicaid, but they're getting very rich. In 2017, Pennsylvania taxpayers paid \$2.86 billion to PBMs for Medicaid enrollees, according to the state Department of Human Services. That marked an increase of 100 percent in just four years, up from \$1.41 billion in 2013.

We've been calling for comprehensive PBM reform in Pennsylvania that focuses on transparency, protecting taxpayer Medicaid dollars, and lowering prescription drug costs for all. Legislation would also forbid PBMs from owning or being affiliated with large pharmacy chains such as CVS and Walgreens. CVS is affiliated with a PBM, CVS Caremark. Walgreens is the preferred pharmacy chain for Optum, another PBM.

This price gouging during a pandemic is inexcusable and yet another reason why PBM reform is so desperately needed. We are also asking state officials to immediately investigate and stop this price gouging — and pass reform legislation — before it leads to the closing of independent pharmacies.

If we close our doors, it provides less competition for large, corporate pharmacies and that means higher prescription drug prices for Pennsylvania. Walgreens understands this. The company recently sent out letters during the pandemic asking if they could buy independent pharmacies across the commonwealth.

Pennsylvania's independent pharmacists will continue to serve their communities, but simply cannot continue to operate like this. We will continue to do all that we can — as long as we are able.

Patricia A. Epple is the CEO of the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association and a member of a new coalition, Your PA Community Pharmacies. Find more information here: ypacp.org.

Construction

Continued from page 1

exemption for construction personnel and construction activities.

The letter from Senate leaders is available here. Several lawmakers have also announced plans to introduce a bill to allow construction activities to resume with the proper protections in place to protect workers. More information on that bill is available here.

FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT: HEALTH.PA.GOV

