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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

WHO'S HURT BY VIRGINIA'S
PAINKILLER LAWS?
page 1

DEMYSTIFY YOUR KIDS'
OVERSTUFFED SCHEDULES AND GET
YOUR LIFE BACK
pages 2

TESTIMONIALS
page 3

ONE-PAN HARVEST PASTA
page 3

WHEN THERAPY COMES ON 4
PAWS
page 4



NEWSLETTER

09 | 17

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Hurting Those Already in Pain

THE UNFORESEEN VICTIMS OF VIRGINIA'S NEW OPIOID LAWS

Many of my clients are familiar with opioids and buprenorphine, medications commonly prescribed for acute and chronic pain. After suffering from a severe accident and having hardware screwed into your bones during intense surgery, this type of pain medication can greatly help the recovery process. Unfortunately, due to the highly addictive nature of these drugs, Virginia has seen a dramatic increase in deaths caused by drug overdose.

In 2016, at least 1,400 people in Virginia died from a drug overdose — a 175 percent increase from 2015. The Virginia Department of Health and law enforcement reports show this spike is likely caused by street heroin being laced with powerful opioids such as Fentanyl or Carfentanil. Fentanyl is 10 times as strong as heroin, while Carfentanil is estimated to be 10,000 times stronger. Carfentanil is typically used on elephants and can kill a human within minutes.

This crisis has the Board of Medicine in a panic. In an attempt to address the nationwide and statewide opioid epidemic, on July 1 of this year, Governor McAuliffe signed new regulations regarding opioids and buprenorphine into law. Under these new laws, doctors will not be permitted to prescribe opioids for more than 14 days unless there are "extenuating circumstances." However, what those

"extenuating circumstances" may be are unclear, and a person who's undergone a spinal fusion is going to need more than two weeks' worth of medication.

While the opioid epidemic is a horrifying crisis that needs to be addressed, as a lawyer who represents severely injured workers, I fear these new laws will cause my clients more pain. I imagine many doctors may begin to refuse to prescribe opioids at all for fear of breaking these regulations and losing their license. This only makes it a greater challenge to find pain relief after surgery. These regulations could cost my clients more money.

Take the regulations regarding buprenorphine, for example. Buprenorphine is used to battle heroin or other opioid addictions. It's fast-acting and reverses the effects of opioids. Many of my clients also struggle with PTSD and are prescribed anti-anxiety medication along with pain medications. In a situation where a patient is being prescribed anti-anxiety medication and opioids, the new laws require physicians to also prescribe the buprenorphine.

Why is this a problem? Well, I can already hear the insurance adjusters who will refuse to pay for buprenorphine. They'll insist the drug is for addiction, and since that's not something my client was insured for, they don't have to

"While the opioid epidemic is a horrifying crisis that needs to be addressed, as a lawyer who represents severely injured workers, I fear these new laws will cause my clients more pain.

cover it. Unfortunately, my client will still need to pay for the drug because their doctors will be legally obligated to prescribe it.

It is incredibly important to combat the opioid epidemic, but I am frustrated to see the men and women I represent being punished for the actions of criminals who have been lacing street heroin with what is essentially an elephant tranquilizer. These regulations just create more hoops for my clients to jump through, hurting people who have already been badly hurt. These regulations are up for reevaluation in 2022. Until then, I promise I will stay informed about these laws and be prepared to fight to get what's best for my clients.

- Joseph Miller

9 LIVES OF LOVE | The Healing Power of Therapy Cats

While dogs are considered the go-to therapy animal, cat lovers will vouch for how quickly a sweet kitty can brighten your mood. Pet Partners, a therapy animal certification program, offers felines the opportunity to use their powers for good. In nursing homes, cats have been shown to help seniors with Alzheimer's or dementia recall happy memories. Kitty volunteers in psychiatric wards and hospitals help patients relax in stressful environments. There are many accounts of friendly cats providing invaluable support to autistic children. One such child is Richard Manerling, who, at 4 years old, was still nonverbal.

Richard's father hoped a therapy animal would help the boy come out of his shell, but Richard showed no interest in the dogs at their local animal shelter. As the family walked past the cat room, Richard pointed to a black-and-white tuxedo feline and declared, "Cat!" From the first day the new family member, later named Clover, came home, Richard could be heard practicing conversations with his new friend.

Cats continued to aid Richard throughout his life. Today, Richard attends college and majors in art. While Clover passed on many years ago, two new cats, Linus and Melody, follow in Clover's pawsteps. Richard's family credits the loving felines in their lives with helping Richard through hard times and teaching him not be ashamed of his autism.

Not every cat is suited to take on the responsibility of being a therapy animal. A cat must be affectionate, comfortable around new people and other animals, unaffected by loud noises, and relaxed in unfamiliar environments. Does your feline have what it takes to be a therapy cat? Visit petpartners.org to learn more about the program and find out how you and your cat can register today.



EXTRACURRICULAR OVERLOAD



Every parent knows that a poorly organized tangle of kids' activities is a recipe for a migraine. As school starts up again, so does sports season, and your kids' extracurricular ambitions pile up like the falling autumn leaves. Don't

let yourself get burned out. Here are some tips to stay sane in the midst of the extracurricular whirlwind.

Consolidate all your scheduling, jotting, and activity-tracking into one system.

Let's get one thing straight: You can't afford to be scrawling "Abby piano lesson rescheduled 9/21" on the first scrap of paper you come across. That doesn't mean you have to be hyper-organized, but it does mean that you need to keep your entire calendar in one place, whether that place is Google Calendar, a fridge whiteboard, or the old-fashioned standby: a calendar with a lighthouse on every page. One particularly attractive option is the Cozi app (cozi.com), which not only consolidates an entire family's calendars, but allows you to include to-do lists, shopping lists, recipes, chore checklists, and more. Whichever system you choose, keep it updated. Its word is law.

Form parent alliances. Those soccer practices Jacob's going to? There are other teammates there, and they have parents shuttling them around, just like you are. Set up carpools — Noah's

mom drives them both Tuesday while you've got Thursdays — to manage scheduling conflicts between your kids and drastically reduce the time you spend as a chauffeur. To simplify the process and make sure everyone's on the same page, check out the Carpool-Kids app at carpool-kids.com. It'll let you directly invite other parents and set up weekly or one-shot carpool schedules.

Maintain balance. You almost certainly will need to say no to additional extracurricular activities every now and then. Sure, simultaneous baseball, football, and soccer seasons might seem healthy and fun for your kid, but you need to consider your own needs, as well. Many parents give their children free rein over what to choose, but limit activities to one or two per season. Johnny wants to do underwater basket weaving? Strange choice, but sure — though he'll have to abandon either fencing or ice hockey. Make sure you weigh each child's needs equally, and keep the rules the same for each of them.

TESTIMONIALS

"My family and I are truly grateful for Mr. Joe Miller and Ms. Lisa Hancock for their endless work with my father's case. Mr. Miller was recommended to us, and it's no wonder why! Even when things didn't appear to be ruled in our favor, Mr. Miller and Ms. Hancock kept persisting until it was ruled in our favor! Mr. Miller took his time to have lengthy phone conversations with us, and Ms. Hancock provided and processed any paperwork that was necessary or requested. Highly recommend!"

-Amy A.



DID YOU KNOW?

Not All Employers Are Required to Carry Workers' Compensation Insurance

As I write this, summer is in full swing, and that means a lot of construction injuries.

Unfortunately, we do sometimes have callers to our office who get severely injured while working for a very small construction company or other type of business that may consist of the business owner and perhaps one other employee. There may even be other folks hired on a temporary basis, such as painters, plumbers, or electricians, who invoice their work and are paid by the job.

We then have the very difficult job of explaining to the injured worker that their employer was not required to carry workers' compensation insurance and that, therefore, there is really no case. If the employer was somehow negligent in causing the injury

there might be a personal injury case, but without insurance, the odds of a decent recovery are very low.

Why is the employer not required to carry workers' comp insurance? In both Virginia and North Carolina, the requirement to carry workers' compensation insurance only applies to businesses which regularly employ **three or more workers**. Typically, in a sole proprietorship, the business owner is not counted as an employee.

In addition, subcontractors who are hired on a piecemeal basis to perform various jobs for the employer are not considered "employees" of the business and do not count toward the requisite three employees.

But watch out! Just because an employer calls someone a "subcontractor" does not make it so. We have seen construction business owners who try and cheat the system by directly employing a bunch of folks and telling them all they are subcontractors. They might even have them sign a paper that says so.

Don't buy it. If they control what the workers do and when they show up, and the business owner provides all the equipment, then all of those "subcontractors" are actually employees, and the business owner is going to be liable for their on-the-job injuries ... and in a heap of trouble with the commission for trying to get around the law.

Joe's Monthly 'SOUL SNACKS'

Know that in this world, man has to pass along a very narrow bridge. The main thing is to not be afraid.

-R. Nachman

If you believe you can break something, have faith that you can repair it.

-R. Nachman

ONE-PAN HARVEST PASTA



What You'll Need ...

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small eggplant, cut into 1-inch pieces (4 cups)
- 1 medium zucchini, coarsely chopped (2 cups)
- 2 tomatoes or 4 Roma tomatoes, coarsely chopped (1 cup)
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (19-ounce) can cannellini beans (white kidney beans), rinsed and drained
- 1¾ cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup dried whole grain elbow macaroni
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- Kosher salt
- Ground black pepper (optional)
- Snipped fresh basil
- Grated Parmesan cheese

Step by Step ...

1. In a very large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, red onion, and garlic. Cook, uncovered, 7-10 minutes or until vegetables are almost tender, stirring occasionally.
2. Add beans, broth, pasta, and crushed red pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Cover and simmer 7-10 minutes more or until vegetables and pasta are tender, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper; top with basil and Parmesan cheese and serve.

Recipe courtesy of midwestliving.com.