

# LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE LAW



LAW OFFICES OF

KIM MICHAEL CULLEN, P.A.

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877.244.6420 407.254.4901

## *An Early Christmas For The Cullens*

It is so easy to get caught up in the commercialism of Christmas – either wanting the newest technology, or the best or nicest item. Sometimes we can lose our focus and forget what the spirit of Christmas is really all about. The Cullen family has had a couple of experiences this year that I am confident will continue to have an impact upon us for years to come.

Many readers of this newsletter will remember that we lost our yellow Lab, Stella, several months ago. Although there was definitely an emotional hole left in our family caused by Stella's absence, it seemed like nobody in our family had a clear plan about what to do next.

That all changed several weeks ago when my wife and daughter fell in love with a "rescue" dog they met on a recent shopping trip. The object of their affection was a small, black, allegedly Australian Sheepadog/Labrador mix. It was love at first sight – both ways, I think. "Luna" has quickly become, in many ways, the focal point of our family.

Luna has TONS of energy, and makes more funny noises than any dog we've ever owned. Because we really don't know anything about her background, and have only owned Labs before, every day is an adventure as we try to figure out who she is, and who she is going to be. We have found taking in a rescue dog to be one of the most rewarding experiences that our family has ever had.

As I think about it, I'm not sure who was really "rescued" – Luna, or our family.



On a more somber note, the issue of child homelessness has recently been brought into focus by a much-watched 60 Minutes television segment several weeks ago. Our family was hit much closer

to home by the recent realization (by children and parents, alike) that there are many homeless children and families in our children's own schools (elementary, middle, and high schools.) This news was particularly hard for our kids to accept – that classmates of theirs might actually not have any place to sleep or food to eat each night.

I was very proud that our family was able to get involved in efforts to help these children-in-need. In particular, we sponsored one of the homeless children at our oldest son's high school. We started by providing him (and hopefully, his family) with a Publix gift card. Then our kids made thoughtful suggestions of things that a high school-aged kid might want or need or use. All of the gifts were dropped off this week, so hopefully this child will get to experience some peace and freedom from want on Christmas.

Hopefully, this experience will make our children more aware of the needs of others, and the idea that, with all of the blessings we enjoy as a family, also comes responsibility to attend to the needs of others. I am very proud of how my kids have responded.

As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, we are closing our offices on the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, in order to spend more time with family. We greatly appreciate your understanding and patience. We also wish to thank you for your continued support of our firm – and particularly the many kind referrals you make to us. **WE WISH YOU THE HAPPIEST OF HOLIDAY SEASONS!!!**

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101 S. NEW YORK AVE., STE. 205 WINTER PARK, FL 32789 877-244-6420



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## Resolve To Take Care Of Yourself In 2012

By Bonnie Dickman, L.M.T.

We can all agree that massage feels good, but why is it that so many consider it a luxury? People need touch, and the simple truth is that touch is healing. Don't put massage on your list of wants along with a splurge shopping trip or a vacation, and leave it out of your list of needs like food and fitness. Many still consider getting a massage a pampering luxury that only people with a plethora of disposable income indulge in.

I recently had a conversation with a woman who mentioned to me she had a gift certificate for a massage for over a year when she finally used it. I asked her why it took her so long, being a very active, athletic mother of two children. She replied, "I feel like I have to earn it!" To which I exclaimed, "Massage is not a



luxury...massage is a necessity!" I then explained to her the value and benefits of massage. I explained that massage is a valuable health related treatment.

Taking care of our bodies and muscles needs to be a priority, similar to maintenance - like brushing our teeth. Not allowing ourselves the benefits of massage is making our bodies more prone to sickness and disease, just like not brushing our teeth would make them more prone to cavities.

Massage helps the body in many ways. Yes, it feels good; but, it also relieves chronic and acute muscle pain, and helps prevent injuries through increasing range of motion. It can prevent and relieve headaches. It promotes a healthy immune system by improving the circulation of blood and lymph, which fight infection. Massage therapy also aids in calming the nervous

system and relieving pinched nerves. Almost anyone is a candidate for routine massages, especially those with active lifestyles or those who are athletes.

Many physical problems we experience can be easily dealt with through massage. Take headaches for instance; there are endless causes for them including dehydration, lack of sleep, poor diet, and muscle tension. Muscles become tight and tense through our daily activities and physical stress. This makes the body produce chemicals that inflame or irritate nerves and subsequently causes pain. Massage can relieve this pain. It's easy to pop over the counter pain meds, but we know that just masks the problem. When we mask the problem, our bodies eventually find somewhere else to store the excess stress and other areas suffer, just like falling dominos.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard the phrase, "This is the first time I have felt relief in months." Clients come to me with some form of pain or stiffness that they have been unnecessarily dealing with for weeks and months. They receive massage, and afterwards, breathe a sigh of relief. I often wonder why it takes some so long to seek help for their ailments. We wait around hoping the problem will go away on its own when we should be taking action to eliminate the problem. We must remember that we are worth it and we deserve it!

Make it a point to remind yourself that good health is a necessity not a luxury! Treat yourself to a massage, not because it's your birthday or you're on vacation, but because you're traveling a daily path to improved health and well-being.



Bonnie Dickman is a licensed massage therapist. She can be reached by contacting Winter Park Chiropractor, Dr. Andrew J. Hull at his clinic in Winter Park on Lakemont Avenue, calling 407-339-2225, or visiting this website: [www.winterparkchiropractor.com](http://www.winterparkchiropractor.com).



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## Office News...

In case you hadn't heard, Terry's assistant, Stacie, and her husband, Dino, are preparing for the best Christmas delivery of all -- A NEW BABY!!! Stacie will be starting maternity leave on December 19th and will be returning in February, so don't be surprised if you don't hear Stacie's smiling voice on the telephone for the next few weeks.

**CONGRATULATIONS  
STACIE AND DINO!!!**

## Don't Get Grinched This Holiday Season

The holidays are often a time when retailers try to pull out the fine print to trap unwary consumers. Here are some things to look out for:

### GIFT CARDS

A gift card cannot have an expiration date less than five years after the card is purchased.

The retailer also cannot charge inactivity or service fees unless the card has not been used for at least 12 months, unless such charges are clearly identified on the card.

### RETURNS

Check the store's policies carefully, especially on larger items and electronics that may have shorter exchange times or restocking fees.

Get a gift receipt. Without one, the person returning the item might be issued a gift card or store credit for the lowest price for which the item ever sold.

### REBATES

Check the dates on rebates—usually they apply only to purchases made in a specific time period and then must be filed within that time period.

Make sure that you are complying with the terms of the rebate. Keep receipts and packing materials and make sure that you keep UPC codes and proofs of purchase.

### SHOPPING ONLINE

Make sure you're buying from a reputable seller, and look for symbols from the Better Business Bureau, Verisign, and TRUSTe to make sure the site is safe.

Look for symbols in your browser like a key or a lock to show that the information is being encrypted to make sure others can't access it.



## Christmas Tree Buying Tips

- When buying an **artificial** tree, look for the label "fire resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When buying a **live** tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and do not break easily. The trunk of a fresh tree is sticky, and when shaken, it should not lose many needles.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to **keep the stand filled with water**. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.



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**Holiday Tipping Guidelines**

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Guideline</b>
Baby sitter	One evening's pay, plus a gift from your child
Barber	Cost of one haircut
Day care provider	A gift from you, or \$25 to \$70, plus a gift from your child
Dog walker	Up to one week's pay or a gift
Gardeners	\$20 to \$50 each
Handyman	\$15 to \$40
Housekeeper	Up to one week's pay and/or a small gift
Mail carrier	Gift worth less than \$20; no cash, check or gift cards
Pet groomer	Up to the cost of one session or a gift
Teachers	A small gift or note from you, plus a small gift from your child

These tipping guidelines come from Liz Pulliam Weston who is the Web's most-read personal-finance writer. She is the author of several books, most recently "[Your Credit Score: Your Money & What's at Stake.](#)"

**HOLIDAY HOURS**

Our offices will be **closed from the afternoon of Friday, December 23, 2011, until Tuesday, January 3, 2012**, so that our team can take a much-deserved opportunity to re-charge their batteries and get ready for an awesome 2012!! **We will be checking phone messages, and can be reached, if urgent.** Thanks for your understanding.

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*101 S. New York Ave., Ste. 205*

*Winter Park, FL 32789*

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