**HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS**

To Sell Your Home: Make It Clean and Clutter-Free

(NAPS)—Selling your home may seem like a daunting task but it doesn't have to be. "It is very important to be clean and clutter-free to show buyers that your house has been well cared for," says Martha Webb, real estate expert and author. A few helpful hints can help lead you to success.

A predecessor to the first challenge is enticing prospective buyers to come in for a peek. Make sure that the outside of your house is in tip-top shape by removing any unsightly objects from yard and around the house. All rakes, children's toys, garbage cans and tennis shoes should be out of sight. Trim the hedges and cut the grass, and don't forget about the flowers!

Make the inside sparkle: Before the potential buyer steps foot in the door, you’ll want to ensure that the inside looks as beautiful as the outside does. Be sure to clean, clean, clean! If you don’t have a lot of time to clean, make a quick pass through the house with the Swiffer Sweep + Vac, which combines the Swiffer cloth with a small vacuum for a quick yet thorough clean. Also try to de-clutter your house as much as possible. Having everything neat and organized not only looks nice but also creates the ideal home image. Arranging your house appear larger. Little touches that make a big difference—make sure to put down toilet seats and straighten out rugs and pictures.

Create an ambiance: "Build the mood to sell your house," says Webb. All houses have a personal identity. Strive to give your house character that will engage prospective buyers and help it stand out. By adding soothing smells and sounds, visitors will be more apt to think back on the pleasant atmosphere resonating from within your home. You can do this by simply baking cookies and putting on soft music. Turn on lamps rather than overhead lights to avoid unwanted shadows or glare. Most importantly, make your pets scents as they may intimidate your guests or create last minute messes.

Satisfy appetites: Everyone is happy to see food! Be sure to have something small for your visitors to nibble on while they are learning about your home. If they are very hungry when they arrive, they may be inclined to rush through the house and not take the time to really experience all that your house has to offer. Who knows—it may even prompt them to stay a bit longer than intended! Have plenty of water and cold beverages on hand in the Spring and Summer months, as well as hot chocolate and coffee during the Fall and Winter.

**TIPS ON TRIPS**

Hong Kong Celebration

(NAPS)—Have a yen to attend one of the world’s greatest New Year’s parties? Hong Kong hosts an unforgettable Chinese New Year celebration. In the 2005, Lunar Chinese New Year, visitors can watch the dazzling Chinese New Year Parade that winds along the waterfront in Kowloon. The parade features international celebrities and performers, with floats and marching bands. Other must-sees include a fireworks spectacular over Victoria Harbor, and a laser light show, accompanied by music, dancing and beautiful illuminated bouquets, that light up Hong Kong’s skyscrapers.

The week-long New Year’s themed holiday includes tours, horse racing, flower shows, shopping, museum visits, and sampling ethnic cuisine. For more information about Pleasant Holidays’ Chinese New Year package, visit PleasantHolidays.com, or call (800) 448-3333 or your travel professional. Kung Hei Fat Choy—may happiness and prosperity be yours in the Chinese New Year!

**Did You Know?**

(NAPS)—Many sports fans don’t know that Mark Spitz, one of the greatest Olympians of all time, won his first Olympic gold medal when he continued to break World records in his early 20’s, his body wasn’t as invincible as he thought. Spitz had always led a healthy lifestyle filled with plenty of exercise and a sensible diet. It came as a shock when he began to experience symptoms of acid reflux disease as an Olympic athlete in his early 20’s.

“During my Olympic training, I attributed the symptoms to an overexposure to chlorine and eating too soon after and before swimming,’ says Spitz. ‘I thought until the symptoms began to get in my way, it was not Boonty, his career in Montreal, which was four years after retirement, that I suspected I had acid reflux disease as an athlete and sought treatment from a physician. The most alarming thing I learned was that stomach acid was regularly backing up into my esophagus and causing an uncomfortable burning sensation,” says Spitz. ‘My doctor explained that if I had continued to ignore the symptoms, the acid could erode or cause physical damage to the lining of the esophagus, which is a potentially serious condition I hadn’t known about called erosive esophagitis.’

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