

# HOME-VIEWS

Monthly Newsletter for Today's Homeowner

July 2007



## Planning ahead for a carefree vacation

We all work very hard to earn our vacation time, and so we want our vacations to be fun and relaxing. At the top of the list of basic travel necessities is a medical emergency kit that contains important items for first aid treatment: i.e., bandages and disinfectant (rubbing alcohol), pain relievers, anti-itch ointments, sore throat lozenges, and cold medications. Consider taking an assortment of healthy snacks in order to avoid having to stop and buy whatever is available at the time. If your children are very young, it's a good idea to bring along some of their favorite small toys to keep them occupied. A few small new toys as surprise gifts can

also be very effective.

Whenever people spend continuous time together in close quarters, it's natural for stress levels to increase. At home, time together is usually interrupted by various separate activities, but during vacations it is normal for everybody to do everything together. One good idea is to have a family meeting just prior to leaving and discuss how everybody can have the most fun together during the limited vacation time. If things get out of control (which does occasionally happen), have another family discussion. Family meetings can be a valuable opportunity for everybody to express their feelings and really listen to one another.

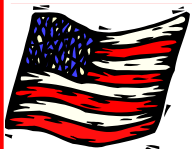


## Wising up to down payment options

When it comes to purchasing a home, there is a common misconception that the more money you invest in the form of a down payment, the better your interest rate will be. Down payments commonly range between 0% and 20% of the price of the home and property. The highest interest rates are usually for loans that involve no down payment or borrowers with less-than perfect credit, but putting down more than 20% usually will *not* get you a better interest rate. The interest rate of a home mortgage depends on many factors, including your credit score, your income, and the calculated value of the home and property. Mortgage lenders have different loan qualification guidelines, and different lenders offer different loan packages. Traditional lenders such as banks and credit unions prefer applicants who have a good credit rating. Some lenders may not approve loan requests for people who have credit scores below 640.



According to the National Association of Realtors, nearly half of all first-time buyers obtain mortgages in the full amount of the home price. Another 30% of buyers put down 10% or less, and 20% of buyers put down 5% or less, with the median down payment of first-time purchasers being about 2%. There are many different loan plans for you to choose from, so don't be discouraged if you do not have available funds for a down payment. If you find the home that's right for you in a location that's right for you, you will always gain long-term value when you purchase a piece of the American Dream.



### *Independence Day: Happy birthday, America!*

The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776 - the day Americans honor as the birth of the United States. But the nation did not officially become independent until September 3, 1783, when British King George III and U.S. leaders signed the Treaty of Paris to end the American Revolutionary War. It's interesting that the very first celebration of Independence Day was in 1777, six years before Americans knew whether the fledgling nation would survive the war. Fireworks have been associated with the **Fourth of July** ever since. Families often celebrate the day with a picnic or barbecue and take advantage of the holiday weekend to gather with relatives.



## Helpful tips on how to create more closet storage space

The problem with most homes is not a lack of closets, but a lack of knowing how to maximize their space. Most closets have a built-in top shelf, and sometimes it's possible to add additional shelves in the space between that shelf and the ceiling. If a closet is wide enough, a series of short corner shelves can also be added between the top shelf and the floor. Some parts of the shelf area can be subdivided into smaller storage spaces, and some parts can be made to serve as drawers. Items can be separated and organized into individual bins that are placed on the shelves. Alternatively, stackable baskets and bins can be used to store all kinds of items without the need for building shelves.

Various closet organizer systems are available at retail

stores and on the Internet. It's a good idea to put some thought into how you would like your closet to be organized before purchasing a system:

- Consider what types of things you want to store in your closet and how much space you need for each type.
- Make a simple sketch of your closet and measure the height, width, and depth. You don't need to make your sketch to scale, but you do need to know the measurements so that whatever system you buy will fit properly.
- Decide if you want to have drawers and shelves in your closet and how many you will need. Drawers located in the center are a good visual focal point.
- Hanging clothes usually need at least 24" of depth. The minimum shelf depth for folded clothes is about 12".

## Is there an easy way to repair your driveway?

There are many different kinds of driveways. Most driveways are made out of concrete. Some consist of asphalt paving material. Less common driveways include those made out of bricks or cobblestones. Repairing any kind of driveway properly involves not only assessing the problem correctly, but also applying an appropriate repair material that will last. Crack repair is a very complex subject, and there are thousands of construction consultants who advise contractors. Unfortunately for homeowners, the real experts are not available to the public for consultations.

The most common complaint that homeowners have about concrete driveways involves oil and gas stains. Some hardware stores offer products that have limited success at removing such stains. However, repairing cracks in concrete successfully is much more difficult to do. Construction

industry experts estimate that about 50% of all concrete repairs fail even when performed by professionals.



Repairing cracks in asphalt is also not easy, but the success rate is higher when the correct procedure is followed and appropriate repair materials are used. The crack filling and sealing products that are available to homeowners at retail outlets are not as high in quality as the materials that are available to contractors. If you have the specific expertise to perform a particular repair job, doing it yourself can save you some money. However, if you do not have the expertise and you make a mistake, you may end up calling a contractor to do the original job plus fix any additional problems that you have created.

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