

*The*  
**SHARP LAW FIRM**  
**Sharper Solutions**

## A Word from Cynthia Sharp



I am pleased to welcome Jane M. Fearn-Zimmer as an associate with my law firm. Jane was admitted to the New Jersey Bar in 1996 and is a

graduate of the Beasley School of Law, Temple University where she earned her LL.M. in taxation with distinction. In fact, she was **FIRST** in her class. Jane received her B.A. from Chestnut Hill College (cum laude) and her J.D. from Rutgers University School of Law, Camden with **HONORS** in International Law. Jane has been with me since April and has proved to be a valuable resource for our clients. She has demonstrated her commitment to supporting charitable causes by serving on the Wishes and Dreams Gala 2005 committee benefitting Cystic Fibrosis, which was held on October 14, 2005.

Our involvement in the Alzheimer's Association remains strong. On October 2, 2005, staff members and their families joined us in the Memory Walk, an annual event that raises significant funds for the Alzheimer's Association.

I was invited to speak at B'nai Tikvah Synagogue on the topic of health care powers of attorney, living wills and HIPAA. This topic is even more popular than before in light of the tragic events surrounding the Terri Schiavo case which was in the national spotlight earlier this year. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all of you to make sure that your estate planning documents are updated.

Please call me so that we can discuss whether any revisions are necessary in light of your personal changes in circumstances or revisions in the law which have taken place over the past few years.

### RADIO ALERT!!!

Cynthia will be appearing as a special guest on the Radio Talk Show "The Law and You" on Saturday, November 12 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Tune to WPEN 950 AM to hear her speak on Estate Planning Strategies for the 21st Century.

### Making Gifts to Reduce Estate Tax

One thing you can do to save estate taxes, whether you are married or single, is start giving away some of your assets now to the people or organizations who will eventually receive them after you die.

This is an excellent way to reduce estate taxes because you are reducing the size of your taxable estate. (Just make sure you don't give away any assets you may need later.) But even more satisfying to many people is that you can see the results of something that may not have happened without your help.

You can currently make annual tax-free gifts up to \$11,000 per recipient (This exclusion will increase to \$12,000 in 2006). If you are married, you and your spouse together can give \$22,000 per recipient per year. You can also give an unlimited amount for tuition and medical expenses if you make the gifts directly to the educational organization or health care provider.

As long as the gift is within these limits, you don't have to report it to

Uncle Sam. Just the same, it's a good idea to get appraisals (especially for real estate) and document these gifts in case the IRS later tries to challenge the values.

What if you want to give someone more than \$11,000? You can, it just starts using up your \$1 million federal gift tax exemption. If your gift exceeds the annual tax-free limit, you'll need to let Uncle Sam know by filing an informational gift tax return (Form 709) for the year in which the gift is made.

If you wish to make gifts to a family member but are concerned about his or her ability to handle the funds responsibly, we can establish a trust to hold the gifts. Please give me a call if you would like to discuss the pros and cons of a gift giving program.

*"To me old age is always fifteen years older than I am."*

Bernard Baruch

### 2005 Annual Caregiver Conference

Alzheimer's Association,  
 Delaware Valley Chapter  
**"Dementia: Surviving the Realities of Caregiving"**  
 Call 856-797-1212 to register.

FREE One-Day Seminar.  
**Saturday November 5, 2005**  
 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Location:  
 UMDNJ in Stratford, New Jersey.

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 The Sharp Law Firm

## DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

[WWW.CYNTHIASHARP.COM](http://WWW.CYNTHIASHARP.COM)

This site will allow you to access Cynthia's articles, our newsletters, directions to our offices, our seminar schedule and lots more.

## Featured website:

[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

Got credit? Know your credit score? Worried about identity theft? The answers to these burning questions, and perhaps a few others, can be found in your personal credit report, which is now available annually to all Americans.

Thanks to federal legislation, the three major credit reporting agencies (Experian, Trans Union, and Equifax) must now provide a copy of your report each year, at no cost to you. The availability of reports was phased in geographically over the past year. Those people living in western states could get them as of December 1, 2004, while those of us living in the eastern states had to wait until September 1, 2005.

You can request a copy of your information from all three agencies by mail, telephone, or the internet. See the featured website for more information on accessing your personal information.

**MYTH:** Once a family member passes away, there are no estate planning opportunities that remain.

**REALITY:** At the moment of death, a number of financial, tax-saving, strategic opportunities begin. Of course, you increase the opportunities to save money and redirect assets if certain terms are included in the will or trust PRIOR

to death. But even without these terms, things can be done. So after a death, BEFORE you shift any assets, change names on accounts, file for insurance, or take over joint accounts, make an appointment to see me so that we can discuss the ground rules. Moving the assets of the deceased person can cut off many tax savings opportunities.

## You Are Invited: Medicaid Planning: The Myths and the Realities

Will you or a family member require Long Term Care? At this FREE seminar, Cynthia will discuss the following topics (and more):

NEW Medicare Part D. Long Term Care Alternatives: Discussion of different levels of care including Continuing Care Retirement Communities, Assisted Living Facilities and Nursing Homes. Need for Asset Protection: Without asset protection planning to qualify for Medicaid benefits, a nursing home stay can lead to financial impoverishment.

We suggest that you bring your children or parents as well as friends and family who are interested in learning more.

The workshops will be held at the following locations:

Thursday, November 10, 2005 at the Palmer Inn, 3499 Route One South, Princeton, NJ from:

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. or  
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

*Refreshments Served!!!*

Thursday November 17, 2005 at Woodcrest Country Club, 300 East Evesham Road, Cherry Hill, NJ from:

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. or  
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

*Refreshments Served!!!*

Call us to register or email Tina at [tlutts@cynthiasharp.com](mailto:tlutts@cynthiasharp.com)

## Do you or your group need a Guest Speaker?

We are available to speak to your professional, civic, religious or special interest group on various estate planning and elder law topics. Give Tina Lutts a call at 856 546 5666 to arrange a date and time.