



Cynthia Hash, Realtor/SRES
 300 Preston Ave., Ste. 500
 Charlottesville, VA. 22902
 Tel: (434) 220-2251
 Cell: (434) 531-5351
 eMail: hash@kw.com

News ON THE HOUSE

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Be sure to talk to your real estate professional on how you can protect your home & budget with First American



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Cool Tips for Hot Days!

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter which is full of tips and ideas for you as a homeowner.

As an experienced real estate professional, I have an in-depth understanding of my clients' needs and challenges. I want you to know that my experience is at your disposal, so please feel free to call me for any of your real estate and/or home warranty needs.

Tips For Saving On Summer Cooling Bills



As summer inches closer, the temperature will rise. And while that means more time spent outside and longer days, it also means higher electric bills in many cases. Numerous Americans are concerned about how a heat wave may impact their utility bills. Fortunately, utility bills can be maintained without compromising comfort. The following tips can help you stay comfortable all summer without breaking the bank.

- Ask about utility programs. Many utilities offer programs that allow customers to "lock into" a

specific rate for the season. Such programs help customers avoid the surprise factor associated with fluctuations in energy prices.

- Change your filter monthly. A dirty air filter has to work harder to circulate air through the home. By cleaning or replacing the air filter monthly, or as directed by the manufacturer, homeowners can minimize wear and tear on their system.

- Install a programmable thermostat. New thermostats, such as the Edge Thermostats by Carrier, make it possible to program a temperature schedule to fit any lifestyle.

- Remove debris near the exterior and interior units. Debris around your furnace and air conditioner can keep air from circulating freely. Make sure that plants and shrubs are kept 30-inches or more from the air conditioning unit. Similarly, keep boxes, trash cans and other items away from the furnace unit.

- Keep equipment maintained. Annual service and maintenance will ensure that your unit is working at peak efficiency. Ask a contractor about the energy savings you can expect with a high-efficiency unit. A system too large or too small will not deliver the efficiency levels it was intended to provide.

DID YOU KNOW...

Having **the right home protection plan** helps ensure that **your home & your budget is protected.**

Call your Real Estate Professional today to find out how you can **save time and money** on home repairs.



If you are currently using another Real Estate Professional, please disregard this notice.

Luxury Household Surfaces Need Special Care

Granite countertops, stainless steel appliances and travertine floors were all once associated with luxury homes but are now staples of new home construction and renovations. However, with these specialty products comes a requirement of special care, or they could turn your beautiful, and possibly pricey, home accessory into an eye-sore. So, what can you do to prevent a possible catastrophe?



Granite Countertops Natural stone is more porous than synthetic, so clean spills before they penetrate the surface. Use a neutral cleaner - stone soap or a mild dishwashing soap and warm water. Rinse and dry with a soft, clean cloth. No abrasive cleaners or scouring pads to clean surfaces. Reduce streaks by using microfiber cloths or gloves.

Travertine Floors Travertine is a calcium-based, alkaline stone, easily damaged by acid substances. Do not use vinegar, lemon juice or acids. Wipe spills before they penetrate the surface. Use mild, neutral cleaners for daily cleaning. Rinse tile and grout thoroughly to remove any remaining cleaner. Frequent sweeping is the easiest way to protect flooring surfaces. Use brooms with soft bristles for smooth floors and medium bristles for textured surfaces.

Stainless Steel Surfaces Stainless steel is stain-resistant but occasionally dulls and is easily shows oily fingerprints. Use white or cider vinegar to clean and polish stainless steel surfaces. Moisten a cloth and wipe clean: Clean stainless steel with a mild soap solution followed by a clean water rinse. Use non-abrasive cleaners to prevent scratching. Use club soda to remove streaks and heat stains. Remove fingerprints by gently rubbing with glass cleaner and rinsing with warm water. A paste of baking soda and water will work just as well.



Small Water Leaks Mean Big Costs

According to the EPA, at least 36 states believe that they will suffer water shortages by 2013. Conserving water has become "the name of the game." Builders install high-efficiency showerheads, low-flow sinks and toilets and rain gardens in green buildings, but small plumbing leaks can still waste water.

Copper pipes can develop pinholes, and plumbing systems can fail, causing the small drips and drops that reduce water efficiency. A pipe dripping one drop of water each second will lose nearly 3,104 gallons of water each year: a loss homeowners can avoid on their water bills.

Currently, leaks account for 13.7% of homes' water use. Homeowners must pay for this wasted water and, for the damage it causes. Even a small leak can encourage mold growth, a major indoor allergy source which can reduce indoor air quality and not easy to remove completely.

Leaks usually prove easy and inexpensive fixes if people can detect them. New technologies, like "circuit-breakers" for pipes, now allow homeowners to detect small leaks before they become big problems. Like an electrical circuit breaker, which protects electrical wires from overloads, these new products automatically shut off extra water flow.

"Popular Science" magazine noted one product, the FloLogic System, for its revolutionary idea. FloLogic is able to monitor an entire home's plumbing system from one location in the water main. When the flow through the system's sensor exceeds a preset limit, the product shuts off the water and sounds an alarm at the keypad. The alarm can also be linked to home security systems.

Systems like the FloLogic can save homes from floods caused by broken pipes or accidental water waste - like when children leave the garden hose running. Some insurance companies give discounts to homeowners using FloLogic, creating an extra benefit.



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Outdoor Grilling Made Quick and Easy

With warm weather approaching and outdoor activities brewing, many people will be trading in their stoves for charcoal and propane. But many will save outdoor grilling for the weekend, because they think it takes too much time.

Now you don't have to wait until the weekend to prepare a great meal on the grill. This quick and simple recipe only takes 30 minutes from start to finish and is perfect for any night of the week.

Chipotle-Rubbed Beef Filets

To prepare steaks and mashed sweet potatoes in 30 minutes, start the potatoes first, and then get the steaks on the grill. While the steaks are resting, finish the potatoes.

Prepare grill for direct cooking over medium-high heat.

Potatoes - pierce in several places with a fork; microwave on HIGH 14-16 minutes or until tender. Remove and cool slightly. In measuring cup,

combine milk, butter and salt. Microwave on HIGH 1-2 minutes or until hot. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise; scoop out flesh into small bowl. Add milk mixture, mash until smooth. Cover; set aside and keep warm.

Meanwhile, brush steaks with oil. Sprinkle with rub and press into meat. Grill steaks, covered, four minutes or until grill marks appear. Turn with tongs and grill 4-6 minutes or until thermometer registers 140 degrees Fahrenheit for medium-rare or 150 degrees Fahrenheit for medium doneness. Transfer steaks from grill to serving platter; tent with foil and let stand 10 minutes.

Thinly slice green onion and combine with sour cream in small bowl. Serve steaks with potatoes; top with sour cream mixture. Garnish with onion curls, if desired. Yields four servings.

Sweet Potatoes

2 medium sweet potatoes
1/2 cup milk
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup sour cream
Green onion curls (optional)

Steaks

4 beef tenderloin filets (cut about 1/2 inch thick)
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 tablespoons chipotle rub