

Be an Identity Theft Crime Stopper

Put the freeze on your info

Not too many years ago, the only people worrying about protecting their identities were Clark Kent and Bruce Wayne. Now it's a concern for everyone.

Unfortunately, identity theft is a multi-billion dollar industry. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that as many as 9 million Americans have their identity stolen each year. Thieves are very busy opening new credit cards, renting homes, accessing medical services, starting criminal records (in your name), and much more -- including tax fraud.

The schemes vary, but crooks are able to direct other people's refunds to their own bank accounts while some unscrupulous tax preparers inflate expenses or withholding and underreport income and then pocket the excessive refund. The IRS and Social Security Administration, slow to untangle the labyrinth of their own laws and procedures, seem to play right into the hands of savvy cyber criminals.

One way you can take concrete action to help prevent identity theft is to put a freeze on your credit files. A frozen file will not be shared with potential creditors. This makes starting new credit cards and accounts nearly impossible. You can also thaw your files if you wish to apply for credit or want an employer to do a background check.

The California Office of Privacy Protection (yes, there is such a thing), provides detailed instructions on how to freeze (and unfreeze) your credit files at the following link <http://www.privacy.ca.gov/consumers/cis10english.pdf> ■



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What to Save When You Give

A donation without documentation might not be a deduction

Because of several recent court cases involving charitable donations being disallowed for lack of proper documentation, we want to remind you of the vital importance of obtaining and saving receipts and paperwork for charitable contributions. The shocker is that in some of the cases the court agreed the money had been donated – it just didn't like the accompanying documentation.

The Wall Street Journal's personal finance blog shared the story of a California couple who donated land worth \$18.5 million. Because the correct property appraisal paperwork was not submitted along with their tax return (which they prepared themselves), the judge in the case had no choice but to deny the entire charitable deduction.

You may not be giving away millions, but even "ordinary" people are experiencing the full weight of the IRS rules. Example: A couple's \$250 cash donation to a church was denied because the "thank you" letters from the church were faulty. One letter failed to mention whether the taxpayer received goods or services for their donation (a mandatory clause for such correspondence) and a second letter, that was written long after the fact, was disregarded for failing to be contemporaneous.

To properly take advantage of your charitable donations, make sure you save receipts at the time of the donation, or any letters received shortly thereafter. Please consult with us to make sure your receipts comply with the laws and regulations. Especially if you are considering a large donation, plan ahead to verify what forms must be obtained and what paperwork must be submitted with your tax return. Let us help keep your good intentions on the right track. ■



Motion Picture & Television Fund

"... dedicated to offering programs and charitable services..."

When Sobul, Primes, & Schenkel was approached to participate in an effort by the "Hollywood" business management community to raise \$1,000,000 for the Motion Picture Television Fund, we stepped right up. The MPTF, as it's known to its friends, was founded 90 years ago by luminaries Mary Pickford, Douglas

Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and D.W. Griffith to provide care to entertainment industry workers. The idea was simple: those who were more successful should share with those in need.

We're proud to be part of the successful \$1,000,000 campaign and are pleased to be giving back to one of the industries we serve. You can also participate by going to mptvfund.org. ■



What Do You Want To Do When You Grow Up?

No, not *you* – some thoughts for your kids

Whatever the young people in your life are considering for their futures, they are probably not factoring in the less-than-romantic notion of which jobs are in high demand or are high-paying. While it's certainly not all about the money, it's wise to consider things from all angles. After all, these are decisions that can set the stage for their financial futures.

What does the future look like? Well, if "The Graduate" were made today, the one word of advice for Benjamin would be "STEM." What's STEM? An acronym for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These are fields where the demand and pay are high, the unemployment low, and the future is about as guaranteed as any career can be. The Huffington Post recently posted an article about mentoring teens toward STEM careers. The U.S. Department of Labor, in 2007, published a report about the STEM Workforce Challenge and the importance of "knowledge workers" to our economy and our future. They all agree with what Steve Jobs so famously told President Obama – the U.S. needs more trained engineers and technical workers.

Just Google *STEM careers* to find resources and information to inspire your youngsters. ■

A New Way to Think About Business Management?

SPS – providing business management services for more than 30 years

Under the impression that business managers are just for movie stars? That was the case once upon a time. But Sobul, Primes & Schenkel partner Steve Levitt explains that, "Though business management was traditionally for the entertainment community, we expanded our business management services to support other types of clients."

Whether it is paying bills, making deposits, or reviewing your insurance and estate planning, what business management does, to quote our own website, is to "...allow clients to optimize their assets, their time, and their life's passions."

You may be surprised to learn that business owners and members of the baby boomer generation are leaning on business management to keep their financial infrastructure sound.

Whether you suddenly find yourself in the "aging population" group or are responsible for someone in that group, our business management services allow you, or your loved ones, to enjoy retirement without having to worry about daily financial stresses.

Business owners who find themselves spending too much time overseeing financial issues rather than growing their core businesses also turn to business management. "We can fill a range of roles – from Chief Financial Officer to bookkeeper," Levitt offers.

Visit spscpa.com and click on the Business Management tab to get more details about our specific services. Ready for a personal consultation? Give us a call (ask or Rick Schenkel or Steve Levitt) to make an appointment. ■



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