



**RETIREMENT COUNSELING™**  
 — Practical Guidance for Your Ideal Retirement —

## Catching up with FFG

### Keeping on Top of an Ever-Changing World

by Sean O'Reilly

In a previous article, I'd given some insight into how we use our core values. One particular core value is to continually educate ourselves and our clients. This is especially important now more than ever given the incredible pace at which our world is evolving. With that in mind, Blake and I recently traveled to Orlando, Florida for the national TD Ameritrade LINC conference. This conference is a great place to meet with other financial advisors, learn about industry trends, and to listen to some very interesting keynote speakers. Here are some brief highlights from a couple of those keynote speakers.

#### Ian Bremmer – political risk expert

Ian's presentation was more of a global journey to visit the current state of politics around the world. Though most of the conversation was focused outside the US, it was still impactful and very relevant to advisors managing a diversified portfolio. Something Ian was very clear about emphasizing was the importance of recent developments in China. Xi Jinping is the president of China, and he is currently positioning himself as the future leader of a global superpower. China's growth has been very consistent, but with the tactical

investment in infrastructure and overall backing of the Chinese people, Ian is very confident that China will soon join the US as the other economic superpower.

#### Jeremy Siegal – economist and Wharton professor

Professor Siegal gave a very interesting look at the current state of US markets, and predictions for 2018. Much of the discussion revolved around the use of a company's stock price vs. its earnings (P/E ratio) as a gauge of market performance. Prof. Siegal presented his research of trends in this ratio over the last 200 years and where we stand today. Though we are currently seeing P/E ratios above average, he believes the numbers do not give reason for panic in the markets. So much so, he is predicting an overall positive return for stocks in 2018 (up to 10%). However, he cautions that more uncertainty toward the end of the year (in part due to US elections) could lead to a positive first half of the year and a negative second half. Regardless, the professor is certain that the stock market remains the best long term investment performer – by far.

Well, I hope that's proof that Blake and I weren't just soaking up the sun in Florida! In truth, it was actually a very rewarding experience. These highlights from the keynote speakers are just a small sample of the great information we received on the trip. While it is a core value to continuously educate ourselves, we are really driven to apply that knowledge to better serve you!



## The Bitcoin: To bite or be bitten?

by Brad Foos

You have probably been hearing a lot about bitcoin lately. It is a digital currency; it has no tangible substance but exists as a computer generated “bit”. Other than buying a bitcoin from another person, the way to acquire a bitcoin is through “mining”. To “mine” a bitcoin you must acquire a substantial amount of computer hardware and then run sophisticated software to try to solve complicated mathematical equations to be “awarded” a bitcoin. Mining bitcoins is a hugely energy-intensive process because of all the electricity needed for computational processing. About 80% of mining costs go toward electricity.

When the first bitcoin was created in July, 2010 it was valued at \$.08; in November, 2013 \$1,242; March 2015 \$200; April 2017 \$1,210; December 2017 \$19,500! Recently the price of a bitcoin has dropped to under \$9,500. The price is extremely volatile. Because of this recent soar in the price of the bitcoin, more people are trying to mine them. As of Tuesday, January 16, 2018 electricity consumption from bitcoin mining efforts rose to a record high of 42.1 terawatt-hours, according to Digiconomist, Alex de Vries’s Bitcoin analysis blog. That’s roughly the energy used by all New Zealand, a country of 4.7 million people. It brings the rate of carbon dioxide emissions from Bitcoin up to 20 million metric tons per year.

Unlike conventional currencies, there is no central bank or mint for Bitcoin that controls its value. Instead, the currency is managed through a distributed accounting system known as blockchain, and its value is governed purely by market forces.

When all is said and done, bitcoin’s value is based simply on a person’s belief that it is worth something. If that faith is maintained in the market place it will have value. If that faith dissolves it will become worthless. Kind of reminds me of a similar overly exuberant phenomenon in the late ‘90s—dot.com companies, eh.



## Another Year, Another Resolution: Have you broken yours already?

by Chuck Read

A New Year’s resolution is a tradition in which a person makes a promise to do an act of self-improvement beginning on New Year’s Day. While there are some religious origins, the general population uses it to set goals for ourselves to better improve our mental and physical well-being. Most of us go the route of physical well-being by stressing the need to improve our eating habits for a healthier lifestyle, lose weight, exercise more, eat better, drink less alcohol, quit smoking or just getting rid of old bad habits.

Some of us opt to improve our finances: get out of debt, save more money, or make new financial investments. There are common goals to become more educated, learn something new or improve a talent. Some of us stress to be more organized, less grumpy, manage our time better, perhaps watch less television, get outside more, or take more trips to get away. There are those that want to spend more time with family, and maybe some want less, but all in all improving how we get along with others can make the list of many.

The most common reason for failing New Year’s Resolutions is setting unrealistic goals (about 35%), while about a third don’t keep track of the progress and 25% simply forget. 1 in 10 people think they made too many resolutions. An interesting study involving about 3,000 people had 88% of those who made resolutions fail, despite the fact that a little over half of the study’s participants were confident in their success at the beginning. Men achieved their goals 22% more often when they engaged in goal setting, instead of just making a blanket statement about their goal, while women succeeded 10% more when they made their goals public and got support from their friends.

The moral of the story is, don’t set the bar too high or have too many goals. Chip away at your goals on a periodic basis, be accountable and measure your results to see whether you are making progress or not. Be encouraged that you are not alone in this endeavor and if you can make it past February or March and are still in touch with your goals, then you are on your way to having a pretty good year. The rest of us will just be waiting for another New Year’s Day to start our list again for the next year.

Good Luck with your resolutions this year!

## Colorado Corner

### *Free Things to Do in Colorado*

by Kathy Riggs

Colorado has a wealth of activities and attractions that are worth (but won't cost) a fortune.

#### The Great Outdoors

Enjoying Colorado's natural beauty is the most obvious budget friendly option. Open lands and miles of trails are available for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, wildlife watching, fishing and so much more.

#### National Wildlife Refuges

Colorado is home to 7 wildlife refuges that are free and open to the public. The refuge system was created to conserve America's fish, wildlife and natural areas across the US. Each of Colorado's refuges is home to diverse ecosystems where visitors can spot everything from bison and moose to hawks and bald eagles.

#### Geologic Marvels

In Colorado Springs' Garden of the Gods, trails meander around the park's otherworldly red-rock figures in the shapes of kissing camels, cathedral spires, praying hands and sleeping giants. Red Rocks Park is comprised of massive, slanting red-rock outcroppings that create an acoustically ideal natural amphitheater.

#### AFA & Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum

The U.S. Air Force Academy's Visitor Center and iconic chapel give you a glimpse of cadet life, academy history and the chapel's beautiful stained-glass windows. At the Pioneer's Museum, exhibits highlight the history of the Pikes Peak region. View artifacts from Ute, Cheyenne and Arapaho cultures; historical photography by local artists and an exhibit about Colorado Springs founder William Jackson Palmer.

#### Brewery, Winery & Distillery Tours

With more than 200 breweries, 100 wineries and 54 distilleries (and counting), Coloradans are known for their creative libations. Take a free tour and see how major producers use mountain spring water and Colorado ingredients to make locally inspired varieties.

#### Ghost Towns

Abandoned yet well-preserved mining towns offer a fascinating window into the state's rough-and-tumble past, when fortune-seekers, outlaws and cowboys roamed the West. Many Colorado ghost towns are accessible by off-road vehicle or ATV in the summer-time, including Independence near Aspen, St. Elmo near Buena Vista and Animas Forks near Silverton.

## Simple Seasonal Recipe

by Cindy Yourtz



Green Chile and Pork Carnitas

#### Ingredients

- 2 large carrots, chopped
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1 pork shoulder or butt roast (boneless, 4-5 lbs)
- 1 tsp. each ground coriander, ground cumin, dry oregano and chili powder
- 3 cups water
- 1 jar (12 oz) green chile salsa
- 1 can (7 oz) diced green chiles

#### Instructions

In a 4 qt. or larger crock pot, combine carrots and onions, place pork on top, then sprinkle with spices. Pour in water. Cover and cook at low setting until pork is tender enough to shred (about 8-10 hours). Discard cooking liquid and vegetables. Lift pork from crock pot and place in baking pan. Bake in a 400 degree oven until browned (about 20 minutes). Using 2 forks, shred pork, stir in salsa and green chiles, return to oven until heated through. Return meat to slow cooker and keep on warm until ready to serve.

Serve with warm tortillas and condiments of your choice (cotija cheese, avocados, sour cream, cilantro).

**NOTES:** Taco seasoning can be substituted for the individual spices, 2-4 tsps depending on taste. Carrots can be left out. Also, you can skip the browning in oven stage if time is a factor. Just drain the liquid and vegetables and shred right in the crock pot. Add the salsa and chiles to warm through.

## Catching up with FFG

### Blake's Back Page Blog

#### *Baby #2 Is on the Way!*

by Blake Barnett

Lindsay and I are so excited to announce that we will be adding another member to our family in May. We just had the 20-week ultrasound and found out that we will be having another girl. Natalie is so excited to be a big sister and she has been working on "sharing" her toys for when her little sister arrives.



## Our Core Values

- We counsel our clients on how to reduce their money worries.
- We counsel our clients without consideration of any product sales revenue.
- We provide a proactive, exceptional experience to our planning clients.
- We utilize a team approach to provide every client with multiple, unique perspectives.
- We position each team member to take advantage of their unique talents and abilities.
- We make the complex easy to understand.
- We deliver and expect open, honest communication.
- We continually educate ourselves and our clients.
- We constantly monitor our performance, identify areas for improvement, and implement necessary changes.
- We always treat others as we would want to be treated.
- We make decisions based on doing the right thing, even when it's not easiest or most popular.

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