

At the Gala, Jamie and James gave an awesome speech about faith, what drives them, and their experiences with James' diagnosis of cancer at birth. Jamie and his wife were continually given frustrating news about the future for James, but they did not let this discourage them. Today, James is thriving! It was at that event, my wife and I made the commitment to reach for a whole new level of faith to equip us for our trial ahead.

Back to the introduction. I went up to Jamie shortly before his speech at the MIPGC and let him know I planned to introduce him differently than he might expect. Instead of the usual corporate sponsor commercial, I told the story of how the Pollard's story challenged my wife and me to increase our level of faith as we began the journey of the unknown with Ryker.

Jamie, his son, and his family, have been a key inspiration for us to tackle this diagnosis head on with faith, determination, strength, and hope.

Jamie spoke about the "why" behind fundraising campaigns and the importance of supporting a cause that is dear to your heart. Thanks Jamie Pollard for being both a personal inspiration, but also a philanthropic inspiration to all who attended the MIPGC conference! As a bonus, a few days after the conference, we were surprised and thrilled to receive a package from Jamie with a personal note and Iowa State shirts for our two boys...truly amazing!



Gotta Love Being Paid to Go to the Iowa State Fair

DAVID STREGE, CFP®, CFA, CKA®

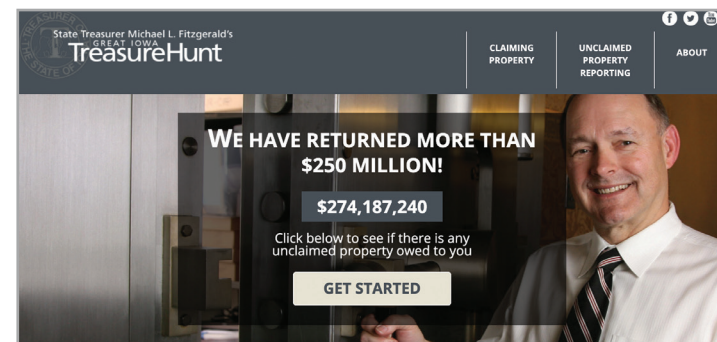
Our family made our annual pilgrimage to the Iowa State Fair in the summer of 2019. As we toured the fairgrounds, we made our

numerous loops through the Varied Industries Building. We walked quickly by most of the booths, but decided to stop at the Great Iowa Treasure Hunt booth. Within a few minutes on their automated system, we found out that our daughter, my wife, and I had funds we could claim.

Our daughter received hundreds of dollars from a previous employer's paycheck that had never been delivered to her to cash. With verification of her address, she completed everything online at the fair, and within a couple of weeks received her money.

It took some treasure hunting skills to locate funds for my wife, Jen, and me. We couldn't verify the addresses online so we accessed www.GreatIowaTreasureHunt.gov when we got home and printed out the required forms. The first address was one of our previous business addresses, and through a past corporate tax return, we could prove our connection with that address. We didn't recognize the other address. With some online research, we found that it was a person to whom we had provided a gift certificate. They never used it and had subsequently died. With proof of our connection to that person, we received a total of \$201. Now we have money for next year's Iowa State Fair!

You don't have to be at the Iowa State Fair to access the Great Iowa Treasure Hunt system. You can go to the website, www.GreatIowaTreasureHunt.gov any time to see if you have some treasure. Remember to check it periodically to recover lost funds.



THE GREAT IOWA TREASURE HUNT!

Each year, millions of dollars are turned over to my office as lost or abandoned. The Great Iowa Treasure Hunt began in 1983 to help reunite Iowans with their lost property. Since then, my office has returned over \$250 million to more than 500,000 people.



For more information, please visit our About section at the top of the page at www.greatiowatreasurehunt.gov

Michael L. Fitzgerald, State Treasurer



What Made 2019 A Memorable Year?

LANCE GUNKEL, CFP®, CFA

Cold temperatures, snowfall, and shorter days: all signs that winter has arrived and another year is coming to a close. I hope that 2019 has been a memorable year for you and your family! It certainly has been for us at Syverson Strege.

We increased the number of clients we serve, which means we're enabling more people to meet their personal goals and help their families and communities. Again, thanks to you, we are a firm on the rise!

Perhaps most importantly, we've retained a focus on your experience as a client. When you visit our office, we want you to feel appreciated. Upon entering our office, you'll find a lending library—made by one of our clients—that is designed to be used to share favorite books. You'll be greeted by smiling staff that is passionate about empowering you to meet your goals. In the event that it rained during your meeting, you'll find an umbrella by the door to keep you dry on your way to the car. And don't forget our Shred-It event which helps you clean out and safely discard your old documents.

These are small niceties, to be sure; they aren't grand gestures. However, these little personal touches will hopefully leave you feeling better about your day. We see too much

negativity on Twitter and Facebook. If you spend enough time on social media, you may believe we are in a divisive world where agreement is impossible. That's not how we at Syverson Strege see things. We believe our community is filled with kind and empathetic people, and we want to pass that along to you.

You may also have noticed our enhanced communications. We rebranded with a new logo and a refreshed website. Jason Gunkel appeared in your inbox in the form of a quarterly market update video. We've added fresh new content in original blog articles by Syverson Strege team members, including David Strege's article which got published in the national Financial Advisor Magazine. Many of you have joined us on our social media platforms and enjoy new content every week.

We feel that the Client Appreciation Event featuring Jason Brown, former NFL star turned philanthropic farmer, was a huge hit. Our Giving Club events have generated over \$25,000 for local Iowa charities. Syverson Strege's ongoing support for nonprofits and organizations (ABI, Faith at Work, Central Iowa AFP Philanthropy Day, ABI, IFDA, Iowa Prayer Breakfast, etc.) helps us to join you in reflecting a generous spirit.

Cheers to 2019 and may you have a blessed and prosperous 2020!



Good Debt and Bad Debt: Borrowers Are Better Off When They Know the Difference

BY TYLER CONLEY

Article provided courtesy of the Financial Planning Association® (FPA®) and FPA of Iowa

Debt is truly a double-edged sword — a blessing when used thoughtfully and selectively but a curse when overused and relied upon indiscriminately, says FPA member and CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional Devin Pope of Albion Financial Group. “There is good debt, when it’s used as a positive tool that enables a person to acquire assets or skills that ultimately improves their financial standing, but that would otherwise not be attainable.

On the flip side, there’s bad debt. That can be when a person takes on debt — and the extra interest — without the means to pay off the debt in a timely fashion.

Bad debt can be debt a person takes on unnecessarily, when they could have used cash on hand to pay for an item rather than assuming the extra financial burden that interest brings, or making a frivolous, unnecessary purchase.

Getting a mortgage makes good sense for a person acquiring a home, for example. But if that person could easily have found a mortgage with a significantly lower interest rate simply by shopping around, then their decision to accept the higher rate will cost them.



With so much potentially at stake, anyone who’s either already a borrower or considering taking on debt in some form, via a car or student loan, mortgage, line of credit, credit card, etc., should have a clear understanding of the distinctions between good debt and bad. Here’s a look at the two sides — financially constructive and financially destructive — of debt.

Good (Financially Constructive) Debt

Generally, student loan debt is constructive debt “because it enables you to acquire skills or knowledge that give you the opportunity to make more money,” says Pope. Essentially, you’re investing to improve the value of your own human capital. Too much student loan debt can negate that added value and turn good debt into bad, however.

A home mortgage also generally falls into the good debt category, Pope says, pointing to the tax breaks that often accompany a mortgage, as well as the potential for that home to appreciate in value over the long term, which can make it a wise investment. Not all mortgage loans are created equal, however.

Zero-interest offers on car loans, credit cards, etc., can represent a positive use of debt. A zero-interest auto loan can save a person significant amounts of money in interest over the life of the loan.

Sometimes Good, Sometimes Bad Debt

Credit card debt generally is neither good nor bad, says Pope, it's merely a tool that increases a person's purchasing power. But that comes with one big caveat: The credit card holder must commit to paying off all or most of the card balance each month. By doing so, they not only avoid running up a mounting balance (due to compounding interest), but they also build their credit score as a result of their positive payment track record.

Failing to pay down credit card balances in a timely fashion can quickly turn credit card debt into bad debt. The balance on a credit card that carries a 20% interest rate can grow unexpectedly.

Bad (Financially Destructive) Debt

"Bad debt," explains Pope, "is debt that has no future benefit." Debt taken on for purely discretionary reasons — vacations, an upgrade to a better TV, etc. — generally is bad debt, says FPA member Scott A. Bishop, CFP®, of STA Wealth Management. "If these things are important to you, save up your money and cut back expenses elsewhere. Then use your cash to pay for it."

Credit card debt can turn destructive particularly when the person lacks the cash on hand to pay off card balances. Given the high interest rates that many cards carry, those balances can quickly escalate (due to compound interest) and become problematic.

A lack of awareness could be part of the problem. In a survey by U.S. News & World Report, 21% of consumers didn't know if they have debt and 30% were unaware of how much credit card interest they pay each month. Meanwhile, 24% were found to be carrying credit card balances exceeding \$10,000.

Too much student loan debt can turn into bad debt, especially in cases where a person lacks the earning power to pay down their debt obligation or meet other basic financial obligations.

A home mortgage also may fall into the "bad debt" category, in cases where an individual or couple take on more debt than they're capable of paying off. A mortgage debt may push an individual too close to the margin financially, where an unexpected large expense or development (such as a lost job) can render them unable to meet their debt obligations.

In cases such as these, debt does indeed become a four-letter word, rather than a constructive financial force in a person's life.



Welcome Jennifer Scheck

Jennifer Scheck is an Associate Financial Planner at Syverson Strege. Jennifer holds a master's degree in Math Education from the University of Kansas and had a career as a high school math teacher and college adjunct professor. Seeking to redirect her math talent to a business environment, Jennifer broadened her finance experience at Principal where she was a Financial Analyst in Retirement Income Solutions. She is excited to merge her passions for both education and financial planning to serve clients and support the financial planners at Syverson Strege.

"I am intentional about integrating a good work ethic and enthusiasm into everything I pursue. I love spending time with my three children, traveling, and making memories. I enjoy being outdoors and am an avid runner. I also cherish the time serving at Saint Francis of Assisi Church with various ministries, and appreciate the Des Moines community and all the activities it offers."

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS... Connecting the Generations

The holiday season is a wonderful time to relive, recreate, and revive family traditions! Every one of us can probably describe a favorite holiday tradition and the magical, warm, and fuzzy feelings it calls to mind. Traditions provide a meaningful connection from generation to generation and fortifies the rich heritage of our families.

We asked two Syverson Strege employees, Debbie Richards and Rachel Watson, to describe a favorite holiday tradition. Thank you for sharing these heartfelt, sentimental family traditions!

DEBBIE RICHARDS' FAVORITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION

My Grandmother Victoria immigrated to the U.S. from the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy, where tortellini en brodo "in broth" originated. Traditionally, tortellini is the first course of Christmas dinner in northern Italy. My favorite Christmas tradition is preparing tortellini in the days before Christmas so that we can enjoy them on Christmas Day with family and friends.



Making tortellini from scratch is a labor of love for all of the women in our family, who gather and make them together. In the old days, my grandmother made the tortellini filling using an old cast steel meat

grinder with a hand crank. Before we made the pasta dough, she sent us all straight to the sink to wash our hands and rinse them very well "so the tortellini don't taste like soap." Then we sat around her kitchen table, rolled out sheets of pasta with wooden rolling pins, and made hundreds of tortellini from the bounty we'd been blessed with, and in the spirit of the holiday season.

My daughter, now age twenty-six, began making tortellini when she was a toddler. While some things have changed, others never will. These days, we use a food processor and a pasta rolling machine, which streamlines the process. But, each small batch of dough must still be kneaded by hand for at least ten minutes, and each individual tortellino is still uniformly cut, stuffed, and twisted by hand, using the same high quality standards my grandmother set for us. Thank you, Grandma, for bestowing this cherished gift upon us. And thank you, God, for blessing me with a beautiful daughter who lovingly embraces my favorite Christmas tradition and will share it with future generations.

RACHEL WATSON'S FAVORITE HANUKKAH TRADITION

My two favorite Hanukkah traditions are making latkes and lighting the menorah. Latkes (also known as potato pancakes) are a very common Hanukkah tradition and most Jewish families have their own recipe they stick to! It might seem odd to eat fried potato pancakes as a holiday treat, but the oil the latkes are fried in represents the oil that lasted for eight nights in the Second Temple.

While some people might think of Hanukkah as a "Jewish Christmas," both my family and I like to reflect on the story of the Maccabees, a group of Jews who never wavered in their faith in the face of violence. The Maccabees rebelled against the Seleucid Empire rather than let themselves be assimilated (or worse) and won, allowing our people to live and worship freely once again. In reminding ourselves of this story and the strength of the Maccabees, we are able to hold fast to our faith even in times when the world may seem dark. Like the light of the menorah, the story of the Maccabees reminds us all that there is hope, despite times that may seem hopeless—one only has to look for a guiding light.



How the Giving Club Raised \$26,550... and Counting

BY DEB LONGSETH

Where can you come together to share values, resources, and have fun? **The Giving Club!**

Syverson Strege formed the Giving Club two years ago from an idea originating from one of our purpose driven beliefs—philanthropy.

Philanthropic planning has been a part of our planning process since the firm started over 22 years ago. We ask our clients this question, "How would you like to be remembered and what will your legacy be?"

Syverson Strege launched the Giving Club to benefit local charities and it is an amazing way to learn about charities in the Des Moines Metro area. Most of us rarely have the chance to learn about the valuable work of 501(c)3 organizations. The Giving Club provides the perfect opportunity to bring together generous people with outstanding charities in an informative and fun atmosphere.

How does the Giving Club work? Each individual or family unit comes to the Giving Club prepared to donate \$250 (tax-deductible). Three charities each make a seven-minute presentation and participants anonymously vote for their favorite charity. The charity with the most votes receives the entire amount donated less \$500, which is split equally between the two runners-up.

Some of the amazing stories that have come out of the Giving Club are exciting! One couple who attended learned about Freedom for Youth, and then introduced their son-in-law to the organization. He is now an instructor in their construction services training program. He teaches youth the art of woodworking and provides on-the-job training so they have the ability to complete certification training.

Last December, Capitol View Elementary School received a check for \$4,000 for their backpack program. The remarkable thing about this story is that the principal had received a call from a donor on the same day, and said he was willing to match the money raised at the Giving Club. Syverson Strege is thrilled that Capitol View Elementary School received a total of \$8,000! Giving Club stories are heartwarming!

To date, The Giving Club and its participants are honored to have given away \$26,550 with 100% of the proceeds having gone directly to charities! **Together we can make a difference!**

How Jamie Pollard Inspired My Family

BY ADAM STEEN

Jamie Pollard, Director of Athletics at Iowa State University, has a big job! But his story of being a man of faith and family runs deeper than any Iowa State Athletic activity or event.

I, along with coworkers Johnne Syverson and Wayne Johnson, attended the Mid-Iowa Planned Giving Council Conference (MIPGC) in late October. Syverson Strege showed its ongoing support to nonprofits and philanthropy by being one of the sponsors of the event. Jamie Pollard was the keynote speaker for the lunch session.

One of the perks of being a sponsor for the MIPGC is an opportunity to introduce one of the conference speakers and gain some publicity (i.e. a mini-commercial for your company). I was scheduled to introduce the morning keynote, whom I did not know well, but one day before the conference, I was asked by Johnne if I would like to introduce Jamie Pollard instead. I was pleasantly surprised and excited to have the opportunity, as Jamie Pollard had been an inspiration to me and my family at a critical moment in my family's life.

Over four years ago, my wife and I attended the Variety Black Tie Gala where we heard speakers Jamie Pollard and his son, James. One month prior, we had received the life-altering news that our baby boy, Ryker, had been diagnosed with Joubert Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that would change the course of our lives.

Continued >>



WINTER HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Please note that our office will be closed on **Tuesday, December 24** and **Wednesday, December 25** in observance of Christmas. We will also be closed on **Tuesday, December 31** and **January 1** for the New Year's holiday.

We will be back in the office on Thursday, January 2. Happy New Year!