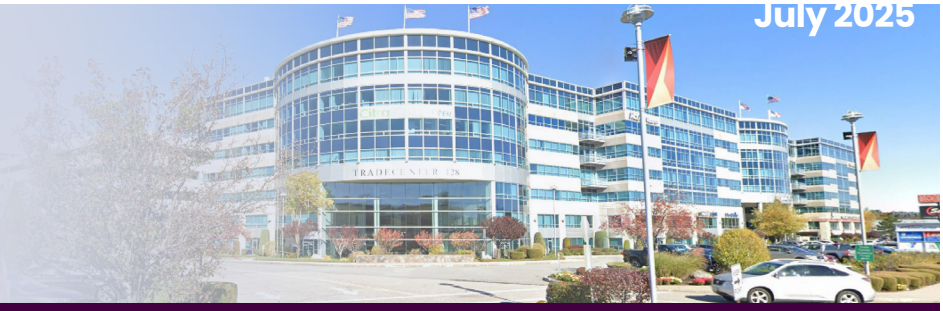
MONTEFORTE LAW, P.C.

LEGACY LEDGER:
Where Law Meets Life

July 2025



(978) 653-4092 | www.MonteforteLaw.com

Wearing My College Colors With Pride (and a Great Story to Tell)

HOW A HUMBLE STATE COLLEGE LAUNCHED MY LIFE AND MY CAREER

Every Aug. 30, when National College Colors Day rolls around, I find myself digging through the back of my closet for my old Salem State sweatshirt, the one that still has a few coffee stains from late-night study sessions. It's more than just college pride; it's a reminder of where it all began — not just my career, but really, my life.

When I think about my college days, I don't picture tailgates or dorm parties. I picture my early morning 45-minute commute to campus in Salem, Massachusetts, followed by classes, then another 45 minutes to a part-time job, and then heading home at 10 p.m. to study. Then, repeat, day in and day out. It wasn't glamorous, and honestly, it wasn't easy. But it taught me something I carry with me every day as an estate planning attorney: discipline. You learn to manage your time when you have no time left to waste and learn that hard work adds up — even when you're too exhausted to see it in the moment.

I chose Salem State College (now a much larger university) because they offered me a scholarship. I had my eye on law school and knew it wouldn't be cheap. The goal was always bigger than undergrad, and financially, it made sense (hence the choice to commute 45 minutes each way rather than live on campus). Of course, not everyone thought so. Some said I wouldn't get into a good law school coming from a small, unassuming public college. That kind of talk could have derailed me, but instead, it fueled me. I got into every law school I applied to. Not to prove them wrong exactly (okay, maybe a little), but to prove to myself that your zip code or school name doesn't define your future — you do.

I majored in criminal justice, thinking I might become a criminal lawyer. That changed fast. I realized pretty quickly that world wasn't for me, but I don't regret that degree for a second. Sometimes, learning what you don't want is just as valuable as figuring out what you do. It narrowed my path, cleared the fog, and led me, eventually, to estate planning, where I get to help people protect what matters most.

And then there's the part of my story that has nothing to do with lectures or legal ambitions. I was 19, grinding through sophomore year with my blinders up, when a mutual friend introduced me to another student who had just transferred. She'd

gone to high school with my friend. I didn't expect that we would hit it off that summer, and I certainly didn't expect that 30 years later, we'd still be together, married, with two kids, and a life I never could have scripted. Meeting her was the last thing I was looking for, but the best thing I found.

Every time I go back to speak at Salem University, to talk to pre-law honor students or just share a few words at an alumni event, I always tell them the same thing: **that my life started there.** Not just my degree, my first job, or my professional future, but my whole life. So, yeah, I wear my college colors with pride. They represent a place that pushed me, shaped me, and gave me everything I never knew I needed.

—Mike Monteforte Jr.

CHEW ON THIS

WAS SINGAPORE'S GUM BAN THE RIGHT MOVE?

Have you ever walked through a parking lot and stepped on gum, causing your foot to stick to the pavement with every step? Or have you felt somebody's disgusting, chewed gum on the underside of a table at a restaurant? Experiencing one of these situations is enough to make you wish gum were outlawed. While chewing gum will likely always be legal in the States, there is one country where you'd have difficulty finding a single citizen chewing gum. In 1992, Singapore officially banned the sale, importation, and manufacturing of chewing gum.

To understand the reasoning behind the chewing gum ban, you need to go back to the mid-1960s. Singapore had just gained its independence and was trying to find a way to establish itself on the world stage. Lee Kuan Yew, the country's first prime minister, designed a plan to make Singapore a "first-world oasis in a third-world region." The country quickly became known for its cleanliness, but chewing gum remained a problem.

While some argued that chewing gum stuck to the pavement outside a business might mean a new burst of creativity was taking hold, Lee Kuan Yew felt differently. He stated, "Putting chewing gum on our subway train doors so they don't open, I don't call that creativity. I call that mischief-making." He had a good point. The Housing and Development Board reportedly spent $150,000 in Singapo dollars each year solely to clean up gum litter. Furthermore, the were countless reports of vandals sticking chewing gum on the door sensors of trains, disrupting their services.

While citizens were divided over the chewing gum ban, it proved effective. In February 1993, there were only two chewing gum litter cases per day, as opposed to the 525 daily cases before the ban. While the ban remains in effect today, Singapore's government partially lifted it in 2004 to allow dentists and pharmacists to prescribe and sell therapeutic gum such as nicotine gum. Even so, you shouldn't expect to see many people walking around Singapore chewing gum and blowing bubbles!

'I'm Sorry, We Can't Tell You Anything' THE COLLEGE KID PRIVACY TRAP

Picture this: It's 11:47 p.m. and your phone lights up with an unknown number from Burlington, Vermont. A nurse's voice says your daughter, a freshman, skiing club newbie, was brought to the ER with a head injury. Your heart stops. Then she drops the bomb: *"I'm sorry, I can't share her condition without her authorization."* Click.

If your child turned 18 before heading off to college, HIPAA and a stack of other privacy laws just slammed the door in your face. Legally, your "baby" is an adult; you have **no automatic right** to medical updates, to make treatment decisions, or even to confirm whether she's stable or still in X-ray. Same goes for moving money around to cover tuition, rent, or — heaven forbid — air ambulance bills. Banks and hospitals don't care how many nights you sat through Little League practice; the law says the info's off limits.

The fix is simple — if you do it before disaster strikes.

1. **Health Care Proxy & HIPAA Release:** Names you (or another trusted adult) as the decision maker and information gate opener if your student is unconscious — or just too frazzled to spell "concussion."

2. **Durable Power of Attorney:** Lets you handle bank accounts, financial aid forms, or a surprise apartment lease while Junior focuses on midterms, not paperwork.

At Monteforte Law, these two documents are usually a no brainer add on for young adults. But because August move-in dates are barreling toward us, we're running a **College Safety Special** now through **Sept. 15, 2025:**

- Flat fee package for Health Care Proxy plus Power of Attorney — no hourly meter running. Special price of $350 for one child, and $499 for two children. But this deal is only for the first 20 clients!

- **Bonus:** Upgrade your existing estate plan to either our **20/20 Hindsight Trust™** *or* the **Retirement Protection Trust™**, and we'll draft both college kid documents **free** — a $650 value, on us.

Don't use cheap online forms! Most of the time, they don't work, and when you need them, it's already too late!

Look, you spent 18 years keeping them safe. Don't let a paperwork glitch erase that superpower the minute they swipe their dorm key. **Call us at (978) 657 7437** or go to **ThreeYearCheckUp.com** to book online. We'll hammer out the paperwork now, so if the phone rings at midnight this fall, you'll get answers — not apologies.

Because when it comes to your child's health and finances, "We can't tell you anything" is the scariest sentence in the English language — and the easiest one to prevent.

Why Your '3-Year Check Up' Can't Wait — Even if It's Only Year 2

Let's get one thing straight: An estate plan is not a crock pot. You don't "set it and forget it." Life refuses to sit still, and your plan needs to keep pace. That's why Monteforte Law builds a **free, attorney-led review every three years** into your package. But here's the kicker: **For a limited time, we're opening the doors to everyone — even if your last plan is barely blowing out its second birthday candle.**

Below are the **Top Three Reasons** smart families are grabbing an early seat on my calendar right now:

1. Your Life Moved the Goalposts.
New baby? Second marriage? Sold the lake house? All it takes is one big life event to knock your beautifully drafted documents out of alignment. A quick check up lets us reset beneficiaries, tweak trustee choices, and make sure the people you love (and maybe a few you don't) are exactly where you want them.

2. The Law Shifted Under Your Feet.
Congress, the IRS, and Boston's own Beacon Hill are constantly rewriting the rulebook — sometimes in pencil. In the last year alone, we've seen tweaks to estate tax thresholds and retirement account rules that can cost families tens of thousands if their documents are even slightly out of date. I track those changes so you don't have to; the check-up is where we plug the leaks before they drain your wallet.

3. Cutting Edge Tools Weren't Around Last Time.
Since your plan was signed, we've launched two proprietary upgrades:

- **20/20 Hindsight Trust™ –** This lets heirs dial up or down their protection after you're gone, based on whatever life throws at them.
- **Retirement Protection Trust™ –** This shields your IRA or 401(k) from divorce, creditors, and the taxman while still giving your beneficiaries flexible access.

Think of these as the Tesla autopilot of estate planning — features the old Buick in your garage just doesn't have.

Bottom Line: Whether you're at month 30 or month 300, ignoring your estate plan is like ignoring a weird noise under the hood — you can, but you'll pay for it later. And because we're offering these early check ups at **absolutely no charge through July 31, 2025,** there's zero downside to popping in.

Ready to lock in a spot? Call us at **(978) 657-7437** or go to **ThreeYearCheckUp.com** and book online. Let's keep your plan sharper than ever — before life, lawmakers, or plain old procrastination leave you stranded on the shoulder.

HAPPY MONTEFORTE CLIENTS

"Very helpful, extremely thorough, and nice to work with."

– James L.

Garlic Parmesan Shrimp

Inspired by CooktopCove.com

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- Juice of 1 lemon

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. In a bowl, combine olive oil, garlic, Parmesan cheese, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper.
3. Add shrimp to the bowl and toss until fully coated.
4. Arrange the shrimp in a single layer on a baking sheet.
5. Roast in the oven for 7–9 minutes or until the shrimp are pink and slightly golden.
6. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with chopped parsley and fresh lemon juice before serving.

MONTEFORTE LAW, P.C.

300 TRADECENTER, SUITE 6750
WOBURN, MA 01801

(978) 653-4092
WWW.MONTEFORTELAW.COM

PRST STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BOISE, ID
PERMIT 411

CHECK US OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mmlawoffice
TikTok: @montefortelaw
Instagram: @montefortelaw

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEAVE US A REVIEW

INSIDE

1 The College Story That Launched Mike's Career — and a 30-Year Love Story

2 Singapore's Bold Move for a Cleaner Future

Avoid the College-Kid Privacy Trap

3 Why Your '3-Year Check-Up' Can't Wait

Garlic Parmesan Shrimp

4 Secrets to Spousal Stability

Maximized Marital Magic

The Art of Unlimited Deductions

Devising the best estate plan to provide for those dearest to you can be emotionally and logistically challenging, even under the clearest circumstances. However, this process can be even more difficult due to the critical terms, conditions, and laws that could determine the strength or weakness of how your wishes are carried out upon your passing. To make things a little easier, here are the basics about the "unlimited marital deduction" and how it influences what one spouse receives from another.

TAX-FREE TRANSFERS

The unlimited marital deduction enables a spouse to transfer unlimited assets to another tax-free. You derive this deduction by subtracting the total amount of assets from the gross estate, which must be distributed according to a will. Estate taxes on transferred assets are delayed until the recipient spouse's death. The spouses must be legally married U.S. citizens to qualify for this deduction.

SAFEGUARDING A SUSTAINED LEGACY

If an individual wishes to have a say in what happens to their assets after their surviving spouse passes, they can set up an irrevocable Qualified Terminable Interest Property (QTIP) Trust that will still provide for the surviving spouse but outline beneficiaries upon their death. Because this trust is irrevocable, it can't be altered by anyone, including the surviving spouse.

CITIZENSHIP EXCEPTIONS

Although establishing the unlimited marital deduction is straightforward for American citizens, pursuing similar options for non-citizen spouses is more complex but not impossible. First, a U.S. citizen can gift money to their non-U.S. citizen spouse. In 2024, the maximum amount not subject to gift taxes was $185,000. Another option would be to establish a Qualified Domestic Trust (QDOT), which allows the non-citizen spouse to take advantage of the unlimited marital deduction so long as they are the sole beneficiary and at least one trustee is a U.S. citizen or an American corporation.

Naturally, the conditions outlined in this brief overview are subject to a host of *what-ifs* that may affect the specific outcome of your situation. Working with skilled financial planners familiar with these nuances is essential to secure your spouse's well-being and satisfy tax obligations when the time comes to implement your estate plan.