



## **Thanksgiving Holiday Provides Opportunity for Family Members to Spot Signs of Incapacity in Aging Parents, Notes Estate Attorney Merrell Bailey**

*Early detection of cognitive decline enables professional advisors to more effectively address financial, legal and care-giving concerns*

**Orlando, FL, Nov. 10, 2014** – With fuel prices the lowest in four years, more than 40 million Americans are expected to take to the roadways, railways and airways as they head home for the Thanksgiving holiday. Estate planning attorney Mary Merrell Bailey notes that Thanksgiving – one of the few occasions when multiple generations gather under one roof – is an opportune time for adult children to observe signs of cognitive decline in aging loved ones.

“My advice to adult family members visiting their parents over the holidays is to be aware of the obvious.” Bailey noted that in addition to the top 10 signs of diminished capacity published by the Alzheimer’s Association®, she suggests watching out for a combination of the following factors: Is the mail piled up or unopened, or are there notices from creditors? Were mom’s family recipes burned or not cooked enough? Is there insufficient food in the pantry or decaying food in the refrigerator? Are the pets being cared for and is the home being maintained as usual? Does the car have signs of damage? Are there changes in personality, hygiene, or ability to engage in dinner conversation?

According to Bailey, spotting cognitive decline in the early stages can help ensure that seniors who are living independently will receive proper care if their condition progresses. Mismanagement of financial and legal affairs, which often occurs with diminished capacity, can be addressed by the proactive appointment of an agent via a Durable Power of Attorney or through legal guardianship proceedings.

“It is far more preferable for seniors to already have in place an estate plan or a trust that addresses the handling of their affairs in the event of incapacity,” Bailey said. “With a Revocable Living Trust, the trustmaker (i.e. the elder parent) names a successor trustee to manage the trust property and assets upon incapacity. Combined with a Durable Power of Attorney, this planning can help prevent the trustmaker’s loved ones from having to go to court and be appointed as a guardian or conservator for the parent,” Bailey added.

### **About Mary Merrell Bailey, Esq., Founder of Your Caring Law Firm**

Your Caring Law Firm is a boutique law firm founded by Mary Merrell Bailey Esq. CPA MBA MSTaxation MSAccounting, and Hallie Zobel, Esq. Located in Maitland, FL, a suburb of Orlando, the firm offers probate, wills, trusts, guardianship, and planning services to clients throughout the Central Florida region. With deep roots in the community, Your Caring Law Firm prides itself on its ability to deliver a rare combination of sophisticated legal advice that draws upon sound business, tax and accounting knowledge, while providing a caring, attentive environment for clients to make some of the most important decisions of their lives. For more information, visit [www.YourCaringLawFirm.com](http://www.YourCaringLawFirm.com).