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THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Moving real estate forward together

Jeannette Karis, President, Spokane Association of REALTORS

Earlier this month, I called together a cross-section of Spokane REALTORS® for a day-long leadership retreat, as is the annual tradition of our organization. We gathered at the Ft. Wright Mukagowa Center adjacent to Spokane Falls Community College. It was a snowy January morning. Collectively, our task was to review the state of the local real estate market as 2008 came to a close, and prepare for what 2009 will bring to those of us in the business of real estate.

As is typical within many organizations, the President is asked to choose an annual theme and unveil it, to unite the leadership. The theme I have chosen for my term is, *"Moving Forward Together"* and I feel this is relevant to share with our readers here. As I am preparing this column, I have just witnessed the inauguration of our country's new President. This fills me with a sense of purpose and a sense of hope. As a country, as well as here in the Spokane community, I believe we will all move real estate forward together.

We know the public expects proactive, intelligence-based leadership from our government, and similarly from the REALTOR® they choose to work with. The leadership of the Spokane Association of REALTORS® is

committed to helping members and homeowners successfully navigate through the current economic climate and achieve their goals. The service of our organization is both outward in helping the public understand and utilize the value of a REALTOR®, and also inward, in order to define ways to best meet the educational and professional needs of our members in their real estate career path.

As you may know, housing typically has led the country out of prior recessionary times. However, this appears to be a total RESET of our economy. At the end of 2008, who among you were wondering along with me: "Just who pushed the RESET button?" I wonder how quickly our country's new administration can recalibrate the economy and ignite the engines of the housing industry, creating economic stability once again?

It was very moving to see the millions of faces of Americans that stood on the National mall to witness the Presidential inauguration. Here at our REALTOR® retreat, as I looked out and welcomed forty faces ready to move forward into 2009, I wondered something else as well: "Who is the face of Spokane real estate?"

Now, you might think that because my picture is here every week, that I am the face of

Spokane real estate. I am not. There are nearly 2,000 REALTOR® professionals that make up the membership of the Spokane Association of REALTORS®. It is not so important to me that you recognize me personally. Rather, I hope you will come to know the real faces of Spokane real estate -- the faces you already know or will soon meet. The voices you talk with by phone. The web site profiles and head-shots that you browse when you search online and first meet a Spokane REALTOR® by googling and landing on their own or their company's home page.

The faces of Spokane real estate include all the working REALTORS® that live in your neighborhoods. They stand alongside you as fellow citizens, embracing worthy community endeavors with you. Like you, they are striving to preserve and enhance the greater Spokane region for all who reside here.

As our leadership participants gave thought to the faces of Spokane real estate, our discussions quickly led to the need for understanding the cross-section of generations that encompass our membership. Did you know that for the first time ever, four generations are at work together in the our country's workforce -- the Millennials, the Gen-X'ers, the Baby Boomers, and the Traditionalists. With that in mind, I would like to share with you some facts about the 2,000 faces of Spokane real estate.

Our 2008 membership poll revealed that 13 percent of our members have been in business over 20 years, and several are second or third generation REALTOR® family

members. Another 18 percent have been active in the Spokane real estate market between 11 and 20 years. Seventeen percent have been active between 5 and 10 years. A large cross-section (43%) of our membership have been active between one and five years, while seven percent of our membership have just become a Spokane REALTOR® sometime in the past year.

The Spokane Association of REALTORS® also proudly acknowledges our 54 active Life Members. Life members are those verified by our Board of Directors as holding an active membership for over 25 years, and aged 65 years or older. These are not retired REALTORS®, but active ones among our ranks.

Further, Spokane REALTORS® are all self-employed and affiliated with 22,000 Washington REALTORS® statewide, as well as the million-plus members of the National Association of REALTORS®.

Spokane REALTORS® pledge to uphold to the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, first ratified in 1913. The Preamble to the code begins:

"Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization. REALTORS® should recognize that the interests of the nation and its citizens require the highest and best use of the land and the widest distribution of land ownership. They require the creation of adequate housing, the building of functioning cities, the development of productive industries and farms, and the preservation of a healthful environment."

Spokane REALTORS® meet mandatory continuing education requirements each year. Even more advanced industry education is available in order to earn additional professional NAR designations in 22 specialized areas of Real Estate. About 20 percent of our local membership have at least one advanced NAR designation or certification. You may search online for Spokane REALTORS® at www.housingmarketfacts.com, then click "REALTORS® can help."

Collectively, there are also more than 200 designated real estate brokers across Spokane, working in partnership to operate the Spokane Multiple Listing Service.

Our broker members offer a range of business models and established company affiliations in order to fulfill the needs of Spokane home buyers and sellers.

Concluding our day-long retreat brought an alignment of our thoughts: that our leadership is tasked to sustain a relevant Association that has value to the members. Our members, in turn, will have the right educational resources and skills in order to capably serve the public and meet your needs. You are also the face of Spokane real estate, and we are all moving forward, together.

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