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THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Hoops & Homes

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The Spokane Association of REALTORS® salutes Hoopfest! The Hoopfest homepage (www.hoopfest.org) bills our region's annual event as "the largest 3-on-3 street basketball tournament and family festival of its kind in the world." This weekend's participants are expected to play more than 13,000 games on 400 courts, with more than 25,000 players. Those visiting Spokane have registered from 42 states at last count, and perhaps even more.



Hoopfest has grown into an unparalleled event that is cherished by the Inland Northwest. In winning Spokane's 2003 Agora Award for Business Excellence, the judges said the following about Hoopfest: "No other single event (here) brings together people of such diverse cultures, economic conditions, and ages for a common purpose. And this common purpose is not just basketball. It is cheering for one another, working together, competing fairly, and celebrating Spokane."

You will find Spokane REALTORS® celebrating Spokane in one of two ways this weekend. Many will be playing, volunteering or sponsoring Hoopfest activities, as they have over the years. Collectively, Spokane REALTORS®' top public priorities are building

communities that have a strong economy, attractive home opportunities, safe neighborhoods, great schools and parks, and a variety of recreation choices for all. We

appreciate the Hoopfest community spirit!

Alongside the Hoopfest hoopla, there is another record-breaking event taking place more quietly in Spokane. As you drive

around this weekend, you may notice a lot of open houses being advertised. REALTORS® are working together all over Washington to bring you the first ever "state-wide open house weekend."

In Spokane (and in 75 other participating Washington cities) area REALTORS® invite you inside to tour hundreds of open houses in neighborhoods all over the county. If you have questions about our local housing market or the home buying process, a REALTOR® will be on hand to answer all your questions, including how the first-time homebuyer tax credit works. At your leisure, you can browse and potentially find your dream home and partner up with a real estate professional in the process.

Home ownership is one of the most important wealth-building strategies for families. Unlike

cars and furniture, homes hold significant value and have historically appreciated over time, becoming the largest financial asset for two-thirds of homeowners, according to reports by the Joint Center for Housing Studies.

And there are other benefits to home ownership. A home can be passed down from generation to generation. Research has shown that owning a home gives residents a stake in the community and a sense of "rootedness" in their neighborhoods.

These days, the path to home ownership may not be as clear as it used to be. Talk to any of the 1,800 members of the Spokane Association of REALTORS® any time. And remember – you may view open houses online, 24/7, at www.SpokaneOpen.com, the web site created and updated by our members for your convenience. The statewide open house weekend continues all day today, until dusk. Just look for a colorful array of open house signs in the neighborhood of your choice. Which one will you call “home” someday?

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One more fast fact:

Hoopfest scores big in its annual boost to Spokane's economy. It has been estimated that the event brings more than 30 million dollars annually into the Spokane economy, including everything from hotel spending and shopping to entertainment and dining.

Hoopfest also impacts our area charities. Since 1990, Spokane Hoopfest Association has donated over \$1,000,000 to organizations such as Special Olympics, YMCA, YWCA, and other youth sports programs, as well as its court construction program. Hoopfest has built or renovated nineteen outdoor basketball courts in area neighborhoods so local residents have an opportunity to play year-round.

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Source: WWW.HOOPFEST.ORG
<http://www.hoopfest.org/Organization/>