

Real Estate Community Opens Hearts For Open House

Realtors Helping Family Shelter Rise to the Occasion



FEATURED
PROPERTY

BROKERS OPEN HOUSE/HEART TOUR
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD FROM 11AM - 1PM

THE NEW FAMILY SHELTER UNDER CONSTRUCTION ON CORAL STREET
(NEAR CORNER OF HIGHWAY 1 AND RIVER STREET)

- Safe and Secure
- Clean and Healthy
- Stable and Reliable
- Supportive & Dignified
- 25,000 Sq. Ft./ 3 Stories
- 27 Rooms Housing
- 85 Family Members Daily
- 90 Families a Year
- On-Site Health Services
- Central Dining
- Children's Indoor & Outdoor Play Areas
- Kid/Parent Classrooms
- Laundry Facilities
- Computer Area
- Close to Bus Line/ Employment Opportunities
- Case Management/ Counseling Rooms
- Financial Planning Education
- Ongoing Transitional Advocacy

by TOM BREZSNY

Now, I don't want to get all Santa Cruz-y on you right off the bat but if the DRE called tomorrow and asked me to come up with a different description for what I do for a living, my choice would be Life Transition Facilitator. Has a nice ring to it doesn't it?

Almost every situation we Realtors work in includes some kind of major life change for someone. Each situation also involves someone's home - that powerful thing that is both their largest asset and the central place of refuge, comfort and safety in their lives. Home and money - two of the hottest emotional buttons you can push. Transitions? All the biggies - marriage, birth, divorce, health, bankruptcy, job, death. We see it all and anyone who doesn't understand real estate as a helping profession (from inside or outside the business) is sadly missing the boat.

I've written these Sunday features for the last three months, encompassing a veritable smorgasbord of things real estate. From Tuscan Villas to Ocean-going Craftsmen to Yacht Harbor Townhomes to Modest Mediterraneans - I've covered just about all the stations on the spectrum of home-ness. All but one.

I haven't written about the other side of the looking glass of home-ness. The one with less. I haven't written glowingly about any special place offered up for the growing number of local families and children who occupy a different universe than the one with a \$639,000 median price. Think hotel-hopping, couch-surfing or crashing in the back of a car and you get a small glimpse through the wormhole to another dimension of realty and reality.

Perhaps you are like I used to be. Maybe you drive by the busy corner of Highway 1 and Highway 9 and don't make eye-contact with anyone or anything. You assume that there is still a muddy field behind the fence, littered with tents, milling people and rivulets of water and waste streaming down towards the train tracks. Some kind of present-day version of Steinbeck's dustbowl past or Philip K. Dick's post-apocalyptic future.

It wasn't until recently that I visited the Page Smith Center, saw

neatly-groomed modular homes with edged lawns and jasmine-covered arbors, discovered the amazing success rate the program has in transitioning people off the streets into homes and jobs, recognized the incredible soul-work many dedicated social workers do and connected it all back to the very same life-transitions I see people struggling with as a Realtor everyday. I realized something important: the inherent value of what happens on that piece of real estate can't be judged by its curb appeal. It isn't a drive-by as we say in the business.

We are in a life-changing profession. It is the best of what we do. Counseling people. Holding their hands. Helping them get past the stumbling blocks. Boosting them up. Soothing them through their fears. Facilitating their transitions. Being Agents of Change.

There's a difference between work and soul-work. There's no rule that says you can't make money, support your family and do good things for other families in the community at the same time. It's called multi-tasking - accepting the largess of one of the highest-priced housing markets in the world and giving some of it back to help redress the balance for those who are struggling.

In late 2002, a small group of Realtors formed the Sanctuary Fund under the auspices of the Commu-

nity Foundation. Their goal was to catalyze, organize and maximize contributions from the real estate industry to support shelter and transitional opportunities for homeless families and children. Hundreds involved in our industry along with many gracious clients have joined our ranks since then. Next Thursday's event will raise the amount of real estate contributions to the new Family Shelter Facility, rising up out of the mud on the corner of Highway 1 and Highway 9, to more than \$100,000. There's still a lot more to do to make it through the final home stretch for this much-needed home-away-from-home. In the world of home-ness, there is only one degree of separation between each of us and homelessness. Everyone in Santa Cruz County knows someone who has been, is or will be homeless in their lifetime, whether they know it or not.

If you are a Realtor, Mortgage Broker, Title or Escrow Officer. Buyer or Seller, come for a tour. Make sure that Home is where your Heart is. Don't just do another drive by.

This week's open house opportunity is sponsored by the Sanctuary Fund, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz Association of Realtors. For more information: www.sanctuaryfund.org e mail: getreal@sanctuaries.com call: 464-5231.