



BOARD BRIEFS

Your Voice for Real Estate In Lebanon County

1300 Florence Street, Lebanon, PA 17042

March 2009



From the President, Joe Wentzel

Congratulations to all who participated in the LCAR "WINNER'S CIRCLE" awards program. Your hard work and dedication as a Realtor member is a credit to this association and does not go unrecognized.

"The Economic Stimulus Bill". Has everyone heard that term enough lately? Actually, NOW is the time to be searching out all those first time home buyers and customers who have not owned a home in the last three years. WOW, what an opportunity for not only those who qualify but also for Realtors to increase their business.



Here is a brief synopsis of what the Homebuyer Tax Credit bill provides. Everyone should be taking advantage of this opportunity.

Homebuyer Tax Credit – The bill provides for a \$8,000 tax credit that would be available to first-time home buyers for the purchase of a principal residence on or after January 1, 2009 and before December 1, 2009. The credit does not require repayment. Most of the mechanics of the credit will be the same as under the 2008 rules: the credit will be claimed on a tax return to reduce the purchaser's income tax liability. If any credit amount remains unused, then the unused amount will be refunded as a check to the purchaser.

For more information and a chart of the First Time Homebuyer Tax Credit qualifications, go to parealtor.org.

Mark your calendars...OCTOBER 9, 2009... "The Homecoming for Habitat Benefit Auction". This year will be Bigger, Better and more EXCITING than ever. Watch for more details. You won't want to miss this year's event.

Also, remember to always look at and refer to the calendar of events in this newsletter and on our website. There is always something for you to get involved in.

Do yourself a favor...volunteer.

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Dates To Remember...

March:

- 2 Luncheon Meeting, Quality Inn - Noon
Winner's Circle Awards
- 8 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS
Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead 1 hour!
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 19 MCE classes, Quality Inn - see website for details!
- 20 Spring Begins!

April:

- 2 New Member Orientation
- 6 Breakfast Meeting, Quality Inn - 9am
- 10 Good Friday—Office Closed
- 12 Happy Easter

May:

- 4 Luncheon Meeting, Quality Inn - Noon

SEE THE FULL CALENDAR OF EVENTS & EVENT DETAILS AT:

WWW.LEBANON-REALTORS.COM

March 2008



IN REAL ESTATE NEWS...

NEGOTIATING: 'WHAT EVERY BUYER'S REP SHOULD CONSIDER'

Question: When does the negotiation begin for the buyer's agent in a real estate transaction?

- A. When the buyer submits a purchase contract.
- B. When the buyer or buyer's agent reads about the listing in the MLS.
- C. When the buyer first visits the property.
- D. When the buyer's agent contacts the listing agent to inquire about the property.

Answer: B! This is usually the first opportunity the listing side has to influence the buyer and/or buyer's agent and, since negotiating is all about influencing and persuading others, this is when negotiations actually begin! Most agents believe negotiations start when the offer is communicated to the seller's side (or in today's market when the seller presents an offer to the buyer!). Skilled negotiators know that negotiations begin as soon as one side attempts to influence the other. It involves considerably more than working out contract terms and conditions. Those terms and conditions begin to take shape early on, based upon often-subtle insights each party to the transaction manages to glean about one another. That's why negotiating skills are so essential to our success as buyer's reps and are so highly valued by the buyers we represent.

In fact, data from the *NAR 2008 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers* proves this point. In naming the skills they most want from their real estate agent, nearly all buyers (98 percent) believe that negotiation skills are "very im-

portant" or "somewhat important." But only 43 percent of all buyers felt their agent negotiated better terms on their sales contract, and only 37 percent felt their agent negotiated a better price. Given this broad gap between what buyers want and what they felt they received, it's not surprising that buyers assigned negotiation skills the lowest satisfaction rating of all agent skills and qualities.

What is negotiating? Because negotiating can be defined as "the art of influencing or persuading others," it's actually a critical life skill that impacts every aspect of your relationships with others, including clients and customers, but also co-workers, friends and family. It's essential to point out, however, that negotiating is not about taking unfair advantage of someone and should never involve dishonest or unethical behavior. In persuading or influencing others, our goal is to create genuine win-win outcomes by helping people see where they do, in fact, share common ground and can benefit from a give-and-take arrangement that advances their mutual interests.

As a buyer's agent, it's pretty obvious that negotiating skills play a pivotal role in representing our clients' interests. But many of us fail to recognize that negotiating skills are also an essential component of initially earning a buyer-client's business. How many times have we struggled with the whole issue of getting a buyer to sign a representation agreement? That's because, realize it or not, getting a buyer to sign a representation agreement is a negotiation process too. You're negotiating *with* each buyer, trying to help them understand why they will benefit from signing your agreement—and why it's fair for you to ask them to do so.

Negotiating with a buyer...it never ceases to amaze me that the overwhelming majority of buyer's agents don't use a representation agreement, particularly to clarify issues concerning compensation. Article 9 of the Code of Ethics states that all agreements related to real estate transactions, including representation agreements, should be in writing. Listing agents always have sellers sign a listing agreement, and there isn't any reason why buyers shouldn't sign a similar agreement on their side. Professionalism extends to both sides of the table.

When agents do discuss compensation, they often tell buyers "you don't have to pay me anything. I'm free to you and paid by the seller (or listing agent), as a percentage of the final purchase price." It shouldn't take long for a buyer to figure out that this means an agent earns more when the buyer pays more for a house. How can buyers honestly believe that we'll be negotiating in their best interests, if our best interests are diametrically opposed?

With today's more educated buyers, I've found that it often works well to give them at least two alternative compensation structures. Most people prefer to have options. For example, you could offer a flat fee, with a bonus based on the amount you're able to negotiate off the list price, or some other non-traditional compensation arrangement.

To be successful in this business, I've found that these three skills are absolutely essential: **1)** the ability to promote and develop your business; **2)** knowledge of and strict adherence to real estate license laws, codes, and practices; and, **3)** solid negotiating skills. Almost everything else can be handled

MORTGAGE COMPANY OR BANK?

WHY NOT BOTH?



Brenda Herring-Ferrebee
Mortgage Loan Officer
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Craig Gates
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by a capable assistant or staff.

Among those top three skills, which ones do your buyer-clients value most? Your marketing talents may help get them through your door, but that's not why they hire you. And meeting your professional licensing responsibilities is simply expected. So it's very likely that the only way you can legitimately earn their loyalty and respect is to hone your communication and negotiating skills. That's where you can make a substantial difference in the results buyers achieve when they work with you.

In fact, a broker who attended one of my classes once pointed out that if you *don't* sharpen your negotiating skills, and bring the offer to the table personally, you're delivering little more than minimal services. This is a critical point to consider, especially at a time when full-service brokerage is being challenged by minimum-service models. So if you're concerned about maintaining your competitive edge, let me suggest one way you can readily improve how you negotiate on behalf of your buyer-clients.



I believe that one of the most overlooked negotiating opportunities is making an offer presentation to the seller. One of the fundamental rules of negotiating is that you aren't really negotiating unless you are communicating directly with a "decision-maker." For example, imagine that you want to receive a discount on a large purchase by offering to pay cash. If you approach a store clerk, you likely won't get anywhere. But if you talk to the business owner or manager instead, who is a decision-maker and better understands the benefits of accepting your cash purchase, you've improved your chances of a successful negotiation.

This same logic applies to real estate purchases. Even though a listing agent is charged with fiduciary responsibilities for the seller, they are not the real decision-maker. And yet, all too often, buyer's agents simply fax their buyer's offer over to the listing agent's office. This is a very common practice that grew strictly out of convenience. But it is *not* the best way to represent your buyer-client's interests. When you submit your buyers' offer via fax, consider what happens:

- You're entrusting another agent to present your client's offer to the decision-maker. Since that agent probably hasn't even met your buyer, how can they possibly present with any realistic confidence the buyer's terms, conditions and qualifications?

- You're possibly exposing your client's offer to all other agents in that office, eliminating the confidentiality of the offer. Were you really providing the best service to your buyer when you didn't protect their offer's terms and conditions? You failed to protect the buyer's information and interests!

I've heard countless examples of "mysterious" events that have occurred after an offer was faxed, including buyer's reps wondering if the seller actually received the offer, or if the seller actually "saw" the offer, or were just "told" of its terms. There are also the tales of multiple offers that appeared after your offer was delivered, and wonder over how it is that an "in-company" offer was accepted instead.

All of these questions can be answered if you fully

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THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COUNCIL OF LEBANON COUNTY

39 N. 12th St. Lebanon, PA 17046

March 4, 11, 18, & April 8, 15, & 22 (Wed. Evenings)
Spanish Classes April 18 & 25 (Saturdays 9am-1pm)
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Attendance is limited, so registration is required by contacting the Lebanon County Redevelopment Authority at:
(717) 273-9326.

After completing all sessions, each participant receives a letter of completion. This may entitle you to special opportunities with reduced fees and rates with most council member financial institutions for certain mortgage products.

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Cleona	717-279-7655
Grantville	717-469-0623
Palmyra	717-641-0032

Jonestown Bank & Trust Co.



REAL ESTATE NEWS...

exercise your fiduciary responsibilities and personally present your buyer's offer. Even though some listing agents may resist such attempts, the practice is fully supported by NAR's MLS Policy Statement 7.73, *Rights of Cooperating Brokers in Presentation of Offers*, and in corresponding sections of the model MLS rules. Only the seller can deny the process. And you even have the right to receive the seller's denial in writing! It's important to note, however, that you do not have the right to remain present while the seller and their agent discuss the offer's terms. Once you've been given an opportunity to present the merits of your buyer's offer and answer any questions the seller may have, you should offer to leave the room. However, if you've gone out of your way to establish positive rapport and a spirit of collaboration, there's a decent chance you'll be able to stay and learn more about the seller's reactions to your offer. There are a number of reasons why presenting a buyer's offer benefits *both* parties to a negotiation.

(Note that buyer's reps should consult Article 1 of the NAR Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice 1-9 and 1-13 (5), which strongly support the need for buyer's agents to protect the buyer's information and to make certain disclosure to the buyer which would control the spread of their information.)

What's in it for the seller's agent? • They don't risk the seller questioning their loyalty. It's always possible that the seller might get the wrong impression if their agent actually promotes the buyer's offer.

• If the seller's agent has done their due diligence and advised the seller properly on their property's market value, and they still listed at an unrealistic price, then

who can better help the seller understand the market and the buyer's pricing than the buyer's agent?

• The seller's agent and their client will have better access to facts and figures that will help them make an informed decision about the quality and terms of the buyer's offer.

What's in it for the buyer's agent? • You will know more about the seller's situation and concerns, and be better prepared to advise your buyer in a counter offer.

• You will be confident that your buyer's offer was put in front of the seller and that its terms were described in a manner that hopefully favors your buyer.

• Your buyer-client will have a better feeling that you handled the negotiation process in a professional manner. Finally, what's in it for everyone? The negotiation process is generally quicker and less contentious! When an offer presentation is used, the entire negotiation is typically wrapped up the same day, as compared to days or a week or more.

Worth the extra effort! Good negotiating skills require knowledge and practice, but also a fundamental shift in your personal mindset. It won't come without some measure of effort, but I also guarantee that improving your negotiating skills can be one of the most rewarding ways to invest in your real estate career—as well as your personal life!

By Tom Hayman, ABR®, GRI, e-PRO®, Keller Williams Realty Professionals and President, Negotiation Expertise, LLC, Peoria, AZ



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ASK THE ATTORNEY...

Old Problems Revisited

Which refrigerator?

Here is a problem I've seen more than a few times over my many years representing REALTORS®. A "special" clause in the Agreement of Sale states that "Seller will leave the refrigerator." At the pre-settlement walk-through the buyer is aghast to see, not the late model side-by-side with water and ice dispenser, but instead that loud, '60s vintage beast of a refrigerator that was in the basement! Most of us understand what was intended, and as judges, we would have no difficulty finding in favor of the buyer: the good refrigerator comes back, the old one goes.

These problems are avoidable. The preprinted language in the Agreement of Sale may be too wordy, but it is clear. When a REALTOR® picks up a pen and writes a term of the contract, it should be equally as clear; identify the refrigerator that remains. Go overboard with clarity to assure that there can be no dispute.

Courts will only go so far in seeking to determine the intent of the parties. Ambiguous provisions will be construed against the entity that drafted the language. A buyer's agent who misdrafts a provision will cause harm to the buyer; likewise, the seller's agent can do harm to the seller. The problem doesn't end there as the parties themselves will turn to their respective agent who may ultimately be on the hook. Be clear!

Still doing BPOs?

We may never be rid of the term BPO, but in Pennsylvania they don't exist! An opinion of value will either be an appraisal or a CMA, whatever label appears on the paper or whatever name we give it. Call it a BPO, but upon analysis, it either qualifies as a CMA or an appraisal.

Any opinion of value that is not a CMA is automatically an appraisal! **A CMA may be performed by a broker or salesperson provided the statutory notice appears first, and further provided that it was prepared for either a buyer to determine the amount of an offer, or for seller as part of a listing presentation for the purpose of securing the listing and determining the list price.** If the opinion is offered to a mortgage company or bank with no hope of securing the listing, then it doesn't qualify as a CMA. If it is not a CMA, what is an opinion of value? It is an appraisal. You better have an appraisal certification and put it in the proper reporting form!

Call it whatever you will, a BPO is either going to look like an appraisal that's performed by a certified appraiser, or it will take on the appearance of a CMA with the mandatory language and performed only for buyers to help with making an offer or to sellers for the purpose of securing the listing and determining a list price.

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Carl & Mary Jane Gacono Honored by Lebanon Valley College

Last month Lebanon Valley College President, Stephen MacDonald and his wife, Mary Warner, presented the Gaconos with the college's Founders Day Award. Carl & Mary Jane help organize Annville's Christmas tree ceremony and coordinate the arrival of Santa Claus at the Allen Theatre each year. But the Gaconos are best known for their involvement in Annville's Memorial Day Parade. Since taking over the parade in 1990, the parade is now billed as the biggest of its type in PA.



And now for all their giving, they are receiving.

Brad Rhen, Lebanon Daily News



"And this is the downstairs half-bath."

LEBANON COUNTY SOLD STATISTICS...

February 1—28, 2009

	<u># Active</u>	<u>\$ Volume</u>	<u># Sold</u>	<u>Sold Avg</u>	<u>ADOM</u>
Residential/Farms	857	\$191,558,437	60	\$ 166,886	98
Annville-Cleona	49	\$ 12,499,520	2	\$ 146,750	10
Cornwall-Lebanon	267	\$ 68,611,171	22	\$ 190,251	96
Eastern Lebanon	138	\$ 27,930,615	7	\$ 139,514	158
Lebanon City	148	\$ 16,850,650	9	\$ 68,633	91
Northern Lebanon	108	\$ 27,154,818	6	\$ 187,824	125
Palmyra	147	\$ 38,511,663	14	\$ 200,923	79
Multi-Family	46	\$ 8,502,500	5	\$ 148,206	227
Lots	182	\$ 26,959,445	3	\$ 164,167	86
C/I/B Sale	46	\$ 33,082,705	2	\$ 148,050	171
C/I/B Lease	11	\$ 190,041	0	\$ 0	0
County Total	1,142	\$260,293,128	70	\$ 164,897	109

These figures are based on data supplied by the Keystone Multi-List, Inc.
Neither the Lebanon County Association of REALTORS® nor the MLS guarantees its accuracy.
Data maintained by the MLS may not reflect all real estate activity in the market area of Lebanon County.



LEBANON COUNTY SOLD STATISTICS...

FEBRUARY 1 – 29, 2008

	<u># Active</u>	<u>\$ Volume</u>	<u># Sold</u>	<u>Sold Avg</u>	<u>ADOM</u>
Residential/Farms	847	\$181,715,018	71	\$ 168,211	98
Annville-Cleona	36	\$ 11,364,797	3	\$ 144,133	97
Cornwall-Lebanon	255	\$ 60,270,594	19	\$ 243,097	108
Eastern Lebanon	100	\$ 24,476,439	7	\$ 180,020	78
Lebanon City	179	\$ 16,434,598	18	\$ 81,667	68
Northern Lebanon	136	\$ 30,077,242	10	\$ 178,557	203
Palmyra	141	\$ 39,091,348	14	\$ 169,715	61
Multi-Family	55	\$ 9,078,010	5	\$ 112,000	222
Lots	229	\$ 33,760,500	2	\$ 56,250	48
C/I/B Sale	45	\$ 29,435,950	3	\$ 247,300	64
C/I/B Lease	4	\$ 114,456	0	\$ 0	0
County Total	1,182	\$253,157,497	67	\$ 150,143	112

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Data maintained by the MLS may not reflect all real estate activity in the market area of Lebanon County.



ATTENTION ALL MEMBER OFFICES...

MISSION OVERVIEW: Homecoming for Habitat Benefit Auction

DATE: Friday October 9, 2009

MISSION PARAMETERS: Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to design, create, and donate a unique and original gift basket to be auctioned off at the Habitat for Humanity October benefit. Think outside of the 'basket'! You may select any number of civilian team members from your office. It is essential they be highly capable, creative, and committed to their task. You have seven months to complete your mission.

MISSION DETAILS: Completed baskets will be delivered no later than Thursday October 1st, 2009 to the Association office. Baskets will be judged by committee members and the top three baskets will be selected based on:

ORIGINALITY-COMPOSITION-PRESENTATION.

The winning offices will be chosen based on the above parameters, not necessarily the one that brings the biggest dollars.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: Bragging rights for one year are within your grasp! Your name will be engraved on a name plate on a 'Traveling Trophy'. Your office will receive free, banner-style advertising on the LCAR website! You will have worthy adversaries...and remember, in every challenge there are winners and losers. The real winners in this challenge will be the families who will live in the homes built by Habitat for Humanity. So accept your mission and be a winner too!



**Lebanon County Association
of REALTORS®**

1300 Florence Street, Lebanon, PA 17042
717-272-6126 Phone 717-270-5668 Fax



FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER TAX CREDIT

As Modified in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Major Modifications Italicized

February 2009

FEATURE	CREDIT AS CREATED JULY 2008 APPLIES TO ALL QUALIFIED PURCHASES ON OR AFTER APRIL 9, 2008	REVISED CREDIT – EFFECTIVE FOR PURCHASES ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009 AND BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2009
Amount of Credit	Lesser of 10 percent of cost of home or \$7500	<i>Maximum credit amount increased to \$8000</i>
Eligible Property	Any single family residence (including condos, co-ops, town-houses) that will be used as a principal residence.	No change All principal residences eligible.
Refundable	Yes. Reduces (or can eliminate) income tax liability for the year of purchase. Any unused amount of tax credit refunded to purchaser.	No change Purchasers will continue to receive refund for unused amount when tax return is filed.
Income Limit	Yes. Full amount of credit available for individuals with adjusted gross income of no more than \$75,000 (\$150,000 on a joint return). Phases out above those caps (\$95,000 and \$170,000).	No change Same income limits continue to apply.
First-time Homebuyer Only	Yes. Purchaser (and purchaser's spouse) may not have owned a principal residence in 3 years previous to purchase.	No change Still available for first-time purchasers only. Three-year rule continues to apply.
Revenue Bond Financing	No credit allowed if home financed with state/local bond funding.	<i>Purchasers who utilize revenue bond financing can use credit.</i>
Repayment	Yes. Portion (6.67% of credit or \$500) to be repaid each year for 15 years, starting with 2010 tax filing.	<i>No repayment for purchases on or after January 1, 2009 and before December 1, 2009</i>
Recapture	If home sold before 15-year repayment period ends, then outstanding balance of repayment amount recaptured on sale.	<i>If home is sold within three years of purchase, entire amount of credit is recaptured on sale. Applies only to homes purchased in 2009.</i>
Termination	July 1, 2009 (But note program changes for 2009)	<i>December 1, 2009</i>
Effective Date	Purchases on or after April 9, 2008 and before January 1, 2009. Repayment to begin for 2010 tax year.	<i>All revisions are effective as of January 1, 2009</i>

POLITICAL NEWS...

'Making Home Affordable' Summary of Guidelines

Making Home Affordable will offer assistance to as many as 7 to 9 million homeowners, making their mortgages more affordable and helping to prevent the destructive impact of foreclosures on families, communities and the national economy.

The Home Affordable Refinance program will be available to 4 to 5 million homeowners who have a solid payment history on an existing mortgage owned by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. Normally, these borrowers would be unable to refinance because their homes have lost value, pushing their current loan-to-value ratios above 80%. Under the Home Affordable Refinance program, many of them will now be eligible to refinance their loan to take advantage of today's lower mortgage rates or to refinance an adjustable-rate mortgage into a more stable mortgage, such as a 30-year fixed rate loan.

GSE lenders and servicers already have much of the borrower's information on file, so documentation requirements are not likely to be burdensome. In addition, in some cases an appraisal will not be necessary. This flexibility will make the refinance quicker and less costly for both borrowers and lenders.

The Home Affordable Refinance program ends in June 2010.

The Home Affordable Modification program will help up to 3 to 4 million at-risk homeowners avoid foreclosure by reducing monthly mortgage payments. Working with the banking and credit union regulators, the FHA, the

VA, the USDA and the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the Treasury Department today announced program guidelines that are expected to become standard industry practice in pursuing affordable and sustainable mortgage modifications. This program will work in tandem with an expanded and improved Hope for Homeowners program.

With the information now available, servicers can begin immediately to modify eligible mortgages under the Modification program so that at-risk borrowers can better afford their payments. The detailed guidelines (separate document) provide information on the following:

Eligibility and Verification

- *Loans originated on or before January 1, 2009.
- *First-lien loans on owner-occupied properties with unpaid principal balance up to \$729,750.
- *Higher limits allowed for owner-occupied properties with 2-4 units.
- *All borrowers must fully document income, including signed IRS 4506-T, two most recent pay stubs, and most recent tax return, and must sign an affidavit of financial hardship.
- *Property owner occupancy status will be verified through borrower credit report and other documentation; no investor-owned, vacant, or condemned properties.
- *Incentives to lenders and servicers to modify at risk borrowers who have not yet missed payments when the servicer determines that the borrower is at imminent risk of default.
- *Modifications can start from now until December 31, 2012; loans can be modified only once under the program.

Loan Modification Terms and Procedures

- *Participating servicers are required to service all eligible loans under the rules of the program unless explicitly prohibited by contract; servicers are required to use reasonable efforts to obtain waivers of limits on participation.
- *Participating loan servicers will be required to use a net present value (NPV) test on each loan that is at risk of imminent default or at least 60 days delinquent. The NPV test will compare the net present value of cash flows with modification and without modification. If the test is positive, meaning that the net present value of expected cash flow is greater in the modification scenario, the servicer must modify absent fraud or a contract prohibition.
- *Parameters of the NPV test are spelled out in the guidelines, including acceptable discount rates, property valuation methodologies, home price appreciation assumptions, foreclosure costs and timelines, and borrower cure and re-default rate assumptions.
- *Servicers will follow a specified sequence of steps in order to reduce the monthly payment to no more than 31% of gross monthly income (DTI).
- *The modification sequence requires first reducing the interest rate (subject to a rate floor of 2%), then if necessary extending the term or amortization of the loan up to a maximum of 40 years, and then if necessary forbearing principal.

(continued on page 9)

So Now You Know...

QUESTION: How do I logon to Keystone MLS with a wireless connection via a Blackberry phone?

ANSWER: If you are attempting to access flexmls from your blackberry device, please ensure that you are navigating to <http://wireless.flexmls.com> (no www.). Once you are on that page, you should see two links that allow you to sign in. Previous versions of the blackberry required the use of a secure login. Please try both login options, and if you are still unsuccessful signing in, please call technical support (1-888-525-4747) for further assistance.

WINNER'S CIRCLE AWARDS 2008...

Congratulations to our REALTOR® Members for all their hard work and success! The following members applied for, and received 2008 Winner's Circle Awards at the Monday, March 2nd Association luncheon:

Scott Graby
Steve Levengood
Ellen Cowan
Jean Taylor
Amy Dellinger
Barb Grumbine
Debra Carroll

TOP 5%

Sylvia Hoffman
Brenda Miller
Jane Cool
Maria Shuey
Melody Kiene
Nancy Smeltzer (not pictured)



Melissa MacBride
Bonita Gettle
Kathe Morrissey
Lori Kahl
Cheryl Gates
Carol Cortright
Joan Weaber
Cathy Bomgardner

TOP 10%

Maxine Brandt
Joni Fortna
(below not pictured)
Joy Burt
Thomas Gates
Debbie Lotier
Frank Tomecek Jr.

WINNER'S CIRCLE RECIPIENTS

Cheri Wright
Tracey Wilson
Sally Weise
Rynell Root
Holly Krall-Heft
Kim Gassert
Roxanne Carpenter
Yvonne Kuhn

(below not pictured)
Beth Boguski
Linda Breit
Diane Griffiths
Wendy Hanford
Alix Lopez
Dan Pellman

Ricky Ramos
Sue Richards
Emi Snavey
Jen Soliday
Audrey Wentling
Wendy Wills



To qualify for the Winners Circle award, Realtors had to have a minimum total of sixty thousand dollars in gross commission income in 2008. The awards are presented annually in March to Realtors® who apply and qualify for the award.



Above: President Joe Wentzel and President-Elect Melissa MacBride hand out the certificates to the winners.



Below: Kris Mease starts the bidding to auction off the 'March Madness' gift basket donated by the association. This basket auction kicks off the 'Mission Not-So Impossible' campaign for the **'Homecoming for Habitat Benefit Auction' on October 9, 2009.**

Right: Wes Dellinger was the winning bidder. The basket included

4 tickets to the Harlem Globe Trotters World Tour at the Giant Center on March 13, 2009, Basketball Toy Box, March Madness Greatest Moments DVD, Basketball Fleece Blanket, Duffle Bag, Basketball, Jr. Slam Door-Mount B-Ball, Ball Pump, Whistle, Water Bottle Shoulder Strap, Basketball Photo

Frame. Proceeds to benefit Habitat for Humanity. Way to go Wes!



REAL ESTATE NEWS...

(continued from page 7)

Principal forgiveness or a Hope for Homeowners refinancing are acceptable alternatives.

*The monthly payment includes principal, interest, taxes, insurance, flood insurance, homeowner's association and/or condominium fees. Monthly income includes wages, salary, overtime, fees, commissions, tips, social security, pensions, and all other income.

*Servicers must enter into the program agreements with Treasury's financial agent on or before December 31, 2009.

Payments to Servicers, Lenders, and Responsible Borrowers

*The program will share with the lender/investor the cost of reductions in monthly payments from 38% DTI to 31% DTI.

*Servicers that modify loans according to the guidelines will receive an up-front fee of \$1,000 for each modification, plus "pay for success" fees on still-performing loans of \$1,000 per year.

*Homeowners who make their payments on time are eligible for up to \$1,000 of principal reduction payments each year for up to five years.

*The program will provide one-time bonus incentive payments of \$1,500 to lender/investors and \$500 to servicers for modifications made while a borrower is still current on mortgage payments.

*The program will include incentives for extinguishing second liens on loans modified under this program.

*No payments will be made under the program to the lender/investor, servicer, or borrower unless and until the servicer has first entered into the program agreements with Treasury's financial agent.

*Similar incentives will be paid for Hope for Homeowner refinances.

Transparency and Accountability

*Measures to prevent and detect fraud, such as documentation and audit requirements, will be central to the program.

*Servicers will be required to collect, maintain and transmit records for verification and compliance review, including borrower eligibility, underwriting, incentive payments, property verification, and other documentation.

*Freddie Mac will audit compliance.

-US Treasury Dept. 3/4/09

7 Common Credit Report Mistakes

By Patrick Ritchie | February 2009

Consumers see the ads in the newspaper and read the signs nailed to telephone poles: "Credit problems? We erase bad debt." It sounds so easy. Just call the phone number and pay a fee, and your credit woes will disappear.

The reality is that bad credit does not vanish by paying someone to remove it. Are there legitimate credit repair organizations out there? Sure, and they can help remove inaccurate information from credit reports. But even they can't get rid of correct information, however damaging it may be.

When it comes to outright mistakes on their credit report, though, it's imperative that consumers have them fixed—whether they hire an agency or do it themselves.

The first step in fixing credit report errors is to identify what's wrong. Consumers have to obtain a copy of their credit report (everyone is entitled to one free report per year from each of the three credit bureaus: Experian, Equifax, and

TransUnion) and review it for accuracy. Look for:

Late payments. There should be no late payments over seven years old on the report. This is important, as approximately 35 percent of a credit score is based on timely payments.

Collections. The report shouldn't show any collections or charge-offs more than seven years old. It's a good idea for consumers to save copies of their credit report for seven years so they have proof of when an item was added.

Payment records. All paid-in-full installment loans and all collections that have been paid in full or settled for less than the amount due should show a zero balance. Sometimes collections are not updated after they've been paid or settled.

Mysterious accounts. Consumers should be able to recognize all accounts listed on the report. Incorrect accounts do sometimes appear, either by mistaken identity or by identity theft. Consumers should contact the creditor immediately to compare their name and Social Security number with the one shown for the incorrect amount. In the case of an incorrect collection, consumers may have to request a "validation of debt," or what is sometimes called a "media packet," which provides details on the account holder. If the account is a case of identity theft, the consumer should request a fraud affidavit from the creditor. It's also a smart idea to file a police report.

Original dates. Length of credit history is 15 percent of a credit score, so consumers should be sure the original dates they opened their accounts are accurate. Original account dates could be reported inaccurately if a credit card company is acquired or merged, or if a credit card is reported lost or stolen.

Available credit. Credit limits on the credit report should match up with credit card statements. It's best to keep balances under 50 percent of the available limit; less than 30 percent is even better. Debt accounts for 30 percent of your score.

Types of accounts. Sometimes accounts are not categorized correctly. A home equity line of credit should be listed as a second mortgage, not just a line of credit. If the account type is not reflected properly, consumers should contact the creditor.

Reason codes. Consumers should read what the credit bureau has to say about why their score is what it is. These so-called "reason codes" appear in the credit report to explain what factors played into the credit score and what actions can be taken to improve the score over time. One caveat: If a consumer already has a good credit score, ignore the reason codes, as making changes could actually result in a lower score.

One last word of advice for consumers: Think twice before closing that credit card, which shrinks the available credit listed on your report and hurts the credit utilization ratio.

The key to good credit is being proactive in reviewing credit reports regularly. If consumers find their credit score is a respectable 680 or higher, removing minor dings may not be worth the effort. Otherwise, finding and eliminating errors is one way to get the high credit rating they deserve.

MEMBER CORNER...



Happy Birthday

March

- 1 Robert Clay, Suburban Realty
- 1 Mark Tomecek, Mark Tomecek Residential Appraisals
- 1 Keith H. Volker, Landmark Homes
- 3 Tracy Levengood, Re/Max of Lebanon County
- 3 Peter Jones, Suntrust Mortgage, Inc.
- 5 Brenda Wurges, Re/Max Cornerstone
- 6 Cindy Radnovich, Jonestown Bank & Trust Co.
- 7 Kimberly Dunbar, Realty World Associates
- 12 Audrey Wentling, Coldwell Banker Select Prof.
- 16 Roxanne Carpenter, Re/Max Cornerstone
- 16 Catherine Dieffenbach, Re/Max Cornerstone
- 17 Mark Darok, Prudential Gacono Real Estate
- 20 Craig Gates, Fulton Mortgage Company
- 22 Peggy J. Seibert, Penn Realty, LTD
- 23 Barbara Hetrick Stehman, Stehman Appraisal
- 23 Barbara L. Harris, Kleinfelter Real Estate
- 24 Ralph Rhode, Met-Ed
- 24 Diane Hoch, Realty World Associates
- 24 Jeffrey Gacono, Prudential Gacono Real Estate
- 24 Judy Mehaffey, Brownstone Real Estate
- 28 Charles M. Brooks, C.M. Brooks REALTOR®
- 28 Melissa MacBride, Century 21 Keall Real Estate
- 31 Joseph Wentzel, Penn Realty, LTD

Newsletter Committee

* Brenda Miller	Re/Max Cornerstone 273-5501
* Debbie Carroll	Century 21 Krall 273-1631
Craig Gates	Fulton Mortgage Company 274-6981
Kris Mease	Edge Abstract of PA 228-0870
Brenda Wurges	Re/Max Cornerstone 273-5501

If you have any ideas or articles for the "Board Briefs", please call any committee Member or the Association Office at 272-6126. You may also fax items to 270-5668, or e-mail them to Julie Osborne at secretary@lebanon-realtors.com.

EDUCATION

- Have you signed up for the **CE classes** at the Quality Inn on **March 19, 2009**? Forms are available on our website.
- Has the High School Senior in your life submitted their application for the LCAR Scholarship ? 3/23 Deadline—Forms available on our website.
- **NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION 4/2/09**: Call the Association to sign up. New members must attend during their first 6 months.

GUESS WHO?

Guess who this is; fax or email correct answer to Julie at the Association office, and be entered in a drawing to win a gift certificate for a free car wash !



Most people would be surprised to know that I:

Love to go camping in our RV—no roughing it or tents

When I was a child, I wanted to be _____ when I grew up:

A Nurse

My favorite junk food and drink / cocktail:

Cosmos for sure on both accounts

My ideal vacation would be:

Tropical Island—I am a sun worshipper

My favorite movie(s):

'The Notebook'

My hobbies and interests:

Golf, reading, my kids' sporting events—go bulldogs!

If I were stranded on an island, the 3 CD's / albums I couldn't live without:

Train 'Drops of Jupiter', Marvin Gaye 'Greatest Hits', Elton John 'Greatest Hits'

My most embarrassing moment:

When clients, husband & wife, started an argument in front of me over debt the husband had no knowledge of

My biggest pet peeve:

When people don't do what I ask them to do!

My idea of a perfect day:

Spending the day with my family on a sunny island

COMINGS & GOINGS...

New REALTOR® Members:
Donna Stuart, Brownstone Real Estate

REALTOR® Member Escrows:
Keith Volker, Re/Max Cornerstone

Member Name Changes:
Met Life Home Loans (formerly First Horizon)

New Affiliate Members:
Keith Volker, Landmark Homes

Our Deepest Sympathies

Please keep Carl Adams, Ulrich Professionals Realty, and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Carl's wife, Elizabeth A. Adams, who went by Betty Ann, passed away on Monday March 9, 2009.



MORTGAGES

- Home Loans
- Construction
- Lot Loans
- Refinancing
- Improvements
- Farms & Farmettes

 **FARM CREDIT**

800.477.9947



farmcreditmortgage.com



Member Profile
Nancy Smeltzer
Re/Max of Lebanon
County

WHAT I DID BEFORE REAL ESTATE:
College, Managed Clothing Store, Secretary in Real Estate Office

YEAR STARTED :
1977

I CHOSE A CAREER IN REAL ESTATE BECAUSE:

I enjoy people, problem solving, and challenges

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS, AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS, OR ACHIEVEMENTS :

LCAR President '97, PAR Excellence Life Member, Chairperson
Habitat for Humanity Art Auction for approx. 12 yrs

MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE AS A REALTOR® IS:

Paperwork—would much rather deal with people, not papers
BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THE INDUSTRY:
Realtors don't work hard; people thinking we drive around and show houses, making lots of money

IF I WEREN'T A REALTOR, I'D BE:

Running my own boutique

MY MOST EMBARRASSING REALTOR® MOMENT WAS:

Falling through a large, second floor, heating grate of an older home; luckily catching myself before I fell through to the 1st floor

MY "DREAM" HOME WOULD BE :

I live in my dream home, full of happy memories and energetic grandchildren, along with the trees I planted when my children were born, and my neighbors are my friends—size doesn't matter, only the love inside.

BEST ADVICE I COULD GIVE TO OTHERS:

Concentrate on the people, provide good service, keep in touch with past clients and the business will follow.

2009 Elections & Important Dates

April 20: Last day to register before primary election

May 12: Last day to apply for civilian absentee ballot

May 19: **Primary Election Day**

October 5: Last day to register for November election

October 27: Last day to apply for civilian absentee ballot

November 3: **Election Day**



MARCH 2009



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 	2 Winner's Circle Luncheon 	3	4	5 Art Auction Mtg. 9am 	6	7 
8 Daylight Savings Time Begins 	9	10	11	12 Registration Deadline CE Courses 3/19 Quality Inn 	13	14
15	16	17 KMLS Mtg. 1:30pm St. Patrick's Day 	18 MLS Training 1pm 	19 CE Courses, Quality Inn 8:30am-12pm & 1:30-5pm 	20 PR Mtg. 9am Spring Begins	21 
22	23 Deadline H.S. Scholarship Applications 	24	25 Board of Directors Mtg. 8:45am 	26	27	28
29 	30	31		4/2/09 *New Member Orientation 		

SAVE THE DATE:

*Golf Outing: Friday June 5, 2009

*Triple Play: December 7-10th, 2009

*Homecoming for Habitat

*Christmas Party: Friday December 11, 2009

Benefit Action: Friday October 9, 2009

LCAR MISSION STATEMENT:

The Lebanon County Association of REALTORS® (LCAR) actively serves its' members needs by providing programs, products, and services to enhance ethical and successful business conduct; and, through collective action, advocating private property rights.