

It's Thanksgiving, and My Thankfulness Is Both Personal and Professional

Thanksgiving is a welcome opportunity to reach out to you and others and thank you all (and God) for being in my life. When we look at the danger and devastation elsewhere in the world, whether from natural or man-made causes, we have plenty for which to be thankful.

2015 has been a good year for Golden Real Estate. Our agents will have sold \$37 million worth of real estate come Dec. 31, representing 100+ transactions, up slightly from the previous two years. We have continued to enhance our services for both buyers and sellers.

As always, it has been a year of learning and improvement, much of which has been documented by me in this column. One of the more satisfying improvements this year was our partnering with Care Patrol to help elderly sellers find the best assisted living facility and not just sell their home and wish them good luck. We've had two successes since announcing that partnership.

We cherish our reputation for sustainability, with our solar powered and super-insulated office resulting in energy costs of under \$150 per month even in the winter — and that includes the cost of charging three electric vehicles. This year all of our agents obtained certification as EcoBrokers, making us the only brokerage I know of where all agents have this important training and certification. If you want an agent who understands solar power and other sustainable issues, any agent at Golden Real Estate can help you. And they will show you listings in one of our two Teslas!

I'm grateful for the progress that our industry has made in so many areas this year. REcolorado, our Denver MLS, has made some great improvements which I've also written about in this column. One of my favorite improvements is that any buyer or seller can now check on the level of success of an agent by going to www.REcolorado.com and clicking on "Find an Agent." The website will then display (with photos) all of the agent's active, under contract and sold listings going back two years. For instance, if you were to search for me right now, you'd see one active, three under contract and 59 sold listings. As Rita would say, Woohoo!

No longer can a prospective listing agent overstate his or her level of success and get away with it — *IF* you know about that feature of our MLS website. Unfortunately, this feature of REcolorado.com does not list how many *buyers* each agent has represented, so you can't check an agent's experience when it comes to representing you as a buyer. If you are also selling, however, that's not a problem because you want your *listing* agent to be your buyer's agent and discount the commission he or

she charges to list your current home.

Also this year, however, www.realtor.com has filled that information gap, and you can now google the name of any agent followed by "realtor" (if he or she *is* a Realtor) and one of the very first items on the first page of Google will be a link to that agent's profile on realtor.com. I checked my own profile just now, and it shows one active listing and two sold listings. (Sales data is still being uploaded from our MLS.) The difference is that each sold listing shows whether the agent worked with the seller, the buyer, or both. You can't find this information anywhere else (unless you're an agent). Buyer information is being provided to realtor.com by REcolorado.com, and I don't see any reason why REcolorado

couldn't add buyer data to its own display of agent information. I was told that we'll see that in 2016.

That profile of agents on realtor.com has another feature that thrills me — it has actual reviews from past clients, something that you could only get, until now, from a little known website, www.RatedAgent.com. I'm pleased to report that it was because of my own suggestion to an executive at realtor.com that a deal was struck for RatedAgent.com to provide ratings and reviews, which realtor.com is rebranding as "Real Ratings." realtor.com will continue to have "Recommendations" which can be written by anyone at all and can be deleted or phoned up by the agent (just like an agent can do on Zillow and other websites), but the "Reviews and Ratings" are only from verified past clients and can't be altered or deleted, if they're negative. This is a HUGE improvement for consumers, and, since Golden Real Estate's agents fare well when it comes to ratings and reviews by past clients, I'm so grateful for this development. I think realtor.com is proud of it too, and you can expect to see a major advertising campaign boasting about their "Real Ratings" as soon as the upload process (ongoing as I write this) is completed.

(Note: Although agents can't delete or alter negative reviews or ratings obtained by Rated

Agent.com, they can turn off the display of all reviews or ratings on realtor.com as well as on RatedAgent.com, so if you see no reviews on an agent's profile, either their brokerage hasn't signed up for RatedAgent.com's service or they haven't allowed RatedAgent.com to display their data.)

As I reported last week, I just returned from the Realtor convention and expo in San Diego, and I'm grateful for all the things I learned and products I purchased, some of which I have already put to work. So I have to say I am grateful for the American (and Canadian) entrepreneurial spirit which keeps inventing and producing products to improve how businesses, including ours, operate.

That brings me back to my original comment about being thankful to live in the United States but specifically in Jefferson County, Colorado. For the most part we live here without fear, especially when compared to what we see on TV every night, including from one of my favorite destinations, Paris. Let's not take it for granted.

As Rita and I sit down for our Thanksgiving dinner, I will have grateful thoughts not only about my clients, my broker associates, my service partners and you, dear reader, but I will also be thinking about how fortunate Rita and I are to live in peace, enjoy as high a quality of life as we could ever want, and have the resources to contribute to the alleviation of hardship by those not as blessed as we are.

Thank you for reading this column. I love writing it each week, but I wouldn't be writing it if I didn't have this newspaper to publish it and an audience to read it. Happy Thanksgiving!

Bring Us Your Unwrapped Toys

As I wrote last week, the **Christian Action Guild** is seeking unwrapped toys for its Santa Shop, and our office at **17695 S. Golden Road** is a 24/7 drop-off location. You'll find a box for your gifts between the front doors or our office, so you can come by after hours. So when you're buying toys in the coming week or two, please buy an extra toy or two for the Santa Shop. It will make you — and us — feel great! We need your donations by Dec. 17th.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



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