



From the Editor: Dan Rafter

Still thriving, no matter the market

The news has been grim: Housing starts are hitting record lows. Sales of existing homes are still dropping across the country. It's taking longer for homes to sell. And when they do sell, prices are low.

Why would anyone want to sell residential real estate today?

It's a reasonable question. But it's not one that's entered the minds of the real estate agents profiled in this issue of *Metro Chicago Real Estate® Magazine*. This issue features some of the top agents in the city and suburbs, all of whom manage to sell luxury real estate.

They do their jobs well. Even in this rough real estate market.

What are their secrets to success? They work hard. They study the market. They promote their listings in specialty publications, on the Internet and by networking with other agents. They return client phone calls quickly, and rely on active referral networks to provide business.

None of this is revolutionary. In fact, you might be tempted to call it common business sense. But in today's rough market, these are the little steps that agents must take to succeed. They are also the steps that many agents, used to the go-go pace of the housing boom of 2001 through 2006, never had to rely on for generating business.

Martha May, a veteran agent with Koenig & Strey GMAC Real Estate, sums up it well: "It's about being honest and upfront with clients. You have to let them know that you're there to get the job done. It's all about creative marketing, setting the right prices on properties and doing the extra things to help a home move."

This is the issue you should read from cover to cover. The agents we've profiled

here are all success stories, are all bringing in the business even as the housing market struggles to shake off its doldrums. They haven't let the negative press coverage, the drumbeat of depressing housing statistics or the fears of both buyers and sellers slow them down. Instead, they've increased their efforts, whether that means bumping up their marketing and advertising budget or scrubbing their clients' homes clean before every showing.

It's hard work, yes. But selling real estate is always hard work, if you do it right.

By the way, both I and our marketing manager, Joe Pellegrini, have some good news to report. Joe and his wife, Elke, are the proud parents of a new baby girl, Sofia. Born Aug. 12, Sofia is their first child. Knowing Joe as I do, I'm sure he'll be an outstanding father to young Sofia.

My wife, Lynn, and I are also proud new parents. Earlier this summer, we welcomed Yonatan to our home. Yonatan, whom we adopted from Ethiopia, is now 11 months old, and has shaken up our household considerably. We'd gotten a bit spoiled: Our oldest son, Ben, is now 9. We'd forgotten the joys of late-night feedings and 5 a.m. wake-up calls from the baby's room.

Having Yonatan, though, is a great joy. It's a thrill to watch him as he learns to roll, crawl and stand up, all seemingly so quickly.

Nothing brings more happiness to a home than a new baby. Just ask me or Joe ... if we're awake enough to answer.

Sincerely,
Dan Rafter