

Real Estate News

By Marian Goetzinger, Pine Knoll Shores Realty



A different sort of real estate story

As I struggled to put together an article for this month's issue of *The Shoreline*, I couldn't get my head around what to write. Is it just me, or do many of you also find yourself feeling a bit like you are living an out-of-body experience? I can't find my comfort zone. I'm not even sure who I am anymore. Nothing is "normal." None of the usual topics seem to matter all of a sudden.

Today I met with an adjuster at my office. He couldn't tell me definitively what would be covered by our insurance policy, when he could answer that question, or when we could begin rebuilding. I had already met with FEMA, who told me they couldn't help me at all. The mold remediation company told me they could tell me within a week if the work we have done so far has cleaned up the air inside the building. I have forwarded the office phones to my mobile number, and my staff and I are meeting remotely each week to try to stay connected and keep things going. I have reviewed and juggled and adjusted numbers in an attempt to keep my firm open until things are cleaned up and back to normal.

I have answered several calls every single day from people who are displaced because of Hurricane Florence and are looking for rentals while their homes are restored. I have tried, but I have not been able to help any of them. I have explained to owners whose homes were under contract before Florence why the buyers have terminated the contract. I have called other owners to let them know that the buyers who made the appointments to preview have cancelled. I have been frustrated with out-of-area owners who don't understand why we are not doing open houses and realtor caravans. Really!

Like everybody else, we have hauled, raked and pulled debris to the roadside for pickup. We are on many contractors' waiting lists to help rebuild and restore.

Realtors are always among the first to respond to crisis. We are Type A, gregarious people and many of us have experienced enough success that we have been privileged to give back. Alan Leary, a friend of mine who is a realtor with ReMax Ocean Properties here in Carteret County, is often quoted as saying, "If you want something done, ask a realtor." You will find us on every charity board and benevolent organization anywhere. We don't know how to be victims, and yet here we are. We didn't just lose "stuff"; we lost our jobs, our livelihood, and, indeed, our identities, some of us forever, hopefully most of us, temporarily.

Many of our local real estate professionals lost their homes or offices to Florence. Some lost both. We have now watched much of our hard work literally washed or blown away. At first, as we went through the rubble and tried to set up remote offices or find a place to live for a while, we were fine, positive and upbeat. I think we were in shock. We are naturally positive, hard-working people and we don't think of ourselves as victims, even as we stand outside our former homes and offices and wonder if things will ever be the same again.

Alan Leary has been in real estate longer than I have. That's a very long time. He supports his family as a realtor. If you need something done, he is a good one to call. He has motivated and encouraged many of the rest of us to dig deep and give. He says:

I am a Morehead City native who has experienced many hurricanes in my 62-plus years—some stronger than Florence, but none that have caused the widespread damage to properties, lives and minds she did... Every area was affected—flooding, fallen trees, loss of power. Things we take for granted have been taken from us.

It is especially hard on realtors. Many have suffered property damage, costs to repair and relocate and added burdens to care for their family and friends. Our real estate business and incomes will suffer for months, if not longer, as our area recovers from this disaster. Many realtors do

not have an office to work from, a phone to answer or internet service necessary to do their jobs. Some have even had their vehicles flooded, records lost and closings delayed or terminated. The business outlook for us for fourth quarter 2018 is, at best, bleak.

Yet even in this adversity, so many realtors immediately started helping their clients and neighbors to recover, leaving their own lives and property to do what realtors do best—help others. I personally know realtors who left their damaged homes and properties and were out chain sawing trees, tarping roofs, pulling out drenched carpet and sheetrock, comforting, feeding, loving their neighbors and clients; assuring those most harmed that they had support, food, water, essentials and friends. These realtors are unselfish men and women, giving their time, resources and talents to move out of the dark and forward toward a stronger Carteret County. Whether at their churches, homes, offices or civic organizations, they were clearing lots and roads, collecting supplies, sheltering those without shelter, seeing the horrible destruction in front of them, then looking beyond it to the future and executing plans to start to get there.

Realtors are wired to help others and always do a great job of it. Now there are realtors who need help. Most are too proud to ask for it, but please know it is needed. My 28-plus years as a realtor have taught me that our first job is to give back to the community that supports us and to help make it even better. Now it is time to assist your area realtors who need help. You may not be able to help them rebuild homes, cars, offices and material things, but every single person can offer them the mental and emotional help of letting them know that they are appreciated and loved.

I know our little community will show its faith, strength and true colors as we rebound, rebuild and restore this great county. We appreciate the support of everyone as we move forward together.

Cathy Gainey, a member of the Star Team at Bluewater Real Estate in Atlantic Beach, is another experienced, successful realtor who has supported her family for years as a real estate professional. Cathy is a single mom. She says:

I have lived here since I was nine years old, and have always thought we were so fortunate to dodge all those terrible hurricanes that have blown though over all those years. This time, we are not so lucky, and while we have suffered tremendous damage, I still feel fortunate.

As a realtor, I have seen this county come together to help in many ways. Realtors from the Outer Banks and, indeed, realtors from around North Carolina and other parts of the country have sent trucks loaded with supplies to help our area. I am one of the many displaced people. In addition to not being able to return to my home any time soon, my income will be adversely affected for who knows how long. I find it very hard to accept help. I am always happiest when I am helping others. I have a lot of faith and hope that our community will come back together stronger than ever. I pray that we will once again be "Carteret Strong."

I have spoken to many other realtors since returning from our evacuation. We have worked together in many ways to assist with the recovery effort, including staffing the distribution center for the supplies that have been trucked in by realtor organizations from outside our area. I have not spoken to one realtor who did not suffer damage to either his or her home or office when Florence blew through. We are all helping and trying to avoid thinking about how we will pay our bills and our staff for the next period of time.

I have been a realtor since 1996, and I'm proud to be part of this profession. We are all also part of the different communities that make up our Crystal Coast. We come together to let you know that we want to be part of the recovery process. We will be out there with you helping clean up and rebuild. We ask your understanding and support when this time, many of us may sometimes find ourselves on the other side of the distribution line.