

HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

AT WORK

✉ [Get e-mail newsletters](#)

Speaking the language

More Hispanic people are buying and selling homes, so real-estate brokers are hiring more agents who speak Spanish to attract them

Home News Tribune Online 10/9/06

By DAVID P. WILLIS
GANNETT NEW JERSEY

On a recent Monday afternoon, Dora Vargas and her husband, Lucino Reyes, talked with their real estate agent about a quaint house on Union Avenue in Neptune City.

The conversation with Sara Pulido, a real estate agent with Prudential Zack Shore Properties in Belmar, covered the all the usual details, such as price (\$298,000) and size (two bedrooms).

But the discussion over the listing was in Spanish. Pulido, who is a native of Colombia and has worked at Prudential Zack for more than two years, is one of several agents at the agency who speak Spanish.

As the population of Latinos rise, real-estate agencies are trying to hire real-estate agents who speak Spanish.

Reyes and Vargas, Bradley Beach residents, are looking to buy her first house. A Spanish-speaking agent is important, said Vargas, 34.

"We tell her what I want and she understands us," said Vargas, who owns a cleaning service. "I think it is better and more perfect when you speak your own language with somebody else."

Vargas and Reyes are joining an increasing number of Latinos who are in the market for a home. Hispanic homeownership is on the rise at the Jersey Shore, according to U.S. Census Bureau data and estimates.

Between 2000 and 2004, the number of homes owned and occupied by Hispanics has risen about 70 percent in Monmouth County and about 56 percent in Ocean County, the studies state.

Owners of real-estate agencies are noticing the trend, said Frances Martinez Myers, chairwoman of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals. The bottom line: Latinos, who are primarily first-time home buyers, are coming into the market.

For the last several years, the real-estate industry, working in a hot market, has been focused on affluent buyers, she said. But the once-sizzling market is changing.

"The tide is changing, and I think real-estate companies that are savvy are looking at this as an opportunity to begin the buying cycle again," Martinez Myers said. "They (Hispanics) absolutely jump-start the market."

Ric Martel, general sales manager at Prudential Zack, said he sees a need for agents who speak Spanish. The number of Latinos living and working in the area is growing. People are starting their own businesses, Martel said.

"The level of the work, the income the worker is making and the desire to live that American dream is alive and well," Martel said. "If we could get some Spanish-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking and different-language-speaking people in our company, we will be able to really grab onto that market."

Latinos are likely to come to an real-estate office when they want to buy a house, Martel said. "I wanted to have agents in these different offices who could speak the language so when they walked into the door, we could say 'Hola, como esta.' "

An agent who speaks the same language as a customer helps to broaden the conversation, benefiting the buyer and the seller, said Bill Spadea, vice president of career development at Weichert Realtors, which is based in Morris Plains.

"Your amount of communication increases because you are not struggling over any word, over any mixed interpretation," Spadea said. "Sellers are getting a much better representation of their home when you have an agent who can communicate.

"They (buyers) are being led by someone who can take them to the appropriate listings and really understand all of what the buyer really needs."

Neptune resident Gulberto Santiago, 40, recently purchased a second home with the help of Prudential Zack's Pulido. He is renting out his first house after he bought a larger home.

"We want to come to this country and be able to go forward and not go back," said Santiago, who works for Ocean Township's municipal sanitation department and also owns a landscaping and cleaning services business.

"When we deal with a Spanish agent, we know that we can go one step ahead because they understand us."

[Subscribe Now! to the Home News Tribune. It's EZ.](#)