

Real estate's younger look

By Tracey Porpora
Special to The Star-Ledger

Watching his mother in the real estate business—a career she's pursued for more than 30 years—influenced Brian Mucerno, 26, to follow in her footsteps upon graduating Caldwell College in May 2005.

NEXT GENERATION REALTORS

"I was drawn to the fact that it's not a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job. You create your own hours, and you have to hustle," said the sales associate for the Bedminster office of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage of New Jersey/Rockland County. "I have a type-A personality, so I felt real estate would be a good fit for me."

Like Mucerno, many college graduates and young professionals are finding that real estate presents many opportunities for a flexible work schedule in a challenging field that can prove to be very profitable.

"It's a wonderful trend that we're seeing more young people in real estate," said Bill Spaden, vice-president of career devel-

opment for Weichert Realtors, which has its headquarters in Morris Plains.

"For years, a career in real estate was not looked at the same as a job on a corporate level. But in the last five or six years, young people have begun to look at real estate as not only a real job, but as a real career opportunity. It's not the job you take out of college, it's the career you start after college to begin to build that entrepreneurial fortune that some people are out there making."

For this reason, many real estate companies today target young professionals who possess the determination to succeed in a sales-based industry.

In addition, Spadea said, this new generation of real estate professionals also adapts easily to the technology that has reshaped the landscape of the industry.

The new generation of real estate agents also knows hard work and dedication are required to be successful in the business.

"You get out of real estate what you put in," said Jodi Luminello, 35, a sales associate for the Westfield office of Burgdorff ERA, who started her real estate career two years ago, after working in pharmaceutical sales.

"It's got to be a full-time job, and you have to be a go-getter.

You can't wait for clients or listings to fall in your lap. You have to be able to go out there and be aggressive. The same way you go out and get your business will be the same way you negotiate for your clients."

Because New Jersey's real estate industry is busier than



Victoria Szwedki, 33, a real estate agent for the Summit office of Keller Williams Realty, said helping others find a home makes her career rewarding.

ever, with many buyers and sellers in the marketplace, newcomers say they often specialize in working with their own peer group.

"I feel there is a need for younger agents. I feel like I have a pulse on the town that I work in," said Kathleen Boyd, a real estate agent with Burgdorff

ERA's Chatham office who left careers in journalism and public relations to become a sales associate.

"I was always interested in the real estate market. I always bought and sold homes, and I was always the one my friends would come to for advice about real estate, so I thought I'd capitalize on that."

However, being young in the real estate business can have its downside.

"The biggest challenge is convincing clients to work with me despite my age," Mucerno said. "But when I sell them on Coldwell Banker, and they see how professional I act, they feel confident in my ability and the training I received from Coldwell Banker."

Many of today's young agents say the most fulfilling part of the job is selling someone a home. "It's so rewarding to help people," said Victoria Szwedki, 33, a real estate agent for the Summit office of Keller Williams Realty, who has been working in real estate since 1996.

"A little hand-holding goes a long way in this business. The more you put your heart into it, the more you'll reap the benefit of helping people. A Realtor's point of view, and a Realtor's way of making the transaction smoother for people—especially those who may be leaving a home they lived in for 25

years—can be really beneficial."
Many young agents initially face the challenge of starting in a business that relies heavily on referrals. "It was tough in the beginning. I had to meet people and get my repertoire going, but now I love it," said Cindy Nazzaro, 29, a sales representative for Hoboken-based Halliburton Homes, for three years.
Working for a smaller, boutique agency, Nazzaro said one of the biggest challenges she faces is competition from larger companies. "My biggest desire is to get listings. To have listings, you have to attract more buyers to the office," said Nazzaro. "The bigger real estate companies attract people with their names, but we try to attract people with our service. It's been paying off." ♦

First-time homebuyers

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like they're our own children."
One of the biggest decisions faced by first-time homebuyers is where they should purchase their residence.

"Location, location, location can still cost you money. (First-time buyers) shouldn't be afraid to expand their search area a little," said Debby Strott, branch manager of Weichert Realtors' Morristown West office.

She said agents will assess first-time homebuyers' needs to make sure they're buying the home that best suits their long- and short-term goals. "Realtors provide area, school and transportation information. They can help you evaluate what other homes in the area have sold for, which is helpful in determining your purchase price," Strott said.

For this reason, it's important that first-time buyers work with a real estate professional familiar with the area in which they desire to buy a home.

"You want your Realtor to be able to educate and familiarize you about the area, and about what's happening in the market, especially if you're coming from out of state or across the state," said Jodi Luminello, sales associate for the Westfield office of Burgdorff ERA.

"It's great when you can educate people about the real estate market, and about making decisions that are best for them." ♦