

## Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® Installs New Officers and Presents Awards

The Association held its Annual Awards and Installation Dinner on Wednesday, January 22nd, 2014 at the Green Valley Country Club in Spring Township. The Association installed the new Officers, and Directors, discussed the 2014 agenda, presented leadership awards, and acknowledged RPAC contributors.

Kim Skumanick, the 2014 Pennsylvania Association of REALTORS® (PAR) President and a REALTOR® from the Greater Scranton area, presided over the installation ceremony. After a short speech about the goals of PAR in 2014, she inducted the following Officers and Directors:

- Victoria Venezia, 2014 President
- Peter Champagne, Immediate Past-President
- David Mattes, President-Elect
- Brad Bentz, Vice-President
- Jaime Perez, Treasurer
- Eva Eisenbrown, Secretary
- Craig Binkley, Director,
- Jerry Buffa, Director
- Denise Devine, Director
- Joseph Capellupo, Director
- Sharon Kehres, Director
- Arlene Parisi, Director
- William Sands, Director (new on the Board this year)

*...continued on page 2*



Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS®  
2014 Board of Directors

## President's Pen

By Vicki Venezia



In my first message to our Association, I want each of you to know how excited and honored I am to serve as your 2014 President. With the help of our entire mem-

bership, I'm looking forward to working with you in the coming year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pete Champagne, our 2013 President, for all his hard work, leadership and dedicated service to our Association.

In spite of the snow and icy weather conditions, we attended the PAR Winter Business Meetings at the end of January in Harrisburg. Dominant topics of discussion were the flood insurance crisis and property tax reform. The senate passed the Flood Insurance Affordability Act and now it moves forward to the House of Representatives. Our own GAD, Chuck Liedike, is the PAR campaign manager for property tax reform. He has been busy organizing and speaking throughout the state at Realtor Association meetings, roundtables and radio interviews. He is working diligently to meet with Senators to educate them on SB 76. Visit the website, [RealReform76.com](http://RealReform76.com) to learn more. All members are welcome to attend the PAR meetings which are filled with a wealth of information.

*...continued on page 2*

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## Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® Installs New Officers and Presents Awards

Jeff Sicher, 2012 President was recognized for his years of service and leadership for the Association and was presented with an engraved mantle clock. Our 2013 President Peter Champagne, was recognized with a President's Gavel and Plaque that acknowledged both last year and his previous term as President in 1997. Peter is now the only member to serve as President two full years. In addition, outgoing members of the Board were recognized for their years of service on the Board. Those members included Dawn Hickernell, Gary Lando, Sharon Sapp, and Mike Klonis.

The final event of the evening was the presentation of the 2014 President's gavel to Vicki Venezia. Vicki graciously accepted her gavel and thanked her fellow board members for their support as we move forward into 2014. Leadership awards were followed by a brief presentation in recognition of some of the key RPAC achievements and contributors of 2013.

Kelly J. Pieja, Managing Director



Peter Champagne & Vicki Venezia



Peter Champagne, Vicki Venezia & PAR Representatives

...continued from page 1

## President's Pen

By Vicki Venezia

One of my goals this year is to be more transparent and improve communication among the Brokers and Members. The first step is distributing the Board of Directors minutes to the membership. Continue checking your inbox on the third Friday of each month. In January, RBAR launched a great new website offering municipal information, videos, articles, Property Lines, press releases, calendar of events, a search vehicle for open houses, social media sites and valuable tools to help your profession. I encourage you to check out all the great new features.

In 2013, the Realtors Political Action Committee showed a sizeable increase with membership investments and to continue those efforts in 2014, RBAR is pursuing 100% participation from all membership to invest in RPAC. It's an investment in your business! Be safe out there and stay warm!

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# R-BAR



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**Leslie Flocco**  
R-BAR  
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### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:

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Leslie Flocco  
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The Newsletter Committee is looking for more members or featured writers. Contact the R-BAR office if you are interested in finding out more information.

### IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

National Association of REALTORS® (NAR)  
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# Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® is very excited to announce a new addition to our staff...



Please welcome Leslie Flocco as our new Director of Membership and Communications.

Leslie and her husband, Bill, have been married for over 26 years and relocated to Spring Township in 2001 from Fairfield County, CT. They have two sons – Matthew, an entertainment host for the Disney Cruise Line, and Trevor, a senior at Temple University. They are Wilson graduates ('08 and '10), and are both Eagle Scouts.

Leslie brings a background in corporate administration, customer relations, event planning and book-keeping. Her varied job experience includes ad-

vertising & print production, fundraising and event planning for Save the Children Federation, as well as customer service and a guest-relations agent for Tauck World Discovery. She also worked as a book-keeper for a small title search firm in CT.

Her love of the Arts naturally drew her to volunteer at the Wilson schools where she helped to produce several of the musicals and assist with the planning of various music trips. On the weekends, Leslie visits her extended family in Connecticut and New Jersey or is busy "cleaning out" the house.

Now that her sons are almost out of the house, she is anxious to begin the next chapter of her life and is eager to jump in and be a part of our staff. Please join us in welcoming Leslie to our team!



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### UPCOMING EVENT:

*Dates subject to change.*

*Check [www.realestateinberks.com](http://www.realestateinberks.com) for up-to-date info! All events at R-BAR unless otherwise noted.*

**Spring Membership Breakfast**  
Thursday, March 20, 2014

**Annual Easter Egg Hunt**  
Saturday, April 12, 2014

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# Best of the Hotline!

By James L. Goldsmith, Esquire

**Q. My office practices dual agency, and my broker requires that when we take listings and enter buyer agency contracts, we do so as designated agents. When my buyer ultimately chooses to purchase a property listed with another broker, do I indicate on page one of the agreement that I am a buyer agent with, or without, designated agency?**

**A.** This has been a hot question since designated agency came to life in November of 1999 when agency amendments to the Real Estate Licensing and Registration Act took effect. An agent becomes “designated” when the broker and client agree that “their” agent will exclusively be their agent. The benefits of designated agency are most obvious in the in-house transaction where the listing agent and buyer agent retain their distinct agency relationships to the respective clients, and the broker takes on the mantle of dual agent. Meanwhile, the designated agents act as though it were a traditional cooperative transaction, with each agent maintaining the role of advocate for their respective client. It is a sensible relationship and assures that buyers and sellers get everything they expect from their agent.

The benefits of designated agency are much more subtle, and inapplicable at times in a cooperative transaction between two brokerages. It is not surprising that a buyer agent would check the box “Buyer Agent without Designated Agency.” I don’t have a problem with that.

But what if the agent checks “Buyer Agent with Designated Agency”? Perfectly acceptable, as well! Why do I think both agents have done the right thing when the two checkboxes seem mutually exclusive? And why would a buyer agent ever indicate that she was a designated agent in a cooperative transaction where designated agency is arguably not applicable? Checking designated agency in the cooperative transaction is oftentimes meaningless, but so what? It can’t possibly hurt because whether that agent considers herself a designated agent or not, she clearly is the buyer agent in the transaction and the designation (or mis-designation you consider it as such) as designated agent is of no consequence. None. Absolutely zero.

Further, there is some rationale for checking the designated agent box in the cooperative transaction. What if the cooperative transaction fails and the buyer and her agent renew their effort to find a home? And what if their efforts lead to an in-house transaction? Can the other agents in your office just stop being dual agent? At this point, the buyer agent clearly wants to be a designated agent in order to avoid dual agency as between the listing and selling agents. The thought, shared by some, is that agents are either “designated” as the exclusive agent for the client at the beginning of the relationship, - and none of the other agents in the office represent this client - or every agent in the office represents the client from the beginning, and dual agency, once bean, cannot be undone. I personally think this is stretching things a bit.

My point of view remains that it really doesn’t matter if the buyer agent identifies herself as a designated agent when submitting an offer to a cooperating company. I know some listing agents are quick to find fault with the offer, even when the nature of your relationship with your client is not at issue in the sale. But if it really causes the listing agent to freak out, then move the check mark to the box that says that you are a buyer agent without designated agency. Again, it really doesn’t matter.

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*Jim Goldsmith is an attorney with Caldwell & Kearns and serves as general counsel to PAR. A substantial portion of his practice is dedicated to providing advice and counsel to real estate licensees. He and his firm represent and defend real estate salespersons and brokers in civil lawsuits and licensing claims across the Commonwealth. Jim also defends REALTORS® in disciplinary hearings conducted by the Real Estate Commission.*

*He routinely counsels employers on employee relations issues and is one of the voices of the PAR Legal Hotline.*

*He may be reached at [www.realcompliance.com](http://www.realcompliance.com)*

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# Writing Contest

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The winners' article will be included in the next issue of Property Lines  
All submitted articles will be posted on the RBAR website

## Important information and guidelines for article submissions:



- 1) All articles must be Real Estate related and professional
- 2) All articles will be edited for content
- 3) Winner of contest will be invited to become a regular columnist/contributor to Property Lines
- 4) All articles must be written in Word format or emailed by April 1st to [leslief@realestateinberks.com](mailto:leslief@realestateinberks.com)
- 5) Please include your name, office/firm name and an email address

Looking for ideas ...

- Interview someone in the industry and write about them
- Write an article about someone significant to your career
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A few weeks ago I sent emails to quite a few agents asking for them to send me some “adventures”, and received only one response, but it was a great one! Thanks to Deb Eisenhower for replying to my email in which I asked for stories. This is very appropriate for underlining the many good-feeling events that were going on during the month of February – THONs, fund-raising tournaments, Valentines, Kindness days, etc.

This one, however, is a personal story of making the world a better place, and I have a feeling that quite a few of us can relate to this story by Debbi:

*“Have a story for you that should teach everyone that this business is not about the money we make...it is about the joy and thrill of helping people achieve their dreams.*

*“I had a property years ago listed in northwest Reading. A Spanish couple who lived across the street inquired about the property and explained that they lived in a rental and the landlord was about to raise the rent and they didn’t know what to do because the property had a leak in the bathroom and the landlord didn’t fix anything...*

*“They were collecting SSI for a disabled child...there were 5 kids between the ages of 21 and 2 and the parents in this 2 BR rental. My listing was much bigger. They did not have a savings account and needed their money to show in an account. Dad had gone to the bank but could not get anyone to help him. So...I went with him. I explained that we needed to open an account and we got the job done. They got their funds in an account and eventually bought the bigger home across the street.*

*“I will never forget the day that we went for the pre-settlement inspection and all the kids were told to go pick out their rooms...it was heartwarming and so rewarding...the smallest paycheck for the biggest return, in terms of knowing you truly helped someone achieve their dream.”*

Loved that story, Deb! She then followed it with a story that is almost the opposite...a miserable, obnoxious buyer, big property in an upscale suburban/rural subdivision...out-of-towner, relocating. Even his mortgage lender did not like dealing with him. Deb gave the details but I will just cut to the chase:

*“At pre-settlement, the cleaning lady agreed to let us into the property to accommodate his schedule (it was not on lockbox). After leaving the property, I made a comment stating how nice it was that she helped us in letting us in....his comment was... “oh, if I had known that was the cleaning lady, I would not have been so nice...”...I wanted to let him out of my car right there. I was furious! How dare he.”*

Obviously, there was no real joy in making that transaction happen. We have so many opportunities to improve our little corner of the world, and being real estate agents gives us many more than some other occupations. Keep up the good work.

Two other stories from a long time ago, but still very funny.

Sherry Hracho of Stewart Abstract told this story about a settlement. This one involved a bunch of attorneys, and they were all sitting around the table, very formal and business-like. Sherry, of course, had to be professional and she was “in charge”, handling all the paperwork and completing the settlement. Things were moving right along smoothly, but Sherry was also chewing gum. Just as all in the assembled group were looking at her, she opened her mouth to speak and her gum flew out and landed on the table. Sherry, cool and professional as ever, scooped up the gum, put it back in her mouth, and continued with the settlement.

Patti Smith related a story from many years ago that involved her real estate partner at the time, Larry Sneeringer. She and Larry were sitting with a property-owner, filling in a listing contract. I guess the light was too bright or something, and the man, who had one glass eye, must have been experiencing some difficulty with watering eyes. He reached up, took out his glass eye, and plunked it down on the table. I can just picture Patti’s face, looking at Larry.

Many times we get through these moments with calm and grace, and then laugh our heads off later.

Keep an eye out for a good spring market, if spring ever does arrive.

---Lorraine



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Or, you list a house and the owner, probably over the age of 45, reads the newspaper every day and insists that an ad in print will get the house sold.

Or, you get a new listing and you really do want to advertise it in print (maybe because of the last scenario?) and the thought of submitting the ad, and keeping up with it, overwhelms you to the point that you decide it would be more fun to go outside and shovel snow for the 14th time this year instead.

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# R-BAR Members Support The Children's Home of Reading



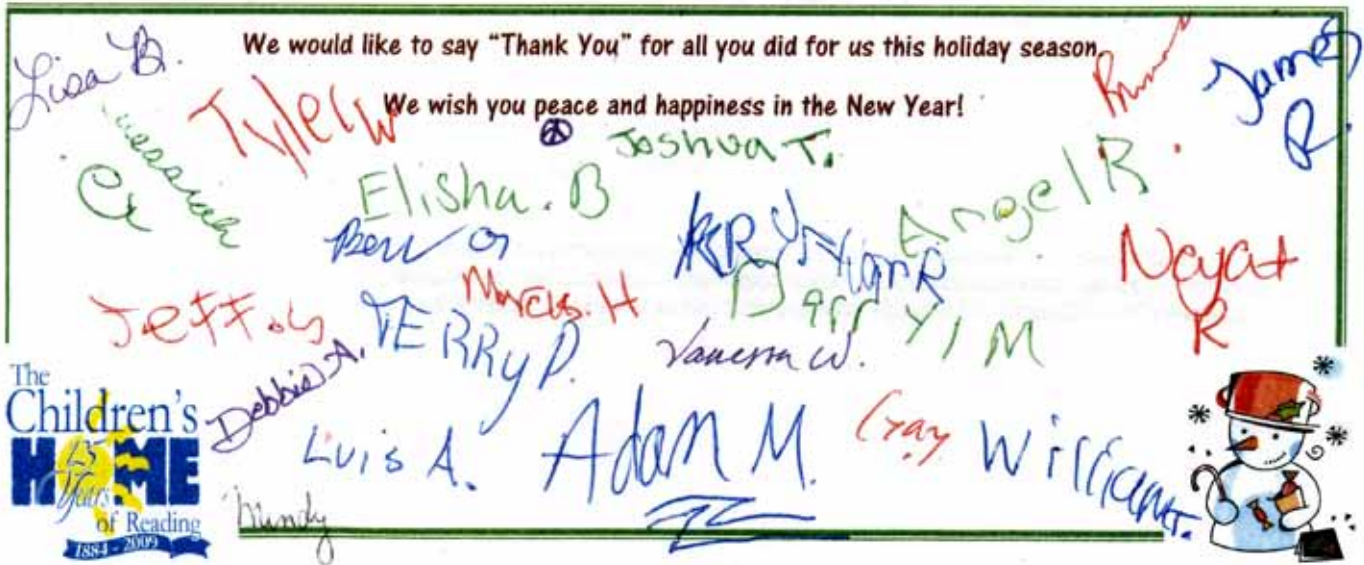
Every year the Members, their families and the staff of The Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® come together and help make the children's holiday a joyful one.

Gifts are unwrapped so we can then have volunteers deliver all the gifts to the Children's Home. Thank you to all who bought gifts and dropped them off at the Association Office.

This past holiday was another successful one! Each year we receive an envelope filled with Angel Tree tags from the Children's Home. Each tag is filled out with information and gift requests from each child. Which we then solicit all of you to take a tag and buy the requested gift and bring it to the Association Of-

It's a wonderful feeling when you know how happy you make them feel and how grateful they are. We look forward to doing the same this holiday season.

A big "thank you" to our volunteers who delivered the room full of gifts to the children's home.





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# An Update on Flood Insurance

*By Chuck Liedike, MPA, e-PRO® Government Affairs Director*



At this year's President's Installation, 2014 Pennsylvania Association of REALTORS® President Kim Skumanick highlighted our lobbying efforts towards flood insurance. This issue is prominent across the country, and it is important to many of our local members.

At the center of the issue is the 5-year reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program itself. Implementation problems threaten to challenge real estate transactions where flood insurance is required to obtain a mortgage. The program is important to real estate transactions across the country. 5.6 million home and business owners in 20,000 communities would not be able to obtain a mortgage or insurance to protect their properties against flooding without this program. Currently, the National Association of REALTORS®, all fifty state Associations of REALTORS® and all locals, including the Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® are supporting the following efforts: renewing and strengthening the long-term viability of the federal flood insurance program. Access to affordable flood insurance isn't seen in the private market, so REALTORS® continue to fight for long-term reauthorizations of the bill. If it didn't exist, property owners may go without insurance or depend on taxpayer-funded relief funds if they are available.

In July 2012, Congress passed legislation which reauthorized the National Flood Insurance Program for 5 years. REALTORS® and property owners across America were struggling with the short-term extensions and shutdowns that caused 40,000 home sales a month. Unfortunately, there were some systematic mistakes by FEMA for property buyers. Increased risk rates were excessive and inaccurate. NAR provided testimony citing several examples where the quoted rate exceeded the true cost by \$10,000-\$30,000 per year. Clearly, there were many concerns for property owners across the country.

On January 16, 2014, Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations Bill to fund the federal government through September 2014. The bill prohibits FEMA

from implementing future premium increases on grandfathered properties for nine months. It does not limit the increases triggered by a property sale that FEMA implemented on October 1, 2013.

On January 30, 2014, the Senate voted 67-32 to approve with bi-partisan support the "Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act" sponsored by Senators Menendez and Isakson. Companion legislation was introduced in the House. The bill calls for a 4-year "time-out" on inaccurate rate increases triggered by a property's sale or flood map update for the grandfathered properties. It also creates a flood insurance advocate within FEMA to investigate and assist property owners with questions over excessive rate quotes.

On February 5, 2014, FEMA gave guidance related to grandfathering for flood insurance. A section of the Biggert-Waters Reform Act eliminated the grandfathering provision in the National Flood Insurance Program. This guidance applies to FEMA's future plans for grandfathering and not to the skyrocketing rate increases being triggered by a property's sale which we're seeing around the county. Grandfathering provides property owners the ability to pay a lower flood insurance rate based on an older map, even if the map and the flood risk changes in the future. Biggert-Waters eliminated grandfathering and required FEMA to increase flood insurance premiums when the maps change, at a rate of 20 percent per year until the property pays the full actuarial rate.

Currently, we are advocating the House to take action immediately. Our membership will remain updated on this issue at all levels of your REALTOR membership. This issue remains a top priority for our local, state and national associations.



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**RPAC** has been a tremendous tool for our advocacy efforts over the past year. Real property tax reform has been discussed for decades, but we are now closer than we have ever been before. Further, we have also positioned our members with better advocacy locally. However, none of this would be possible without your efforts!

**We would like to thank the smaller-sized REALTOR® and Affiliate offices for 100% participation in RPAC:**

Associated Realty & Appraisals  
Berks Fire Water Restorations  
Berks Realty Services  
Faust Appraisals  
Firstrust Bank  
Fulton Mortgage Company  
Furniture Soup  
Home Builders Association of Berks County  
Interlace Communications  
Jamison Appraisal Services  
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The Winter's Circle Real Estate  
Waterstone Mortgage Corp.

**Next, we thank the following offices for DOUBLING or nearly doubling their RPAC investments over the past year:**

Bellairs Real Estate  
Century 21 Gold  
Century 21 Park Road

Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Keller Williams Realty Elite

**See page...17 for the \$99 Club and HIGHER RPAC Contributors for 2013**

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# Welcome New R-BAR Members

*The Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS® welcomes the following new members  
who recently completed Orientation and Induction on February 27, 2014.  
Congratulations and best of luck as a member of the  
R-BAR family!*



**LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER:**

*Jennifer Blankenbiller, Prudential Landis HomeSale Svs  
Carmen N. Chiumento, Keller Williams Realty Elite  
Mary M. Coble, Richard A. Zuber Realty  
Eliezer Corniel, Springer Realty Group  
Joshua Forry, RE/MAX of Reading  
Matthew C. Herneisen, Century 21 Park Road  
Allison Lawless, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Daniel Leibert, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Kim L. Marks, Keller Williams Realty Elite  
James R. McHale, Shuman Development Group  
Teaa M. Myer, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Denise Porcaro, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Robin Reed, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Melissa Stofka, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Jane M. Thomas, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Lisa Tillman, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services*



## Thank you to all of our \$99 Club and HIGHER RPAC Contributors for 2013!

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Eric Angstadt, Realty Wise  
Joanne Baggott, RE/MAX of Reading  
Thomas Bellairs, Bellairs Real Estate  
Debora Bensinger, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Bradley Bentz, RE/MAX of Reading  
Landon Bernheiser, RE/MAX of Reading  
Sandra Bieber, RE/MAX of Reading  
Jerry Buffa, Keller Williams Realty Elite  
Karen Burnish, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Jose Candelaria, RE/MAX of Reading  
Joseph Capellupo, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
Peter Champagne, Keller Williams Realty Elite  
Randy Corcoran, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services  
Jeffrey Crosby, Realty Wise  
Glenda DeLillo, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals  
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## ***Transfers of REALTOR® Membership:***

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Sean Murphy to  
Coldwell Banker Select Professionals

Jennifer Miller to  
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Shannon Fowler to  
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Ashley Freese to  
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Monica Button to  
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Peter Anthony to Century 21 Gold

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Lorri Perkins to Springer Realty Group

Irene Maurer to Stout Associates Realtors

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## ***Reactivations of REALTOR® Membership:***

Jamie Moore, Coldwell Banker Select Professionals

Lisha Rowe, Century 21 Park Road

## ***Name Changes of REALTOR® Membership:***

Heather Love (formally Heather Ebling)

Jaime Moore (formally Jaime Rothstein)

## ***REALTOR® Membership Drops:***

Gene Batz, Century 21 Gold

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Carla Speaks, Century 21 Gold

Todd Dojan, Prudential Landis HomeSale Services Group

Muriel Kramer, Century 21 Gold

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Joseph DiRosa, Springer Realty Group

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Kenneth Esterly, Realty Wise

Angie Rosario, Betances Realty

Carole Snyder, R.J. Snyder & Associates

Richard Snyder, R.J. Snyder & Associates

William Sears, Assist2Sell Smart Choice Realty

Elsie Seese, Stout Associates Realtors

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Heather Love, Century 21 Gold

Dana Keeney, Bold Realty

Jennifer Binasiewicz, E. Dianne Reed Associates

This article is submitted by George Spanier who is employed with PuroClean Emergency Restoration Service in Shillington. PuroClean is a franchise and their offices are all across the United States. This winter alone our crews have responded to 55 frozen pipe/water damage calls. Extreme cold temperatures have brought many challenges in January and February.

Our crews have worked many long hours taking care of the damage caused by frozen pipes. One thing for you to remember is that this is preventable and you should prepare your home for extreme cold temperatures before the cold season arises. PuroClean is an affiliate member of the Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS®.

# Freezing Pipes

Water is a unique substance. As with most materials, when water cools, its density increases and it settles to the bottom of a container. However, at 32° F, it expands and, therefore, its density decreases! This is why ice floats. This expansion increases the volume of water by about 11% and creates tremendous pressure on its container (between 50,000 and 114,000 psi). Such containers include metal and plastic pipes. No matter the strength of a material, expanding water will cause it to break.

Pipes are especially vulnerable to damage caused by expanding water. Water lines that freeze are usually those directly exposed to severe cold, such as outdoor hose bibs, swimming pool supply lines, or water sprinkler lines. In addition, pipes in unheated interior areas such as basements, crawl spaces, attics, garages, and kitchen cabinets, and those that run against exterior walls with little or no insulation are also susceptible to freezing.

A number of variables contribute to freeze damage: the type of building construction; the quality and quantity of insulation; the decline in temperature; the direction and force of wind; and other weather-related conditions are all contributing factors.

Buildings that are poorly designed and do not withstand severe weather sufficiently can contribute to their own damage. The type and age of the plumbing system is also a factor. Rust or corrosion weakens pipes, making leaks more likely to occur. When freeze-expansion occurs, corroded pipes will often split open. When thawing begins or when the water is turned back on, damage can occur.

During renovation of older homes, blown-in or foam insulation is sometimes added to wall cavities between interior and exterior wall surfaces and between studs. This process may actually insulate heat away from pipes adjacent to the exterior wall surfaces, making them more susceptible to freezing. Surprisingly, pipe freezing can be a particular problem in the warmer climates of southern states. In these areas, buildings may not be adequately constructed for cold weather conditions. Pipes often run through non-insulated or under-insulated

attics, crawl spaces, or walls. If the temperature drops below freezing for even a day, these pipes may freeze and break. In northern climates, many people go south for the winter. They "winterize" their homes by draining the plumbing system and adding antifreeze to plumbing fixtures. This is an excellent prevention procedure and greatly reduces the possibility of frozen pipes.

Draining of a plumbing system should be thorough and complete. If water lines sag or bow, there may be low spots that are difficult to drain completely. To be most effective, compressed air should be used to blow out the lines. If not properly done, some amount of water will remain in the low points of the lines that can freeze.

Damage generally occurs when the water supply is turned back on. Since most modern plumbing lines are inside walls hidden from sight, a freeze-caused leak is usually discovered only after water has damaged floors, carpet, walls, or ceilings. Occasionally, an occupant hears the sound of spraying water, but by then it may be too late. The leak has already caused some degree of damage.

Winter wind, snow, and ice storms frequently damage electric power lines and equipment, resulting in interruptions of electric power. Most heating systems depend on electricity, and when the power goes off, so does the heat. In severe cold weather, this can result in extensive freeze damage before power is restored.

*...continued  
on page 21*



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# FREEZING PIPES

...continued from page 19



Following are some tips to help prevent damage from frozen pipes when away from your home for more than a day or two:

1. Shut off the water supply and drain pipes or appliances.
2. Have someone you trust check your home about once per week if you are away.
3. Have emergency numbers handy such as a plumber, electrician, roofer, and PuroClean in case something does go wrong.
4. Protect pipes, fittings, and appliances against freezing with insulation or heat strips.
5. Have your HVAC system serviced before leaving if you will be away for an extended period of time.
6. Set your thermostat no lower than 55 degrees.
7. Before leaving turn off your water heater. (See owner's manual for procedures.)

8. Install storm windows and/or close shutters to keep in heat.

9. Clean gutters and downspouts to ensure proper water drainage.

10. Service sump pump to ensure proper operation. Adding a backup power source is prudent.

11. Unplug all nonessential electric appliances.

12. Inform local police if you will be out of town.

Regardless of the circumstances — frozen or leaking pipes or any water damage, fire/smoke damage, biohazard remediation or mold remediation — call your local PuroClean office, the Paramedics of Property Damage™. For all property damage situations, these professionals are standing by. They will mitigate the loss to prevent further damage and will then provide restoration services to return the property to a pre-loss condition as quickly as possible. All PuroClean offices have well-trained professional technicians who provide the latest state-of-the-science services to all property damaged from water, fire, smoke, mold, and other disasters.

## Remodeling can increase the value of a home... and a Website!

**We have done a complete overhaul on our website at Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS®.**

The Technology Committee had several goals in mind when we were working to get the new website up and running, but as always, our primary focus is our membership! We have structured the site so that it is visually appealing, search engine friendly, simple to navigate, and easy to update. One of the first things you will notice is that information that only our membership should have is now ONLY accessible by our Realtor members.

Gone are the days that a consumer could hop on our site and get municipal information. Now, that is only available to those professionals who know what to do with it (YOU!). We have also made it easier for our membership to find education opportunities and even added a reminder so when your schedule gets busy...you still get the info you need. Our Realtor members can also register for events right on our new site in a few simple clicks!

For the consumer, we have Open Houses for the whole county in one easy to use location. You may already know this, but as long as you have entered your open house in Trend by noon each Monday, it will appear on the web site

and in print – for FREE! The Berks Real Estate Weekly also offers consumers a way to search for homes, and to scroll through a digital version of our publication.

We hope you like the new site and we are looking forward to your feedback. The new system allows us to make changes easier than before, so we value your opinion on what to include. What would you like to see on the site? What would benefit the membership to have in one central location? Visit the web site [www.RealEstateInBerks.com](http://www.RealEstateInBerks.com) and let us know!

*Tavia Ritter, Member of the Technology Committee*



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# "Almost the Last Word"

by Brad Bentz

*You only need the light when it's burning low  
Only miss the sun when it starts to snow  
Only know you love her when you let her go*

I was standing in the funeral receiving line for a fellow Realtor who had recently passed. A father, grandfather and Realtor emeritus, I was proud to consider him a friend. Listening to all the anecdotes and sad warm wishes extended to the family members, I was struck by the irony that he would have enjoyed hearing them while he was alive. Indeed, it sometimes appears that the best things said about a person are after his demise.

Denis Fick was one of the few people that would always read my articles in this publication. Seeing me in the halls of our office he would engage me in dialog about what I had published. While he always had an opinion about what I had written, he was always respectful in allowing me mine. He offered me a different perspective that had not occurred to me while drafting the article. In many ways, I wish I had spoken to him before I had published the articles, it might have allowed me a more rounded perspective. Even now I know he has an opinion about this article ☺. I miss him.

Because he worked in the industry for 40 years, it would be fair to say Denis had a large influence in our real estate community. Sometimes I look at my own craft and picture it in my minds eye as a large puzzle, always adding pieces that fit daily. All of us contribute to each other's puzzle, perhaps adding a phrase of perspective we learned from another, and in a sense we all become a part of each other's identity. Denis contributed many pieces to my puzzle.

Regardless of how long we have been in the industry, all of us have at one time had a mentor, and if we continue in this profession, it is likely that we will also be someone's mentor. In a sense, we are all each other's mentor, influencing how each of us travel in business.

Perhaps it is time for us to celebrate each other and acknowledge the part we play in each other's business lives now. I remember a respected agent allowing me the per-

spective of pricing in the hard years of 2011, saying "The price of a home doesn't have to be competitive, it has to be compelling". Or my first mentor who hired me at 19 years of age telling me on my first day that Realtor has two syllables not three, or teaching me to always be a student of Real Estate.

So this is my shout out to my first broker, you are a large reason I am who I have become and you helped me shape the boarder of my puzzle. I thank you. To my editors who gently guide me with grace and perspective, I thank you. Indeed, to all with whom I have interacted over the last 30 years, I thank you for allowing me to absorb from you and build my business identity, I am very proud to be a part of this community.

I encourage you to reach out to those who have had an impact on your life, tell them their influence was and is appreciated. Perhaps it is better to celebrate them now rather than to reminisce about them later?

***You only know you were high when you're feeling low  
Only hate the road when you're missing home  
Only know you love her when you let her go***

***And you let her go.....***

***Passenger***



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