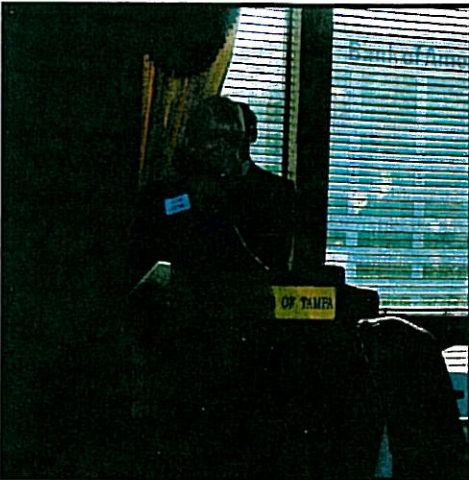


CREW Tampa Brings Life To Real Estate Lives

By Cristina Carelli
Pro-Ject International

When Ron Weaver, partner at Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Siterson Attorneys, reached out to colleagues to help him create a support network to assist out-of-work commercial real estate professionals (Rebounders) adversely affected by the fall out of the current economic recession, the credit and lending crisis and deterioration of the local real estate market, he called Linda Pearson, president of Diaz Pearson & Associates and past president of CREW Tampa Bay. He invited her to attend an information meeting and to bring friends and colleagues who are leaders in the industry.



Elaine Kennedy shares Rebounder success stories

Linda in turn reached out to her CREW network of past presidents, directors and members. In a graceful entrance, the CREW Tampa Bay Chapter made a solid impact at that very first meeting, as the conference room filled up with CREW members responding to Ron and Linda's call for help, and included: Brenda Dohring of The Dohring Group/Real Wired!, Elaine Kennedy, who recently accepted a job with USAsset Management & Disposition Corp., Amy Henrikson of The Murray Group, Pam Winchester and Mary Crino of Focus Real Estate Services, Jodi Wilkeson of WDA Design Group, Jan Chaffee of JC Commercial Brokerage, Lisa Collado of Tavernier Capital Partners, Nancy Phaneuf of NPR Development and Jeanette Flores of Gray Robinson.

This discovery meeting took place on De-



www.realestatelives.org

ember 6th, 2008 and by March 11th, 2009 only three months later, the official Real Estate Lives (REL) launch event took place at the University Club at One Tampa City Center with more than 150 in attendance. The capability for this fast track action is a direct result of the involvement, dedication and commitment of key CREW Tampa Bay members and other leading commercial real estate professions to spear-head and take-up leadership roles. More than fifty-percent of the leadership volunteers are CREW Tampa Bay members. Yet, despite facing their own personal hardships and also dealing with the negative effects of the decelerating commercial real estate market, these champions immediately stood up and offered not just their support but their hard-work and commitment to undertake and deliver the mission of Real Estate Lives for the public good without any payment or compensation.

I caught-up with Pam Winchester, Focus Real Estate Services, after a recent CREW meeting at the Center Club. Pam is the Volunteer Resource Navigator for Real Estate Lives and is usually the first person that a new Rebounder interacts with for immediate needs. Pam guides Rebounders and other Volunteers through the many volunteer resources that have joined forces with REL. Pam said, "Real Estate Lives is not just about getting a job. It's about resources, providing support and motivation. We put Rebounders in touch with food banks, financial counseling, recruiters, job training education and mentors. Our goal is to help them to re-build their lives and gain confidence to get back out there and reposition themselves in a new viable opportunity."

When I asked her what Real Estate Lives meant for her, she said, "It's about giving back. My decision was faith based. I have been blessed to be at a point in my life that I have the time to help others who are struggling in these bad times." Pam also recalls

the overwhelming response from CREW members and other industry colleagues at the initial stages. "At the first organization meeting everyone present was energized and sincerely committed to the mission of REL. I believe the commitment of CREW members is the reason for the quick success of Real Estate Lives."

Everyone who attend the REL Launch Event will remember being touched by the sincerity and compassion of Elaine Kennedy, who as champion of Employment Resources, started



Rosanne Versaggi relates her Rebounder story

crying as she read out the thank you letters received from Rebounders who, through their involvement in Real Estate Lives, had been successfully repositioned in new jobs. Standing there moved by her words, I knew that I had to speak to Elaine and get her story. I was able to track her down at her husband's (Jim Ruyle) architectural practice on W. Kennedy Blvd., late on a Wednesday evening, working away on new resumes and preparing for the REL meeting the next morning. As I sat down, she excitedly told me that she had traveled that day to Orlando for a job interview, and got back to her office to find another job offer in Tampa. She had, just then, put down the phone and accepted the position with Bill

Eshenbaugh's USAsset Management Corp and was starting work the following Monday! What perfect timing!

Back tracking to the first meeting in December 2008, it was Elaine who, still employed at GVA Advantis at the time, immediately raised her hand to volunteer when Ron asked for help to collect the resumes and build the job database. She recalls, "As I listened in the meeting, I sensed that more hardship was still to come and knew that I had to get involved." As soon as she started working with Rebounders, she began to hear their stories, and told me, "Cristina, these are real people! Not just the unemployment statistics resonating over the media airwaves and charts in newspapers. I was drawn into their lives and heard about their troubles, and I was touched. You can't believe what a difference it makes, just calling them back. Everyone is so grateful." In February 2009, Elaine was also retrenched and found herself working harder and longer on REL. "I realized that helping others was making me feel better, more positive and motivated about myself, and I truly believe that by helping in this way we will get out of this recession faster."

The volunteer leadership at REL includes, Brenda Dohring of The Dohring Group/RealWired! whose company has sponsored the website construction and worked at a fast and furious pace to get the website up and ready to provide valuable information, job leads, contacts and resources to Rebounders. Aubrey Hankins, American Surveying is involved in mentor coordination and matching up job seekers. Mary Crino of Focus Real Estate Services (Pam Winchester's business partner) is Special Events Coordinator. Jodi Wilkeson of WDA Design Group provides valuable assistance with building and editing the most vital tool for job seekers, the resume. And last but certainly not least, Amy Henriksen, The Murray Company, whose unenviable task is to reach out to the community to seek and coordinate volunteers.

Our gratitude, honor and respect does not only extend to the CREW Members, but also to industry leaders and all those who volunteer and contribute some of their time and effort to help with this worthy cause, and include: Dallas Whitaker of Grey Stone Equity - Sustainability Committee, Steve Ernst of CLW and Jack Brubaker of Andretta Marsh - Rebounder Connection (mentor program), Rob Barber of Broderick Realty - Marketing &

Communications, Margo Darlington of Roe Insurance and Melissa Parks of Volunteers of America - Health and Social Services, and Janet Stringfellow of Volunteers of America and Donna Matasinni of Aparicio-Levy Technical and Janet Stringfellow - Training and Education.



Ron Weaver thanks leadership volunteers at Real Estate Lives Launch Event

The goal of Real Estate Lives is to go out of business as soon as possible! This will happen when all Rebounders have been repositioned in their new careers and there is no longer a need for REL to exist. Ron's objective is to get 300 new jobs in Commercial Real Estate before the end of this year.

How are they doing so far, you ask?

As at April 22, 2009 there were 212 registered Rebounders on the database and over 30 success stories representing a success rate of 14% in the first month since March 6th 2009. There were 51 jobs on the database with 5 jobs exclusive to REL.

I attended the meeting on April 9th at Greater Tampa Association of Realtors and was overwhelmed at the attendance. The parking lot was full at 9:15 am and the Rebounder's session only begins at 10am. I counted 13 new Rebounders attending that meeting for the first time. As each one stood up and introduced themselves to the group, Ron welcomed each and everyone with a warm message of encouragement.

I enjoyed Steve Tombrink's humor and speech about his recent experiences with having lost his job and how he faced the harsh reality of getting a new one. After he shared the constructive and positive steps he took to secure a new position at Sembler Company, the group broke into workshops centered on individual needs. What a great experience! I walked away inspired and filled with hope at witnessing what humanity does best, people caring about each other.

Think about what can you do to help? At this critical time in our industry, when you reach out to someone in need this is when you will build the greatest relationships in your career. Visit the website: www.realestatelives.org to get information on the next meeting, attend the meetings and get involved.



THE Dohring Group **realwired!**

Diversified Commercial Real Estate
 Appraisal | Brokerage | Development | Technology
 518 North Tampa Street, Suite 300 | Tampa, Florida 33602
www.DohringGroup.com | www.RealWired.com
 813.223.9111 | 813.349.2700