



Evergreen Realty Associates

235 Worcester Road

PO Box 1137

Sterling, MA 01564

Tel: 978-422-8181

Fax: 978-422-8383

www.EvergreenRealty.com

Senior Real Estate Matters

Quarterly Newsletter – July 2010

Happy Intergenerational Households

By Elyse Umlauf-Garneau

Gail Niermeyer recently sold a house to a three-generation family that included a grandmother, a daughter, a granddaughter, and a married son with twins. And four dogs.

It's becoming more common to see multiple generations of people living under one roof, according to Niermeyer, a salesperson with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Naperville, Ill.

And statistics point to a rise in such living arrangements. A January 2010 Coldwell Banker Real Estate study found that in the prior 12 months, 37 percent of sales professionals who responded to the survey had seen an increase in homebuyers seeking property to house more than one generation of their family.

Almost 70 percent of respondents believe that economic conditions may cause greater demand for such homes over the next year.

And after a significant drop in multigenerational living arrangements between 1940 and 1980, the Pew Research Center (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/752-multi-generational-families.pdf>) is seeing a trend reversal.

In 2008, an estimated 49 million Americans (16 percent of the total U.S. population) lived in a family household that contained at least two

adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation. In 1980, this figure was just 28 million, or 12 percent of the population, according to Pew.

A tough economy, more elderly parents needing care, a larger immigrant population and a rise in the first-time marriage age all are contributing to the change.

For some, it just comes down to family bonds. "Many want their children to know their grandparents and have a sense of family," observes Niermeyer.

If you're thinking of such an arrangement for your family, here are some real estate considerations:

- ❖ One-floor ranch homes with separate entrances make it easier for elderly residents to get in and out of the house, and a separate entrance offers them some privacy. Properties later can be modified with ramps to accommodate aging in place.
- ❖ Multilevel properties retrofitted with elevators can transform a multi-story house into an accessible option for seniors.
- ❖ Lower levels that can be converted to living areas with kitchenettes deliver privacy and autonomy for younger and older family members.
- ❖ Opening walls between bedrooms can accommodate a suite with sitting and sleeping areas for seniors.

- ❖ Coach houses are ideal both for boomerang college students or seniors. They also can house caretakers.
- ❖ Renting a house for a senior in a child's neighborhood has become an appealing option for some, says Niermeyer.

Observers do warn that such living arrangements can be rife with conflict. "Practicing effective communication principles and utilizing a family meeting format, the three Rs--rules, roles and resources--need to be ironed out before the blending of generations occur," comments Richard Horowitz, a New Jersey family and relationship coach (www.GrowingGreatRelationships.com), who gives seminars on effective intergenerational households.

His rules of thumb include:

- ❖ Rules--How will we handle disciplining kids, chores, and the use of computers and other media devices?
- ❖ Roles--How are decisions made? Who's in charge of what? How are chores assigned and carried out?
- ❖ Resources--Who pays and how much? What else non-monetarily can individuals contribute?

Niermeyer notes that it can be wonderful to have an entire family living together. "For the senior, it can be a source of pride that they've raised a loving caring family that wants to be together. You just have to make a pledge that it's going to work."

Oil spill scams

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a warning (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt058.shtm>) about scam artists who may be

angling to take advantage of consumers affected by the oil spill in Louisiana.

The FTC says scammers likely will use multiple forms of contact, including e-mail, phone, websites, and in-person visits, to solicit money, pose as insurance adjusters, or offer phony services.

"Some may claim they're raising money for environmental causes or offer fraudulent services – like remediation services – related to the oil spill. Others may claim they can expedite loss claims for a fee. Still others may knock on your door and talk about placing booms or checking for oil on your property," says the alert.

Some FTC guidelines:

- ❖ ESIS, BP's authorized claims administrator, doesn't charge fees to process claims, nor will the government and authorized adjusters ask for fees to expedite services. If you make a claim, you are assigned a claims number through the BP hotline (800-440-0858), and an authorized ESIS adjuster will contact you to verify and process claims.
- ❖ Get proper legal and financial advice before signing any waivers of liability.
- ❖ Don't hire contractors asking for up-front payments.
- ❖ Before donating to charities, check a charity's legitimacy at <http://www.bbb.org/us/charity>, the Better Business Bureau's website. For information on the warning signs of a charity scam, see <http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud>

- ❖ Avoid job or volunteer positions requiring you to pay a fee before the job begins.

For oil spill updates, search for "Gulf Oil Spill" at usa.gov. If you suspect that someone is committing fraud related to the oil spill, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud at 866-720-5721.

Distracted driving dangers

Ever had a near-miss on the road? You're not alone.

Accidents due to distracted drivers have spiked, and teens aren't the only culprits. A study (<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Cell-Phone-Distractions.aspx?r=1>) by Pew Internet & American Life Project found that 47 percent of texting adults say they have sent or read a text message while driving.

If you're tempted to text, talk on cell phones or apply makeup while driving, consider this sobering statistic.

The National High Traffic Safety Administration estimates that in 2008, 5,870 people lost their lives and another 515,000 were injured in police-reported crashes in which one form of distraction was noted on the crash report.

If you're still tempted to text and drive or you want to convince someone to stop driving distractedly, there's no shortage of data.

For safety information see:

<http://www.distraction.gov>

<http://www.oprah.com/packages/no-phone-zone.html>

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Distracted>

Real Estate Matters: News & Issues for the Mature Market

Evergreen Realty Associates

235 Worcester Road

PO Box 1137

Sterling, MA 01564

Judy Reynolds, CRB, CRS, e-Pro

