

Mobile Home Park and Manufactured Home Community Newsletter

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Joanne M. Stevens

For more information on
**LISTINGS OF PARKS &
COMMUNITIES**

Visit us at

www.JoanneMStevens.com
joannestevens@iowarealty.com

Office: 319.378.6818
Direct: 319.378.6786
Fax: 319.365.9833

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CREATING MEMORABLE LIVING PLACES

How About A Good Cup Of Coffee

Sandra Kulli (www.sandrakulli.com) spoke at The Urban Land Institute annual meeting in San Francisco last November. She is a specialist in the business of creating memorable living places. I wanted to hear what Sandra had to say to see if there might be something to learn and apply to Manufactured Home Communities. As a presenter, she is visionary but pragmatic, high energy and inspiring to listen to. A plus about Sandra is that while she has some experience with manufactured homes (she consulted for Fleetwood during the 1990's) and communities, she has had a successful career as a site-built housing consultant in many US markets with many different housing developments and in all kinds of markets, including down markets. About down markets, she says that homes still sell but that you have to really explain to people how their lives will be better if they move. In a down market, people are more inclined to stay put.

One of the things that struck me during her presentation in San Francisco was her insistence that if you are going to sell homes you need a kitchen and a place for prospects to eat. Selling homes is about many things, one of which is to sit with the customer, spend time with them, get to know them and understand what is on their mind. She described an elaborate (and expensive sounding) dinner that resulted in a quick sell out in a high end housing development for a consulting gig of hers. In the interview that follows, Sandra illustrates how the same principle can be applied to a community on a low cost scale. Sandra is all about big picture planning, team building, creating demand for the housing product and creating memorable places in which to live.

Joanne Stevens is a specialist in consulting and brokering mobile home parks and land lease communities throughout the U.S. With her 20 years of experience in developing, zoning, owning, retailing, managing, turning around and brokering parks, she can enhance your decision to sell your property.

For a FREE PROPOSAL on your consulting needs or a FREE MARKET ANALYSIS on the value of your park or community, contact Joanne Stevens at:

319-378-6785 (office)
319-365-9833 (fax)
joannestevens@joannemstevens.com

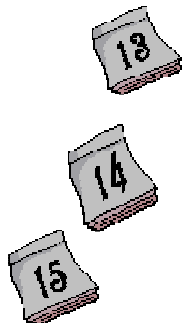
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MHI

(Manufactured Housing Institute) annual Las Vegas **Congress & Expo** **April 13, 14, 15**

Tuesday, April 13 is a day long community owners and managers forum on marketing, filling sites and more. On Wednesday, April 14 Jim Clayton, founder of Clayton Homes, is the keynote speaker. For more information and to register, go to www.congressandexpo.com or call 1-703-558-0400



Continued from Page 1... Sandra Kulli Interview

Q. Manufactured housing and manufactured home communities have never recovered from our own sub-prime housing debacle that began in the late 1990's. How can we community owners rebuild the trust with our current and prospective customers so that they will want to stay in the communities or move into a community?

A. Manufactured housing is the ultimate freedom for the homeowner. It's the chance to live independently and have freedom from living with relatives and friends. In Levittown after World War II the families that bought houses there were not put off by the fact that every house was the same. They were so excited to own their own homes and not live with in-laws. They felt they were taking a huge step forward in making better lives. Manufactured housing is a better housing product to sell, in a way, than say luxury site-built homes. Manufactured homes are one of the coolest things to sell because the buyers are so grateful to have a home of their own.

Q. How was your experience of working with a manufacturer of manufactured homes?

A. The buyers were thrilled to be able to buy a manufactured home. The financing was ridiculous! It penalized people for being poor.

Q. What about food and kitchens and selling homes?

A. Manufactured home communities have a wonderful sense of community. It's as good or maybe better than expensive housing developments. People are joined together by their home ownership and the community.

Some ideas for selling homes, stabilizing current occupancy and getting referrals from residents are to have potlucks and invite prospective homebuyer/residents. That way the prospect gets to hear about why residents love living in the community, how they were uncertain at first but now are happy that they bought in the community.

Any events where residents and/or prospects can get together in the community building and share recipes, cook, have coffee will help warm up the home buyer prospect. Find out about bringing a farmer's market to the community.

Look for ways to celebrate life. Think like a kindergarten teacher; they are always celebrating something. A couple of ideas are:

✓ Once a month have a birthday party for all the kids with a birthday that month. Have cake, balloons, games.

✓ Have a potluck once a month and have desserts or cake to celebrate the adult's birthdays for that month.

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Interest Rate Watch

“Economic growth will continue, inflation will rise and the Federal Reserve...will begin to withdraw liquidity from capital markets...For us the outlook of this is again for higher rates...”
from Economics Group— Wells Fargo Securities, February 5, 2010

Q. What is your mantra?

A. Smile and be happy! You can measure the economic environment of a home sales center by the smiles. If the owner is depressed (because of lack of sales) the salespeople will be depressed. Be happy with the customers even when sales are down. Prospects respond to that. Give them the permission to buy a home and help them get through the process.

Q. What did you do with housing developments that had a negative image or negative internal energy?

A. I repositioned a development. You have to change the feeling of the community. It's about respecting the homeowners and home buyers. If you can get the sales associates to think of the sales center as their stores and that they have to create the energy and the environment for something to happen, that is huge. I used to give salespeople \$200 a week to create something special to get people to come to the sales center. Visit an Apple store and see how they do it. Use your community room as your sales center. Bring in speakers or teachers from a local college. People always want to learn more. The sales center should be more than just making the sale.

Q. What traits are needed to sell homes successfully?

A.

- √ Compassion
- √ Desire to help people.
- √ Desire to help people make a difficult decision so the homebuyer can move on in their lives.
- √ Sense of humor.
- √ Have to love what you're doing.
- √ Believe that you're helping people reach their goals.
- √ Sense of purpose
- √ Sense of getting the job done.

I once interviewed a man who, after visiting a sales center, said he felt like a total loser. Bring people's dignity back. This is about fulfilling people's dreams. Sales people and community owners need to think and feel that the homebuyers' lives will be better if they buy a manufactured home in a community. It's always about the customer.

**Apartments of the Future:
What Will Multi-family Look Like in a Decade?**

At a recent Multi-family Conference, experts predict the minimizing of apartment square footage. Expect a studio to be 300 to 400 square feet, a one bedroom under 700 square feet, a two bedroom, two bath to be slightly over 900 square feet and a three bedroom, two bath to be less than 1,000 square feet. This makes manufactured housing seem downright spacious. It could be that manufactured homes will shrink in size due to rising building costs. The reasons for the smaller apartments are higher building costs but also local officials requiring higher density.

Note: Ask prospects their current square footage and illustrate how they will have more space.
Ask: "How would you use the extra space"?



*Do you know
anyone that
should be
receiving this
newsletter?
Please call or
e-mail me with
their contact
information and
I'll be glad to
add them.*

**Nutrition Labels and
Manufactured Homes**

Americans are getting better at reading the nutrition labels on packages according to nutritionists. Making better and healthier food choices is becoming more important to more people. The nutrition labels have helped raise awareness in Americans and make them more knowledgeable consumers. Hopefully, the end result is healthier people.

What if we had HOME labels in our new and pre-owned homes that showed the cost to operate the home:

- Taxes \$___ per month

- Homeowners insurance \$__ per mo.
- Garbage \$___ per mo.
- Water \$___ per mo.
- Sewer \$___ per mo.
- Utilities \$___ per mo.

(Your local utility company may be able to help you.)

It's all about educating the customer.

Hand-outs

The National Association of Realtors has studied the effect of giving the prospect a hand-out at open house, and has found that if the prospect has a hand-out, they are more likely to remember the home and go back for a second and third look. It's a help in the home purchase process.

FREE REPORT!

#8014
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