

# Gulfshore Life

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Realty Check  
Maxine Ginsberg

While the ripple effect of the foreclosure mess continues to expand across Southwest Florida, one Fort Myers attorney is trying to stem the flow.

"Homeowners have got to act," says Kevin F. Jursinski, who is board certified in real estate law. "According to a study reported in USA Today, a survey of 14,000 cases showed that when positive action was taken, resolution of mortgage foreclosure problems was achieved 50 percent of the time."

The Fort Myers attorney lists shame, depression, ignorance, intimidation and alienation as some of the reasons homeowners fail to act on their own behalf. He also mentions a Freddie Mac study indicating that the success rate for resolving mortgage issues drops with the corresponding amount of time the loan is in default.

"If no action is taken to address a default, the prospects of successfully resolving the mortgage default drops to 3 percent after 90 days, or a 97 percent failure rate," he says. "The lesson: Take a proactive approach early."

In an article he wrote for the January issue of the Lee County Bar Association's *Res Gestae*, he cites the Florida Bar Association-sponsored FLASH program for homeowners who can't afford a lawyer, the Homeownership Resource Center and the Consumer Credit Counseling Service.

"There are experienced attorneys who can help negotiate a mortgage resolution, and lenders have people in their loss mitigation departments to help find solutions," he says. "Trouble is, many homeowners have no idea how the foreclosure process works. Some think they have to be out of their home when they get the first summons to a hearing."

Jursinski says a mediation session, where the borrower sits down with the lender and a mediator, could result in fewer foreclosures and more payback for lenders. His firm is resolving many cases that way, he states.

During the last session, Jursinski proposed legislation through local legislators that would get homeowners and their lenders into mediation, a process he says has an 80 to 90 percent success rate in Florida. The bill was stalled in committee, he suspects due to the banking lobby. "Even though a speedy resolution would put more money in their pockets than a lengthy foreclosure and resale, it seems they don't want to surrender their control," he says.

Better legislation and education, he says, could stop homeowners from surrendering what

might  
be salvaged.

## MODELS WE LOVE

The Maison Nouveau at Amarone in Mediterra is aptly named, considering this model has been remodeled. Nelson Bordeau, of Bordeaux Homes, took advantage of the quiet season to update the four-bedroom, four-and-a-half bath home in a style he calls Southwest Florida elegance.

"We wanted a home that had great flow, and something that someone could call home from the minute they walked in," he says. "Crystal chandeliers are one expression of the elegance, and our earthy colors help convey the added warmth we were seeking."

A coffered-ceiling kitchen with custom-glazed cabinetry and solid granite tops is a major attraction of the 5,440-total-square-foot model, as is a spectacular wood and leather sleigh bed in the master suite. The family room's detailed ceiling has an earth-tone, woven-grass cloth paper treatment, and the neutral backdrop of warm, rich, earth-tone walls—set off with ice white marble flooring splashed with walnut-colored marble inlays—complements the warm browns and grays of the solid hardwood furniture. "People feel at home here," Bordeau says. The Maison Nouveau is priced at \$2,295,000, furnished.

A wraparound balcony that provides stunning views of the Caloosahatchee River and the Fort Myers skyline is one of two balconies and one of many exceptional features built into the 2,026-square-foot Aquarius model at North Star Yacht Club. While the design of the model's floor plan, which includes three bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths, makes the most of the outside views, at the same time it delivers a sophisticated, contemporary ambiance complete with coastal accents and rich-toned furniture. A color scheme of Dijon mustard, cream and chocolate brown adds distinctive personality to this high-rise home. Prices for homes in the twin-tower complex start at \$307,900.

Buy a house, go on a cruise!

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch, but Ginny Lee is promoting her Naples real estate business by offering a free ride. A seven-day boat ride that is, on a cruise ship going to the Caribbean or the Mexican Riviera, among other destinations. The longtime upscale market player says she has a healthy respect for Internet marketing.

"I do a lot of online marketing for my business, Premiere Plus Realty," she explains, "and a lot of exploring, too. When I discovered this option to expand my brand recognition, I decided to pursue it."

Vacation certificates are transacted through a marketing company and require some fees and taxes, but

Lee says she's encouraged by positive feedback she's seen about the company's service.

"Cruise lines don't like empty cabins, and hotels don't want empty rooms," she says. "They're open to arrangements that could benefit sponsors and do benefit users."

Offers aren't limited to homebuyers. "Other folks who use the offer might remember me when the time comes for them to buy a new home or sell their existing one," she says.

And colleagues could brighten the picture. "If realtors get excited about the trips, my sellers might get more showings," she says.

Lee's online giveaways, which she provides through a monthly membership fee, include free gasoline certificates, trips to Florida to encourage buyers, and airline and resort deals. The cruise freebie entitles users to inside cabins, but they can upgrade to fancier digs at their own expense. And the lunches aren't free, nor are any meals. Those go on the vacationers' tabs. Jumping off points include Miami, Tampa, Los Angeles and New York. Lee estimates that, depending on the user's choice, some giveaways could be worth as much as \$2,000.

#### NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH- KEY MARCO

In addition to pristine acreage and estate homes, Marco Island's Key Marco boasts one of Southwest Florida's most colorful pasts and unusual topographical personalities. Capt. John Horr, a Key West and state official, built a tabby mortar house on an island he bought that was 46 feet above sea level. The elevation results from Calusa shell mounds said to date from 4,000 years ago. Horr had a pineapple plantation on the island and built his home in 1877. With the advent of the Key Marco development in the late 1990s, homeowners craving peerless water views, a private marina and seclusion with nearby conveniences have chosen to make its 534 acres home.

Number of homes and lots: 134

Sales January 2006 to December 2007: one home, three lots Price range: \$1,450,000 to \$2.7 million

Sales January 2008 to December 2008: one home, two lots

Price range: \$450,000 to \$1,750,000

On the market: The Hamilton, left, is a West Indies-style, new, two-story home with broad views of Barfield Bay and multiple balconies. Hand-carved mahogany floors lead to a second floor with two suites and a casual room. There's a pool, lanai with fireplace, summer kitchen and boat dock. Lura Jones, owner/broker of Amerivest Realty South, says the unfurnished price for the 5,776 air-conditioned square-foot home is \$5,995,000.

Recent sale: In January 2008, Peggy Forrester of Prudential Florida WCI Realty sold a 3,083-square-foot estate home with 4,066 total square feet, four bedrooms, five full baths and two family rooms, one on the second floor. Beautiful water views helped close the sale at \$1,750,000, she says. MLS records show the former owner paid \$350,000 for the lot in 1999 and built the house in 2001.

For more local real estate news, read *Gulfshore Life's* bimonthly blog "The Housing Game"

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