

Realtors establish legacy at Aviara Real Estate

By Amy Stroba
Special Sections writer

There is no greater concept in business, real estate or other, than for professionals to perform with integrity and ethics.

And though, while it is agreed that there are many in the industry who speak the words "integrity" and "ethics," broker of record at Aviara Real Estate, Hugh Holbert says it directly. "There are people who talk and preach ethics and those who 'practice' ethics," he said.

His statement met with enthusiastic agreement by the shareholders of Aviara who gathered Tuesday to talk about the company and the revolutionary new approach to real estate it offers to industry professionals and their clients.

At Aviara Real Estate top-producing teams — or business units — from throughout the Conejo Valley have joined forces to form a real estate company where service, integrity and high ethical standards and equal authority are the cornerstone.

Meeting with the many of the owners of the new company in Westlake Village, the introductions read like a copy of Who's Who in Conejo Valley real estate.

With all shareholders having an equal voice, the company formed in March of 2004 and recently moved into its office spaces at 2555 Townsgate Road in Westlake Village. "These are movers and shakers," said Angie Wright, who along with her husband Ed, are co-founders of Regency Real Estate in Mission Viejo — the model for the innovative company.

The concept was first introduced to Joy and Allen Reznick, Bill and Sandy Humphrey, Mike and Kim Plisky and Geoff Baker by the Wrights at an informational gathering one weekend early last year. It focused on setting a new standard for professionalism in the real estate industry and offering control of one's future.

The model was developed in Orange County in 1994 at the height of the area's bankruptcy woes and depressed real estate market. From its beginning, the company has offered dividends all 10 years and has not experienced any turnover within the teams.

Everyone has a voice at Aviara Real Estate. "The board of directors are chosen from the shareholders," said Geoff Baker, currently one of 19 shareholders of the company. They govern by committee — 20 in all — and it seems to be working. There is no mandatory assignments. Each agent works on committees in their area of interest.

The leadership by committee at Aviara works because of the quality agents and their common thread — integrity — and the importance of working among colleagues who's ethics are exemplary.

Before signing on, Holbert, the company's broker of record, wouldn't even talk to anyone about joining until he saw the list of shareholders. Also, an equal owner, his background is diverse, having experienced a number of aspects to the real estate industry throughout the years.

Ownership is by invitation only. When someone is invited to join, all shareholders have to agree. "Our reputation in the community is very important," said Sandy Humphrey of The Humphrey Team.

Among the qualities needed to be seriously considered as a shareholder is being a role model in the real estate community, possess and practice exemplary ethics and have an established level of production.

Also notable, three of the shareholders at Aviara are the past, current and future presidents of the Conejo Valley Association of Realtors.

"These are people who have gone out of their way to contribute leadership and give back to the real estate community," said Kim Plisky of Mike and Kim Plisky and Associates.

At its completion, Aviara Real Estate will have 33 shareholders, however, individual business units act autonomous as to how business is done and can grow.

"We like the idea of having control over our clients from the moment they walk through the door — unlike the way business is done at some other companies," Humphrey said.

Many agents who have been in the industry for



Members of Aviara Real Estate in Westlake Village have a common thread — the desire to share information and work among professional and ethical colleagues, totally enjoying doing what they do on behalf of their clients and the industry.



Each business unit at Aviara Real Estate is set up to its personal preference. At left, shareholders Sandy Humphrey and Terry Moerler plan a future seminar. Above, Joy Reznick shows off the signage that adds an upscale, professional flair to the Reznick Team's offices.

awhile have been at companies where they come to work one day and there is a new name and owners. As a shareholder of Aviara, they can assure they have a say in their professional futures. Many also see this as a chance to build a legacy.

The Pliskys are among those who have experienced a company that has folded and sold to a larger entity. "We had no say in it. We were simply part of the commodity being acquired," Plisky said. At Aviara they have a legacy they can pass forward. "It's part of your portfolio — who you are and what you've created."

Members of Aviara Real Estate say they truly love what they do and decisions to leave their former companies were primarily because of the great business opportunity Aviara provided.

Terry Moerler is among those who was content with her former company.

She said when she was first approached with the idea of leaving, she laughed and said "Why would I want to do that?"

However, for Moerler and many shareholders like her, she often wondered "what if ..."

"I had always said the ultimate for me professionally would be to go around to other real estate companies and work with top professionals — where the synergy and camaraderie with coworkers was good, but I could still maintain my individuality," Moerler said. "At the time, it didn't sound very realistic."

As a shareholder of Aviara her dream has come true. "I can spend the rest of my life here and never retire," she said.

Realtor Jim Ferguson and his wife Chris agree. "I've been waiting for a company like this for 20 years," he said. All were quick to add that everyday is a joy to come to work, primarily because they work with those who truly love what they do.

Naturally, there has been skeptics among industry peers.

With this many top-producers in one place, the perception from the real estate community was that too many egos would clash. It's been just the opposite.

Humphrey prefers to believe their peers are "skeptically curious." "I think they want us to succeed," she said.

"Each of us are tops in our own right but different in our approach, opposed to 'do it this way at this time' like that of corporate real estate offices," Kim said. "We appreciate the differences among one another."

Perhaps another reason egos have not been an issue is because they do not compete for awards. "What they do is encourage one another," Ed Wright said.

The agents combine their experience, share their knowledge, expertise and compassion for the real estate industry and encourage one another.

Aviara Real Estate is celebrating the grand opening of its office Wednesday for members of the Conejo Valley Real Estate Community.

"This is a wonderful location," Humphrey said. "It was very carefully chosen and thought-out with every agent having their own space."

Just outside of the reception area is The Aviara Room which features a large meeting space and kitchenette, and available to any associate of the company.

"Most brokerages don't have a large meeting room like this," Humphrey says. It's a place to gather and share ideas. It is here Aviara shareholders present seminars open to members of the real estate industry.

Offices are set up at the request of each business unit with elegant built-in cherry

cabinetry and desks. "And the spaces are permanent," says Realtor Chuck Weiland. Elegant signage for each business unit also adds to the professionalism and individuality of each group.

"There is a lot of knowledge in this company and we're not afraid to share it." Rebecca Griffin said. "We all sell real estate but we all do it differently."

"Here, you want to share how you do business," Plisky said.

"It's a family," Holbert said.

New shareholders to Aviara are CC and Jeff Kinney. "At other companies we are top performers but here there is a feeling that there is no limit of what we can accomplish," CC said.

What do all members of Aviara Real Estate agree on? "We have fun here."

Clients and industry members alike have benefited and people are catching on.

Many have noticed their clients think much more of them — they are more loyal.

Shareholders say they are able to find their clients homes much quicker working among the caliber of people they do at Aviara. "Hire one and you get the strength of all," Maria Powell said.

"In a multiple-offer arena for a no-money down we got the deal specifically because they know working with an Aviara agent, they can be sure all facets of the transaction will come together smoothly — with no surprises," Joy Reznick said.

Oh, and the name? "It's pronounced 'Ah vee air ah,'" Griffin said, breathing out each syllable. Don't bother finding its meaning, said Allen Reznick. "It sounds pleasant and professional — just a nice name," he said.

For more information about Aviara Real Estate, call 418-2500.