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Hill's New England Condominium magazine assists community associations fill their needs

November 27, 2007 - Spotlights

Five years ago, Alyce Hill looked at the New England landscape, dotted with new condominium developments, and decided the time had arrived to produce a magazine tailored to the lifestyle of the owners of those new homes.

There are, she knew, dozens of publications geared to homeowners. But condominium owners are a unique crowd: They own their homes, but they chose condominium living for its maintenance-free lifestyle. They own their homes, but they share common areas of the property with other owners. They own their homes, but their community is governed by a homeowner board and documents containing rules and regulations covering everything from the color of a front door to holiday decorations.

In just a decade or so, thousands of new owners had begun experiencing the condominium lifestyle for the first time. Most condo buyers, Hill knew, are unaware of the ins and outs of community association living.

But Hill was in a unique position to understand the subtleties of condo life. As a former executive director of the New England and New Hampshire chapters of the Community Associations Institute (CAI), an educational and research organization, she had more than a decade of experience with community governance, and extensive contacts with experts in the community association industry. And as publisher of real-estate publications, including "Condos Plus" and "Welcome Home, Central New England", as well as the official magazines of the New England, New Hampshire, Connecticut, western New York and southern New York chapters of CAI, over a period of 25 years she had gathered a wealth of knowledge about community associations.

In January, 2003 she launched New England Condominium magazine, a monthly publication designed to help new owners, as well as board members, managers and other industry professionals enjoy all the benefits of community association living. From the importance of reserve accounts to tips on upgrading older communities to become more energy-efficient, the magazine's articles are focused on this increasingly-popular choice of homes.

Unlike a trade magazine geared to only industry professionals, New England Condominium is reaching thousands of homeowners in associations throughout the region with up to date information and a fresh outlook on the condominium scene. The magazine regularly showcases new properties, explores cutting-edge topics such as "green" buildings, and introduces homeowners and board members to both established and new players in the industry.

Associations looking for vendors and professional service providers know that in the pages of New England Condominium, they'll find solid information from industry pros and a constantly-growing field of vendors who can meet the full range of condominium needs.

"It's been estimated that one in six homes being built today is in a community association setting,"

Hill said. "Young people are buying condos as their first homes, and baby boomers are moving into over-55 communities because they love the maintenance-free lifestyle, after taking care of their own property for decades. They want to be able to travel, and not worry about leaving their homes untended. They want to live in attractive, safe communities and enjoy amenities like golf courses and fitness centers.

"But community association living does represent a different lifestyle, and there are important concepts that homeowners and home-buyers need to understand," she said.

"We are excited that many newcomers in this market have turned to us to help brand their business and reach the folks who make the decisions at community associations throughout New England," Hill said. "All trustees and board members have a fiduciary responsibility that cannot be taken lightly, and by reading our magazine, they not only learn about the steps they need to be taking to fulfill that responsibility, but they also 'meet' many of the people who can provide the specialized services they need." Because New England Condominium is an independent, consumer magazine, it can offer unbiased information from a broad spectrum of industry professionals and observers.

The magazine is enjoyed by industry professionals, from architects to developers and managers, who want to keep on top of news and also introduce their communities to the expanding base of subscribers.

When her industry contacts made her aware of a growing need for skilled workers among the companies that maintain condominium communities, Hill joined forces with Bridgewater engineer Ralph Noblin, P.E., to create a workshop and career fair for construction trade students at central Mass. technical schools.

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