



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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Networking opportunities and prof'l. development are common goals of WCR and CREW

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On May 12, 1908, 120 founding members joined together to form the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges. The mission of the organization was "to unite the real estate men of America for the purpose of effectively exerting a combined influence upon matters affecting real estate interests."

Interestingly, the mission statement of the founding body of the National Association of Realtors (NAR), drafted over 100 years ago, specifically recognizes the unification of men. Were they implying the exclusion of women?

Digging a little deeper, history reveals women have always played an important role in the real estate industry. According to information compiled by the NAR, in the early days women factored quite predominantly in the real estate profession, often providing necessary office and clerical skills. And, by 1880 women begin to move into the roles of agent and broker, albeit, at a very slow rate.

A hundred years later, the demographics tell a much different story. According to a survey compiled recently by the NAR 59% of Realtors are women. On average, 62% of those women surveyed work full time. And 50% of all brokers surveyed were women.

Out of this growing segment of the Realtor population, specialty groups have been formed with the specific needs and professional development goals of women in mind.

Women's Council of Realtors (WCR), was formed nationally to empower women to expand on their potential as industry leaders. At the RI Chapter of Women's Council, Shannon Buss, the 2009 program chair, establishes events that include "awareness, involvement and knowledge." She said, "We focus on business building, strategy and practice, business planning and systems, personal performance and cultural awareness."

Elaine Southwick, WCR, RI Chapter 2008 president is pleased with her accomplishments during her term. Elaine said that, "membership involvement is up 19% this year and our programs have a very high attendance rate." Elaine attributes the success of the RI chapter with providing quality programs that invite regionally and nationally recognized speakers to address the local audience.

Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW), was established to support the needs of women working in the commercial segment of real estate. Commercial real estate is one area of specialization that does not share the same gender balance with its residential counterpart. Commercial real estate has long been a male dominated profession and the trend is slow to change. CREW, and its local affiliate New England Women in Real Estate (NEWIRE) - located in Boston, are dedicated to promoting the advancement of women in the commercial real estate field.

Laura Domenico, NEWIRE's director of operations, believes the success of the organization lies in the ability to facilitate meaningful professional connections. Laura said, "We focus on networking and relationship building - these powerful tools assist our members in making lasting business

connections." NEWIRE offers luncheon events throughout the year but Laura believes it is the committee involvement that has proven valuable to the members.

Networking opportunities and professional development were common goals of both the residential and commercial specialty groups. Memberships are welcome in both organizations and are taken on a rolling basis. For more information on Women's Council of Realtors, RI Chapter contact: Maureen Mills at (401) 578-9001. For more information on NEWIRE, contact Laura Domenico, (617) 247-2346.

Michele Caprio is the CEO of the Greater Providence Board of Realtors, Providence.

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