

The art of selling real estate



Charlotte Chan has had an exhibit of her art at a local Blacksburg coffee shop. REALTORS such as Chan and Rick Parrish, both of Raines Real Estate, Inc./GMAC, say their hobbies or outlets help their real estate business.

By SARAH COX

The formula for being a successful REALTOR has to contain a dollop of the unusual, most real estate professionals will tell you. That doesn't mean they seek the off-beat, necessarily, but REALTORS need a hobby, a release, that will refresh their stamina, many believe.

Such is the case with two REALTORS at Raines Real Estate, Inc./GMAC.

Charlotte Chan said her interests in watercolor painting and cooking get her mind off of real estate, which consumes her 100 percent most of the time. Rick Parrish, who has long been interested in the concept of staging and how that affects how fast and successfully a property sells, has researched Feng Shui, the ancient science of arranging living spaces in order to enhance positive energy and harmony.

Chan's interests began when she was a little girl living in Hong Kong, she explained. "When I was a little girl helping out in the kitchen in Hong Kong, my mother taught me, and it just grew on me," she said about her cooking. "I really enjoy it, and it is really artistic. When I open up the refrigerator, something calls me and says, 'Cook me,' so my husband never gets what he asks for."

Those early cooking tricks came in handy when she moved to the United States and needed to cook, rather than eat out. When her daughter was 2, she began cooking at Main Street Bazaar, a former Blacksburg store, just to have adult

conversation. Today, she uses her interest and knowledge of cooking as an ice-breaker.

"I can make contact with people just talking about food. People feel very comfortable when you can share. That's my trick - to tell people what I do and ask what they do."

In addition, painting has been an artistic venue for Chan, who also started this hobby as a young girl in Hong Kong. Currently, Chan has an exhibit of her work at Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea on Main Street in Blacksburg. While it's the first sole exhibit of her work, she has shown with other artists before.

Chan said when her daughter began art lessons, the desire to paint was rekindled. She took a workshop through the Blacksburg Regional Art Association and found ways to simplify painting.

"I got hooked on this technique," said Chan. "It's just a good match [for me]."

One particular artist, Nadine Allen, encouraged Chan. Chan said her friend passed away this past March, and her show is dedicated to her memory.

"Nadine worked so hard for the association, and we feel her spirit is still around us," said Chan.

Chan melds her two interests by picking subjects from her cookbooks to paint.

"I look at the shapes and modify a little bit here and there. Most of my exhibits are related. My Strawberry Cheesecake is already sold. I really didn't want to sell it - they are just like my babies," she said.

The theme of Chan's exhibit is "good life."

Parrish, on the other hand, hopes to make improvements to his clients' lives, or at least succor the positive energy flowing through their homes through Feng Shui [pronounced fung shway].

"Feng Shui is part of the overall concept of helping a client's property sell faster and for a better price. It can also affect the health and well being of a buyer, as far as looking at a property that they are considering purchasing," he explained.

"The fact is, [Feng Shui] is becoming a trend in certain sectors of the real estate market, and there are well-known components of this in the country. The market in the New River Valley, especially due to the influence of the university, is becoming more sophisticated. The other factor is that we have a growing number of immigrants where things are just not done without considering Feng Shui," Parrish said.

Parrish said there is some resistance to Feng Shui - the science is so old that the terms used in it sometimes sound archaic or slightly superstitious. But, he said, he believes it does work.

"The flow of energy is simply a fact, and whether you believe in it or not is your choice, but that doesn't alter the fact that it's going to affect you either way.

Parrish, who has done considerable research into this practice, is attending an eight-day certification training program so that he can better offer this service to clients. He has worked on his own home, he said, as well as clients'.

Sometimes, in an existing home, it is a matter of placement. It can be as complicated or as simple as one wants it to be, he said.

In some parts of the world, people don't build without consulting Feng Shui. For instance, Parrish said, if someone is going to build a major office building in Hong Kong, a Feng Shui consultant will be in on it from the very beginning. "The Trump Tower in New York had one," he said.

Parrish said he doesn't think the Feng Shui market in the New River Valley will be huge, at least at first. He pointed out that the real estate market is very active and that it behooves clients to look for an edge when positioning their homes.

From cooking to watercolors to Feng Shui and beyond, Raines Real Estate, Inc./GMAC has created some edges of their own to offer clients.

What is Feng Shui?

* Feng Shui is not a religion, but an ancient design science based on natural laws and energy flow, called chi.

- * Many consider Feng Shui and real estate to be a perfect match, as Feng Shui is the ancient Chinese art of harmonious placement and balance.
- * This science can be applied to homes or businesses, inside or outside.
- * Its literal translation is "wind and water," an Asian philosophy that works with the chi of your space.
- * Feng Shui is no longer exclusively an Asian art or science.