

Stamford Board of REALTORS turns 100!



BY NAIDEN STOYANOV

The world of any sales person is a highly competitive place where everyone tries to outmaneuver everyone else. But you wouldn't know any of this by looking at the history and accomplishments of a Stamford organization that celebrates its 100th year of working to make our community better – the Stamford Board of REALTORS (SBOR).

A century ago this coming September, a group of local insurance salesmen decided that it was high time to band together and create a group that would help them in a job they often performed along with their primary business to sell insurance. In those days they often acted to connect home sellers to home buyers, effectively doing the job of real estate agents today. After operating informally since September of 1919, the group incorporated in 1930 under the name The Stamford Real Estate Board. The by-laws of the new organization were signed on January 29, 1930 by Messrs. Randall, Abbott, and Bell.

According to the document, the purpose of the corporation would be to “unite the real estate men of the Town and City of Stamford for the purpose of exerting effectively a combined influence upon the matters affecting real

estate interest” as well as to aid their members in transacting real estate deals, advance civic development and economic growth in Stamford and to grant its members the right to use the designation REALTOR, “under the conditions established for that use by the National Association of Real Estate Boards”. This last part is really important, since the designation shows that a real estate agent who is a member of the organization adheres to a Code of Ethics, formulated by the National Association of Real Estate boards. As part of its by-laws the board also tasks itself to “promote and maintain the high standards of conduct in the transaction of the real estate business” according to the aforementioned code as well as to enforce it among its members. The code specifies certain ethical and moral rules for REALTORS both when they deal with one another and when they interact with the public.

But besides being a professional group and an ethics sentinel of sorts, the board has also been involved with a number of charitable undertakings through the years and today.

Among the bigger acts of philanthropy of SBOR is the annual scholarship that the organization gives to ten carefully selected students, going to

public or private schools in Stamford. Viktoria Cooper, president-elect of the organization, who will assume her new post next January, is particularly proud of their scholarship program.

“The criteria is based on community involvement and academic standing. The SBOR Scholarship committee is tasked with the onerous duty of selecting the ten students from a batch of excellent and well qualified high school seniors,” reports Cooper. “No easy task, I assure you.”

To date, SBOR has given out more than \$160,000 for scholarships since 1993.

But the charity doesn't stop there, especially during this celebratory time for the organization.

“This is a big year at the Stamford Board of REALTORS. It's not everyday an organization turns 100! And we are planning a few big events to celebrate,” says Ken Fried, the Stamford Board of REALTORS' president.

In celebration of its Centennial, SBOR will work to assemble 100 Cartons of Kindness of nonperishable goods and necessities to be delivered to households in need and the goal is to do all this by September 24, 2019 – 100 years to the date of the organization's founding. “50 cartons will go to Inspirica



REAL CHARITY: The Stamford Board of REALTORS is proud of its numerous charitable acts in the community. (from left) SBOR gives a donation to the Lower Fairfield County Food Bank. Pictured: SBOR Director Cheryl McCormick, Ken Fried, President of the Stamford Board of REALTORS, Food Bank Executive Director Kate Lombardo, Assistant Executive Director Martin S. Cohen | SBOR members teamed up with the Glenbrook Neighborhood Association to help clean up the Glenbrook train station | SBOR donates to the Bennett Cancer Center in Stamford. Pictured: Director of Bennett Cancer Center Development at Stamford Hospital, Gayle Alswanger, SBOR Directors: Lara Winters, Cheryl McCormick, SBOR President Ken Fried.



SBOR Director Laurie Cingari, Inspirica's Director of Marketing, Communications and Special Events Emily Tang-Lee, Ken Fried, President of SBOR.



and another 50 will go to SilverSource. Both great charitable organizations that do great work in Stamford and we have a history of supporting over the years," reports Fried. The two nonprofits will assist with the delivery of the donations as well as to maintain the privacy of the recipients, if necessary. Inspirica is tasked to identify families and children in need, while SilverSource will be selecting the households with seniors that would most benefit from the donations.

"Sponsors have an opportunity to "Buy a Box" for \$200 and the cost can be split between two donors, if desired," mentions Cooper.

Another event, part of the year-long celebration of SBOR's anniversary, is the Centennial Gala which is slated for September 19, 2019 (9-19-19!!!!), as Cooper points out, at the Woodway Beach Club in Stamford.

And before the year is over, SBOR also plans to further elevate its visibility with the community by participating in the annual Stamford Thanksgiving Day Parade with a float and to hand out branded souvenirs to the audience.

"We hope everyone will join in our celebration," exclaims Fried.

Besides focusing on charity, the organization works with politicians and leaders from both sides of the aisle to defend the interests of homeownership and real estate, according to Cooper.

"An Advocacy/City Hall Committee is charged with embedding itself in city talks to learn of issues that may adversely affect the city's homeowners, property values, and the overall fabric of the City," explains Cooper. "The SBOR is the first line of defense when a tax is proposed. As a member of the Connecticut Association of Realtors, the executive officers meet at the state and national level to come together as a large body to affect needed change to avert changes that adversely affect homeownership." She also stresses that the organization is bipartisan.

Everyone knows that a healthy real estate market is very important to the local, and national economy. If you need a proof, just look at the Great Recession, just barely a decade ago. And SBOR is acutely aware of this. "We proudly emphasize that every real estate sale easily has an economic effect on our community," says Cooper. "Comfortably 25 to 35 other jobs are created with every home sale, from landscapers to insurance vendors."

Real estate is usually a long-term asset. And so is the Stamford Board of REALTORS which hasn't stopped re-inventing itself together with the profession it represents. Robin Schultz, SBOR Director is excited to see those changes continue. "As a membership, we started as a male-centric industry and have evolved over the decades into a diverse group of men and women culturally diverse and reflective of the community in which we live." ■

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