

Staging home for sale is popular new concept

I am a complete neophyte in matters relating to home buying or selling. The only home that we ever owned we built from scratch 36 years ago. And we're still there. The land on which it stands we bought from friends. Hard to believe, but during my extensive time on this Earth I have never bought or sold a home.

That thought would never have occurred to me had I not recently had a long and fascinating talk over lunch with a young woman in the business.

Lori Howard doesn't sell homes, she 'stages' them. She is what I would call an "enabler". She makes it possible for others to sell their homes . . . quickly and for the most money.

Lori was best friends with our eldest daughter all through Palgrave Public School. And back then it was noted that she was born to be a designer. It was



Country Roads

KAY MacDUFFEE

always her first love. She would practise on doll houses and 'stage' her bedroom. She graduated from design school in the early '80s, but then got sidetracked and pursued a career in Social Services.

Then there was marriage and children and all the ups and downs and somersaults of life to navigate before finally coming to rest right where she left off - her passion for design.

Now a single mom with two

daughters, she returned to school for accreditation in Home Staging and Redesign and bravely began 'Hope Designs'. The name alone implies a leap of faith.

But when one is pursuing a passion - that which you are meant to be doing - and has the boldness to begin a business, there is magic in it. Things just seem to flow. Howard is now "beautifying Caledon one room at a time".

You may have heard her interviewed on Radio Caledon's 'Real Estate Radio' last month, or read an article she authored for Terra Cotta Magazine on 'The Importance of Curb Appeal When Selling Your Home'. She listed 15 tips for making that first impression of your home a head-turner.

I admit that 'staging' a home was not a concept that I was comfortable with at first. But the more I discovered, the more fascinated I became with it.

I viewed some 'before and after' photos of homes that Howard had worked her magic on and was hooked.

I learned that staging helps create an environment that leads a buyer's eye to the home's attractive features, while minimizing its flaws.

The way we live in our homes is completely different than the way we should sell our homes. The idea is to create a neutral space so that a buyer can 'see themselves' in that space, as in model home displays.

Howard first conducts a thorough consultation of a home by providing specific room-by-room

recommendations along with detailed 'curb appeal' suggestions. Then according to preference, the client would follow up on this or have the whole process managed, from rearranging current furnishings and accessorizing to sourcing professional painters, handymen, furniture rentals, storage facilities, and landscapers.

Services include everything from simple 'decluttering,' organizing and packing, to rental of furniture and open house preparation.

"Home buyers make up their minds within minutes of viewing a home," says Howard, "and the investment in staging

is always less than your first price reduction (on your home)".

A well-known, local realtor who worked with Howard was impressed: "The house was staged on Wednesday, the realtor open house was on Thursday and the house sold Saturday for full asking price! After only two days on the market".

Honestly - I am now a believer. And I'm starting with 'decluttering,' a concept that has enormous applications, from my house, to my days, to my mind!

For more information on Hope Designs visit www.hopedesigns.ca or call (416) 557-7903.

Home tour supports Headwaters

This year's Headwaters Hospital Auxiliary Fall House Tour should be another fun day of touring around the beautiful countryside around Orangeville and visiting eight unique homes, all offering special features.

The tour will be held Saturday, September 13 and tickets are on sale for \$30, which includes lunch. This event is a major fundraiser for the Auxiliary and all proceeds support the hospital.

Buy your tickets before September 3 and be eligible for the early bird draw of two tickets for

a trip on the Credit Valley Explorer steam train.

Tickets can be purchased at Berney's Pro Hardware in Caledon East, Forster's Book Garden in Bolton, and Booklore, F-Stop Camera, Pear Home, The Home Shop, Scotia Bank on First Street, and Headwaters gift shop.

To purchase by mail send a cheque payable to HHCA House Tour to Ann Davidson, 18932, Centreville Creek Rd., Caledon, L7K 2M9.

For details visit www.headwatershealth.ca.