

# Broker retreat turns out best in class

BY ALICIA HARTGROVE

Over 100 agents “graduated” from the New York Real Estate Academy’s first Urban Retreat session last week.

Co-designed by the Academy’s co-founder Esther Muller with the Dean of Touro College’s Graduate School of Business Dr. Michael Williams, PhD, the event featured a roster of high-profile speakers that included Dottie Herman, Adrienne Albert, Stan Ponte and Jonathan Miller.

The aim was turn out a new and improved real estate professional capable of tackling the issues that arise during any market, good or bad.

“We believe we are establishing a baseline [in education] for a successful career,” said Williams. “This industry is in its infancy. It is ripe and necessary to have a level of understanding and knowledge before approaching savvy consumers or you’re out.”

The retreat was held at the New York Athletic Club and, over the three-day event, some 25 of the industry’s most accomplished brokers and managers gave seminars.

Although the course was open to anyone, brokers received the New York Department of State required 22.5 hours to renew their license.

Williams spoke on the last day of the retreat about achieving the highest level of excellence in the profession. “You are the architect or victim of your own future,” said Williams, adding that the key to success is to continuously re-invent yourself. “Problems can’t be solved with the same level of thinking that was used to create them.”

The Dean also urged brokers to

become avid readers, everything from business journals to lifestyle magazines, market reports and data. That information, he noted, enables brokers to be a one-stop source of knowledge to their clients. “You don’t have to be smart to be great,” said Williams. “You just have to be smart enough.”

Speaker Dawn Doherty, vice president of strategic development at StreetEasy.com, the real estate tracking service, addressed the issue of technology and how to drive your business with online applications.

Brokers and agents who attended said they found the retreat informative. Shirley Benfante, sales agent at B.P. Vance Real Estate, was surprised to learn about how many new projects are still going up in this economy.

With this increase in stock, she said, “We all have to be patient. The market will improve eventually, but for now we see high and low-priced listings selling but not middle priced listings.”

Marjorie Oberlander, an agent at Gonzalez Oberlander & Holohan LLP, attended primarily for networking. “The pep talks are interesting,” she said. “It is very important to network though, and I was surprised to discover how some people don’t have relationships with



Adrienne Albert of the Marketing Directors, one of the Retreat speakers, with Esther Muller.

clients or colleagues.”

Williams and Muller have high hopes for expanding the Urban Retreat series and plan a national and international expansion of the program.

The next three-hour urban modules will be at Touro College on Mar. 25, Apr. 1, 8, 15, 20, 22, and 29. Topics will include co-op board requirements, credit availability, and new disclosure requirements. The next three day, 22.5 hour Urban Retreat will be May 13, 15 and 20 at the New York Athletic Club.