PROFILE

Esther Muller, co-founder,
Real Estate Academy for Continuing Education

Muller is real estate industry's class act

By Dan Orlando

Esther Muller is about to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of her co-venture, the Academy for Continuing Education (ACE), which provides continuing education courses for real estate professionals.

However, before Muller ever dipped her toes into the real estate pool, education was a core part of her life.

During her tenure as a teacher in Ridgefield, Connecticut, Muller found herself in the service of a developer named David Paul.

Paul needed to convince a building of rental tenants to purchase their units.

After tapping Muller to help him decorate the property's interior, Paul asked her to assist him in explaining the benefits of ownership to the residents.

"At a very early age, I learned that you should never be renting, you should only be buying," Muller told *Brokers Weekly*, citing her parents drive to do so when they immigrated to the United States from Israel.

"I was just sharing information," she said. "I understood the value of owning property."

For every group of tenants that agreed to buy their unit, an unlicensed Muller was awarded $500. She eventually sold out the entire property.

"I never felt that I was in sales and I don't feel like I'm in sales today. I'm an educator," she said, stressing that her main goal for each client is to teach them about "the American Dream" that is homeownership.

Fast forward a few years and Muller decided to make the foray into real estate a permanent trip.

After obtaining her license in 1977, and becoming a broker in 1981, Muller was soon exposed to the continuing education courses that real estate professionals are required to attend in order to maintain their official status.

Saying that the classes that she attended "lowered our standards of who we are as professionals," Muller told said that the initial refresher courses she attended took place in "inappropriate" venues, such as a hairdresser's salon, or a basement, and were often taught by individuals who were not properly qualified to teach in New York State.

"The quality of instructors at the time — the 1980's going into 1990's — was not up to my standards," she said. "This led me to the realization that we needed to do something about this painful flu shot that we have to take every two years," Muller said.

"It was painful because we were not exposed to experts in our field. We were exposed to mediocre people who did not even practice their profession and taught theories instead of real-life trends."

Armed with the "tremendous education on how to convert a building," that she received while working with colleagues like Paul, Muller decided that if she wanted to see change in continuing education, she'd have to be the one to make it.

In 1995, Muller co-launched (ACE).

On February 20, 23, and 27, ACE will celebrate its 20 anniversary during its Winter Symposium.

This year's event will feature several leading real estate experts, including the chairman of Douglas Elliman's retail Group (and Muller's good friend), Faith Hope Consolo, who will serve as a moderator on a Meet the Press panel.

Among this year's speakers will be new Charles Rutenberg LLC president Stefani Markowitz, Dottie Herman CEO, Douglas Elliman; Eric Trump, Howard Lorber, chairman, Douglas Elliman; Michael Shvo, president, SHVO; and Robert Knakal, Chairman of New York City investment sales at Cushman & Wakefield.

The classes are available to attendees to who are beginners in pursuit of a license as well as the established professionals looking to renew their certifications.

Muller said she doesn't leave education in the classroom. She treats each and every one of her clients like her student. "I always think to myself, let me educate you. Let me show you and then you'll become my best customer and my best client," she said. "I use my loved for teaching to teach my clients."

Muller expects a significant amount of her upcoming customers to be on the younger side and believes that Millennials need to get serious about owning a home.

"I think the generation needs to get educated about the differences in renting," she said, stressing that younger people need to "create a future with their money."

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"You can come into the market today and you can put down maybe 10 percent, maybe 25 percent," Muller instructed. "In five years, you will have the equity that you put in. It's going to grow, and it's probably going to grow at more than five percent a year."

Muller said that she believes even that growth projection is conservative.

"The stock market is great," she continued, "but it is a risk. The banks are giving less than one percent."

Muller said she advises younger clients who likely are intimidated by the high cost of real estate in New York to partner with a friend if necessary, or perhaps borrow the money from a family member.

The Academy of Continuing Education 20th anniversary events will be held at the 3 West Club inside the Grand Ballroom at 3 West 51st Street from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.