

The Oregonian

Green agents know green homes

Sunday, June 01, 2008

By **CONNIE POTTER**

The Oregonian

For help finding a home with sustainable qualities, environmentally conscious homebuyers can turn to the "Green Team."

That's what The Hasson Co. calls the 55 sales agents at its brokerage who have completed the Earth Advantage S.T.A.R. (Sustainability Training for Accredited Real Estate Professionals) program.

More than 375 agents received the certification, which began offering classes last June. S.T.A.R.-certified agents have completed a two-day training program about sustainable living, green building and how to communicate those concepts to buyers and sellers.

At Realty Trust, more than 150 of its agents -- 86 percent of the sales staff -- are S.T.A.R. certified.

Agents are jumping on the bandwagon "because it's the right thing to do," said Kristin Staver, a Realty Trust broker who is a S.T.A.R. instructor. "As agents, we have a responsibility to raise awareness of our buyers and sellers." To find a S.T.A.R.-certified Realtor, visit the Earth Advantage site at www.earthadvantage-eastar.org/realtors.php.

Dana Griggs, The Hasson Co., said she became certified last year, after attending the training with about 200 agents from various companies.

"We left the class all gung-ho to sell green houses," she said. "It's quality of life. That's why people are moving to Oregon, because we have it all here."

Green homes use less energy, water and natural resources, offer improved air quality and create less waste.

They also sell for more.

Over the past year, 3 percent of all new homes sold in the Portland metro area carried a sustainable or "green" certification. These homes earned more in the market than non-certified homes, selling for an average price of \$223 per square foot, versus \$185 per square foot for non-certified, traditionally built homes, according to the Regional Multiple Listing Service (RMLS).

Those interested in buying a green home can go to the Realty Trust Group Web site (www.realtytrust.com), which offers a search tool for homes with green qualities. Prospective buyers can view listings that meet the standards of Energy Star, Earth Advantage and LEED For Homes (the most stringent of the three ratings).

RMLS has a search tool available to its member agents. It can be used to search for green-certified homes or homes with specific green features, such as high-efficiency furnaces, Energy Star appliances or home modifications such as water filters, rain collectors and solar tubes.

Currently there are about 500 homes listed on the RMLS in the Portland metropolitan area certified by LEED, Earth Advantage or Energy Star.

Other organizations certify green Realtors to assist in your home search, such as EcoBroker International (www.ecobroker.com) and the Green Building Certification Institute (www.usgbc.org). When choosing a green buyer's agent, ask how extensive the training was for the particular certificate earned, how long the agent has dealing with green properties and about any affiliations with green builders or professional groups.