

Service and Leadership

Region XI Conference promotes military values, cultivating military clients

Service and Leadership were key themes earlier this month during the Region XI Conference, hosted by the Arizona Association of REALTORS® at the Wigwam Resort in west suburban Phoenix. That was evident from the opening reception through the final programming session two days later.

2019 Region XI Vice President Paula Monthofer kicked off the three-day conference Wednesday, April 10 with a welcome reception that featured a contest and resulted in participating REALTOR® teams filling care packages for U.S. soldiers. The event was in honor of Operation Gratitude and it carried over into Day 2 of the conference.

Margo Wheeler, a broker from Tacoma, WA, was the first speaker of the annual conference and her background as a drill sergeant in the Army gave her valuable experience to draw from as she emphasized the values of service and leadership in the current real estate landscape.

"I never heard in the military that anyone joined to become a leader, but you learn those things," Wheeler said. "I joined because I wanted to serve. Real superheroes are those that go the extra mile, not because they have to, but because they choose to.

"What I learned about leadership while serving in the military is you must take care of your people. If you take care of them, they will take care of you. It's the same way in our real estate businesses. We must take care of our people and our members. And the other thing is you must take care of their families."

Wheeler outlined many instances where military and real estate themes align. She cited how enlistees and REALTORS® need to stay on top of the latest trends and equipment, how they must be self starters or quickly face negative consequences. Of course a key focus of Wheeler's time on stage was also asking her REALTOR® audience to understand the value in serving mili-



tary clients.

"Good leadership is about taking care of others," she said. "Help everyone who comes through your doors. I encourage you to reach out for ways to connect with military members and organizations. There is no greater feeling than giving the keys to a first-time buyer, especially a military buyer, who didn't even know they could buy a house. I commend you all for the work you do. Keep supporting Operation Gratitude ... Help someone find their path, their journey to leadership and serving."

•Monthofer and Maura Neill, a Georgia REALTOR® who specializes in working with military clients, tied in well with Wheeler's military theme. The duo followed with a presentation on the value of VA loans.

Neill opened the session by pointing out some common myths of working with military clients. Unlike common myths, VAR loans are not just for first-time buyers; military buyers can utilize the VA loan program more than once; VA loans do not take exorbitantly longer to close; and there are VA loan products for renovation projects.

Neill said the average close of a VA

loan sale actually takes 47 days, just two days longer than the average conventional loan. Additionally, she pointed out that 76 percent of VA loans close, up a touch from the 75 percent closing figure of conventional loans.

The presenting duo shared some back-and-forth banter, noting it wasn't their first presentation together. Monthofer and Neill promoted even more positives for working with military clients. They cited the fact that no down payment is needed when clients stay under their loan limit and still get a reduced figure when going over the limit. Neill said VA loans allow higher debt-to-income ratios while Monthofer shared that VA loans avoid PMI and have limits on closing costs.

The presentation got a big bow wrapped on it when Neill listed some staggering figures on the history of VA loans. She said VA loans have saved nearly 800,000 homes from foreclosure since 2009 and added more than 23.6 million VA loans have been written since the program's origination in the late 1940s.

Learn more about VA loans at www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/

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