



Lodi (CA) REALTORS® Help Clients Go Green By Offering Home Energy Efficiency Closing Gifts – September 2015

Brainstorming last year to devise a helpful new initiative he could implement as 2015 President of the 1,828-member Lodi (CA) Association of REALTORS® (LAR), Ryan Sherman, a long-time member of the board of directors, considered a number of housing affordability angles. Then, zooming out, he realized that what really matters to most homebuyers is simply paying the bills.

"As REALTORS®, we all know that the point-of-sale mandates a whole raft of expenses," says Sherman. "So we started investigating how we could affect an immediate impact on utility bills, an ongoing expense for all homeowners, beginning at closing."

Increasing a home's energy efficiency is one of the clearest and most cost-effective opportunities to reduce greenhouse gases, while saving homeowners money, and in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in California's Central Valley, several Climate Action Plans had already been implemented in various municipalities. That's how LAR's Energy Program was born: a game-changing idea that strengthens and promotes the REALTOR® brand, while giving back to members, their clients, and the community.

Pooling a \$15,000 Game Changer Grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, a major grant from the state association, \$8,000 of its own funds, and a key partnership with Greener Solutions, Inc., a local company specializing in residential energy efficiency, LAR's Energy Program enables REALTORS® to give current clients a closing gift valued at \$650 to increase the energy efficiency of their newly purchased home. Eligible homebuyers can have their homes retrofitted with window caulking, weather-stripping, water heater blankets, compact fluorescent light bulbs, and more, upgrades estimated to reduce at least one ton of greenhouse gas per retrofitted home each year, and save the homeowner an annual average of \$360.

Greener Solutions, the contractor-partner, has dedicated a trailer to the LAR Energy Program, as well as a team of technicians, but the REALTOR® remains central to the value-added gift. He or she presents a certificate to the client at closing, and arranges with Greener Solutions for services of the client's choice, much like managing a cleaning or painting service. The new homeowners may opt for the entire suite of services, or choose on an à la carte basis, but the idea is for it to be turn-key simple. "We wanted for our REALTOR® members to be in control of the program, and for their clients to associate this great benefit with the REALTORS® of the community," says Sherman.

The environmental goal of the program is to retrofit at least 300 homes this year, which will reduce at least 300 tons of greenhouse gases. As LAR explained in its grant application to NAR, "No single step can reverse the effects of climate change, but a collective effort can make a difference. We hope that the LAR Energy Program will have an impact by influencing local residents, organizations and businesses to continue to take steps towards creating greener communities and reducing carbon pollution. Any influence to work collectively to...create a cleaner environment...would be considered a success."



The feedback from members has been phenomenal, reports Sherman, and many have already presented the benefit to numerous grateful clients up and down the Central Valley at closing. "And, all things considered," notes Sherman, when you give people free stuff, it tends to put a smile on their face!"

To learn more about how Lodi, California REALTORS® are helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and helping their clients reduce monthly utility bills, contact Ryan Sherman, 2015 President of the Lodi Association of REALTORS®, at ryan@lodihomesforsale.net or 209.896.6012; or Henrietta "Hank" Van Dyk, LAR's Association Executive, at hank@ConnectLAR.org or 209.368.5316.

Sample Gift Certificate, Energy Efficiency Kit and the Greener Solutions Crew that Delivers the Program

