

Energy in Action

Brett Furniss Makes Affordable Housing a Top Priority

By Louise Barden

You don't have to spend too many minutes with Brett Furniss, president of BDF Realty, to feel the energy. Just walk down the high-ceilinged, lime-green hall of a converted warehouse to his new office in the North Carolina Music Factory, off 10th Street. Inside, you'll find yourself beside the office air hockey table, or looking through tall windows at the rooftop where there will soon be an outdoor patio.

"I like to be on the cutting edge of things," Furniss says. "I like the high energy of this building. I was just the second tenant here, after *Creative Loafing*." He's expansive when he talks about the high-ceilinged space with its old industrial-brick walls, and about plans to make the Music Factory the city's first "strolling district" filled with offices, bars and restaurants.

After moving here from New York just three years ago, Furniss, 29, is high on Charlotte's real



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— Brett Furniss, BDF Realty Inc.

estate market. And he's just as enthusiastic about CRRA's affordable housing efforts and his work as a volunteer on CRRA's Fair and Affordable Housing Advisory Council (FAHAC).

"In Charlotte we're doing things that are not being done other places," Furniss asserts. "We are trailblazers. It's exciting ... there are a lot of eyes on Charlotte and what we are doing in the fair and affordable housing arena."

A House For Everyone

Furniss hopes one day to see everyone who has problems qualifying for mortgage credit referred to The Housing Partnership's (THP) homeownership classes. Then he wants to see each prospective buyer who completes the program referred back to a Realtor® for a home purchase.

"As a Realtor® community, we can get a lot more people involved in knowing that there are avenues for people who really want a house to get a house," Furniss says. "We need to get the word out that there are ways to do it."

CRRA's Affordable Housing Certificate Program, Furniss says, is the best way to learn about the many types of assistance that can help first-time

buyers who have some difficulty in qualifying for homeownership. Moreover, Realtors® need to be able to refer prospective buyers to lenders who know about the city's housing programs and special options, including the Nehemiah Program for down payments and programs that can help pay one-time hospital bills.

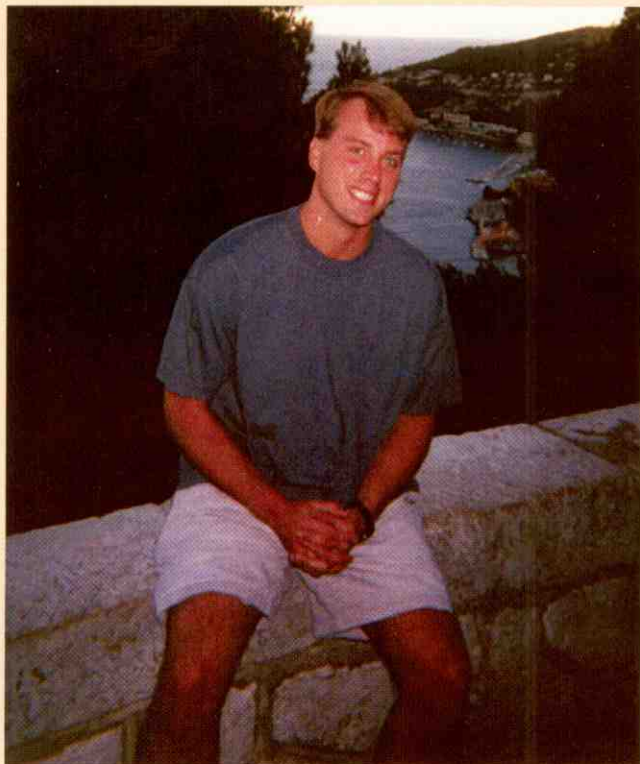
Both Rodney Tucker, executive director of the Housing Opportunity Foundation, and Ted Klovanick, chair of the FAHAC, praise Furniss' commitment and contributions.

Tucker says, "As an active volunteer working on the Fair and Affordable Housing Advisory Council, Brett supports the foundation's effort to help Realtors® give back to the community. Brett's work with the council will give us the information we need to make the Affordable Housing Certificate Program more valuable for Realtors®, and make affordable housing more available for buyers."

Klovanick explains, "He has spearheaded an initiative to increase the presence of the Affordable Housing Certificate Program on the CRRA Web site. He is also actively working with the council to consider ways to increase the number of graduates from the Affordable Housing Certificate Program, as well as to create more awareness of the council's work and of affordable housing programs."

Wealth Builder Turned Ardent Volunteer

Furniss has made this new mission an extension of the decision that brought him from New



Brett Furniss in front of the French Riviera on the Mediterranean coast of Monaco.

Photo courtesy of Brett Furniss

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Iredell Corner

CE Courses, TEMPO Training on Tap

The Mingle School is offering continuing education courses in Iredell during May and June. On May 2, the mandatory update course will be offered at the Statesville Civic Center from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and the elective "And the Commission Says" from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. On June 5, the same courses will be offered at the same time at Queens Landing, located on N.C. 150 off I-77. Mingle instructor Kathryn Rand, DREI, is the instructor. Registration is required.

CMLS is offering TEMPO™ training on May 26 at the Mooresville Center from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. This training is free for members, but registration is required. Contact Bryan Perkins at 704-940-3133 or bperkins@carolinahome.com to register.

Iredell Realtor® Appointed To UDO Steering Committee

Denise Eddleman of Century 21 Eddleman Realty, and the Iredell representative on the CRRA Board of Directors, was recently appointed to Statesville's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Steering Committee by Mayor Constantine Kutteh. This steering committee will begin implementing the city of Statesville's Land Use Plan's goals and objectives.



Denise Eddleman

Iredell Legislative Broker Briefing

Iredell-designated Realtors® and brokers-in-charge are invited to attend the Iredell Legislative Broker Briefing on May 31.

The briefing will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Statesville Civic Center, 300 S. Center St. Seating will be limited to the first 25 people who make reservations before May 25.

Contact Brenda Welch at 704-940-3123 or bwelch@carolinahome.com to make reservations. Joel Mashburn, Iredell County manager, will talk about the "Iredell County Budget and How Iredell County Deals With Growth." ❏

Volunteer Vision

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York, where he was a national sales leader for Nextel. When he saw "the wealth-building opportunities in real estate" and heard about Charlotte's expanding market from friends who had moved here, he studied for a real estate license at New York University, and arrived in Charlotte to make personal investments and form his own company.

That move is just one indication of Furniss' achievement-oriented, competitive nature. While earning a business degree, he became AT&T's fifth-leading sales representative in the nation for event marketing. While studying in England for a semester, he played American-style football at Staffordshire University, where he was named to Second Team All England. The same semester he ranked second on Staffordshire's basketball team, while also finding time to play lacrosse.

Since 2003 he has earned his broker's license, and he is currently working on the e-Pro designation and the final part of the Affordable Housing Certification. In his few nonworking hours, he goes rock climbing at Crowder's Mountain, plays basketball and softball, and enjoys participating in fantasy football leagues.

But Furniss, who is single, manages to find time to work on FAHAC's behalf.

Making A Remarkable Difference

Furniss sees volunteer work for affordable housing as a logical extension of his business. "It's OK to make money," he says, "but

it's also good to help people some of the time. We spend enough time on ourselves. It's a good thing to spend some time trying to make a difference."

He continues, "The Affordable Housing Certificate Program takes just five sessions to learn how to help people. It's easy to sell a house when someone has great credit and makes a lot of money. It's hard when someone doesn't have great credit ... when you have to say, 'You should talk to this person and this person' instead of just closing the door."

And Furniss is effusive in his praise of Tucker's and Klovnick's leadership. This year on the council has been exciting in moving forward quickly. The FAHA Council is a dynamic group of volunteers. Ted Klovnick really wants to get everyone running, and Rodney is really fired up. I'm amazed.

"I think we have a window of opportunity to do something that could be replicated across the country," Furniss says. "Something truly remarkable." ❏