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Happy New Year - 2017

WOW! What a year this should be! An inauguration of a new President, a new Congress in the halls, an empty slate full of new possibilities. Exciting and also a little scary. But thank goodness we are fortunate enough to live in such a great country where anything is possible. Regardless of your political standing, I hope we can all be as optimistic as possible and concentrate on looking forward rather than backward. I heard a very wise man say over the holidays, he wondered what would happen if everyone always expected the best rather than the worst. First and foremost, I want to thank all of you for another good year - past and ahead. You are what make my business and my daily living so fulfilling. Especially in real estate can one meet such incredible people and make so many good and lasting friendships! Here's to another great year ahead.



In the News

Experts gathering for an event recently in the Washington, D.C. offices of the National Association of Realtors® said that although homeownership in America continues to hover around a 50-year low, there are real-world opportunities to turn that trend around.

"It's tough out there right now for buyers, especially in many of the red-hot markets around the country where competition is the fiercest," said National Association of Realtors® President William E. Brown from Alamo, Calif. "Thankfully, we know there are ways to help consumers. Addressing the growing student loan burden, widening the credit box for strong buyers, building more homes that meet the demand of lower and middle-income buyers – these are among the many steps we can take to clear the pathway to homeownership."

The noted economists honed in on the homeownership rate and its importance to the broader economy. Lawrence Yun, NAR Chief Economist, in particular talked about challenges to homeownership including rising rents and student debt loads, noting that the difficulty in purchasing a home has led to a growing wealth inequality between generations.

"There is a tremendous wealth buildup among people who are 65 and older," Yun said. "They have essentially paid off their mortgages." For the younger generation, including those under 35 years of age, they feel that they are being left out." He added that while the pendulum swung too far towards loose underwriting before the Great Recession, it has since swung in the other direction, leading to what he described as "overly strict underwriting standards" that can put homeownership out of reach for even strong buyers in some circumstances.

NAR reported in November that the median existing-home price for all housing types in October was up 6.0 percent from the previous year, marking the 56th consecutive month of year-over-year gains. This finding coincided with a 4.3 percent year-over-year decline in inventory levels, a consistent challenge for buyers looking to purchase a home, particularly in competitive markets.

National Association of Realtors, Dec. 2016

In other news, 2017 is a new re-appraisal year for the El Paso County Assessor's Office, so be prepared to see a change in your home valuation based on more recent figures. Homeowners still have an opportunity to contest any new valuation so if you need my help, do not hesitate to call.

Home Gadget Gifts - Just For Fun

The TV was saturated over the holidays with more and more tools and gadgets that are supposed to make your life easier, safer, and more enjoyable. I found a couple of these I thought would be fun to share with all of you. I'm still waiting for one that will pay my bills, clean my house, and cook my dinner! Enjoy.



Ring, the video doorbell

The doorbell rings: Is it just a package drop off? A friendly neighbor? Or the dreaded solicitor? Now you can find out without getting off the couch. With the Ring Wi-Fi enabled doorbell, you can see a video feed of who is at your door from your phone, and even speak to visitors. Plus, it's triggered by motion detection, so you can see what's going on even if the doorbell doesn't ring. For a small optional fee, you can record what you missed and store it in the cloud.



Lucy, the sunlight bender

Nothing beats natural sunlight, especially during the short days of winter. Lucy is a robotic, mirrored ball that you place inside your home, and it reflects natural sunlight into the room. A self-adjusting smart motor inside follows the sun as it moves throughout the sky, so you don't have to worry about resetting the device throughout the day. The new device, offered by Italian-based company Solenica, is available on Indiegogo.



Click & Grow seed starter kits

Everyone loves having fresh herbs when they cook, but not everyone loves growing those herbs. Click & Grow's Smart Herb Garden takes all the guesswork out of gardening and allows anyone to grow fresh herbs, fruits and flowers year-round from anywhere in their home. The kit comes with basil seeds ready to go, and all the owner needs to do is plug it in, fill the tank and the garden takes care of itself.



Drop Scale, for the precision baker

Every baker knows that measuring ingredients by volume is the way to go if you want the perfect bake. But many standard recipes include measurements by cups and spoons, so you have to convert them to weight. What easier way to measure those ingredients than with the Drop Scale? Connected to an iPhone app (sorry, Android users), you simply dump the ingredients into a bowl on the scale and the app tells you when you have enough.

Smart Moves

Today's buyers want move-in-ready homes, and a new survey points to exactly what that means. More than 70 percent of buyers want a move-in-ready home, and that ultimately breaks down to a home that has updated heating and cooling and an updated kitchen and bathroom (more than 80 percent expect those features to qualify as move-in ready) and they want new appliances (74 percent). To a lesser but still notable degree, buyers feel a move-in-ready home has smart-home technology installed (44 percent). Additionally, 57 percent of those buyers that want a move-in-ready home would consider an older home updated with smart-home technology.



Apparently, survey respondents want the technology, but they really don't want to sift through the options and install it themselves. Thirty-six percent of all respondents believe that having smart technology is a major selling point when buying a home, but 32 percent feel they are too intimidated to install it themselves. And while the millennial generation certainly leans hardest toward this technology with 61 percent interested in it, 52 percent of Gen Xers and 50 percent of baby boomers do as well. Taking that first leap and making the investment in smart home technology may wind up being an investment in your home's value.

We don't stop laughing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop laughing.

Anonymous



Barbara

