



THE Home Team

Prospective home buyers find an indispensable ally in the team of professionals led by Bucks County Realtor Mary Ann O’Keeffe.

by PETE CROATTO | photography by JODY ROBINSON

Even as demand for her services has bloomed, Yardley/Newtown-based Realtor Mary Ann O’Keeffe has stayed the steady course. As one of Bucks County’s most successful Realtors expanded her business, she refused to sacrifice the defining characteristics that fueled her rapid success—reliability, intimacy, empathy and the desire to help.

The result: This entrepreneurial soloist has grown her organization into a world-class symphony orchestra. Her newly expanded and highly skilled team includes J.P. O’Keeffe—Mary Ann’s son—as well as fellow buyer’s agent Kelly Reamer and executive marketing assistant Amy Barone. Mary Ann and her team focus primarily on

residential properties in the Bucks County area close to the I-95 and Route 1 corridors, for easy commutes to Philadelphia, Princeton, N.J., and New York City.

“Our goal is our clients’ satisfaction,” says Mary Ann, who recently changed her affiliation to RE/MAX Properties from Coldwell Banker Hearthside, both national/international brands. “The team approach was the best way to serve an expanding client list. I’ve built a great team that I and my clients can trust.”

The process of buying and selling homes is a very personal one, and the relationship between



Mary Ann O'Keeffe



J.P. O'Keeffe



Kelly Reamer



Amy Barone



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agent and client is paramount. Touring houses, for example, is a time-consuming process, as are the duties of guiding, educating, networking, advocating, negotiating and managing the minutiae of the transaction so everything goes smoothly.

"Things move fast in this business," Mary Ann says. "It's always 9-1-1, but that's the nature of the job."

Having a skilled, trusted staff allows the principles of Mary Ann's business to stay pristine, even with increasing business volume.

"I'm staffing the business to make sure client's needs are always met," she says. "There's no room for 'I'm sorry.'"

Kelly and J.P. enable Mary Ann to maintain her focus on the personal side of the business and operations as a whole while concentrating on the listing side of the business. The duo tackles all elements of real estate including showings, price evaluations and market analyses. Both have Pennsylvania real estate licenses, so clients can see a house at any time with any team member. J.P. will soon obtain his New Jersey license.

Meet the Team

It's unsurprising that Mary Ann favored a personal approach when assembling her team. After all, that is how she started her business when she relocated to Bucks County from New York in 2007, right as the Great Recession reared its ugly head. There was no existing center of influence, so she networked. She canvassed neighborhoods. She chased referrals. When she landed clients and found them homes, she individually updated them on developments within their neighborhoods.

J.P., who witnessed his mother's business style first hand, decided after graduating from Penn State with a degree in economics to join the family business of real estate—and it has paid off. Although she mentored him, there was no guarantee he'd succeed, and he'd need to develop his own personal approach to the real estate business. Throughout her career, Mary Ann has mentored approximately 50 aspiring Realtors, and she says J.P. has been the best. She's continually impressed by the 24-year-old's knowledge, common sense and people skills.

"I sometimes think, 'How does he even know that?'" Mary Ann says. She's not the only one. Expanding his reach into the world

of listing appointments, J.P.—a newcomer, young and the boss's son—must immediately prove his worth. Without exception, Mary Ann says, clients leave impressed.

Kelly Reamer is a veteran, licensed for approximately 15 years. Having grown up in Philadelphia and raised her three children in Bucks and Montgomery counties, she also worked as a marketing manager and on the floor of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. She and Mary Ann teamed up recently, and Kelly's ability to "stop, drop and do whatever a client needs" aligned with Mary Ann's own attitude, so joining forces made perfect sense. Always

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one to go above and beyond, Kelly prides herself on being recognized for her genuine compassion, proactive approach, strong communication skills and follow through.

Amy Barone's professional past with Mary Ann features a twist. Three years ago, Amy, who moved to Pennsylvania from Virginia, was one of Mary Ann's clients. She bought a newly constructed home, and she impressed Mary Ann with her attention to detail during a harried time.

"The way that she went about that process was very impressive, and she was extremely organized," Mary Ann says. "Amy could clearly communicate with both the salespeople and the builder." Those same qualities have made her a highly effective executive marketing assistant. Amy's professional experience includes working as a small-business owner in the event-planning industry in Washington, D.C. She also holds her real estate license in Pennsylvania.

Having a reliable team in place is terrific, but this is still Mary Ann's business. She knows what everyone on her team is working on, so she can intervene to provide the guidance that has made her a top Realtor in a hyper-competitive, highly desirable market.

"I'm always available," she says. "I want to be. I want my team to be."

People Helping People

Mary Ann truly wants to help. She enjoys it and she also knows how stressful buying a

home can be, as the process is often unfamiliar. Most of us buy one or two homes in our lives. What should be a positive life event is often overshadowed by the weighty financial commitment and sheer number of decisions involved, some emotional others practical. *Should we invest this much money into what may not be our "forever home"? Who can we get to fix the deck? Is this town the right fit for us? If we have kids, how are the schools?*

In the line of duty, Mary Ann has answered all those questions and more. She does this every day. Name a style of house, name an issue; she's seen it and addressed it. Her experience and level-headedness are reassuring for the wide-eyed and overwhelmed, steering uncertain buyers through the maze of bids and contracts, especially in this competitive market. Whereas a prospective buyer might be dazzled by new hardwood floors and

gleaming kitchen with stainless-steel appliances, Mary Ann provides a grounding voice. But she also helps clients see the possibilities through renovations and the values and costs of upgrading a home.

She's a trusted adviser—the quarterback, of sorts—introducing clients to the various professionals who make a house become a home and turn a town into a sanctuary. "I'm their contact for critical referrals and resources," she says. "It's not just about the buying and selling of a home. It's about the long-term client relationship and long-term community building."

Even though Mary Ann has grown more successful, she knows the real estate game is a detail- and deadline-oriented business—it's all about people and ensuring every transaction is executed with professionalism. The team approach guarantees these guiding principles don't get lost or forgotten, especially as J.P. and Kelly build their own client lists.

"My goal is to make sure I continue to provide excellent service to my new clients and maintain positive relationships with my past clients," she says. "With an expanded business, that's where the team element really comes in."

Mary Ann O'Keeffe's devotion to her craft remains unchanged. The difference is that she now has more resources than ever to ensure clients have the best possible experience in the sale of a property or in pursuing the home of their dreams. ■