

suburban life

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SOLD BY: The O'Keeffe Team

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by **BILL DONAHUE** | photos by **ALISON DUNLAP**



J.P. O'Keeffe

"Best of Yardley" honorees Mary Ann and J.P. O'Keeffe of The O'Keeffe Team of Keller Williams Real Estate blend expertise and creativity to help clients overcome the challenges associated with buying and selling in Bucks County.

As a top-producing REALTOR® in Bucks County since 2007, Mary Ann O'Keeffe has had a bird's-eye view of the area's remarkable transformation, particularly over the past few years. She cites the influx of new residents drawn to the area for its strategic location, relative affordability, reasonable taxes, and high quality of life, among other advantages.

"The pandemic changed everything," says O'Keeffe, a native New Yorker who began her real estate career in 2005 and now leads The Mary Ann O'Keeffe Team of Keller Williams Real Estate in Yardley. "People from New York and North Jersey, even as far away as Connecticut, found this amazing part of the world that enables them to work where they need to and still come home at night. Even though the pandemic has waned, people are staying [in Bucks County]."

Once regarded as a "well-kept secret," Bucks County is a secret no longer. As a result, buyers and sellers face some significant challenges—namely, elevated prices, limited inventory, and high interest rates. O'Keeffe says competition remains so intense that prospective buyers often forgo the contingency of a home inspection in order to make their offers more attractive.

"There's so much pent-up demand," she adds. "Home pricing is up 30 to 35 percent, and the rents for investment properties are up 30 to 35 percent, too."

For O'Keeffe, real estate represents a "second act," of sorts; she previously worked for Merrill Lynch, where she guided clients in their decision making involving financial services and retirement. Her background and expertise have given her a unique perspective on the challenges buyers and sellers face in the current climate. She strives to help each client "think like an investor," with guidance designed to help them avoid costly mistakes or capitalize on unanticipated opportunities.

"Since 2005, we've seen just about every kind of market, so we're able to get creative with buyers and sellers," she says. "Nine times out of 10, a seller is also a buyer, and they need and want to sell their house but

may have nowhere to go. In those cases we'll often negotiate a rent-back agreement, in which the seller is able to take their equity out of the house and still live there for a time while finding their new home. It's about helping all parties get settled in a way that works for them."

O'Keeffe's team includes J.P. O'Keeffe, her son, who began his real estate career after graduating from Penn State University with a degree in economics in 2015. J.P. has gained a reputation as a talented REALTOR® who specializes in representing younger buyers and sellers, and holds an Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®) designation, indicating he is a specialized real estate buyer's agent who works with buyer-clients at every stage of the home-buying process.

Both Mary Ann and J.P. are focused on continually expanding their respective skill sets, adding to their knowledge through education, growing their professional networks and enhancing their public marketing—all in the interest of finding new ways to provide value to clients. For example, Mary Ann recently earned the Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES®) designation to help older members of the community transition into smaller homes with less upkeep, 55-and-older communities, or continuing-care retirement communities.

For prospective buyers and sellers of any age, O'Keeffe suggests "it's never too early to start the conversation," even if someone is a year or more away from making a move. She believes getting a head start is especially important for someone who is buying a home for the first time.

"One thing to consider early on is where you'll want to move to," she says. "This is why we've begun rolling out a series of local area tours on our website and social media—so people can get a feel for what different neighborhoods around Bucks County have to offer.

"We're real estate advisors and local area experts," she continues. "Buying a house is often the largest investment one makes in life, so you need someone who is capable and experienced to guide you through the process—especially now. In Bucks County, half a million dollars doesn't go quite as far as it used to; even a condo or townhouse is likely to go for half a million dollars. Personally, I think the current climate will become more balanced, but a lot has to happen before it does."

Whether you're looking to list, buy, or invest, Mary Ann and J.P. O'Keeffe may be just the experienced team you're looking for. ■

The Mary Ann O'Keeffe Team Keller Williams Real Estate

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