

suburbanlife

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Her True Calling

SINCE MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM LAW TO REAL ESTATE NEARLY TWO DECADES AGO, **STEPHANIE MACDONALD** HAS BEEN USING HER UNIQUE EXPERTISE TO GIVE CLIENTS ON THE MAIN LINE MORE THAN THEY EXPECTED.

Stephanie MacDonald spent nearly a decade as an attorney specializing in litigation and real estate law. It was a dream job in many respects. There was just one problem: The work did not bring her much happiness.

Rather than staying in a position she did not love, MacDonald took the bold step of transitioning into a new career as a Realtor. Almost 20 years and countless satisfied clients later, she knows she made the right decision.

As the leader of The MacDonald Team at COMPASS RE, she focuses on a wide range of properties on the Main Line and uses her unique background and down-to-earth personality to deliver optimal results. Her passion for the industry is evident to everyone with whom she comes into contact.

“Litigation is acrimonious, and I found the constant arguing to be emotionally draining,” she says. “I thought: *What else can I do where I can apply the knowledge that I learned and do something that would not be so taxing?*”

“I probably work more hours now as a Realtor,” she continues. “It’s seven days a week and a lot of nights and weekends. But when you enjoy what you’re doing, it’s energizing.”

In the highly competitive field of real estate, MacDonald’s previous experience sets her apart from most of her peers. She understands the complex language in contracts and can break it down into simpler terms for her clients. Likewise, the negotiating skills she honed as a lawyer allow her to garner the best price and best terms on behalf of her clients—buyers and sellers alike.

“I’ve carried over the concept of attorney-client privilege and made it a Realtor-client privilege,” she says. “I’m involved in many community circles where people mutually know each other. However, I would never be the one to share that someone is looking to move or is buying a house. Clients trust me and respect that I will keep their confidence.”



A South Jersey native, MacDonald attended Villanova University for her undergraduate degree and stayed for law school. She has lived and worked on the Main Line ever since, deciding to rear her family in one of the country's most desirable areas.

Buyers appreciate the Main Line for its proximity to Philadelphia and New York, as well as its top-notch school systems, both public and private. MacDonald's in-depth knowledge of the area is an asset to those who may need recommendations on everything from the most capable physicians to the finest restaurants and retail establishments.

"I become their resource for everything because I've lived here for so long and have raised my two daughters here," she says. "I can not only suggest certain professionals for the house itself, like an electrician or a remodeler, but I have a network for everyday things that, when you relocate to an unfamiliar area, you realize you need once you get there."

Then there are the differences between the various communities of the Main Line. MacDonald gets to know each client's particular wants and needs, and then guides them to the appropriate home in the right town, whether it's an historic estate in Villanova or a modern mansion in Bryn Mawr.

"Some people want more of an urban atmosphere, but they want to be in the suburbs," she adds. "Others want complete privacy. Some people want a neighborhood kind of feel, where they have the best trick-or-treating or where ice cream trucks come in the spring. I can guide them on whether a neighborhood is quiet and everyone keeps to themselves, or it's much more family-friendly and social. That's not something you can tell from a picture; you really have to talk to someone who lives there to find out what each neighborhood has to offer."

Having seen the ups and downs of all kinds of markets throughout her career, MacDonald can keep clients on an even keel throughout the process. She has established a reputation for thriving in the sale of luxury, high-end homes thanks to her unique approach to marketing and helping sellers sometimes up to a year in advance prepare their house for the market. At the same

time, she is just as comfortable working with a young couple seeking to buy their first house. After all, she strives to deliver an experience that makes each client a lifelong client, meaning they will come back to her when they are ready to find their next home.

"I treat everyone the same, whether they're buying their first home or selling a \$3 million estate," she says. "I'm honest and straightforward with everyone, and most clients appreciate that."

While MacDonald has worked for other brokerages, she found a home at COMPASS RE as the company's first agent on the Main Line. She was attracted to its use of advanced technology and exclusive marketing programs. Private Exclusives, for example, allow clients to control how much information is shared about their home while getting exposure to serious buyers through other top COMPASS agents.

MacDonald is the first to admit that she doesn't do it alone. She maintains an intimate team to retain the personal feel she believes is so important to building strong relationships. In addition to the Main Line, she has the Jersey Shore covered thanks to Steve Soldatovic, a lifelong area resident who specializes in the luxury market.

MacDonald is as busy as she's ever been, but she wouldn't trade her flourishing career for any other. All these years after leaving

the law behind, she can honestly say she's in the right place but still leverages her earlier honed skills.

When asked how she handles the competitive market we have been in, she replies, "I love a good bidding war, when my clients are competing against five other offers and they get the house; it's exhilarating. To be part of making their dreams come true is an honor. Alternatively, when a seller sells for more than they expected, or the process was so much easier than they anticipated, that's also gratifying."

"I try to make it as pleasant of a transaction as it can be," she continues. "I try to keep the emotions out of it and help keep everyone focused so they can have a positive experience. I think that shows given that so much of my business comes from referrals and repeat clients." ■

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Photos were shot on location at Stephanie MacDonald's listing at 5 Honeysuckle Court in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. Price available upon request.



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—Stephanie MacDonald, The MacDonald Team at COMPASS RE