

Dedicated, Loyal, Honest

With 26 years of experience behind her, Judi Schaeffer has become one of Bucks County's most prominent Realtors by doing "whatever it takes" to help clients realize their dreams

by BILL DONAHUE
photography by
ALLURE WEST STUDIOS

It happened on a day last autumn, but Judi Schaeffer remembers it like it was yesterday. Schaeffer, who is a Realtor, was taking a client on a tour of an available equestrian property in Bucks County. At the back of the 57-acre property, which had been foreclosed upon by the bank, Schaeffer and the client discovered two abandoned horses that had been left to die—no food, no water, nothing.

Rather than leave the horses as "someone else's problem," Schaeffer knew she had to do something to help. So that's exactly what she did. For the next seven to eight weeks, she and the client's wife returned to the property daily to feed the horses, provide them with plenty of water and otherwise make sure they were cared for. She also went to work finding a permanent home for the horses, which proved to be no easy task.

With some persistence, Schaeffer used her contacts to find a stable in Buckingham that would take in the two horses—one a retired racehorse, the other a rather shy pony that was averse to human contact. Fast-forward to a year later, and both horses



With the expertise and support of Schaeffer's "Isam"—(pictured, left to right) Jami Kratz Wallace of Keller Williams, Mary Ann Suder of Mid Atlantic Regional Abstract LLC, Tina Ferguson of Waterstone Mortgage, and Lori McPherson of Mid Atlantic Regional Abstract LLC—clients are in good hands, no matter the need.

are living happily. Even the shy one, which used to be afraid of people, is now being ridden. Schaeffer still visits the horses twice a week, usually with apples for them to eat.

"Before that, I never touched a horse in my life," says Schaeffer, agent/owner with Keller Williams Real Estate in Doylestown. "It was a real learning experience, and I love that when I see them now they're as happy as can be."

The story speaks volumes about Schaeffer's personality. It also underscores the three qualities she believes have helped her stand apart from the crowd in a 26-year career as one of Bucks County's most successful Realtors: dedication, loyalty and honesty.

Schaeffer, who used to work as a nurse, initially entered the world of real estate as an alternative to her role as "a bored housewife," as she likes to say. With her children

grown and having left the family home, she remembers one day looking through the newspaper want ads and asking, "Why not give real estate a try?" A few calls later and she was on her way to forging a new career.

Almost immediately, Schaeffer found she had a natural gift for real estate. She cut her teeth with Flo Smerconish Realtor in Doylestown, and over the next several years she honed her skills and developed a flourishing list of clients. She transitioned to Keller Williams in 2000, at a time when the firm didn't have nearly the name recognition it does today.

"It was a big gamble," she recalls of the move to Keller Williams. "I had built a decent following by then, but I didn't know if people would follow me to a company that didn't have a recognizable name. We had seven agents back then, and in the beginning we had to do everything without a lot of help. Now we have 170 agents just in the Doylestown office, and it even has an international reach. It's a company I love, in a field I really enjoy, because I get to work with nice, happy people."

industry as a "top producer," having won numerous productivity awards for listing and selling homes. For example, she earned a "Top Five Star Real Estate Agent Award" by *Philadelphia Magazine*, and she also was a three-time winner of the Pennsylvania Association of Realtors' Award of Excellence (Gold). The association granted her lifetime membership in this prestigious club, an honor earned by fewer than 200 of its 32,000 members.

Schaeffer has reached a point in her career where she is blessed with repeat and referral business from previous satisfied clients, whether it be listing a home or purchasing a new one. She enjoys working with buyers and sellers in all price ranges—whether it be first time home buyers or in the luxury home market. Although she mainly represents clients in the Central and Upper Bucks area, she is happy to go outside "her comfort zone" if a client seeks a property elsewhere.

"To do well in real estate, you need to be patient, because it doesn't happen overnight," she says. "It takes a lot of work—these days



The two horses Schaeffer helped rescue

Schaeffer's "team" includes Jarni Kratz Wallace, her "wonderful" executive assistant; Tina Ferguson, senior loan consultant with Waterstone Mortgage Corp.; and Mary Ann Suder and Lori McPherson, settlement officer/manager and conveyancer, respectively, with Mid Atlantic Regional Abstract LLC, which assists clients in settlement and escrow matters. With the expertise of these professionals, as well as the resources of an established company such as Keller Williams, Schaeffer's clients are in good hands, no matter the need.

"With all my clients, whether they're a buyer or a seller, my approach is to develop a relationship," Schaeffer says. "To do well in this business, especially for as long as I have, you need to have integrity and honesty, and you just have to be a good person. Too many Realtors get caught up in thinking about their commission, even before they get to settlement. The most important thing is servicing the client, and if you do that well the money will come."

"My clients know they can trust me," she continues, "and they know I will do whatever it takes."

Schaeffer, who has three grown daughters and seven grandchildren, currently lives in the Borough of New Britain with her husband and two dachshunds. She does, however, currently have her home on the market. She now has great empathy for clients who are selling their home. To make sure the property sells while maximizing the value, she has "a pretty good idea" of what to do next, she says jokingly.

"After 26 years," she adds, "I ought to." ■



Some of the distinctive Bucks County properties Schaeffer has represented recently



it's 24/7 access—and even then you can't expect a consistent return for a couple of years. You also have to be a "people person" and have a great team behind you. I'm lucky in that I am a people person, and I have a great team who perfectly complement the way I work."

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To complement her strong work ethic, Schaeffer sought out opportunities to build upon her knowledge base, including earning advanced designations such as Accredited Buyer Representative and Accredited Luxury Home Specialist; she is also fully accredited in relocation. Such devotion to her craft has gained her significant recognition. In 1996, for example, Schaeffer's peers elected her to the position of director of the Bucks County Association of Realtors. She earned reelection in 1999 and served in the post till January 2003.

In addition, Schaeffer has been lauded in the