

REALTORS Work to Build Stronger Communities

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If you happen to know any REALTORS chances are pretty good that you know them through their community involvement whether it be through their work with charities, social causes or perhaps business organizations. REALTORS serve on planning commissions and zoning boards, they volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and their Rotary, they serve as village trustees, township trustees and county board members, just to name a few. When it comes to involvement in their communities REALTORS are right there pitching in. While it is true that involvement in charities and business associations is a great way for a REALTOR to demonstrate their street cred most get involved out of a genuine desire to give back.

REALTORS are also making a positive impact in their communities at an organizational level. The Capital Area REALTORS has left a positive mark in the community in a variety of ways. Some of CAR's more substantive contributions include its contribution as an original investor in the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's Q5 Initiative, one of the founding organizations behind the Homeownership Coalition for People with Disabilities and a cumulative contribution of over \$150,000 to CAR's various Charities of Choice throughout the past ten years. Additionally, individual brokerage firms engage in the support of worthwhile causes as do the Illinois Association of REALTORS and the National Association of REALTORS.

The Capital Area REALTORS was one of the original investors in the Q5 economic development initiative. We feel strongly that working collectively in this initiative is especially important so that we gain every advantage possible to advance our economic footing. Also, CAR has several members active in Q5 through its Strategic Leadership Counsel, the Community Development Council and the Development Policy Counsel.

Additionally, Capital Area REALTORS was a founding member of the Homeownership Coalition for People with Disabilities. This group helped assist 215 families of disabled individuals in realizing the dream of homeownership over the past dozen or so years before ceasing its activities in 2015.

CAR's Community Service Committee is one of the most popular volunteer opportunities offered through the organization. CAR and its Community Service Committee would be a great partner to have for ANY social service organization! Last year, the Friends of Sangamon County Animal Control was chosen as CAR's Charity of Choice and received over \$17,000 for its work. A record number of submittals were received for the 2016 Charity of Choice which required the completion of an application outlining the organization's mission and how they would use these additional funds. Three finalists were invited to offer a presentation explaining what their cause is all about.

Generally, the Committee likes to direct its energy to those causes where it can make the largest impact and where the money is allocated to a specific identifiable need. It can be a very difficult process and it is often hard to narrow it down to one cause because there are so many worthwhile causes. Everyone has their own pet organization but at the end of the day only one is chosen and once the organization is chosen everyone rallies to support it. The 2016 Charity of Choice is the Refuge Ranch. The Refuge Ranch was developed to rescue the equine, mentor the child, and provide hope, healing and community for at risk children and families in Central Illinois. The Ranch which is located near Rochester, IL provides a beautiful setting and unique experience that helps to develop empathy, responsibility, work ethic, perseverance, problem solving and many other character traits and life skills in the clients they serve. The Refuge Ranch incorporates horsemanship, mentoring, and the unique joys, challenges, and responsibilities of farm life to teach accomplish these goals. To learn more about the Refuge Ranch go to: <http://www.refuge-ranch.org/> CAR's major fundraising initiative to benefit the Refuge Ranch will be a Trivia Night Fundraiser scheduled for April 29th at the KC Hall on Meadowbrook Rd.

Through its Community Service Committee CAR has donated close to \$150,000 to charitable causes over the past ten years including te Boys & Girls Clubs, Contact Ministries, Land of Lincoln Honor Flight, M.E.R.C.Y Communities, Central Illinois Foodbank, Salvation Army, Helping Hands and the Iles House, to name a few. Other activities that CAR has engaged in over the years has been the sponsorship of homeownership fairs, homeowner counseling, career days, habitat builds and collection of toys at Christmastime for area youth. CAR has also supported tornado relief efforts as well as hurricane relief efforts. Suffice it to say, when all tolled REALTORS have a big impact on their communities.

The Capital Area REALTORS® is the Voice for Real Estate in the Capital Area representing more than 750 members involved in all aspects of the real estate industry throughout a thirteen county area in Central Illinois. The Capital Area's Resource for Real Estate Information can be found at www.SeeHouses.com.

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