

## **SILVAR reaches out to other cultures**

**A panel discussion on Realtor® Etiquette & Ethics, with special emphasis on helping Realtors interact with home buyers, sellers and Realtors of different cultures, was well-received at the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors® (SILVAR) office in Cupertino in May. The forum was hosted by SILVAR's Cultural Diversity & Equal Opportunity Committee and focused on the first stage of the real estate transaction: how to communicate and develop relationships with all parties to the real estate transaction.**

Panelists included Mark Burns, Silicon Valley Association of Realtors president; Eunice Chan, Chinese American Real Estate Association president; Patricia Lindo, National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals – Silicon Valley Chapter president; Sue Bose, SILVAR members and representative of the South Asian Real Estate Association of America; and Tess Crescini, SILVAR members and representative of the Filipino American Real Estate Professionals Association - Santa Clara County Chapter.

The panelists were asked about general cultural nuances, proper introduction etiquette and dos and don'ts when first meeting clients and Realtors from their respective cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Chan said as president of CAREA, it is her goal to do more community outreach and create a broader network capacity for CAREA members. She said Chinese come from everywhere and advised fellow Realtors not to automatically assume all Chinese come from mainland China, because many Chinese do not want to be connected with the stigma of communism.

She told the audience, “Always respect the business card. Hand your business card and receive their business card with both hands while facing them. Never write on the business card or place the card in your back pocket.”

Lindo said the goal of NAHREP is to promote homeownership among the Latino population and empower Latino practitioners to give their clients excellent service. Real estate jargon like “prime” and “subprime” do not exist in the Latino language, according to Lindo, and many Latinos don't know what their options are when purchasing a home. As a result, many homebuyers fall prey to predatory lenders.

Latinos are not superstitious, said Lindo. When searching for a home, they look at size as well as financing, since extended families pool their resources together and often live in the same house.

The goal of SAREAA is to create a bridge between the Indian sub-continent and help South Asians achieve the American dream of homeownership, said Bose. She told Realtors to be aware there is much diversity among South Asians - in language, religion and culture.

Crescini, a founder of FAREPA, said the association was created to establish a voice in the community and elevate the standards of Filipino real estate professionals, with board of directors serving as role models and Realtor associations such as SILVAR, as the “mother ship.” She cautioned that Filipinos are superstitious and would be wary of home where there has been a death.

There are common elements among the Asian cultures. Among the Chinese and Filipinos, the decision maker is the wife, as well as the buyers’ parents, who often are a source of funds and would live with the buyer. Respect for elders is also important in Asian cultures. The Realtors said avoid addressing a client, particularly an elderly person, by their first name at the initial meeting, unless you know them well, the Realtors advised.

The principles of feng shui are likewise important in Asian cultures and followed closely when selecting a house. Make sure the stove and sink are not back to back; the Chinese prefer a front door which faces east or south; lucky numbers are 2, 3, 6 and 9 - not 4, which signifies death, said Chan. On the other hand, Bose indicated South Asians like the front door facing east or north.

While noting Caucasians do not base their home search on superstition and religious issues and instead, select a home based on good schools and on distance and travel time to work, SILVAR President Mark Burns stressed no matter what race clients are, he always makes it a point to observe interaction among family members, as well as the other agent’s interaction with his clients, and tries to mirror these actions and do his best to show the highest level of respect.

Burns said, “There will always be differences in any culture. The important thing is to pay attention and observe and maintain a level of respect.”

The panelists said it is important to earn the respect of all clients, regardless of race, at the very first step of the real estate transaction, since this stage lays the foundation of trust between agent and client.

“If you prove you know what you are doing they will respect you,” said Chan. “You have to show them you can earn their trust.”

They also stressed ethics is important and it is what separates the professional Realtor from other agents. It’s the reason why agents become members of Realtor associations like SILVAR. SILVAR Realtors promote the highest ethical standards of real estate practice and subscribe to a strict Code of Ethics.

***About SILVAR:***

*The Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS® (SILVAR) is a professional trade organization representing over 4,000 REALTORS® and Affiliate members engaged in the real estate business on the Peninsula and in the South Bay. SILVAR promotes the highest ethical standards of real estate practice, serves as an advocate for homeownership and homeowners, and represents the interests of property owners in Silicon Valley.*

*The term "REALTOR®" is a registered collective membership mark which identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® and who subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.*

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