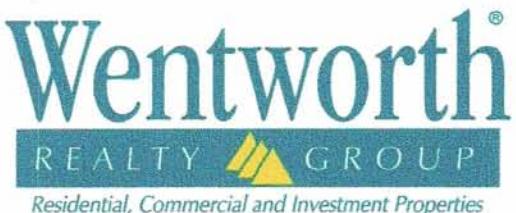




OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DESK OF
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A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself. Joseph Campbell



Millenials (18 — 34) want to BUY, Boomers (65+) want to SELL

"Millenials still believe homeownership is a good investment, with 90% planning to buy a home someday," according to Fred Ehle, VP for Pulte Group. Further, "Millennials today want a lot of value in their home that makes efficient use of every space. The most important feature to this buyer is the floor plan layout." More than 90% of millennial buyers research a home purchase as well as real estate professional through the Internet.

One to two million baby boomers expect to put their homes on the market in the next 7 years as they seek to downsize.

With low rates and affordability, it sounds like a match made in heaven!

Spring cleaning and downsizing

Chances are your stuff is not worth as much as you think. Memories and a sense of attachment tend to make us overvalue items. Here is some advice on setting fair prices from Sandy Tavarez of Florida who advises people on spring cleaning with a financial finish. Label good-condition appliances, sporting equipment and designer items for about 1/3 of the original price. Kid clothes — \$2, \$3 and \$4. Tee shirts—\$1. For furniture check out the going rate at eBay and Craig's List.

She summarizes, "Never refuse a first offer, it's usually your best."



Consumer Confidence in April

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index increased in April. Director of economic indicators, Lynn Franco said "Consumers' expectations about the short-term economic outlook and their income prospects improved." Further, with the challenges we've faced over the past few months, she contends "it is too soon to tell if confidence is actually on the mend."

Where the economy has and has not yet recovered

Although the economy is not back to full health, there are some promising signs. Home foreclosures and layoffs have dropped, stock market has improved and economic output has rebounded. That's the good news.

The bad news is that unemployment is at 7.7%, and there are 3 million fewer jobs than when the recession began.

The housing market is improving, but there is still a long way to go before it can be declared healthy. Growth in housing has been steady but modest over the last several months. Builders are experiencing increased demand, which means more jobs, more good news.

NAR lobbies to maintain interest deduction

Gary Thomas, president of National Association of Realtors, testified before the US House Ways & Means Committee in support of the mortgage interest deduction on federal taxes. He said “The federal policy choice to support homeownership has been in the Internal Revenue Code since its inception in 1913. We see no valid reason to undermine that basic decision. Indeed, we believe that the only viable tax system is one that would continue to nurture homeownership.” AMEN



Dogs in pet-free condos

If you can get your dog classified as an “emotional support animal” by a physician, psychiatrist, social work or mental health professional, he can live with you in a pet-free building in Florida. Sounds fair enough. But, suppose you specifically live in that building because it is pet-free and you are allergic to pet fur. I can understand that point of view as well.

I'll keep you posted how this issue sorts itself out.

Add up the costs before becoming a landlord



A NAR survey shows that the promise of rental income has become a big driver for vacation home purchases. Do check out the costs of financing and maintenance as well as tax implications before diving into this pond.

Later marriage does not postpone homeownership

Studies show although young people are often focusing on career and waiting to marry and have children, they are not delaying buying their first home. It's a big step, but research shows the tasks involved with a home purchase can strengthen a marriage. Couples learn about each other's dreams, and they also learn how to be practical and compromise.

Is 13 an unlucky number? We don't think so, and we found 13 superstitions that just might bring your home a little luck this year.

1. **Never walk under a ladder.** This is believed to be the devil's territory. If there's no way around it, protect yourself by crossing your fingers or making the fig sign with your hand — closed fist, with the thumb between your index and middle fingers.
2. **When you move out of a house, leave the broom behind.** Along with the dust and dirt of your old home, old brooms also carry the negative aspects of your life. A new broom signifies a fresh start in your new home.
3. **Carry bread and salt with you when you first enter a new home (along with your new broom).** After crossing the threshold, sprinkle salt in front of the door to keep evil spirits away.
4. **It's bad luck to carry a hoe into the house.** If you do it by mistake, carry it out by walking backwards through the same door — it'll reverse the bad luck.
5. **Stuff fennel, an herb with yellow flowers and feathery leaves, into your keyhole or hang it over the door** to protect your home from witches.
6. **Paint your front porch blue to ward off ghosts.** This superstition, which originated in Southern plantation homes, tells us that "haints," or ghosts, can't cross water. Painting the porch "haint blue" would confuse ghosts into thinking the porch was made of water, so they wouldn't enter the home.
7. **Never put shoes on a dresser or table.** Bad luck will ensue, according to a Jewish superstition.
8. **In fung shui architecture, there should be windows on a house's east side to face the sunrise.** A 27-story home in Mumbai, valued at \$1 billion, currently sits empty because its owner believes the lack of windows on the east side will bring him bad luck.
9. **On Chinese New Year, which was celebrated on Feb. 10 this year, you should clean your home** thoroughly to get rid of bad luck and accept new luck into your home. Also decorate your doors and windows with posters featuring the word "fu," which means good luck and happiness.
10. **According to a Norse superstition, placing an acorn on a windowsill will protect a house from being struck by lightning.** Window blind pulls decorated like acorns are still popular.
11. **Never open an umbrella inside.** Doing so would be an insult to the sun god, as umbrellas are commonly used for protection against the sun.
12. **Don't move into a new place on a Friday, Saturday, or rainy day.** These days are unlucky and may prevent you from ever truly settling into your new home. According to Indian superstition, Thursday is the luckiest day to move in.
13. **Never pound a nail after sunset, or you'll wake the tree gods.** Wouldn't want to do that.