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Setting the stage for a successful home sale

Homestage Impressions can help deliver designs that sell
BY ERIK RADVON ERADVON@LEOMINSTERCHAMP.COM



Elizabeth Flanagan can help your property stand out from the pack by making the most out of a property's potential. SUBMITTED PHOTO

In a time when the real estate market is flooded, what can be done to make one property stand out from all the rest? The answer may be staging--having a professional come in and tweak a property's appearance to make it more appealing to potential buyers and get it off the market as quick as possible. Staging has been common practice on the West Coast for years, and Leominster resident Elizabeth Flanagan is on the forefront of bringing the technique to this side of the country.

Flanagan's new company, Homestage Impressions, offers a complete range of staging service. Don't call it decorating, though--staging involves using existing furnishings and color schemes already present in a house to evoke a strong emotional reaction in potential buyers.

"We find how to use rooms to their highest potential, remove excess, and improve the overall flow of the property," Flanagan said. "We can dramatically improve the style and presentation of individual rooms or a whole house on a budget."

Given the state of the economy and a real estate market that will clearly favor buyers for the foreseeable future, Flanagan believes home staging is on the way to becoming something of a necessity.

"I think it's almost as necessary as a home inspection is, at this point," she said.

While hiring a home stager can save time and energy, the main benefit, according to Flanagan, is the return on the investment.

"People generally have to drop their asking prices by 5 to 10-percent after a home has sat on the market for more than 90 days. For a \$325,000, that's a loss of anywhere between \$16,000 and over \$32,000," Flanagan said. "So the message I'm trying to get out to the public and to real estate agents is the return on investment. Spending a few hundred dollars up front could end up saving you tens of thousands of dollars in the long run."

Flanagan received her real estate license in March and is beginning to build relationships with real estate agencies across the city. She has also launched a Web site, www.homestageimpressions.com, where people can get a look at her handiwork.

In addition to helping sellers make their property stand out in the market, Flanagan can also help those moving set up their new houses beautifully from day one.

Flanagan's new business endeavor is probably comes as no surprise to those that know her. She has had a lifelong passion for home design, often volunteering to work her magic on the houses of friends and family members.

"So many people really dread having to rearrange their spaces, but for me it's always been so enjoyable and rewarding. I just love it. This is fun to me," she said.

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