

Setting a big, hairy, audacious goal

Local businessman helps interns learn ropes of real estate

By JANICE DRESSER
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Bill Syrios is a property manager and a real estate investor.

He is using all these skills to mentor 10 interns this summer who have signed on with his newly-created Stewardship Home Buyers.

Syrios, who has owned Stewardship Properties in Eugene since 1989, came up with the idea of training interns in all aspects of real estate after reading two books by Jim Collins. One book told how to build a leadership team and the other urged readers to make a BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal).

Syrios is making a BHAG for Stewardship Properties, to grow ten times larger than its present size. This is where the interns and Stewardship Home Buyers come in.

They will work all summer on finding potential home sellers, learn to remodel the homes they have purchased, and publicly market their intent in capital letters painted on the side of a house built on the back of a truck that reads: "WE BUY HOUSES!"

Syrios' theory is an investor needs to learn all aspects of real estate even if it means getting a bit dirty.

"They drive around with my property maintenance people and learn from watching them," Syrios said.

All this learning earns them \$8 per hour for a 40-hour work week.

The ten college students began their internships June 13 and will complete them Sept.



JOHN GUSSENHOVEN/The Springfield News

Interns take in the visual impact of a wooden house on a truck.

16. Each one is a business major. Seven attend the University of Oregon, two Oregon State University, and one Northwest Christian College.

Syrios recruited possible interns by advertising in the UO and OSU campus newspapers and the UO Career Center. He required each respondent to complete an application by writing a "life resume" and instructed them to become famil-

iar with Stewardship Home Buyers Web site and other similar Web sites. He also cautioned applicants that he was only looking for serious interns who were "teachable and open to work hard."

His goal is to train his interns to become skilled investors and eventually partner with him. He has developed a structured daily schedule the interns are expected to follow. They are di-

vided into two teams that alternate between the office and the field. Some evenings and weekends are spent listening to tapes and guest speakers and attending discussions.

As of Monday, they had purchased three houses to remodel. One is located at 233 South C St., a 1400 square foot house built in 1920. The interns plan to renovate it and offer it for rent.

That is their BHAG, anyway.

Business

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According to Rush, Don even let Miller leave for school, but never cut any pay for the time he was away from work.

Miller said Don would not charge for some services involving young children and babies because he felt working in the community gave him so much as an individual.

"It was part of his ministry — he was given so much, he wanted to give something back (to the community)," Miller said. "He and Cleone were great in the community, just awesome ... they will be missed."

According to Rush, Don is an active member and past president of the Springfield Lions Club.

He has also been a member of several local business associations, as well as a longtime member of Twin Rivers Baptist Church.

Having organized more services than he can remember (a couple of hundred services a year for 30 years — you do the math) Don said those involving local police and fire crews have been among the most memorable.

That, according to the energetic 74-year-old, is because those departments put so much care into making sure their fellow comrades are put to rest in a memorable and respectful way.

"It's just nice to see the way they work together, and pull together," Don said.

While funeral services have remained pretty much the same over the years, rules governing funeral homes have changed drastically over the last decade.

Don said there is an increasing number of laws that govern funeral homes, and employees need to be certified to conduct services.

Many of the corporations that have bought up family owned funeral homes, according to Don, have come under fire for failing to employ certified people.

As a result, he said, many of the corporately owned funeral homes are filing for bankruptcy because they have become targets of lawsuits by families who have seen funeral homes fail to conduct proper services.

The Slacks will continue to operate under the same name as the Majors did.

While the Majors have been running the funeral home on Mill Street the longest, they weren't the first.

According to Don, Lars and Clara Frederikson, a Danish couple, built the funeral home in 1962.

The Frederiksons operated the business until Don and Cleone took over 14 years later.

The building, which has gone through interior renovations and additions over the years, was built by local contractor Eldon Shields.