

## Real estate agent offers advice to future first-time buyers

Written by Ariana M. Taylor, Daily Vidette Staff Writer  
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As May approaches, several potential graduates may fear the thought of venturing out into the world, finding employment, and ultimately becoming homeowners.

To help nervous first-time homebuyers, Melanie Walker, certified residential real estate specialist at Coldwell Banker, explained her experiences in the real estate world.

Walker, also a registered nurse at Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, began working at Bloomington's Coldwell Banker Real Estate in 2000. Although she obtained a bachelor's degree in nursing from Southeast Missouri State University, she said she "absolutely love[s] the real estate business."

"Thirteen years ago, I decided that I'd always loved real estate. My former husband and I owned a lot of investment properties. I decided that I needed to get out there and start earning that money instead of giving it to another realtor," Walker said. "I loved buying, renting, and fixing up [property], so I [went into the real estate business] from the management standpoint leasing property, and then decided to go into the sales [aspect]."

An average day in the office for Walker begins with a cup of coffee provided by her husband every morning. Then she immediately checks the "hot sheets" which, according to Walker, is the real estate bible.

"The list tells you everything that's new on the market. It [also shows] price changes, [property] that's sold, [and property] that now has a contract on it," Walker explained.

Although the system is not accessible to the public, Walker mentions that the Coldwell Banker website, CBHOA.com, is available to anyone and allows users to "find any house on the market

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in this area."

Walker only comes into the office three days a week, but she explained that her duties do not stop when she exits the facility.

"We have our phones on 24/7 so my phone is always charged. Most realtors are always on the go ... you get the call, you go," Walker said. "Tuesday is our sales meeting day, so everybody is in the office on Tuesdays at 9 a.m."



Walker said after the sales meeting, realtors attend "realtor open houses" where they are able to physically see homes that are on the market rather than viewing photos.

According to Walker, since most clients work a nine to five job, realtors mostly work weekends and are "pretty flexible" during the weekday. She added a broker can never know what to expect because the amount of clients one may have fluctuates.

"You never know when that phone rings what it's going to bring. One of my good friends in the

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office, a week and a half ago she had no buyers ... this week she has five buyers all wanting her to show them houses this weekend,” Walker explained. “You have to be very flexible, be prepared for whatever, and make adjustments in your schedule.”

Walker said the real estate business is a “dog-eat-dog world,” but she has a “golden rule” where she prefers not to work with a client who has another realtor.

“I kind of have this ethics thing where if a client is working with someone else, I’m not going to step on that other realtor’s toes,” Walker explained.

Buying a house is one of the biggest decisions one may make in their lifetime.

Walker offered advice to students who may fear stepping out into the real world.

“If parents are willing to let students come back home [after graduation] ... I say absolutely [students should go back home]. Probably the biggest mistake that young students can make is to get themselves so far in debt that they’ll never qualify to buy a home,” Walker said.



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Whether students decide to move into their own homes or go back home to their parents, Walker encourages students to create a credit history because lenders specifically look at “credit worthiness” when an individual is looking to buy a house.

“You get all the junk mail with credit cards and if you’re smart you throw them away. Well if you’re smarter, maybe you take one credit card, buy something on credit, and pay it off,” Walker said. “If you get out of school and you’ve never had a credit card, it’s going to be really hard because you’re just getting out of school and you don’t have a job history.”

Walker said she loves working with first-time homebuyers, and always places herself in the shoes of her clients. She recommended students should find a broker who has their best interest at heart.

Walker said that her goal is not only to keep all of her customers happy, but to also stay in her past clients’ minds by staying in touch.

“If people forget you were their realtor then you’re not really doing your job,” Walker said.