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I am pleased to present you with the latest issue of Life@Home. This newsletter is designed to give you the real estate information that is important to you. In each issue, you will find practical tips and articles related to buying, selling or owning a home, as well as the latest news on real estate trends. I hope that you enjoy this issue of Life@Home. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Beautiful Center Hall Colonial in Montville. Visit Century21cardinal.com for more info on this listing and many more!

Falling House Prices Create New Opportunities for Buyers



Buyers should pay close attention to the results of a report released on Feb. 10, 2009.

On that date, Denver-based Integrated Asset Services released its House Price Index for December 2008. Based on the most current information available at the time, the report shows a 13.8 percent decline in house prices for the full year 2008 and an overall decline of 19.1 percent since the market's peak at the end of 2006. These are national numbers, of course; certain local markets have seen greater or lesser declines.

Of greater interest to potential buyers, however, is the data contained in the IAS report that identifies 10 of the counties hit hardest during the national real estate decline. It is in these markets that some of the greatest buying opportunities lie. Not surprisingly, most of the hardest hit counties were in states that experienced the largest gains during the housing bubble. California fared the worst, with the top three of the nation's hardest hit counties: San Joaquin County, down 51 percent from its high; Monterey County, down 49 percent; and Kern County, down 45 percent. In Florida, Lee County fared the worst, with a decline of 44.6 percent. Charlotte County dropped 42.2 percent, and Pasco County declined 39.7 percent.

"We're seeing house prices returning to pre-bubble levels, and there are no signs of leveling off just yet," says Dave McCarthy, president and CEO of Integrated Asset Services. "But location is still everything."

In these hard hit counties, and others, opportunity knocks for savvy buyers. Want to learn more about prices in your neighborhood? Give our office a call, and we can provide you with prices and other data for areas that you'd like to live in as well as tips on how to make the most of current market conditions. If you would like more information, please visit www.century21cardinal.com.

How to Downsize Your Space in Style



Are you moving into a smaller home? If so, you don't have to sacrifice luxury and style along with square footage.

Downsizing is a popular option these days, as people move from larger to smaller houses for a variety of reasons. Some are empty nesters, looking for a more manageable home when children fly the coop. Others might be college graduates, moving from their suburban childhood home to their first apartment in the city. No matter what the reason, a smaller space can be just as comfortable and elegant as the larger one left behind.

Many downsizers opt to change their design style when they move. Lauri Ward, a designer and author of "Downsizing Your Home With Style," says her clients often swap traditional furniture and design for cleaner lines that are more eclectic and sleek. The biggest design challenge for those who downsize: storage. Many smaller homes lack garages and basements. What to do? Ward recommends closed storage—a trunk rather than a coffee table, for example—to do away with what she calls "visual chaos." She also makes extensive use of built-ins, which save space.

In living areas, avoid cluttering the floor space with tables that have no purpose or with stacks of magazines. Opening up the floors makes the space appear larger—and in any downsized home, every piece needs to earn its keep by having a purpose for being there. Rooms in a smaller home need to serve double duty. Combine a home office with a guest room, for example. Or purchase a dining room table that can double as a desk for a home office.

"People often think they're compromising if they go smaller, but good things come in small packages," Ward says. "You can really have a beautiful home—even more beautiful than your last. It's more about quality than quantity."

Digital TV Transition Delayed



If you've delayed picking up the converter box that will allow your analog TV to view digital broadcasts, you're in luck. Congress recently extended the date that TV stations can broadcast in digital only until June 12, 2009. Broadcasters may opt to transition before then; some already have.