

THE NEWS-HERALD



Jeff Forman/News-Herald

At 27, real estate agent Michael Kaim leads the top-selling team at Prudential Select Properties in Mentor.

Born to sell real estate

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For two years, Bonnie Spinelli and her husband, Rocco, tried to sell their home in Munson Township so they could relocate to Hamden Township.

The couple would list the home with a real estate agent, and when that person couldn't sell within a certain period, they would find another one.

One day, soon after their listing with a real estate agent expired, they received a telephone call from Michael Kaim, who had just launched his career as a full-time real estate agent with Prudential Select Properties in Mentor.

"He came to our home and gave a sales pitch," Bonnie Spinelli recalled. "Initially we were skeptical because he's very young."

To the Spinellis' surprise, the 27-year-old Kaim sold the house "within a short time."

"We got (the price) we asked for," Bonnie Spinelli said. "He is very aggressive."

Bonnie Spinelli said she was impressed by his sales strategy, which included a few open houses, a luncheon open house for other brokers, and advertisements in many publications.

"Everything he said he was going to do, he followed through," Bonnie Spinelli said.

Since selling her house two years ago, she has been recommending Kaim to her friends.

Such personal references and aggressive marketing helped Kaim and his team to post home sales worth \$12.5 million in 2003, and \$21.4 million so far this year.

Now, he has set a sales target of \$40 million for 2005.

■ After selling first home as a college sophomore, 27-year-old Realtor now setting benchmarks at firm

To serve buyers and sellers better, he has formed a group, the Michael Kaim Team.

His sister, Tina Hivnor, who also is a real estate agent, was the first to join Kaim's team. Other team members are Matthew Canzone, Jason Hadad and Jennifer Hart.

There's no magic formula to be a successful real estate agent, said Kaim, who sold his first home when he was a sophomore at John Carroll University in University Heights.

"All I'm doing is covering the basics," said Kaim, a 1995 graduate of Lake Catholic High School in Mentor.

It calls for "hitting the streets by door-knocking and cold-calling 'for sale by owners' and expired listings."

Cold-calling is an industry term for unsolicited calls.

Kaim, who grew up in a real estate business family, said some of his sales techniques he learned from parents Frank and Jane. They operated Century 21 Laundries for 27 years before selling it in 2002.

That company became Prudential Select Properties under new management.

Soon after obtaining his business marketing degree from JCU, Kaim worked for Carlos Justo, a nationally renowned Realtor in Miami, for 18 months.

After honing his sales skills with Justo, Kaim joined Prudential Select in 2002.

"I didn't have a desk then," said Kaim, who occupies the entire second floor of Prudential Select at 7395 Center St.

In 2003, Kaim's team became the top sales

group in the company, which has eight offices and 200 salespeople.

It was recognized as the top team with the highest sales in volume, units and listing. In that year, Kaim's team listed 111 properties and sold 80.

When Hivnor joined his brother, she expected him to build a list of 10 to 12 homes within the first six months.

But she was surprised when Kaim built a much bigger list.

"I didn't expect 20 to 25 homes," she said. "I was shocked. It was crazy."

Steve Forsythe, regional manager of Prudential Select, lauded Kaim's hard work.

"Real estate is in his blood," Forsythe said. "Michael himself has built marketing skills. He has the right attitude; and attitude is everything in this business."

A lot of fear is involved in cold calling, Forsythe said, noting the caller should be prepared to accept rejections.

The team concept is beneficial to buyers and sellers. They can contact one of the team members instead of waiting for a particular agent, Kaim said.

A talking telephone is another marketing tool implemented by him.

"For sale" signs put up Kaim's team will have a toll-free number and a code. If dialed, a pre-recorded message will give a detailed description of the house.

Kaim and team focus on homes in Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga counties.

To reach the team, call (440) 266-8322.