

NVAR Members Hone Leadership Skills at State Leadership Academy

REALTORS® Ready to Empower, Lead Peers Toward Success

By Joe Rominiecki, Communications Coordinator

Three Northern Virginia REALTORS® recently completed training to become tomorrow's leaders in the real estate industry.

At the Virginia Association of REALTORS® annual convention in September, the 2006 graduating class of the VAR Leadership Academy was announced. Among the graduates were:

- Luis A. Lama, CRS, GRI of Long & Foster Real Estate in Falls Church
- Susan Mekenney, ABR, CRS, GRI, ePRO of Re/Max Allegiance in Fairfax
- Julie Pearson, GRI of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Alexandria

Lama will be the NVAR 2007 Chairman of the Board, and Mekenney served as the 2006 NVAR Treasurer.

Mekenney raved about the program. "It was the most amazing experience I have had in my real estate career," she said. "It was one of the best programs I have ever been involved with, and I worked for a Fortune 500 company before I got into real estate."

The Leadership Academy consists of three 2.5 day retreats for the class of approximately 20 REALTORS® statewide. Each retreat – one in January, one in April and one in July – involves educational and motivational speakers, group reading and

discussion sessions and team building exercises, all aimed at developing the class members' leadership skills. The program's conclusion took place at the VAR Convention in September.

Lama said the program has helped to prepare him for his duties as 2007 NVAR Chairman of the Board. "For the next year the Leadership Academy has empowered me with a sound foundation to solve problems," he said. "It taught me to lead rather than manage, to welcome change and to make decisions strictly for the benefit of the association. It also taught me to work hand-in-hand with the staff and the leadership team to meet – and by all means exceed – the expectations of our membership."

Pearson is in just her fourth year in real estate. She is a member of NVAR's Government Affairs Committee and said she

wants to get involved in other capacities at NVAR, but the academy also taught her that leadership is a daily practice.

"Leadership is taking people where they cannot go without you," she said, "but a title alone doesn't make you a leader. You have the opportunity every day to be a leader. It's not just a title."

Nominations for the Leadership Academy are submitted in the summer, and class for the upcoming year is announced at the VAR convention in September. Three NVAR members were selected for 2007:

- Charlie Bengel, Re/Max Allegiance, Leesburg
- Angela Eliopoulos, GRI, Long & Foster Real Estate, Washington, D.C.
- Nicholas Kuhn, Jr., McEneaney Associates, Alexandria



Three NVAR members graduated from the 2006 VAR Leadership Academy in September: (Left to Right) Julie Pearson, Luis A. Lama and Susan Mekenney.