

It is with great pleasure and sincere humility that I accept the position of President of the Kettle Moraine Realtors Association for the 2011/2012 year. Representing such a distinct group of consummate professionals such as sit in this room today is a responsibility that I do not take lightly. Since moving to Washington County in 2006, you have all welcomed me with open arms to this very tight knit family of Real Estate Professionals. In that regard...I think it's imperative that as we step into another challenging year in this real estate market that we remember one thing: While we all may wear different badges with different company logos, the fact remains that we are all members of one distinct group of professionals that has had to be on the front lines of this most difficult economic war. As a Real estate community, standing with each other as conditions continue to become more difficult is more important now than it has ever been. The opportunity to build our REALTOR® Brand has never been more present than it is now. If we unite in one common goal...to raise the bar of professionalism and ethical practice, the possibilities of moving our individual businesses and our collective reputations as REALTORS® has never been greater than it is now. The public continues to look to us to represent their best interests in extremely challenging circumstances who for many are quite literally facing the break point of their financial situations. Many of us in this room have faced our most difficult real estate deals this past year as financing regulations continue to present new challenges, home values have diminished beyond our client's expectations, rules and regulations in all arenas continue to change and tighten and time with our loved ones become less and less and we struggle to keep deals together, bring peace to our troubled clients and make great efforts to bring each deal to a closing. However, without trying to be a walking cliché, it's fair to say that the old saying "that which will not kill you can only make you stronger" has never been more true and more pertinent than it is now. I can honestly say that amongst the chaos of this market, I have grown both personally and professionally as I overcome each challenging situation...and I can guarantee that if I ask you to dig deep in this past year's memories, you could all say the same about yourselves as well. Looking back to history as our greatest teacher, The Great Depression yielded one of our most beloved generations...our Grandfathers and Grandmothers who truly knew what it to live fully and without regret. What is most poignant to me about that generation is that although their dinner tables largely consisted of bread and soup and with their bank accounts nearly empty...their hearts were full and flourishing. And out of that great strife and suffering came a generation of people who valued the right things...honest dealings, ethical living, practical problem solving, hard work and above all else...the true meaning of living well...which often times had nothing to do with the almighty dollar. And while we will be hard pressed to mimic that courage that our forefathers had in facing an economic situation much worse than what we are facing now, we must take their example and make it our own. Make opportunity out of struggle...and so that is my goal as your 2011, 2012 President...to look this struggle dead in the eye and not cower or tremble but to rise up and be better in all aspects both as a REALTOR® and as a human being. Doing this together as a Real Estate community will breathe new life into our profession...so I ask you to challenge yourselves as our new year begins to rise above the struggle by picking up a book, going to a seminar, talking to that great depression generation, digging deeper personally and professionally to become someone you never thought you could or would be. While putting up great numbers in a profession as ours will always be perceived as the "ultimate achievement", the reality is numbers are meaningless if the character behind the professional is questionable. Create a new mantra for yourself that embraces the idea that struggle will bring about a new greatness in you...anything is possible now. Don't limit yourselves to what your numbers are...because the reality is as a REALTOR®, you are only as good as your last deal. So make each "deal" about something more...make it a character building opportunity that will allow you to tell stories of your "great struggle" as our Grandparents and Great Grandparents told us. As someone very wise once told me..."live the question" ..."live the question" ...and you will find the answer. So I challenge each of you to find your question for this upcoming year, be it personal or professional...and live that question to the fullest to find your answers to make you the best person you can be. Making greatness out of struggle defines who you are and creates your legacy...let's do this together this year and make it a year not just about the numbers but also about who we are as a group of Moms and Dads, Brother and Sisters, Grandmas and Grandpas and as a group of Real Estate Professionals...

I look forward to working with you all this year and thank you again for this great opportunity as President of the Kettle Moraine REALTORS® Association.