

Best Company to Do Business With in Marin County

FRANK HOWARD ALLEN REALTORS

By John Abbott

On the eve of commemorating its centennial, Frank Howard Allen has a lot to celebrate. In 2008, it was voted not only Best Real Estate Company in the North Bay but also the Best Company to Do Business with in Marin County, an auspicious double dip for a firm that's swept the Best Real Estate Company award every year since it was introduced in 2002.

"We're very excited about being named best company," says Noreen Smith, president/CFO. Smith, a 22-year veteran with the company, became responsible for Frank Howard Allen's day-to-day activities last year. "It's a great honor to receive this award. And it feels even better to know we were also recognized as the best real estate company."

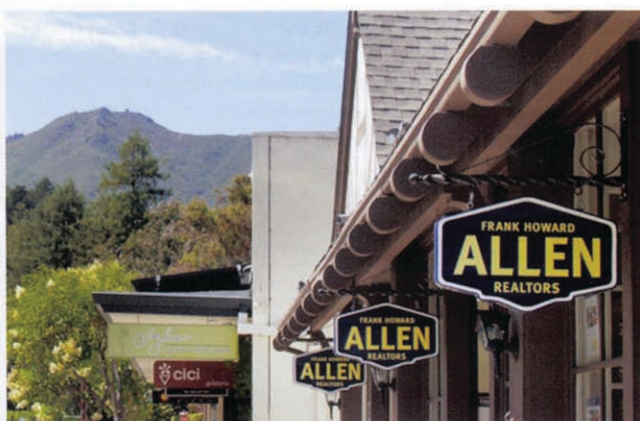
Frank Howard Allen has 370 agents within Marin and Sonoma counties and more than 600 total located at more than 20 regional offices. Privately owned and operated, it's one of Marin's oldest and most respected companies, and by virtue of its strong heritage, it's helped to shape the history of the North Bay as a whole.

The secret of its success after nearly 100 years? "We bring in the best agents in the business," Smith says. "They come to a company that has a culture of giving, and they quickly adapt to that philosophy, and we all do it together." More than 40 percent of Frank Howard Allen agents have been with the company more than 10 years, a statistic that's amplified by the fact that the vast majority of the company's business comes from referrals and repeat customers.

Based on the principle, "Love where you live, give and work,"



(L to R) Jennifer Falla-Firkins, Alva Falla and Janice Guehring were honored for Top Team Dollar Volume this year.



Frank Howard Allen's operating philosophy has been driven by an unwavering commitment to the community. "Our owners instilled that belief in giving back to the community, and our agents do the same," Smith says. For example, the company sponsors a matching grants program, in which each of its local offices chooses a worthy program and offers its support. Its agents also play a big role in the Rebuilding Together program, where teams of employees take part in community refurbishment projects ranging from repairing the homes of the elderly to volunteering at homeless shelters.

The economy, aggravated by the mortgage and credit crisis, has presented a tremendous challenge to Frank Howard Allen over the past 18 months. "It's been tough, and it's impacted both existing and new homes," Smith admits. "We've stayed strong by keeping focused on the positives. Our market share in Marin County in 2008 was about 24 percent in units—the number one spot—but we were also number one in the North Bay in market share for sales volume. That gives us an excellent platform for growth as we approach our 100th anniversary."

The company has recently launched several new initiatives, including a foray into social networking designed to increase communication between agents and their clients. You can now log on to Frank Howard Allen blogs in both Marin (Guidemehome2marin.com; Guidemehome2marinluxury.com) and Sonoma (Guidemehome2sonoma.com) counties to get the latest updates on issues in the industry. "It gives consumers a chance to have their voices heard," Smith points out. "We're excited about opening up this new channel of communication with the public." ■

<http://fhallen.com>



Best Real Estate Company

FRANK HOWARD ALLEN REALTORS

By *Virginie Boone*

Being able to maintain standards during tough times is certainly a measure of one's worth, and Frank Howard Allen Realtors has once again (as it has consistently since 2002) been named best at what it does by the readers of *North Bay biz*—a testament to its ability to ride through good times and bad. This year, it's even being awarded Best Company to do Business with in Marin County.

"We really are part of the fabric of the North Bay," says Claudia Coury, Frank Howard Allen's director of marketing. "We're a successful, nearly century-old, locally owned and operated business and a consistent contributor to local organizations that benefit children, culture, the arts and well-being."

Frank Howard Allen first opened its doors in Marin County in 1910, owned first by Frank Howard Allen, Jr. himself. In 1949, Allen named son Charles Howard "Howdy" Allen a partner, and the firm became known as Frank Howard Allen & Son. Howdy took over in 1953 upon his dad's passing. The Brackett family has owned the firm since 1989; Larry Brackett still serves as chairman/CEO.

Frank Howard Allen has always specialized in the North Bay, helping clients "Love Where they Live," the company's motto, in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and San Francisco counties. More than 600 professional agents work for Frank Howard Allen, spread across more than 20 offices. As with any service-oriented business, the firm's magic is its people, like Ed Reiners, Petaluma office manager, who was recently recognized as 2009 Citizen of the Year by the Petaluma Area Chamber of Commerce and the town's *Argus-Courier* newspaper.

"Our integrity, experience and seasoned agents have let us earn people's trust," Coury adds. "It's key to note that more than 150 of our 370 CORE [Company Owned Real Estate] agents and administrators have been with Frank Howard Allen for 10 years or more."

Last year, Frank Howard Allen led the Marin market, both in terms of units sold (24.2 percent of the total in the county) and dollar volume (22 percent).

In addition, the realtor is committed to helping its communities, holding a first ever



Coat Drive last November during which more than 1,500 coats were collected and distributed to Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa, Committee on the Shelterless (COTS), Homeward Bound of Marin, Open Closet, Petaluma People Services Center and Social Advocates for Youth (SAY).

"We understand how important it is to give back to the communities we serve," says Brackett. "It's only natural to enrich and nurture the things that make the North Bay such an extraordinary place to live. We also feel it's our responsibility to do what we can to help, because this is where we do business." ■

<http://fballen.com>



CEO Larry Brackett



[L to R] Kim Hutcheon, John Duran, Raina Duran and Kent Byers received recognition for Top Team Units sold at the "Hats Off to You" event.