



# News and Views

Dakota Chapter CRS

Spring 2008

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## President's Message

Have you heard “home sales for existing homes fell in 45 states during the October-December quarter, 3 states didn't report, North Dakota remained unchanged, and South Dakota sales rose 8.9%.” That information comes from the Rapid City Journal and wire services. This is really good news for us here in the Dakotas not just because our markets are doing better than “national markets” but because our media has decided to print good news.

When we get this type of article we need to thank the publisher and make sure that the public is aware of it. It is extremely important that consumers



2008 President  
Bruce Curington

stay current on market conditions. We are their best source of information and can help them understand local market conditions. We all know that mortgage rates are great and that the supply of housing is at least adequate but we need to get that word out to the public. Additionally, we need to keep a positive attitude and communicate it to our clients.

OK! The winter vacation is over and it's time to get out there and sell houses!

*Bruce*

## 2008 Leadership

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## fast fact >> >> >> >> >>



Nearly 30 percent of home electrical-wiring fires can be traced to the misuse of electric cords, such as overloading circuits, poor maintenance and running the cords under rugs or through high traffic areas.

Source: InsWeb.com

### In This Issue...

- New Technology Tools
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# New Technology Tools Allow CRSs to Work Out of the Traditional Office

Wearing shorts and a New York City Police Department T-shirt, John Pinto, CRS, is stretching out his legs on a chair perched on the dock of his second home in California's Napa Valley. He is looking at the blue water and watching the hawks circle and then dive for prey. But he's not on vacation.

Pinto is making business calls on his cell phone and Bluetooth wireless headset, and has fired up the wireless connection for his Red Tablet PC — checking on new e-mail messages as he chats. If his client on the phone needs to review a home inspection report or review a contract, Pinto can send it over instantly.

By using the right technology, you can take your work anywhere. For Pinto, his goal is to spend every Thursday evening through Tuesday in Napa Valley and come back to San Jose, his formal business base, as little as possible. Of course, when he does, almost every minute is scheduled for face-to-face meetings with clients.

"You can run your real estate career, or it can run you," says Pinto with Realty World, John Pinto & Associates. "Successful REALTORS® have very lucrative careers — some making more money than doctors and lawyers — and can still have a great life."

## Creating the Paperless Office

Pinto and other CRS Designees can work without traditional desks and file cabinets. That allows them to work in the car, at road stops, or in homes or hotels in any location — from Italy to their backyards. The paperless office is not just a dream anymore; it's their reality.

Gregg Fujita, CRS, GRI, uses an online transaction management

system called SureClose from Stewart Realty Solutions, allowing him to scan in and access clients' documents at a secure Web site. "When I travel, I no longer have to carry file folders for pending transactions," says Fujita with Harbor Bay Realty in Alameda, Calif. "As long as I have Internet access, I can find every document I need for my clients' transactions."

On the flip side, Fujita gives his clients a special password to access their own documents, which is another big time saver. "About 75 percent of my clients are Internet savvy, and they love being able to access their own transaction," he says.

Fujita finds the disclosure documents and other information also is handy for helping to answer buyers' questions up front and mitigate problems before they happen later. And now instead of a bulky transaction folder, he can hand his clients a CD with all the documents at the end of the transaction, including the home warranty and HUD forms to file with their taxes.

Mark Porter, CRS, GRI, uses many technology tools for his own paperless office and teaches those techniques to CRS students in the Advanced Technology CRS Course (CRS 206). For his clients, he uses a Hewlett-Packard 7310XI, a multifunction printer, fax machine and scanner all-in-one.

"I can scan and save documents, and get rid of those manilla folders I used to have for every client," says Porter with Keller Williams Realty in Carrollton, Texas. He loads the documents into his H-P 4000 Notebook with a 12-inch screen. With his lighter than average notebook slung over his shoulder in a bag, Porter can set up his office on any café table in any spot with WI-FI.

Traveling is Ira Serkes's second love after selling residential properties.

Using a software program called SKYPE.com, the CRS Designee can tap into his phone calls while on an Alaska

cruise. He's literally cut the cord of a physical phone line or the need for power cells to run a cell phone. Through SKYPE.com, a headset, Tablet PC and a wireless connection, he receives and sends phone calls and instant messages from anywhere in the world.

"This system allows me to do business wherever I am," says Serkes with RE/MAX Executive in Berkeley, Calif. He also counts himself blessed that technology allows him to work with a virtual assistant living on a ranch in Texas. They share the same server-based database, so they can work together easily.

That's a business relationship Pinto calls "inside-outside." When he's outside, his assistant is inside, or stationary, and can facilitate operating his business most efficiently.

"Never underestimate the inside-outside relationship," Pinto says. In his own business, he has two other salespeople and 15 support staff. Comparing salespeople's independence to cats, Pinto says, "Have you ever tried to herd 100 cats? They don't listen. You have to have those who comply with directions helping to run your business too."

Or for another analogy, he turns to sports. "What would Walter Payton have been without his offensive line?" Wireless and other technology tools that allow salespeople out of the office are efficient and time-saving. But as Pinto says, he needs people in his back office or he'd have to stay in San Jose most of the time instead of Napa Valley.



# Get to Know CRS Member Connect

True success doesn't happen overnight. Whether you're building a highly productive real estate career, constructing a dream home or creating a new online resource center for CRS members, it takes time, energy and proper planning to realize your vision. After months of planning and development, CRS members now can enjoy the benefits of the CRS Member Connect virtual community ([www.crs.com/Community](http://www.crs.com/Community)).

This valuable resource provides members with the latest real estate

industry and Council news as well as links to current market research and data. It will also provide useful professional resources, such as:

- presentation and marketing templates;
- sample marketing materials;
- audio clips of interviews with industry experts;
- archived articles from *The Residential Specialist*;
- CRS member discussion forums; and
- a CRS blog covering real estate

news, trends and market data

Look for Member Connect to evolve over time as new content and resources are added in the coming months. CRS Director of Member Services, Colleen McMahon, manages the Council's virtual community project. "Member Connect will serve as a central destination where members can find a broad range of resources, tools and professional connections to help them succeed," she says.

Visit [www.crs.com/Community](http://www.crs.com/Community) today!

## Looking for CRS Classes in the Region??

Are you looking for a way to differentiate yourself from all of the other REALTORS® in your market? Has your business slowed down and you want to find strategies to give you an edge? Are you looking for tips and refreshers on how to deal with your specific market?

Then now is a great time to attend one of the hundreds of CRS courses or Approved One-Unit Courses that have been scheduled in 2008! But how do you locate a course when new offerings are being scheduled every day? You could check the CRS Course sched-

ule every week...OR as a member or past student of CRS you have access to a convenient tool called the **Course Notifier!** To activate **Course Notifier**, just log-in to your Advantage Account (from any page on [crs.com](http://crs.com)) and look under "**Designee Action Menu**" (for designees), "**Candidate Action Menu**" (for members) or "**Student Action Menu**" (for non-members). Under this heading you will see a bullet point for "My Course Notifier Settings".

Just click on **My Course Notifier Settings** and you will be taken to a page where you can choose the distance you would travel to take a CRS Course (up to 999 miles) and at the beginning of

every month you will be notified via e-mail if a course has been scheduled in your allotted area in the next 45 days. Remember to save your settings!

That's all you have to do! No more worrying about when a course is coming to your town! Once a month you will be notified of **every course opportunity** in your area.

So customize your Course Notifier now to make a difference in your career today!

Questions? Contact a Customer Service Representative at 1-800-462-8841 or email [CRSHelp@CRS.com](mailto:CRSHelp@CRS.com)

## Calendar of Upcoming CRS Events

Oct 14-15 CRS 210 Course in Fargo, ND  
Watch website for more details  
[www.dakotacrs.com](http://www.dakotacrs.com)

[Click here](#) for National CRS Classes available

## New CRS Designees

**Congratulations to those who have earned the CRS Designation in 2008!**

Peggy Mahar, Fargo

Kevin Fisher, Fargo

Daniel O'Hara, Sioux Falls

Mavis Winkels, Grand Forks

James Tharp, Huron

Emma French Laird, Yankton

# Dakota Chapter Re-Certified

Your Dakota CRS Chapter received notification that the re-certification process has been completed. Here is the letter the Chapter Administration received:

Dear Dakotas CRS Chapter,

The 2008 Chapter Policy Review Board has just completed the CRS Chapter re-certifications for 2007. We are happy to inform you that the Dakota CRS Chapter has been re-certified due to their fulfillment of the minimum mandatory requirements for Chapter re-certification in 2007. Congratulations on a job well done!

Jennifer L. Williams

Chapter & Regional Program Coordinator



## IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT SELL-A-BRATION® 2009

The registration fee for Sell-a-bration®, the annual conference sponsored by the Council of Residential Specialists, has remained the same for six years. At the same time the costs to put on this event have increased significantly. In order to offer the same quality experience that Sell-a-bration® attendees have come to expect and still meet our financial obligations, it is necessary for CRS to increase the registration fees for Sell-a-bration® by \$75.

This increase will take effect April 15, 2008. If you plan to register for Sell-a-bration® 2009, which will be held in San Francisco from February 5 – 7, and do so **before** April 14, you can still take advantage of the current registration fees.

	Received by 04.14.08	Received after 04.14.08	Received after 11.17.08
CRS Designee/Member	\$545	\$620	\$670
Nonmembers	\$700	\$775	\$825
New members	\$605	\$680	\$730
One-unit course	\$100	\$125	\$150
Fun Night (\$100 Value!): <i>Dinner/Band/Networking</i>	\$65	\$65	\$65

To register, call CRS Customer Service at 800-462-8841 or [REGISTER ONLINE at www.sellabration.com](http://www.sellabration.com).

# Protecting the CRS Designation

Most REALTORS® who proudly market themselves with the CRS Designation have worked long and hard to earn it. But some non-CRSs who claim to be Designees “are holding themselves to a higher standard as a CRS than they have achieved,” says CRS Regional Vice President Dorothy Reinecke, CRS.

The Council strives to protect the Designation from misuse, either by REALTORS® who have not earned it or by former Designees who have let their memberships lapse. Maintaining the integrity of the Designation is critical because “clients make a choice between agents,” says Reinecke, with RE/MAX Around Atlanta Results. “If they are evaluating my abilities against Agent X, who is an impostor CRS, then it’s not a fair comparison.”

Although it is difficult to determine exact numbers of agents who misuse the Designation, Ralph Renninger, CRS, with RE/MAX Premier Choice in Powell, Ohio, estimates that 20 percent of those using the CRS either never earned it or are no longer paying Council dues. Renninger, who is the Ohio CRS Chapter Immediate Past President, estimates that 25 to 50 percent of those misusing it had never earned the CRS Designation, while 50 to 75 percent had earned it in the past but had stopped paying their annual dues and neglected to remove the CRS logo from their Web sites, business cards, signs, riders and other marketing materials.

“The strength of our Designation is only as good as our policing of it,” says Renninger. “CRS Designees need to learn how to follow up on these impostors and verify that they have removed the CRS Designation from their materials.”



The Council urges CRSs to report any misuses of the Designation to Sharese Simmons, the member services assistant, who can be reached at 800.462.8841, ext. 4459, or [ssimmons@crs.com](mailto:ssimmons@crs.com). Whistle-blowers will be kept completely anonymous throughout the process, which begins when violators are notified by phone that they must remove the CRS from their marketing materials or pay \$170 to reinstate their membership within two weeks.

If the person does not comply, the Council sends them a letter, with copies going to the agent’s broker, state association and local REALTOR® boards, and the CRS Chapter President. If they do not respond to that notice within two weeks, the Council sends a final letter to the agent and

those same organizations before a complaint will be filed with the state real estate commission. During the course of this process, approximately half of all terminated Designees choose to reinstate their Council membership.

Designees themselves are often the best protectors of the CRS Designation, Simmons says. After all, the Designees who report violators often “feel like it isn’t fair that they’re paying their dues every year, and there are others out there who are getting a free ride.”

Reinecke points out that in some cases, people make an honest mistake. For example, some who have joined the Council and taken a CRS Course may think they are entitled to use the CRS Designation. Most of these people remove the CRS from their Web sites as soon as they find out they are in violation of the rules, Reinecke says.

On the other hand, there are some unscrupulous agents who try to get away with using the Designation after they have dropped their Council membership. “With anything like this, you’re always going to have people out there who are trying to abuse the system,” says Indiana CRS Chapter Immediate Past President Michael Litchin, CRS, with Resource GMAC Real Estate in Fort Wayne, Ind. “That’s why it’s so important for the Chapters and for individual CRSs to be alert to make sure people who are using the Designation are in good standing with the national Council.”

Working with a CRS Makes a Difference.  
**It’s the Ph.D. of real estate !**





## Your 2008 Dakota CRS Chapter Board of Directors



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