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Article published Sep 12, 2006

Home makers Erie transplant to give advice on HGTV show

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The housing market might be cooling down, but that just means competition for buyers is heating up.

Starting Wednesday night, former Erie resident Terry Tallant Haas will help HGTV viewers win that competition with her role on a Washington, D.C.-based version of "Designed to Sell."

"The market is shifting to more of a buyer's market," Haas said. "You need to be the one who stands out."

In addition to Haas, the show's team includes two designers, a construction crew and host Shane Tallant, an experienced TV reporter and host who is Haas' brother. They all have one week and \$2,000 to improve the market value of a home the owners hope to sell.

"First they have to listen to the critique of the crabby real estate agent," Haas said. "That's me."

Haas is actually anything but crabby. Bubbly and talkative, she "exudes confidence," said Melissa Sykes, senior vice president for original programming at HGTV.

"She's an expert," Sykes said of Haas, who has been selling real estate in the Washington area for 10 years. "She has a sense of humor. She's approachable."

It's her confidence that did the trick in the audition, however.

"When you're talking about thousands of dollars, you want to know that person giving you advice knows what they're talking about," Sykes said.

10 tips from the pros for showing your home

1. Make the front entrance inviting.
2. Clear away clutter, including personal pictures.
3. Clean the house thoroughly.
4. Freshen the appearance of rooms.
5. Arrange furniture for spaciousness.
6. Do all you can to reduce odors.
7. Perform minor repairs, if necessary.
8. Replace outdated lighting fixtures.
9. Clean the carpeting.
10. Don't forget the garage and basement.

- www.hgtv.com

Family affair

Tallant already was cast as host when Haas was chosen, but both Sykes and Haas swear the network didn't know she was his sister until after the auditions.

"They were cast totally individually," Sykes said.

After taping 13 shows so far, with 13 to go for their first season together, Haas said there hasn't been a hint of sibling rivalry.

"It's really fun," she said. "We have built-in chemistry. He is amazing at what he does and makes it much easier for me."

Haas, 37, is the oldest of four children, and Tallant is the youngest and the only boy. They grew up with their parents in Pittsburgh, but their mother, Marlene Tallant, was from Erie, so they visited the area as children.

Haas attended Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, earned a degree in social work and worked at Florence Crittenton Services of Erie Inc. and Sarah A. Reed Children's Center for six years before moving to Atlanta and then to Washington, D.C., where she got into real estate.

She recently married Tim Haas, a real estate broker from York. They met while working on a house deal in Washington, where they live.

The Tallants still have aunts and uncles on their mother's side who live in Erie, and Haas said they'll be having Thanksgiving here this year.

Designing woman

When Haas looks at a house, she knows what she likes.

"The most common mistake people make is personalizing their homes with artifacts, pictures and clutter," she said.

She also stressed neutral paint colors and curb appeal.

"Have your lawn manicured," she said, showing off some of her crabby real estate agent side.

"I want your plants pretty. I want your door clean. I don't want electrical wires hanging out of your doorbell. It should be very warm and inviting."

When it comes to the open house, your pets must go.

"Not all people are pet lovers," she said. "Your four-legged creatures are not necessary during open houses."

Haas said some of the changes she's seen designers make on the show have included adding new appliances, flooring, paint colors and built-in bookshelves.

She said her own knowledge of design has all come from real estate.

"If you gave me a blank canvas, I couldn't tell you that pink should be here and blue should be there, but I can tell you what I like and don't like," she said.

Season premiere

The show, entering its third season, formerly aired only on Tuesday nights, but this year HGTV has extended that to five nights a week. Viewers will see new episodes from Washington, Los Angeles and Chicago along with some repeats.

"It's a show that our viewers made really popular, and they want more," Sykes said.

The Washington version was intended to help diversify the real estate markets the show covers.

"Not everybody lives in a California-style home," Haas said. "The D.C. show gives you a much more diverse outlook on the United States real estate market."

She said they'll visit homes in Washington neighborhoods as well as in its Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

"The housing styles are similar" to those in Erie, she said. "There's condominiums, town homes, single-family homes, and they're very diverse in style and in all price ranges."

Has the team ever done such a good job the homeowners decided not to sell after the improvements were complete?

"I've heard rumors," Haas said, laughing, "But it has not yet happened on our show."

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On TV

On HGTV's "Designed to Sell," a real estate agent, a designer and a construction team prepare houses for sale on a budget of \$2,000.

The show now airs five nights a week at 8 p.m., and adds a new Washington D.C.-based team to the existing Los Angeles and Chicago teams previously on the air. Terry Haas, a former Erie resident, is the real estate agent on the D.C. version.

The first episode with Haas will air Wednesday at 8 p.m., and will focus on a family with a new baby. They have outgrown their one-bedroom condo and need to sell fast. The team takes on oversized furniture, a mediocre kitchen and a lackluster patio.

The next D.C.-based episodes will air Oct. 2 and 25.

New shows coming up this fall on HGTV

HGTV's senior vice president for original programming Melissa Sykes mentioned several other new shows to expect this fall. They include:

"Hammered," starts today at noon.

Show stars John and Jimmy Duresca, who are brothers. "Jimmy can build anything, and John can make anything funny," Sykes said.

"Hidden Potential," starts Oct. 1 at 8:30 p.m.

A real estate show where "We show buyers three homes and show them how that home could be renovated to suit their tastes and their budget," Sykes said.

"24 Hour Design," starts Oct. 6 at 8:30 p.m.

The show "has great clever design ideas that are accessible and easy to do," she said.

"Over Your Head," starts Nov. 4 at 11 a.m.

Sykes it called a "rescue series."

"We go in and help homeowners fix renovation and design problems that have overwhelmed them," she said.

"Haulin' House," starts Nov. 5 at 8 p.m.

Sykes called it a reality show about "people who pick up their houses and move them."

Last changed: Sep 12, 2006

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