Military Manoeuvres

There are a few things you can count on in Kingston in the autumn. The days start getting shorter, the leaves on the trees change colour and the kids head back to school. When Re/Max Realty Concepts realtor Penny Blake thinks about autumn in Kingston, she can’t help thinking about military families planning a move in 2008.

With over 18 years of experience working with military families in Kingston East, Penny knows how traumatic a sudden relocation can be. She knows the pressures military families face when they’re forced to find a new home in a new city in just a few days. Whether you’re about to leave the comforts of Kingston for a brand new home base or you’re about to settle in for a tour of duty in the Limestone City, Penny and her network of professional partners -- both in Kingston and across Canada -- can help you take care of the details and make sure your next move is a smooth one.

Words of Wisdom from Patricia English

Unless you watch a lot of HGTV, you might not know much about home stagers. That will change soon if Patricia English has her way. Patricia is a Certified Staging Professional™ and the owner of Style Sells, a Kingston-based business that helps sellers prepare their homes so that they’ll sell as quickly -- and for as much money -- as possible. In the last few months, Patricia and I have collaborated quite a bit and her insight has helped me make quick and profitable sales for my clients. I recently caught up with Patricia and asked her a few questions about home staging.

PB: What exactly does a home stager do? Is it just another name for decorator?
PE: A lot of people think I’m just a decorator, but staging is much more than that. I like to think of myself as a teacher and a motivator. I visit people’s homes, take notes and photos and then I give them a report with my suggestions for increasing the property’s value and the likelihood of a quick sale. Living in your home and selling your home are two different things. I help people learn to think like a seller by looking at their home from the buyer’s perspective. That’s the big difference between a stager and a decorator. Decorators help you live in your home. Decorating is about personalizing. Staging actually de-personalizes the home, and that’s how you make it sell faster. Staging makes a home look and feel like it’s for sale, which is what buyers want.

PB: What do you say to people who are worried about keeping costs under control?
PE: Based on the data I’ve collected, I can tell you that in an active market, staged homes tend to sell at a higher price than un-staged homes. In a slow market, staged homes tend to sell faster. You really want to sell your home as quickly as possible because the longer your house stays on the market, the further away you get from your original asking price. In most cases, your investment in staging your house will be significantly less than the first price reduction if your house lingers on the market for any length of time. The longer your house sits on the market unsold, the more mortgage payments you’ll be making. Staging fees are likely to be less than one extra mortgage payment.

PB: What kind of future do you envision for the home staging industry?
PE: The prediction for the industry is that stagers will be like property inspectors. You know how some people will buy a house and discover serious problems with it and your first reaction is to wonder why they didn’t use a property inspector? I predict that within five years, people will look at their friends who had trouble selling their houses quickly and wonder why they didn’t use a stager. In the US, agents are now specifying in their MLS listings that a house is staged and buyers are telling their agents that they only want to view staged homes.

Vital Statistics

Name: Penny Blake
Phone: 539-3307 (cell) 544-3325 (office)
Born and raised: Kingston
Lived in Kingston East: 31 years
Selling homes since 1989 - 18 years
Selling 100’s of homes in City East
Registered with DND Relocation Services
Hundreds of military families served across Canada
The People in Your Neighbourhood

What makes Kingston East such a special place to live? Some say it’s the diversity; the mix of rural and suburban living, new developments and historic neighbourhoods. For me, though, it’s always been the people. That’s why I like to take the time to introduce you to some of the people who make Kingston East such a wonderful place to live. In this issue, I’ll introduce you to Toy Yee, one of the hardest working business owners in the Rideau Town Centre.

Toy Yee: Enjoying the Golden Years

Toy Yee may be closing in on her 75th birthday, but she works harder than people a fraction of her age. Toy’s legendary work ethic first surfaced in her native China, where she lived through hard times, including the tumult of the Second World War. After a lifetime of scraping by to survive, Toy’s father moved the family to Toronto in 1950. “It was supposed to be easier in Canada, but it wasn’t right away,” says Toy’s son, Kenny. “My mom says she cried and cried for the first couple of years.”

Because she was only earning 50 cents a week, Toy was forced to live with her large family in a single rented room. Still, they didn’t give up on the dream of a better life. After a few years, Toy’s father packed up the family again and moved them east to Kingston. “I think he just felt it would be easier to open a business here than in Toronto,” Kenny says.

That business was the London Café, a one-time landmark downtown restaurant at the corner of Princess and Barrie Streets in the building that now houses Phase Two. Kenny describes it as “a Chinese restaurant that didn’t sell Chinese food.” The café was popular among downtown business people, who enjoyed the delicious – and cheap – meals. Hot sandwiches, a menu staple, cost just 65 cents and a plate of bacon and eggs sold for only 55 cents.

It was a true family venture. Toy’s father presided over a staff that included Toy, her siblings and a few friends. Meanwhile, Toy’s husband, Paul, worked in Montreal as an executive chef. When Kenny, his brother and two sisters got older, they also took shifts in the restaurant. “We all grew up there,” he says. Of course, no one worked harder than Toy, who was in the kitchen every day, from morning to night, for 19 years.

By 1980, Toy and Paul were ready to start a new business. They opened the Golden Gate Restaurant at the corner of Montreal Street and Sutherland Drive. While the restaurant thrived for over two decades, a dispute with their landlord got the Yees thinking about relocating. Kenny’s sister, Frances Splinter, suggested that they move into a vacant store she owned in the Rideau Town Centre. And so, in 2003, the Golden Gate moved east.

Kenny looks back on the move as a wise decision. “Kingston East is more family-orientated than where we were before,” he says. It’s a perfect fit for a restaurant that plays such an important role in the Yee family’s life. Kenny spends as much time as he can in the restaurant these days, while Frances helps out by taking care of Kenny’s two children after school. Still, no one works as hard as Toy.

“She still does the morning to night shift,” says Kenny. “She’s one of those die-hards that wouldn’t know what to do if you sent her home. She would probably just clean the house and come back to work. She always says ‘I’m going to retire next year,’ but a year goes by and she’s still here.”

As Kenny looks toward the future, he foresees a more leisurely lifestyle ahead for his mother. After Paul died last spring, Toy transferred ownership of the business to Kenny. And while Kenny says he’s more interested in taking care of his kids than in working 15-hour shifts, he intends to keep his mother’s legacy alive. “Hopefully, it will keep thriving,” he says. “I’m going to keep it going for as long as I can and maybe I can pass it on to my kids.”
1088 Hwy 2 East
IDEALLY LOCATED ON AN EXCEPTIONAL SIZED LOT OF 120' X 185' VERY PRIVATE, OPEN FIELDS AND TREES BEHIND HOME, MINUTES TO DOWNTOWN, THE BASE AND RMC. THIS BUNGALOW OFFERS A YEAR ROUND VIEW OF THE RIVER FROM LIVING ROOM WITH BEAUTIFUL HARDWOOD FLOORS AND WOOD BURNING FIREPLACE, 2 BEDROOMS, 2 BATHS, 4 BAY DETACHED GARAGE, ROOF IS 5 YEARS OLD, FURNACE 4 YEARS OLD.

$189,900

21 Schooner Drive
CUSTOM 4 YR OLD. 2230 SQ FT PLUS FINISHED BASEMENT, HARDWOOD FLOORS, OPEN CONCEPT KITCHEN AND GREAT ROOM WITH GAS FIREPLACE AND DINING ROOM/LIVING ROOM/SITTING ROOM, 4 SPACIOUS BEDROOMS, 3 BATHS, PAGODA DECK OVERLOOKING A PREMIUM 135' DEEP POOL SIZE YARD, VERY PRIVATE, FULLY FINISHED REC ROOM.

$327,900

1652 Grousewood
SITUATED ON 3.5 ACRES OF BEAUTIFULLY TREED ESTATE LOT IN GROUSEWOOD ESTATES. IN PRISTINE CONDITION THIS HOME OFFERS A SERENE SETTING. FORMAL LIVING ROOM AND DINING ROOM GREAT FOR ENTERTAINING, LARGE BRIGHT KITCHEN AND FAMILY ROOM. OVERLOOKING THE NEW SWIMMING POOL AND PRIVATE YARD. COZY UP TO THE GAS FIREPLACE IN FAMILY ROOM OR RETREAT TO THE SPA TUB IN THE ENSUITE. LOWER LEVEL IS FINISHED. PLAY POOL IN GAMES ROOM OR ENJOY ANOTHER GAS FIREPLACE IN THE REC ROOM. A WONDERFUL HOME.

$449,900

820 Lotus Avenue
TRULY A CUSTOM 3 BEDROOM HAMILTON CUSTOM HOME. JACUZZI ENSUITE WITH SEPARATE SHOWER, OPEN DINING ROOM, MAIN FLOOR LAUNDRY CUSTOM KITCHEN BY CATARAQUI CABINETS, EXTRA HIGH BASEMENT, 9 FT. CEILINGS MAIN FLOOR, EXTENSIVE USE OF HARDWOOD AND CERAMIC, GAS FIREPLACE, H.R.V. C/A, COVED CEILINGS, HIGH EFFICIENCY GAS HEAT, 2 CAR ATTACHED GARAGE, DRYWALLED BSMT, COVERED DECK, HUGE LIST OF STANDARD FEATURES.

$334,900

824 Danbury Road
CLOSE TO MANY SCHOOLS, SHOPPING AND ALL AMENITIES...PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP. 1900 SQ FT, 3 BEDROOM FAMILY HOME OFFERING BEAUTIFUL NEW KITCHEN, NEW FLOORING, NEWER POOL, WOOD FIREPLACE INSERT, AIR TIGHT. THE FAMILY ROOM OPENS TO A 48' X 16' CANOPIED DECK WITH 16' X 32' POOL AND HOT TUB. IT IS LIKE HAVING YOUR OWN SPA! LOT IS 180' DEEP, EXTREMELY PRIVATE WITH MATURE TREES. MANY UPGRADES, CONTACT LISTING AGENT FOR DETAILS AND FEATURES.

$298,900

900 Jasmine Street
CUSTOM 3 BEDROOM HAMILTON HOME, JACUZZI ENSUITE WITH SEPARATE SHOWER, OPEN DINING ROOM, MAIN FLOOR LAUNDRY, CUSTOM KITCHEN BY CATARAQUI CABINETS, EXTRA HIGH BASEMENT, INSULATION PACKAGE, 9 FOOT CEILINGS, EXTENSIVE USE OF HARDWOOD AND CERAMICS. HIGH EFFICIENCY GAS HEAT, HRV, CENTRAL AIR, 2 CAR ATTACHED GARAGE, FULLY SODDED LOT, HUGE LIST OF STANDARD FEATURES. COMPLETED HOME WILL BE SIMILAR TO ABOVE PHOTO.

$319,000

2232 Middle Road
MINUTES FROM CFB, R.M.C, AND DOWNTOWN. THIS 2400 SQ FT 4 BDRM BUNGALOW SITS ON APPROXIMATELY 2 ACRES OF TREES AND PRIVACY. MANY UPGRADES TO HOME. GORGEOUS MAIN BATH WITH A CORNER JACUZZI, LARGE LOFT FAMILY ROOM, HARDWOOD IN DINING ROOM, GARDEN DOORS TO LARGE DECK AND POOL. NEW FRONT DECKS, NEW PROPANE FIREPLACE, NEWER CARPETING AND NEW FLOORING IN BDRMS. AND FOR THE MAN OF THE HOUSE A FINISHED WORKSHOP...OTHER CHATTELS INCLUDED ARE SATELLITE AND WALL AIR CONDITIONER UNIT, CONVECTION RANGE W/ CERAMIC COOKTOP.

$259,900

4314 Highwary 2 East
1850 HERITAGE HOME WITH LOTS OF CHARACTER, SET ON A GORGEOUS 3.25 ACRE TREED LOT. 12 MINS EAST OF DOWNTOWN. BEAUTIFULLY MAINTAINED AND UPDATED, NEWER KITCHEN, CUSTOM HANDCRAFTED PINE CUPBOARDS, BUILT IN MICROWAVE AND DISHWASHER. ORIGINAL PINE PLANK FLOORING THROUGHOUT HOME. SPACIOUS MAIN FLOOR FAMILY RM WITH HIGH CEILINGS AND PELLET STOVE. BRIGHT FORMAL DINING RM AND PARLOUR WITH WOOD BURNING FIREPLACE. 4 BEDROOMS, 2 BATHS, 3 SEASON PORCH, MASTER WITH CATHEDRAL BEAMED CEILING WITH VERMONT CASTING STOVE. 3 CAR DETACHED GARAGE.

$435,000

FOR MORE DETAILS CHECK OUT WWW.PENNYBLAKE.COM
There she goes again!

Working hard for Kingston East! Penny Blake has sold hundreds of homes. No wonder Penny is considered by her clients as one of the top Real Estate agents. If you want results call Penny Blake. Member of D.N.D Relocation Program with over 18 years of experience!

Fall Activities

If you thought summer was a busy season in Kingston, wait until you see the incredible line-up of fairs, festivals and family fun in store for you this fall.

Chillifest

September 29, Confederation Park
If you like it hot, you won’t want to miss this fall fundraiser. More than two dozen chefs will serve up their versions of this spicy favourite.

Autumn Leaves Artists’ Studio Tour

September 30, October 1, October 7-9
Take this free self-guided driving tour and explore historic homes and artists’ studios throughout the Thousand Islands region.

Ghosts of the Fort

Oct 23-26, Fort Henry
Only those with nerves of steel will have what it takes to make it through this spine-tingling pre-Halloween tour of Canada’s spookiest historical landmark.

Pumpkinfest

Saturday, October 27, MacLachlan Woodworking Museum
This harvest celebration includes pumpkin carving, candle making and other fall fun for the whole family.

Family Fun Fair

Tuesday, November 13, Batoche Community Centre Gym, CFB Kingston
If you live on the base, you don’t want to miss this chance to celebrate fall, family-style with games, activities and a delicious barbecue dinner.

Kingston Santa Claus Parade

Saturday evening, November 17, Downtown Kingston
You’ll have to wait until Penny’s party for a private audience with St. Nick, but you can get a sneak preview a week early as you welcome him to town at his homecoming parade.

Penny’s Free Kingston East Christmas Party

Saturday, November 24th, St. Martha’s Catholic School
Join Penny and her special guests as they welcome Santa to Kingston East. Bring the kids along for games, crafts, snacks and presents, with proceeds going to the Pittsburgh Library. Everyone is welcome and admission is free!