

# TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE



*Donna Luff Taylor*

# Unmatched Character and Service

When Donna Luff Taylor moved to Duluth's St. Marlo Country Club in 1996, little did she know the tremendous impact it would have on her life. Yes, she became part of one of North Atlanta's most prestigious golf course communities, with beautiful surroundings, incredible amenities including the Denis Griffiths-designed, 18-hole Championship Golf Course, and impeccable schools. But she also became introduced to a new and exciting career—one that has been every bit as successful as she could have imagined.

You see, Donna made such an impression on one of the early builders in St. Marlo community, the builder of the home she purchased, that he encouraged her to pursue real estate as a career.

"I lived here for two years prior to beginning my real estate career, and during that time, the builder kept telling me I should get my license so we could do business together," said Donna.

Once Donna earned her license, it wasn't long before she was faced with the opportunity to secure her first listing. Now she just had to overcome her reluctance to approach a neighbor and offer her real estate services.

"I became very involved in the neighborhood as soon as I moved here, not to network, but to have fun and spend time in the company of the people I liked," she said. "They told us in real estate school that if you were there simply because you liked people and enjoyed looking at houses, you would never make it. Well, I have always genuinely enjoyed people and liked looking at homes, and that ended up helping me in that I was more aware than perhaps the average new agent would have been of what was going on around me.

"I had heard that my neighbor across the street was being transferred to Saudi Arabia with Pepsico," she added. "I wanted call my neighbor and tell him that I had just earned my license and would love the opportunity to list his home, but I felt really uncomfortable seeking a listing that way. Several couples in the neighborhood were going on vacation together, and I decided to drop a note in his mailbox at 5 a.m. expressing my interest in representing him, and then left the country for five days."

When Donna returned home, she learned that her neighbor's company wanted him to interview two other real estate firms, in addition to her, before choosing an agent. Donna had not yet joined a company or placed her license, yet she was getting ready to interview for a listing.

"I secured my first listing appointment without any company affiliation ... I didn't even have a Broker yet, and I obviously had no experience because this was my first opportunity," she said. "But he told me he liked my energy and enthusiasm and knew that whatever I lacked in experience I would make up for in work ethic, attitude, and determination. Nine years ago, Re/Max did not hire new agents, but, thankfully, they agreed to hire me and mentor me as they saw the same character qualities as the neighborhood executive who was interviewing me."

Donna committed herself to providing excellent service on her first listing, which resulted in the successful sale of her neighbor's home and a more than satisfied client. Since that time, she has been consistently impressing her neighbors, friends, and colleagues, establishing herself as the agent of choice for those moving to, and moving from, St. Marlo Country Club.



“Very quickly after my first sale, my business kind of snowballed,” she said. “Once I was a proven agent, and people saw firsthand how hard I worked, I was fortunate that I got quite a few clients and didn’t have to call or drop notes in potential clients’ mailboxes again.”

Said client Thomas W. Lebert II, MD: “In large part, my decision to use Donna’s services at the onset was based upon her longstanding history of success within the St. Marlo community. It was obvious to me that her efforts generated significant interest despite a market that was difficult, to say the least. It was very reassuring to know that my interests were represented by such an outstanding professional.”

Donna’s excellent results have earned her membership in Re/Max’s prestigious Million Dollar Club and 100% Club. All told, she has sold more than 92 homes in St. Marlo Country Club, and has earned a reputation as the community’s premier resale specialist. But while St. Marlo is Donna’s bread and butter, as a luxury golf community authority, she also has significant experience helping her clients buy and sell properties in the surrounding area’s upscale enclaves, including Sugarloaf, Laurel Springs, Country Club of the South, Old Atlanta Club, and Creekstone. Regardless of where the property she is selling or helping someone buy is located, Donna’s clients all receive the same high level of unmatched service, integrity, and professionalism that has distinguished her since the beginning of her career.

“I always tell the truth, even if my clients don’t want to hear it,” she said. “I don’t sugarcoat, and I never just wing it or pretend that I know something I don’t. In this business, you are your reputation, and I want my clients to know that I am going to go to bat for them. I am committed to not only meeting their expectations, but also exceeding their expectations through my service and work ethic. I am working with a client right now who has moved 16 times and worked with 16 different agents. She made a point of telling me that she has never worked with anyone like me. She appreciates my integrity and hard work, and that means a lot to me.”

Donna credits that integrity, as well as her strong faith, which helped her stay on the right path when her life took a turn, for the consistency that has fostered her success. A strong believer in the 90/10 rule, which says that: “Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% on how you respond,” Donna always maintains an upbeat outlook, turns challenges into positive outcomes through sheer will (and a lot of skill), and attracts clients, friends, and peers through her contagious personality and great attitude.



“My career is a blessing; I thank God for it. My faith has definitely played a role in helping me to achieve my goals. Things don’t always go as planned. I didn’t set out to become a single mom, but I really believe that if you do the right thing, God will bless you and take care of you,” said Donna, the mother of a six-year-old daughter. “If I didn’t have my faith and character, I am quite certain I would not be where I am today.”

But Donna also owes a debt to her tremendous innate skills, her detail management, which was cultivated during her previous career in the legal field, her creative solutions, which include producing a quarterly magazine called St. Marlo Today that breaks down the area real estate market—something she has been providing for her clients and neighbors since her second year in the business—and her commitment to personalized service that breeds loyalty among her clients. Add that to her ability to balance strategic negotiating skills with a welcoming quality that is instantly endearing and certainly enduring, and it is no wonder Donna’s clients are enriched by the experience of working with her.



“We thank Donna so much for the work that she put into successfully selling our home in St. Marlo,” said clients Price and Nancy Harding. “We considered many options for how to best market a resale house in a subdivision where we knew we would be competing against new home sales. We interviewed outside agents, who really did not understand St. Marlo, and could not be true ‘advocates’ of our community. We also considered the subdivision sales office, but realized that we would not be able to fairly compete for their attention against the builders who bring them a continual flow of sellable product. At the end of the day, Donna’s persistence, performance, and passion won us over. She worked hard to get our house strategically priced and marketed, and told us about how long we should expect it to be on the market. She made great suggestions for minor improvements to help our house draw more appeal. She made sure that we were continually informed with regard to every prospect’s level of interest. Most importantly, when the buyer’s broker came to a complete impasse in the purchase negotiations, she found very creative and workable ways to bring us an offer that met every one of our objectives. Our house simply would not have sold without her persistent effort and her determination to make it happen. I am grateful for her work and consider it a privilege to recommend her to future customers.”

Added clients DeeJay and Bobby Peterson: Donna Luff Taylor was absolutely wonderful in both her personal service to us and her professionalism. We recommend her to every St. Marlo

neighbor who is serious about selling their home and want to make the process as pleasant, smooth, and painless as possible. Through Donna’s integrity, professionalism and work ethic, she is able to obtain the highest price possible in the shortest amount of time—even in a challenging market.”

For Donna, who has been achieving awards and accolades for her production since her auspicious beginnings in real estate, her clients’ high level of satisfaction, and the referrals that result from it, are her greatest rewards.

“Right now I’m working with a client on their fourth transaction, and I have another client who is on their third transaction with me,” she said. “I love the fact that I am working with the same people over and over again, as well as their friends and family. The numbers and the sales achievements are meaningful because they are concrete measurements of success. But

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when it comes to the true rewards of the real estate business, they are measured in grateful and pleased clients.”

Clearly, the career has had as much of an impression on Donna as she has had on it.

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