

REAL ESTATE PROFILE

For Elite Weiler Pools, the water's great

The company has become a favorite of home builders, so business is booming.



John Kennedy, president of Elite Weiler Pools, gets his feet wet Monday morning in a water park his company built at the amenity center of the Grayhawk Landing development in East Manatee County. Elite Weiler has hitched itself firmly to the building boom in Southwest Florida. CHIP LITHERLAND / Staff Photo

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Richard Taylor became a real estate agent as a way to avoid the fate of many young men in Michigan who migrated to auto plants after high school.

"I knew I wanted to do something different," he said.

Real estate wasn't his first choice, though. As a high schooler, the profession seemed unglamorous. As he got older he realized the benefits of working mostly on his own.

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"You can make your own hours," said Taylor, who worked as a real estate agent in California, starting in 1967, before heading to Michigan and eventually to Bradenton to start his own brokerage company in 1982.

Taylor Realty Group, 3021 Manatee Ave. W., employs 12 agents.

The job never gets boring, especially in this fast-paced market with booming prices, and it still gives Taylor time to pursue interests outside the job, from sponsoring a Little League team to working as a pastor.

His latest outside activity brings him back into the real estate fold.

Next year, Taylor, a member of the Manatee Association of Realtors for the past five years, will serve a one-year term as the association's board president.

The job involves, among other things, facilitating meetings, overseeing committees, tending to the association's business and, in general, serving as a spokesman for 2,500 Manatee real estate agents.

The board votes in a new president each year from its 13 members.

Among the topics Taylor might face as president is emerging technology and how it can help those in his field learn about housing markets and reach clients.

One issue he is glad to avoid, he said, is the acrimony that erupted last year between the Manatee and Sarasota Realtor associations.

A feud over access to Manatee's listings arose about a year ago when the Manatee association switched to new software for its Multiple Listing Service.

The change limited access to listings for agents who were not members of the association. Some Sarasota agents argued that the group's intention was to exclude outsiders in order to keep commissions in-house.

Agents in Manatee vehemently denied that and said the restricted access was a technical issue. Unsatisfied, the Sarasota group countered by configuring its software to restrict easy access.

The dispute was resolved when Manatee agreed to make its listings more accessible and imposed a nominal usage fee for agents who are not Manatee association members.

That has seemed to satisfy both sides.

Taylor said some members from both groups overreacted to what really was just a difference in technology. There was no overt effort to shut out Sarasota agents, he said.

"I think it's important to have a good working relationship with Realtors whether they're from Manatee, Sarasota or Tampa," he said.

Speaking not as incoming president but as a real estate professional, Taylor also said that he prefers the boards to use a single database that can be easily accessed by both memberships. Many home buyers view the two counties as one metropolitan area anyway, he said.

Taylor, who will take his oath of office in December, will be the first president in a few years who works at a

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small brokerage.

The current president is Joan Oliszewski of Wagner Realty, one of Manatee's biggest real estate companies.

Before her, Lynn Parker was president. Parker was the general manager at Wagner before she resigned six months ago to become a partner at RoseBay Real Estate.

Taylor has served on the Manatee board for five years. Before that, he ran an outreach ministry in his spare time for children in Bradenton. He became an ordained minister in 1993 and was an elder at Christ Community Church in West Bradenton.

A few years ago, he founded The Lord's Church, which for now meets at his house.

Peter VanDerNoord, a broker and member of the board for two years, says Taylor is a steady and stable influence.

"He's a knowledgeable guy and has a great reputation."