



Photo by Bonnie Stever Photography

# CATHY HILL

## An Entrepreneur at Heart

by Kalindi Johnson

In today's uncertain business times, there are many schools of thought regarding what it takes to make it as a successful business owner. For Cathy Hill, it is old-fashioned hard work, dedication to clients, and integrity.

An entrepreneur at heart, Cathy started her first business — dubbed *de bodie* — with a friend shortly after graduating from Linn Mar High School. Specializing in cruise wear and seashell bikinis, *de bodie* became successful enough to gain the attention of companies like Victoria's Secret and other national mail order catalogs.

A few years later, Cathy started a second joint venture, AdVenture Advertising, an advertising firm that targets the captive audiences in high-traffic venues (i.e., bar and restaurant restrooms). Soon, Cathy took sole ownership of the company and continued building the business upon her reputation for service and her strength in sales.

### Leader of the Pack

With a solid background in sales and advertising, real estate seemed a natural choice for the next step in Cathy's career — to everyone but her, that is. It took years of persuasion from her husband Kris and her close friend and real estate broker, Tom Davis, before Cathy finally decided to give real estate a chance — and found that she loved it.

"I saw so much potential there, with all the efforts Cathy had put into her advertising business. I knew that she would take real estate to many levels above that. Once she finally convinced herself to take the risk, she set the industry on its ear," comments Tom.

After lots of long days and hours, business started booming, and within months, she was already in need of a full-time assistant. "It all happened so fast — I was so busy juggling all the details and learning along the way, praying that I wouldn't make any mistakes."

In her first year of practice, Cathy surpassed industry records, earning Skogman Realty's 'Newcomer of the Year' award. Now into her fourth year in the industry, Cathy has held the title of Office Sales Leader for the past two years, and received recognition as the Company Sales Leader for 2003, unprecedented achievements for a newcomer to the industry.

With hundreds of licensed real estate agents in the Cedar Rapids area, a rising star agent like Cathy gets noticed. So, what is the secret to her success? "I think it was just my time. I am a firm believer that you get out what you put into something — I have taken this very seriously from the beginning and treated real estate like a business, because it is a business. I start my days at 6 or 7 each morning and I don't leave until I'm done. People are counting on me to get things done, and I'm not about to let them down."

"Cathy starts what she finishes; she is just driven to succeed," states Shirley, a close family friend. "She has always believed that the best thing you can do is be yourself and she has held true to that since she started her career — she's genuine. People are thrilled to work with her because she really shines."

Tom agrees, "I've never seen anyone work so hard. Cathy doesn't waste any time — she has one speed and that is full speed ahead. She knows what she has to do and isn't afraid of the hard work it takes to get it done."

Cathy's assistant and "right-hand woman," Margie Jenkins, echoes these sentiments. "Cathy is the most positive person I've ever met. She approaches life with enthusiasm, drive, and sincerity. She does

her research and is very decisive. Her clients think the world of her because she would walk through fire to get things done for them."

Even in the competitive environment of the workplace, Cathy's coworkers have said, "Cathy just lights up the office when she comes in, taking time to talk to everyone, to offer her assistance when needed. Skogman is a happier place because of her."

### Attitude is Everything

Cathy's passion for real estate is fueled by her deep faith and positive mind-set, giving her the strength to take on new challenges. "It's all about your attitude. Just like the saying 'dress for success,' your attitude has a direct impact on the level of success you achieve and on how others perceive you." Cathy prides herself on being open and upfront with her clients.

"Word of mouth has made her what she is today," remarks Shirley, "she genuinely cares about her clients and it shows in everything that she does."

Tom states, "Lots of people know what they want, but they aren't willing to pay the price it takes to achieve it. Cathy is willing to put in the time, the energy, and the commitment that it takes to succeed."

One of the biggest challenges for Cathy is finding balance between her personal and professional life. Open houses and showings take up much of her weekends and evenings. When she does have free time, she spends as much of it as she can with her husband Kris, a custom home builder. The two of them enjoy riding their Harley as often as possible, spending time with friends, cooking, entertaining, and playing with their three Labradors, KD, Cassie, and sixteen-week-old Carly.

Accolades aside, what does Cathy like about working in real estate? "I'm so thankful that I can do something that I enjoy and that I have the opportunity to help other people," Cathy expounds. "Buying a home is the single largest purchase that most people will make in their lifetime, and I want to be there to help them through every step of the way." ♦