

Christine Estes



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"Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

–Albert Schweitzer

Dear Friend,

The leaves have pretty much been blown off the trees, Starbucks has already decorated for the holidays (are they really allowed to do that *before* Thanksgiving?!) and we are heading into the season for family gatherings and traditions. And one of the best of these time-honored traditions is giving thanks for everything we hold dear.

I know that when life is busy and crazy and the traffic is annoying and the lists are longer than the hours in the week, it's not always easy to remember how much we are indeed blessed. But I believe it will make us all happier and healthier to live with an 'attitude of gratitude,' and just think how much each of us could brighten the world a little bit each day. The famous philosopher Cicero said, "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." This time of year is all about recognizing and appreciating our loved ones and many blessings, and spreading that good will. And maybe we'll keep it up after the holidays too!

So this month's flyer is focused on expressing gratitude. It reminds us to reflect on what we have, rather than dwell on what we don't have. Being thankful isn't just about internalizing good fortunes but fully expressing this gratitude to everyone around us. Have you ever noticed that an honest and heartfelt "thank you" or "have a good day" can bring an unexpected smile to someone else's face? And the great part – it will help to brighten your own day as well.

In the spirit of being thankful, I am very thankful for all of you. Your support and encouragement continue to help my business grow. And the stronger we get, the better we will continue to serve you and those you send to me for help. You have already seen the classes that I will be hosting over the next several months. I will keep adding to the mix – I'm hoping for an investment class next. All I ask is that you keep inviting other folks to join us!

And I am delighted to tell you that Phil Auberg has joined Bob and me, so The Christine Estes Group is adding more depth and expertise. We'll be adding information about Phil and his background to the web site over the next several weeks. We each will have our own group of people that we serve – this isn't about you referring me to someone and them only hearing from me once before they're 'passed along' – but it does allow us to maximize our tools, documentation and services so that you always get the best that the three of us can devise. As you've seen from the Market Updates you're now getting from Bob, and as you'll see in the data on the reverse side of this letter, we've been busy gathering yet more good information for you.

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Continuing along the lines of delivering the best that we can, I wanted to specifically address *The Market*. Just what is the market doing here? Is it a bad thing? A good thing? And how are we supposed to know?

Let me start with a looking back question. For those of you who lived in this area in 2002, did you think *The Market* was 'bad' in 2002? Did you read newspaper article after newspaper article that said that houses weren't selling, there was too much inventory and the housing market was in a crisis? No? Well I didn't either. The message that I want to deliver to you is that the market is making news in 2007 primarily because it is different than the hot, seller's market in the very recent previous years. Not that it's 'bad,' it's just different. And I've got some statistics to share with you. Because, yes, some parts of the country – that spiked far more dramatically in sales than we did on our hottest day – are falling just as dramatically as they adjust. Our market didn't go blistering hot like Las Vegas, Phoenix and Miami, so we're not struggling as they are.

And here's something else to be sure to factor into the thought process. You'll see from these statistics that every house *doesn't* sell. Many sellers test the market to see what they can get, and if the market doesn't give them their pricing, they simply stay put. Yes, priced low enough, any house will sell. But that doesn't mean that sellers are willing to do that. The following statistics address the percentage of homes that sold in a given year, as compared to how many homes were available. The numbers tell an interesting story.

Let's start with **Bellevue east of 405**. (These are residential home sale numbers, not condos.) In 1999, 60% of the homes on the market sold. In 2000, it was 56%, in 2001, it was 53%, in 2002, down to 51%, and in 2003 up to 77%. Where it held for 2004, then increased to 83% in 2005 and then dropped to 78% in 2006. Now **Redmond**. In 1999, 54% of the homes on the market sold. In 2000, it was 51%, in 2001, it was 49%, in 2002, back to 50%, and in 2003 up to 72%. Up to 73% in 2004, and then an increase to 81% in 2005 and then dropped to 72% in 2006.

West Seattle. In 1999, 62% of the homes on the market sold. In 2000, it was 58%, in 2001, it was 49%, in 2002, up to 60%, and in 2003 up to 66%. Up to 78% in 2004, and then – here's an exception for you! – down to 76% in 2005 and again to 72% in 2006. You're right, we didn't hear that the sky was falling in West Seattle... Except it's not really an exception. **Ballard and Greenlake** did the same thing. 2004 was the hottest year, and then 2005 and 2006 dropped a few points. But lots of houses did sell; that's the important message.

We'll keep tracking the numbers and report on 2007 as soon as possible, but I'm told that 2007 is still one of the top sales years reported. It's just that it's not as high as 2005 (or was that 2004? – even in our local markets there's a difference in which years were 'better'). I believe this change is a healthy one. Good business depends on both sides getting enough of what they want to feel good about the transaction. When sellers prepare their homes well and price fairly, buyers have good choices and will reward preparedness with contracts. And our level of service can help you to stack the deck in your favor. Yes, in this market, buyers do have an advantage because of the amount of inventory, but don't sellers also usually buy something else? And so long as you've held your home for a few years (which is another important facet of good real estate business!), appreciation is going to serve you well. Let's perpetuate a good business philosophy. Please encourage folks who might be on the fence that it is a good market. Sellers, the buyers are out there! The October numbers are up...

I will be happy to share 'your' local statistics with you if I haven't included them here. We have them all, in graph format which was just too bulky for this format... and for condos too. Just give me a call!

Sincerely,



Committed to serving you ...if you know of someone who would appreciate the level of service I provide, please call me with their name and business number, and I'll be happy to follow up and take great care of them!

GIVING THANKS

Celebrate the season year-round by acknowledging what you're grateful for.

It's Thanksgiving afternoon. You've had turkey, stuffing, potatoes, cranberries—all the fixings. You've had pie (both apple and pumpkin). And right about now you're thankful you're wearing pants with an elastic waist. It's time to watch another game or perhaps figure out which sales to hit with the start of the holiday shopping tomorrow. But isn't there something more to this holiday? Thanksgiving is the perfect opportunity to slow down and take stock of what's really important in your life. So before the meal, or right after, while everyone is still seated at the table, invite each family member, friend and guest to state something they're thankful for. Pay special attention to the responses of the very young—their honesty may prove to be very enlightening. Gratitude can help you stop taking your life for granted. It can free you from petty annoyances and inspire you to think of other people. So why just limit gratitude to Thanksgiving? Here are a couple of suggestions to keep the good thoughts flowing throughout all the holidays and into the upcoming year.

Facts related to Thanksgiving*

- **265 million** – The preliminary estimate of turkeys raised in the United States in 2006. That's up 3 % from 2005. The turkeys produced in 2005 together weighed 7.2 billion pounds.
- **664 million pounds** – The forecast for U.S. cranberry production in 2006, up 6 percent from 2005. Wisconsin is expected to lead all states in the production of cranberries, with 375 million pounds, followed by Massachusetts (175 million). New Jersey, Oregon and Washington are also expected to have substantial production, ranging from 16 million to 49 million pounds
- **13.4 pounds** – The quantity of turkey consumed by the typical American in 2004, with a hearty helping devoured at Thanksgiving time. Per capita sweet potato consumption was 4.7 pounds.
- **68,000 tons** – The 2006 contracted production of snap (green) beans for processing. Of this total, Wisconsin led all states (305,000 tons). Many Americans consider green bean casserole a traditional Thanksgiving dish.

*Online resource: www.usa.gov



Accept, acknowledge, appreciate.

Try to remember the Three A's: Accept, Acknowledge and Appreciate. They should replace the Three C's: Complaining, Condemning and Criticizing. The Three A's will get you much farther in developing positive relationships with co-workers, friends and family members.

Do something for someone else.

Yes, you've heard it before: it is better to give than to receive. One of the greatest rewards in helping others is the uplifted feeling you get while doing something philanthropic. If you aren't ready for any long-term volunteer commitments, it's possible to make a difference in hourly increments. Offer to deliver meals during lunch for Meals on Wheels. Help serve dinner for the homeless, volunteer at the animal shelter, or send care packages and write letters of gratitude to the U.S. Military*. The rewards will be immeasurable.

Put it all in perspective.

It's often easy to lose perspective on exactly how much we do have. It's easy to feel less than satisfied with your lot in life as you watch your neighbors drive up in a new car, install a new gourmet kitchen or jet off on an exotic vacation. These expenses don't always equate to happiness. Remember, what you have is always greater than what you need.

Focus on the positive.

Keeping a positive outlook on life will change your entire perspective, as people have a tendency to remember the bad things as vividly as the good. One way to solve this problem is to keep a gratitude journal that differs from a traditional journal by only containing positive entries. Also, try to remember what good things came out of a seemingly bad event, such as a difficult experience that brought you and a friend closer. Another exercise is to make a list of all the people that have had a positive effect on your life. You quickly realize how much good happens from nearly everyone you spend time with.



HOW MANY WAYS ARE THERE TO SAY THANK YOU?

There are many simple ways to show a token of your gratitude to your family, friends and co-workers.

- Bring donuts or bagels.
- Praise your colleague to their boss.
- Bake cookies.
- Send flowers.
- Send a card.
- Make an unexpected phone call.
- Give movie tickets.

THE ART OF THE THANK-YOU NOTE.

In this age of email, voicemail and instant messaging, the handwritten thank-you note has been all but forgotten. But it is still one of the very best ways to say thank you—whether for a dinner, special gift or kind word. And in the business world, the written thank-you note is truly a way to stand out. So how do you write a thank-you note?

1. Be prepared. Keep a supply of simple note cards on hand. Then you're ready to jot down a note. The small size of the card lets you be quick and concise.
2. Think beyond the note. You can write a thank-you message on postcards or on the back of photos.
3. Keep it simple. Say thank you; mention the item and what you'll use it for, or if the note is an acknowledgement of someone's efforts, mention what you really appreciate about the other person. Allude to the future (i.e., we'll look forward to seeing you again soon). And then simply sign off.
4. Mum's the word on money. If you received a gift of money, simply thank the giver for "their generosity."

SHOWING GRATITUDE. TIPS ON TIPPING.

The holidays are the perfect opportunity to remember those who serve you regularly. The easiest way to give a tip is within a holiday card or small gift. And of course, it's nice to give your gift during the month of December to say thanks for a year of great service.

- Housekeeper: one week's pay.
- Gardener: \$20-50.
- Apartment building handyman: \$15-40 each.
- Apartment building elevator operators: \$15-40 each.
- Newspaper carrier (daily delivery): \$25-50.
- Teacher: \$25-100; a gift certificate to a bookstore or office supply store.
- Your children's piano teacher, coach or ballet instructor: a small gift from your child.
- Babysitter: one night's pay, plus a small gift from your child.
- Full-time nanny: one week's to one month's pay based on tenure, plus a small gift from your child.
- Au pair: one week's pay, plus a small gift from your child.
- Day care service: \$25-70, plus a small gift from your child.
- Parking attendants: \$10-20 each.
- Manicurist/pedicurist: \$15 or more.
- Hairdresser/stylist: \$15 or more; Shampoo: \$10.