

# Valley of the Sun Real Estate Update

October, 2006

## Home For The Holidays

The end of the year is typically a slow time in the real estate world. One of the biggest reasons is that through the holiday period, most people are too busy living in their homes to think about buying or selling them. Winter grass gets seeded, Halloween decorations go up on the lawn, to be replaced by Thanksgiving arrangements and then Christmas lights, and many of us will either be traveling to see family or getting ready to entertain visitors from out of town.

At times like this, it is easy to take the joys of home for granted. But even before the pricing boom we saw here in the Phoenix area last year, there have always been many families that are simply not able to afford even a modest home. They sorely miss the physical comfort and emotional pride of having a place to call their own, and all too often they can not find a way to take the very large step to home ownership.

Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976 in an effort to fight the cycle of poverty that keeps so many people from having a safe & stable place to call home. Working with the generous support of large & small contributors, the support of local and international governments, and the invaluable efforts of volunteer construction crews, Habitat has built homes for more than 750,000 people around the world. Habitat families are poor but hard-working, and all of them are required to contribute 400 hours of their own time to the construction process.

Habitat for Humanity is currently working on several projects here in the Valley, and they need lots of volunteer labor. I organized a volunteer day with Habitat a few years ago, and it was a great time for everyone. Because we had so much fun the last time, I have set up another volunteer opportunity for later this year, and I would like to invite you to participate.

We are scheduled to work on a construction site in Apache Junction on Saturday, December 16th. We will meet out there at 7:30 in the morning for an introduction to the site with the project foreman, and plan to work until the middle of the afternoon. I will provide breakfast & lunch, and Habitat will take care of the rest of the event.

While Habitat has a constant need for volunteers, they can only handle a limited number of visitors on the site each day, and the weekend slots are the most popular. Please be in touch with me as soon as you can so I can hold a spot for you. I need to hear back from you no later than November 20th to make sure we can keep our reservation and provide Habitat with the able bodies they need to keep their project on schedule.

No tools or experience are required (in fact, if you do have your own tools, Habitat prefers if you leave them at home.) All you need is a little time, and the desire to help a family enjoy the comforts of home that mean so much. If you have any questions about this opportunity, please give me a call. I think you will find that your day of hard work will be rewarded with memories that will last a lifetime, and you can truly help a deserving family get their own home for the holidays. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

## On the Home Front



Boy, they grow up fast, don't they? Taran has become much more sociable & outgoing recently, and here he is hanging out with his friend Jessica in our back yard.

I just got back from a quick trip to Europe to visit with an old friend. I drove through 5 countries in less time than it takes to go from here to Denver!



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## Recipe of the Month

### Bread Pudding with Cherries & White Chocolate

This recipe comes from noted chef Emeril Lagasse, by way of FoodNetwork.com. Bread pudding is a classic comfort food for the colder months, and you will love the aroma it creates in your kitchen. Serves 8 or more, depending on how much you want to share.

4 Tablespoons unsalted butter, divided	6 cups day-old bread in 1/2" cubes
4 large eggs, lightly beaten	6 oz white chocolate, chopped
1 cup light brown sugar	1/2 cup Crème Anglaise
3 cups heavy cream	3 Tablespoons sweetened whipped cream
1 cup milk	Powdered sugar & mint sprigs for garnish
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon	
1 cup dried cherries	

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Brush a large baking dish (approx 10x14 inches) with 2 tablespoons of the butter.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, brown sugar, cream, and milk.
- Add the vanilla, cinnamon, cherries, bread, and chocolate and stir until thoroughly blended. Stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter.
- Pour the mix into the greased pan, and bake for 60-70 minutes, until firm.
- Remove from the oven and cool until the pudding is just warm. Place squares of pudding on serving plates, dust with powdered sugar, and spoon the Crème Anglaise over the top. Garnish with mint & a dollop of whipped cream.

#### Bonus Crème Anglaise Recipe!

In a stainless steel bowl, stir together 3 large egg yolks and 3 tablespoons sugar with a wooden spoon. In a small pan, heat 1 cup light cream just to boiling, then remove from heat. Stir a tablespoon into the egg mixture, gradually adding the rest, whisking constantly. Add mix to a medium pan, and heat to not quite boiling, stirring constantly. Sauce is done when a streak remains on the back of the wooden spoon. Strain mix into a bowl to remove any cooked egg. Stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, then chill until ready to serve. If that seems like too much work, buy a mix!

## Culture Corner

### Quick reviews of some recent favorites

**Food:** A new pizza place, **Jimmy & Joe's**, just opened up across the street from our office at Ray & McClintock. I am very happy about it because they serve by the slice, which is surprisingly rare around here. And it's a monster slice—just one and a drink is all you'll need for lunch, and you can get that for just \$4. Oh, and it tastes pretty good, too!

**Movies:** Phoenix isn't known as a hotbed of independent film, but the makers of **NBT** are trying to change that. Their mockumentary looks at the skewed world of frozen entrée collectors (NBT stands for "Never Been Thawed") and was filmed in & around Mesa. The story manages to lampoon a wide range of characters who are both self-absorbed and completely lacking in self-awareness.

**Movies:** The newest mind-bender from director Chris Nolan ("Memento") is **The Prestige**, the story of two magicians obsessed with each other's lives. It has a complex story-within-the-story structure, and deals with subtle questions of identity, duality, and the nature of reality itself. You may want to see it twice!



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## Ken, how much is my home worth?



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**Home Description:**

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