

HOUSECALLS

THE GABE SANDERS STUART FLORIDA REALTY TEAM'S JULY 2016 NEWSLETTER



Gabe Sanders

Summer jobs for students change in tech economy

High school and college students in larger cities are checking out tech-type companies for their summer work, spurning the usual retail and restaurant positions.

According to The Wall Street Journal, jobs in companies like Uber, TaskRabbit, Instacart, and Postmates are hiring students for deliveries, tech support, and transportation. These are jobs that, for the most part, didn't exist at all 10 years ago.

Delivery services Postmates and Instacart go out of their way to court students for summer work.

But unlike traditional summer jobs, these can be very flexible, offering little in the way of structure. According to college coach Suzanne Shaffer, a summer job is what trains kids to get up, dress up and show up on time. Listen to instructions. Obey a boss. Work with others. Accept responsibility for the job.



The power of a letter

In locales all over North America, housing supply is tight. The homes that are on the market are often snapped up quickly.

Home buyers who want their offer to stand out can often send a letter to the seller and, when done properly, letters can help close the deal.

Let's look at a true story of selling and buying a home in a hot market.

Mrs. Jones lists a lovely 3-bedroom, 3,000-square-foot home on two wooded acres. In just 24 hours, she has four showings and four offers.

In this hot market, everyone is nervous. Potential buyers want this great house. Mrs. Jones wants a solid, but quick sale on her house. In fact, Mrs. Jones has an all-cash offer on the table to purchase her next house. Time is pressing and Mrs. Jones wants nothing to go wrong with her home sale.

Mrs. Jones and her real estate agent analyze the offers. The highest two offers are FHA loans. The lowest offer is a conventional mortgage with 50 percent down, but the offer is 10,000 under the asking price.

The top two offers look good, but since FHA financing requires such a small down payment, the buyers might not actually be in a position to purchase and maintain the house. Mrs. Jones is worried that these buyers have very little cash



and the deal might fall through if anything unexpected shows up in the FHA approval process. Or if there is a problem with the home inspection, a buyer with no cash might drop the deal.

Mrs. Jones focuses on the last two offers, both conventional buyers. She makes up her mind to deal with the lowest bidder after her real estate agent reads a letter from the potential buyers. The buyers are downsizing now that the kids are gone

and they are selling their 8,000-square-foot home. Some of the proceeds from their home sale will help their daughter in college. Some will help buy the new house. They are excited about the property. They want this deal and they want to move forward.

Two things Mrs. Jones is now sure about: The buyers can afford the house and the deal likely won't go sour.

The power of a letter to the seller is often reassurance. The letter can demonstrate to the seller that the buyer is serious about the property and can make the deal. Sometimes a letter can show understanding of a seller's sentimental attachment to a house.

In the case of Mrs. Jones, after some negotiations, the buyers came in just \$2,000 under the highest bid, but it was their letter that tipped the scales.



Ask the Expert



Claudine Porikos
Group One Mortgage

Can the FHA help us buy our first home this year?

Maybe it can.

The FHA has reduced its Mortgage Insurance (MI) rate, resulting in a monthly payment reduction of \$80 on average, according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

"Buying a home is about more than owning a roof and four walls. It's about investing in savings and building a family and planting roots in a community."

That was the message that President Obama relayed in his January 7 speech on housing and homeownership in Phoenix, AR. His speech announced significant improvements to mortgage loans backed by the Federal Housing Administration.

"We're going to start this week laying out some of the agenda for the next year. And here in Phoenix, I want to talk about helping more families afford their piece of the American dream, and that is owning their own home."

Obama announced that FHA Mortgage insurance premiums would be reduced from 1.35 to .85 percent on both purchase and refinance loans. The up-front mortgage insurance premium (UFMIP) will however, remain at 1.75 percent.

Summer Lawn Maintenance Tips

Get a barefoot-worthy lawn and ensure your home has curb appeal.

Here's a good mantra to guide you through the heart of grass-mowing season: The taller the grass, the deeper the roots, the fewer the weeds, and the more moisture the soil holds between watering.

With that in mind, here's how to ensure a healthy, green lawn:

Set your mower blade height to 3 inches.

Deep and infrequent watering is better for lawns than frequent sprinkles, which promote shallow root growth. In general, lawns need about 1 inch of water per week to maintain green color and active growth.

Lawns that receive less than that will likely go dormant. That's okay, the grass is still alive, but dormant lawns should still receive at least 1 inch of water per month. Your grass will green up again when the weather brings regular rains.

To check the output of a sprinkler, scatter some pie tins around the yard to see how much water collects in a specific length of time. Having a rain gauge (\$5 to \$20) will help you keep track of how much water the lawn receives naturally.

At least once each month, clean underneath your mower to prevent spreading lawn diseases.

Although it's OK to leave grass clippings on the lawn where they can decompose and nourish the soil, large clumps of clippings should be removed. Regularly rake up any leaves, twigs, and debris.

If your grass seems to be stressed out, check out our advice on what to do if your lawn is turning brown.



The White House estimates more than 800,000 homeowners stand to save on their monthly mortgage costs from the reduced MI premiums. They also predicted that 250,000 potential buyers will enter into homeownership over the next three years as a result of the changes.

CoreLogic estimates the change will benefit FHA borrowers with an average of \$80 per month, or \$900 per year, in savings.

The President's measures are designed to address homeownership numbers radiating from the flagging first-time buyer market.

First-time buyer participation limped into 2015 accounting for a meager 33 percent of the overall homes sold, the lowest market share since 1987 and down from 50 percent in 2010.

"Hi, I'm Gabe, a local real estate expert. I heard you're in the market for some affordable vacation property."





We're still in the folding dark ages; new machines could help

It is the computer age. We can make a phone call, play a game, save a report, and send data to Japan with about four words to our smartphone assistant.

Why are we still folding laundry?

Answer: There is just no app for that. But there could soon be a machine and, failing that, there are new strategies.

All the newest clothes dryers helpfully steam, de-wrinkle and freshen but somehow when they come out of the machine, they are not folded. According to the Wall Street Journal, most of the major appliance makers have not solved this problem. Same with unloading dishes into cabinets; it doesn't happen.

During a lifetime, people spend 18,000



hours (375 days) doing laundry and half that time is manually handling each piece

and folding.

A Tokyo-based company is developing the Laundroid to address an annoying gap in the market. The size of a refrigerator, the Laundroid takes several hours to fold a load of laundry. Drop shirts, pants, and towels into the machine and overnight they are folded.

Another strategy being developed in California. FoldiMate is a folding machine about the size of a washer. Users clip a dozen items to the outside of the machine. Folding takes 10 seconds per garment. Dewrinkling takes 30 seconds per garment.

Neither the Laundroid nor FoldiMate is on the market yet, but plans are to start production in about a year.

Exposure to fireworks Particles can be harmful

Fourth of July fireworks can bring a toxic brew of air pollution to our atmosphere, according to federal scientists.

Exploding fireworks unleash tiny particles (about 1/30th the diameter of a human hair) that can travel deep into a person's respiratory tract and enter the lungs.

Known as "particulate matter," the particles include dust, dirt, soot, smoke and liquid droplets. They are measured by micrometers, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The particles are linked to a range of health effects, from coughing and shortness of breath to heart attack and stroke, says a report published in the journal Atmospheric Environment.

The air is at its worst between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. during the holiday. Levels drop by noon on July 5.

"The study is also another wake-up call for those who may be particularly sensitive to the effects of fine particulate matter," says NOAA scientist Dian Seidel, the study's lead author.



Choose effective safety glasses

- * Polycarbonate lens
- * Side shields
- * UV protection against ultraviolet and infrared rays
- * Meets ANSI Z87.1 standards

- Worst offender: bottle rockets**
- Half of all eye injuries.
 - 38.5 percent of all fireworks injuries
 - Most eyes surgeries required.

Apps help identify flora, fauna

Smartphones are where it's at when it comes to garden help.

A number of apps allow you to plan, nurture and identify plants.

Identification

These apps can be handy if you see a plant in the wild or in a nearby garden that you love but can't identify. Or if you forgot the name of the plant in your garden.

Two apps, Like That Garden and Garden Answers, are similar in that you can take a picture of a plant and submit it for identification. You can see some suggestions as to what the plant might be. In testing out a picture of a Ninebark Bush, each app returned at least seven possible matches, including the right one. However, the photos were so ambiguous that in one case, we appealed to the \$1.99 Ask the Expert feature. The correct answer came by email in about a day.

On the other hand, we also got the correct answer from the Facebook Plant Ident site, in about 3 minutes. Of course, Facebook relies on what garden experts are online at the time.

Like That Garden also offers to identify a butterfly.

Knowing what to plant

The right soil, sun, and water add up to success in gardening.

The most elaborate app for this purpose is Gro. This app, which is free to download, works with accessories you can purchase to help analyze soil, recommend a plant perfect for the conditions, and even control watering schedules.

Gro can also recommend plant combinations - like the plants you'll need to grow to make salsa, according to maketecheasier.com. Or, it can recommend plants that will beautify your landscape.



Featured Listing

Affordable Stuart Condo

A Stuart FL 2 BR, 2 BA first floor condo with a covered carport in a wonderful location lose to shopping, restaurants, beaches and medical facilities. Spacious rooms with ample closet space and an enclosed Florida Room that opens to your garden area. This can be the perfect location for either a full time residence or a winter getaway. This condo has been repainted and has new carpets. The kitchen features new appliances (2015) and ample cabinet space. There's also a new hot water heater and air conditioner as of 2015. Enjoy the amenities with 2 pools and clubhouses and the numerous social activities. This is a 55+ community and no pets are permitted.

\$99,000



April Real Estate Market Report

Click on the Image for the full report

Monthly Market Detail - May 2016
Single Family Homes
Martin County

FloridaRealtors[®]
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Summary Statistics	May 2016	May 2015	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	242	249	-2.8%
Paid in Cash	76	113	-32.7%
Median Sale Price	\$330,000	\$285,000	15.8%
Average Sale Price	\$395,514	\$407,619	-3.0%
Dollar Volume	\$95.7 Million	\$101.5 Million	-5.7%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	95.3%	93.9%	1.5%
Median Time to Contract	46 Days	53 Days	-13.2%
Median Time to Sale	97 Days	101 Days	-4.0%
New Pending Sales	221	259	-14.7%
New Listings	274	252	8.7%
Pending Inventory	443	466	-4.9%
Inventory (Active Listings)	1,054	987	6.8%

View all Market Reports for Martin County, Saint Lucie County, and Florida (statewide)

Click on the name of the region above to view the reports.



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