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## Georgetown Housing Market Goes High Tech

by Kay Steele Faulk

**Today, the Internet affects nearly every aspect of business life, and the Georgetown housing market is no exception.**

This was certainly the case when Patt Van Valkenburg went online from her home high up in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains to help her son Joshua (who lived in Lexington) search for a new home in the Scott County area. Innocently, Patt clicked a link and fell in love.

There on her computer screen, calling to her through cyberspace from the edges of Georgetown's historic district was a 1930's Bungalow—2,400 square feet of completely restored seductive charm, fronted by a 45-foot porch. "It's the perfect spot for your swing, Mom," Joshua said via email after viewing the house online.

"But I have no plans to move to Kentucky," Patt emailed back, unaware of the power of the Internet to reach halfway across a continent and change her life forever.

Despite his mother's objections, Joshua visited the house in person and found everything brand new—copper wiring, flooring, Berber carpet, roof, vinyl siding and remodeled kitchen and bathrooms. It was perfect.

Smitten, Patt prayed for God's guidance then listed her mountaintop home. It sold in 10 days for a price higher than she had asked. With the help of Georgetown realtor Katy Prather of Smith Realty Group, Patt bought the Georgetown Bungalow through the Internet. "The next thing I knew my friends from church had packed me up and loaded my belongings into a 17-foot U-Haul," she said. With her truck in tow, Patt found herself and her four Cockatiels and one scared cat driving for four days through Arizona whiteout blizzard conditions and New Mexico zero-visibility sand storms.

Shaken, but intact, Patt and her pets arrived in Georgetown on December 9. "After all I'd been through, I knew I was supposed to be here," she said. "And after getting to know the town

and the people and becoming reacquainted with my grandchildren, my conviction hasn't changed. I love Georgetown!"

According to realtor Rick Leigh of White Oak Village—Georgetown's first and only active-seniors community—the Georgetown housing market has never been better, Internet or not. "Scott County is the second-fastest-growing county in Kentucky," he said. "There's everything from starter homes to move-up homes to golf-course homes and plenty of apartments." White Oak Village caters to the downsizing market, or as Leigh called it, the "right-sizing" market. And after only six months, they're over 60% sold out.

Realtor Katy Prather attributes Georgetown's robust housing market to a combination of factors. She said, "We've seen a lot of growth as Toyota expands. This brings in other companies that supply and support the auto maker." With the average existing-home price at about \$150,000, other contributing factors Prather listed include the college and hospital, the town's location at the crossroads of I-75 and I-64, Kentucky Housing Corporation money that helps first-time buyers purchase with little or nothing down, low interest rates and "our large lots and beautiful pastoral settings that make living in Scott County so special."

Coming from another state that's also known for its beauty is new resident Carolann Freid. A consulting therapist, artist and researcher in art and anthropology, Carolann is from Seattle, Washington. She decided to move at the urging of her nephew and his wife, who live in Georgetown. Carolann had visited them several times throughout the years. She said, "Moving to Georgetown just had a feeling of coming home."

Always attracted by the amount of care residents give to preserving Georgetown's older homes, Carolann is another new resident who found her house on the Internet. She said, "Number one in my search criteria was that the house have a historic background." One of the homes Carolann discovered was a 4-Square built in 1904 in Georgetown's South-Broadway historic district. Carolann put her research skills to work and uncovered the home's past, much of which had special meaning for her. Once Carolann found the house, she contacted a realtor. Again, Katy Prather helped with a cross-country, high-tech purchase.

According to Carolann, the house was perfect. "I wanted one that needed the amount of love and attention it was reasonable for me to provide in time and effort." She wanted to do some of the restorative work herself and felt confident she could find in Georgetown the professionals needed to help her.

An avid gardener, Carolann is developing a garden on her 1/2-acre lot with indigenous plants that “will be respectful of the architecture.” Back in Seattle she had put together the program for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese garden in the Washington Park Arboretum. She said, “Imagine my delight when I discovered that Georgetown has a Japanese garden.”

As an artist Carolann has a special appreciation for landscapes. “I’ve been fortunate to live in some of the world’s most beautiful places,” she said. “But in Georgetown, it’s not just the beauty of the land that’s so appealing; it’s the beauty of the people too. Everyone is so warm and welcoming. Every day I wake up excited about the new people I will meet and the discoveries I will make. To me, this is what the gift of living is all about.”