

MARK
SAMUELSON



A campaign of giving has a way of snowballing

When Prestige Real Estate Group agent Amy Cesario looked across the crowd of 450-odd Realtors in the Walnut Foundry Event Center last fall, she noticed something remarkable happening... a kind of snowball effect where people give money and then give even more money. But she had no idea of just how far it would go.

Cesario, an outgoing type who'd

Please see MILES inside back cover of 2nd Real Estate Section

Prestige Real Estate Group's Miles for Miracles campaign, which began as a single effort to help a Realtor's infant daughter fight childhood cancer, has a history of sparking other acts of kindness.

Website: www.mileformiracles.com



Eight-year-old Kohl Benjamin, center, back from successful surgery for bone cancer, is joined by his mom and dad, Kim and Randy Benjamin, sister Kelsey, and by Realtor Scott Matthias (left), chairman of the Miles for Miracles Foundation. Kohl asked Realtors to give half of his MFM contribution to another child battling cancer.

Imagining an Arvada neighborhood that uses no energy at all



Norbert Klebl, looking across Ralston Creek Bike Trail to his west Arvada site, has already built a sustainable resort in Western Samoa that uses fossil fuels only for cooking.

Just before the Berlin Wall toppled, Austrian businessman Norbert Klebl was making a bundle exporting computerized woodcutting machinery to Eastern Europe. Now he's applying his imagination to west Arvada, where he's planning a 300-home community that uses no energy at all – not a watt of power, not a single cubic foot of natural gas.

That idea would have been a pipe dream 25 years ago, when Golden and Boulder were first sprouting solar homes. Now

energy conservation is generating a buzz again, but the engineering has moved way beyond...so far that Klebl is on track to go for city council approval in April, with move-ins possible as early as spring 2008.

The big thing is price. While a custom solar home might run a million dollars, single-family homes and townhomes at GEOS would be priced from \$150,000 to \$500,000...so low, says Klebl, that energy savings will more than offset a 9

percent margin for the added design features, even during the first year of ownership.

Advertising whiz David Haifleigh of Haifleigh Brand Works came up with the name GEOS, to highlight the fact that Klebl's zero-energy formula relies as much on Mother Earth as on Mister Sun.

"Most homebuilders are fighting the climate," Klebl said

Please see GEOS inside back cover of 2nd Real Estate

The idea:

WHAT: GEOS, a community of homes and townhomes designed for zero-net energy use, through novel use of passive and photovoltaic solar, high-performance construction, and ground-based heat exchangers.

WHERE: West Arvada near West Wood Golf Club. Site is not open yet, but can be seen from the Ralston Creek Bike Trail, west of Indiana Street on W. 69th Avenue at Joyce Street.

POTENTIAL PRICES: From \$150,000 to \$500,000

WHEN: Spring 2008

WEB ADDRESS: www.discovergeos.com

Live auction featured at event to benefit kids battling cancer

MILES from Page 1-R

worked for the Denver Nuggets during her pre-Realtor days, had signed on to coordinate a silent auction fundraiser for Prestige's Miles for Miracles Foundation – a self-styled charity that had its start when the baby daughter of one Highlands Ranch agent went through one of those battles with pediatric cancer that is the secret dread of every parent.

Her skirmish, waged at Children's Hospital, had a happy ending...but Miles for Miracles just kept going. Agents came across more places to spend money: other families fighting cancer...church charities favored by particular agents...a trip to build houses in Juarez, Mexico, that Prestige does every spring.

When the crowd arrived in LoDo,

Cesario and other agents from Prestige's Cherry Creek office set out to see what they could raise. The highlight would be a live auction on behalf of two case files, each of them involving kids locked in cancer battles. The auctioneer called for \$2,500 for each family, to help cover countless incidentals that even an insured family encounters when this kind threat comes along.

A few agents volunteered big sums...but then a cascade of \$100s, \$50s and \$20s rolled in and the tide washed past the mark. With that and the night's other activities, Miles for Miracles had raised about \$17,000 – a record for the event.

**A few agents volunteered big sums...
With that and the night's other activities, Miles for Miracles had raised about \$17,000 – a record for the event.**

Kohl Benjamin, meanwhile, was locked in one of those two battles. The Castle Rock 8-year-old had been taken to the hospital with a swollen arm after a tackle football game. It's not a bone break, the diagnosis came back. It's a bone cancer called Ewing's Sarcoma.

Kohl started chemo...but scarier pros-

pects waited in November when the entire bone would need to be replaced. Kohl's mom, Kim Benjamin, knew he wasn't looking forward to that...and when she saw a clip in the paper about a Castle Rock girl who was also in a cancer battle, she passed the piece on to Kohl to show him that he wasn't totally alone.

When Cesario and other agents showed up at the Benjamin house to give Kohl a check a week before surgery, they saw a muted conversation between Kohl and his mom. Then young Kohl stepped forward and asked if the Realtors minded if he gave half his money to the girl in the story.

I tagged along last week at the Red Robin in Castle Rock, when Kohl, his arm in a cast following the transplant, met 4-year-old Ari Gonzalez and presented a second check for \$2,500 to her family. The agents,

of course, had told Kohl's family to keep all of the money...and had raised more to cover the girl.

By the way, Kohl has great prospects for a full recovery; but as you're parceling out your prayers tonight, he could use a few; those bouts with chemotherapy are no fun. And little Ari Gonzalez has a real struggle ahead and her family needs every one they can get.

Mark Samuelson is president of Samuelson & Associates, a homebuilding/real estate communications firm, on the web at MarkSamuelson.com. You can e-mail him at mark@samuelsonassoc.com.

Though still too early for buyers, interest in GEOS already stirring

GEOS from Page 1-R

as we took a walk along the Ralston Creek Trail, circling his 25-acre site at W. 69th Avenue and Joyce, across from West Woods Golf Club. "It's a wonderful climate here, and you have to live with it."

We retreated to a coffee place across Indiana where he outlined the tech components: passive solar (the site plan, which has already won an award from AIA, staggers homes into a checkerboard that allows each to get winter sun); a super-insulated shell; and a megawatt of solar panels that would often generate more power than homeowners use.

Added to that are some novel heat exchangers that pre-heat the outdoor air...and that pull heat from a loop of pipes six feet underground, where temperatures are much warmer than winter air, much cooler than summer air. Klebl is meeting with engineers at the nearby National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, to weigh alternatives on the exact heating/cooling components.

Meanwhile, Klebl says he's getting good cooperation from Xcel, which will need to install fewer transformers...and from the city, which likes the "LID" (low impact development) aspects. He's already met with a few builders; his partner Mike Eddy at

720-200-4500 takes calls from builders willing to hear the idea. And though it's a little early for home buyers to get involved, Klebl knows there's always interest, and takes email inquiries at cottonwood60@hotmail.com.

Mark Samuelson is president of Samuelson & Associates, a homebuilding/real estate communications firm, on the web at MarkSamuelson.com. You can e-mail him at mark@samuelsonassoc.com.



The community site plan for GEOS staggers homes into a checkerboard that allows each to gain some winter solar energy.