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FOR THE REAL ESTATE GUIDE

A local realtor is giving back to the community in her own unique way. Earlier this year, Kathy Barrett (Pineo), of Re/Max Group Four Realty Ltd., began implementing her own pay-it-forward program to help out local charities in the greater Fredericton area.

Pineo, who has been in the real estate industry for nine years, said she used to give her customers door knockers, a personal gift, as a closing gift. But in the spring, she decided to do something more.

“In April, I initiated the pay-it-forward program and, instead of a door knocker (a closing gift), I give a grocery certificate,” Pineo said. “In the letter I give to my clients on closing, I say this gift certificate is for you or you can pay it forward to the Fredericton Food Bank, the Fredericton SPCA or the Oromocto SPCA.”

Pineo said clients can also donate the gift certificate to any other individual or group they know of who may be in need of it.

“So it is kind of their choice,” she said. “I leave it up to them.”

So far, her pay-it-forward idea is being well-received by her clients. She even has a licence plate that reads “PAITFWD”.

“My clients love it,” Pineo said. “They are like, ‘What a great idea.’ It has always been a part of me to give, give, give, and I thought this is great. The door knockers were very well-received, but this way it is helping the community as well. So this is a win-win for everybody.”

But the pay-it-forward program



isn't just for buyers. Pineo noted her program would also extend to sellers listing their homes.

“Normally, a closing gift is only for buyers,” she explained. “But in my program, I have included sellers and buyers. So it doesn't matter if they are selling or buying, they are still going to get the grocery gift certificate.”

Pineo said she is the first in the industry in the capital city region to dream up the unique idea and implement it.

Pay it forward came to her while out driving one Sunday afternoon earlier this year with her husband, she said. She wondered what Sobeys does when a customer doesn't have an Air Miles card or forgets it.

She said she thought each cashier could have an Air Miles card for the food bank or the SPCA and swipe it if people aren't using their Air Miles cards.

Her husband thought it was a great idea, she said, and the follow-

ing day she contacted a manager at Sobeys to inquire if it would be a possibility. She was told it wasn't, as it was a national decision. Undeterred, Pineo decided to take it upon herself to pay it forward.

“I said, ‘I'm going to do it then,’” she said. “Instead of a closing gift, I'm going to give a grocery gift certificate and ask them (clients) if they want to pay it forward.”

So she contacted the Fredericton Food Bank, the Fredericton SPCA and the Oromocto SPCA to

see if they would be interested in participating in her idea, and the response was encouraging.

Like other community-oriented ideas, Pineo would like to see her pay-it-forward program catch on in places beyond the capital region.

“I'd like to get a realtor in every office in Atlantic Canada to work the program and give closing gifts to pay it forward,” Pineo said. “That is my wishful thinking, and I am working on that. It is just a great opportunity.”