

North Canaan

Working hard to sell still-vacant condos in town

By Karen Bartomioli

NORTH CANAAN — In an effort to market homes in the Blackberry River Commons condominiums, the developer is offering owner financing to buyers. This is in addition to a recent announcement that closing costs will be covered by the developer and a free upgrade will be offered on new construction.

The 10 acres off West Main Street near the town business center includes walking trails along the Blackberry River. It is a few blocks from North Canaan Elementary School, and now "family friendly" with the removal of a 55-plus age restriction for buyers.

The homes are offered by William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty for \$269,900 to \$299,900. Site development began a decade ago. Three model homes were built. One new home was constructed. With rising costs for materials and a flagging real estate market, 16 lots remained vacant.

Square footage was scaled back a bit, but prices remained on the high end for the North Canaan market. There was interest from elsewhere, and the prices were relatively low for Litchfield County. But nothing was moving.

The developers took a rather unusual approach to what was initially marketed as retirement homes. Hoping that still active people would buy them once the nest was empty, and while still employed, they were designed with ample space to allow for gracious living, accessibility adaptations and room for visiting family.

The more recent change to the age-restriction status followed a bit of a battle with the Planning and Zoning Commission, which recalled public concern about

potential school over-crowding and costs.

The Canaan Fire District raised its own concerns, about children living near the sewage treatment plant. However, long-time residents said there have never been issues with safety, noise or odors. Fencing and additional natural buffers were added; and school enrollment has dropped considerably in recent years.

There has been considerable interest from people under the age of 55, which prompted the developer to market to families, especially first-time buyers.

Broker-associate Sherie Berk is the listing agent. She described the single-family homes as each having attached two-car garages, full basements that can be finished as living space and gas fireplaces. Buyers of new construction can select appliances, finishes, paint colors and more.

All exterior and road maintenance will be done by the developer until enough homes are sold

for a homeowners' association to be formed.

"The fact that the owner will finance opens a lot of doors for people that might want to buy a home but can't qualify for a conventional mortgage. It's a really great opportunity that I hope local residents will consider," said Kristine Newell, regional assistant manager for William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty.

There are three types of home. One is called the Barberry and is offered at \$299,900. It promises 1,892 square feet of living space with three bedrooms, two baths, a formal dining room and a great room with cathedral ceilings.

The Willow, offered at \$279,900, also has a great room with cathedral ceilings and has 1,772 square feet with two bedrooms and two baths.

The Holly is the end unit for the development, with privacy on two sides. For \$269,900, buyers get 1,567 square feet of living space with two bedrooms and two baths.



PHOTO BY KAREN BARTOMIOLI

The Holly is the development's end unit, with two bedrooms and two baths.

Viva la Femme will benefit AHA!

NORTH CANAAN — Viva la Femme (an evening of pampered indulgence) will be held on Friday, May 15, from 5:30 to 9 p.m. at the VFW on Route 7. More than 20 salon owners, massage therapists, Reiki and yoga masters, health and stress relief experts and several related vendors will offer their services for women of the community.

Tickets are \$25 at the door (\$22 for women over 62 years of age). The ticket price includes free use of two "sessions," a glass of champagne (or nonalcoholic

beverage), free refreshments, lots of samples and handouts, access to vendors, a penny auction, and several demonstrations and mini-workshops. There will be a cash bar to benefit the VFW and the opportunity to purchase extra sessions for a service.

All proceeds will benefit AHA! and Camp AHA! (the after-school program and summer day camp held at North Canaan Elementary School). For more information or ticket purchase, call Lynn Nania, director, at 860-824-0393.

Farm market opens at new site May 20

NORTH CANAAN — The Canaan Farmers Market will open for its second season on May 20, in a new location. It will move from the Lawrence Field parking lot to the municipal lot off Railroad Street.

Organizers Amy Davis and Ty Ford said it will offer easier access, more parking and room to grow.

Markets will be open every Wednesday, 4 to 7 p.m., rain or shine, through Oct. 7.

Last year's market had five regular vendors selling mostly meat and produce. Chubby Bunny Farm is no longer in business, but Davis said two new vendors have come on board, and four or five more are interested.

It is open to North Canaan vendors but not limited to farm products. Ford said they are

hoping to make all sorts of products available to attract more buyers.

They are also looking for someone to take over organizing the market, and for someone

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to design a poster to advertise the market. The winner will receive a \$50 gift certificate for use at any vendor.

The poster should be creative and colorful. Slogans are welcome.

Designs should include the market name, dates, day and times, location (municipal parking lot at routes 7 and 44) and "rain or shine."

To reserve vendor space or for more information, contact Davis at canaanfarmersmarket@gmail.com or 860-453-4085.

— Karen Bartomioli