

## NO.1

CUMMINGS &amp; CO. REALTORS

## Building relationships

Maintaining professional relationships centered on respect and aligned vision and values

BY DONNA OWENS

When Dave Cummings hung out his shingle back in 2006, the founder of Cummings & Co. Realtors had no idea what the future might hold in an industry notorious for market fluctuations, housing booms and busts.

Yet the broker was determined to work diligently, treat clients with respect and surround himself with fellow professionals in sync with his vision and values.

One such colleague he met 16 or so years ago was Chris Palazzi, a Realtor who actually stumbled into his longtime affiliation with the brokerage. He's now the longest-serving member of the company.

"I went to lunch with a good friend and met Dave years ago, but it wasn't a recruiting meeting," Palazzi recalled. "Honestly, I was with another broker and wasn't looking to move. But I came over to check it out. I've worked with him ever since."

That professional relationship is among many

that Cummings has forged with hundreds of Realtors over the intervening years. Today, Cummings & Co. Realtors has more than 550 real estate agents spread across nine offices in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Although Cummings holds licenses in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C., and serves as the firm's broker, he does not compete with the agents who are independent contractors.

He prefers they come in with a minimum of two years of experience and sell real estate full time. Beyond that, he's always available to offer mentoring and support.

"The people make this company what it is," he said. "I've been lucky to surround myself with creative, positive, optimistic and fun agents."

That type of collegiality serves the team well and was key during the early stages of the pandemic and all of its uncertainties.

As a housing shortage heightened demand, Cummings put a series of protocols in place to



Dave Cummings, center, broker and founder of Cummings & Co., talks with, from left, Realtors Jennifer Maley, Jasmine Lawrence, Jontell Hinton, Marie Snyder DeVries and Lynn Gurley.

PHOTO BY LLOYD FOX

help agents run their businesses from almost anywhere and service clients.

Now, as the market is slowing down and normalizing, the offices continue to offer an array of resources.

For instance, there's Key Transaction Management, an in-house company available to help agents with administrative transaction details from contract to closing.

Another in-house asset, Samantha Allen Marketing, can assist agents with advertising and social media needs. Additionally, Cummings previously launched C&C Title Company.

"Having a local management team allows specialized focus in the areas where our clients buy and sell," he said, "thus making us nimble in

a changing market to meet their needs."

Cummings adds that the agents seem to appreciate that the company — which has locations in Canton, Timonium and Columbia, to name a few — is locally owned and operated.

"I have a small leadership team accessible to all the agents, creating a tight-knit community," he said.

That's just one of the reasons that agents like Palazzi, who's created The Palazzi Group within Cummings & Co., give Cummings high marks.

"Dave does a very good job looking out for everyone," Palazzi said. "He makes sure that we know what's going on in the industry, and the office culture is really nice. He's here for people, and really, that's key to any job and life in general."

That type of validation makes Cummings feel that he's making a difference.

"In a fiercely competitive industry," he said, "we work together to lift up and support one another to succeed."