

The Wander Woman of Real Estate

Franne Schwarb:
2018 Realtor of the Year

[BY DANIELA JOHNSON]

On a mid-March afternoon, the local real estate community gathered for the annual Charleston Trident Association of Realtors (CTAR) Awards Luncheon. As the presenter commenced announcing the 2018 “Realtor® of the Year,” Franne Schwarb glanced around the lunch table at her colleagues. The honoree’s accomplishments sounded familiar, but it hadn’t dawned on Schwarb that she could be the recipient.

Upon hearing her name called, Schwarb’s jaw dropped. When she reached the front of the room to accept the award, she spotted her sister, Risa, her daughter, Jenny, and her oldest son, John, walking up from the back, flowers in hands. Unbeknownst to Schwarb, they’d flown in the night prior to join her younger son, Jeremy, at the ceremony. Together, they pulled off the surprise of Schwarb’s lifetime — hiding in a closet for two hours beforehand.

“It was an overwhelming experience,” she recalled.

CTAR bases the award on a real estate agent’s reputation in the community and the number of hours he or she has worked at the Board of Realtors. It’s reserved for those who’ve given up their time and provided service to the community while showing superior ethical conduct.

Schwarb exceeds these requirements on a near-daily basis, though her countless hours of dedication are often



Photos courtesy of Franne Schwarb.

behind the scenes. A culmination of over 25 years of commitment to not only the business of real estate but the people, too, the feeling of recognition is difficult for her to sum up in words.

As a licensed broker in North and South Carolina, Schwarb works at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage alongside partners Chari Karinshak and Yvette Grist, who nominated Schwarb for the award along with her daughter. She finds satisfaction when clients become friends and when they love their new homes.

Schwarb has several clients who’ve trusted her with transactions for multiple members of their families. As a proponent of continued education for Realtors, she was imperative in launching the CTAR Gold Card, which helps make advanced real estate education possible.

However, it’s more than her business achievements that make Schwarb unique. She is a fierce advocate for causes she holds close to heart. Her son, Jeremy, has special needs, and Schwarb spoke before a congressional committee to advocate for better special-needs services. Each year, she takes part in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk and contributes to her son John’s golf charity tournament.

Schwarb received the award almost 40 years after the first-ever woman recipient, Jane Williams, in 1981. A spearhead of the local real estate community, Williams was a woman ahead of her time. After leaving a management job to raise children, her replacement was



a man paid far more for the same job. Williams vowed when she returned to work to be paid her worth. She went on to achieve significant real estate success in the local market, opening her own firm with several locations around Charleston. Besides being named the first-ever woman Realtor of the Year, Williams was also the first female president of CTAR in 1980, among other accomplishments.

The industry has come a long way since then. But Schwarb faced her own challenges as a woman in a



male-dominated industry. She comes from a generation where women didn't necessarily work outside the home. That didn't stop her.

"I told myself, 'I can do this,'" she said. "Women make great Realtors. You have to be able to put others' needs above your own."

For Halloween last year, Schwarb donned a

red bodice and gold headpiece to the company office party (her idea). The costume was Wonder Woman, a fitting choice for a woman who balances the 24/7 demands of her job, advocates for causes she's passionate about and still finds time to bake holiday cookies.

The day after she received the Realtor of the Year award, the office surprised her with a life-size cardboard cutout of the superhero complete with Schwarb's face. She's planning to bring it home.

"I'm still floating," she concluded. 🌸



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