

## Setting the stage

Preparing your home for sale can be a monumental task. But even little improvements can make a big difference.

Here are a few ways to help ensure you end up with top dollar, provided by Kelly Coty of Prix de Solde Home Staging:

- Work on your home's "curb appeal." If people don't like what they see from the curb, they may never make it inside.
- Let go of your clutter.
- Have your windows cleaned. You can't purchase sunlight, and when it's streaming through the windows, it makes everything look better.
- Get rid of smells.
- Accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. Chances are, you know what that means for your particular property.



List in hand, Kelly talks with Candice Forte and Marshall Pearson about how they will stage this south Nashville home.

► Continued from page 8

de Solde ("sale price" in French) in a new way. Through a company she has called Mother of Invention (the initials of which, she points out with a laugh, mean "me" in French), she has packaged her strategy for others across the country wanting to give home staging a try. Take note, though: Success doesn't come cheap. The series of five manuals and hands-on training personally provided by Coty are \$7,500.

"My learning of the business wasn't exactly free, either," she said. "I spent much more 'mistake' money than that."

It's her hope, however, that the opportunity will especially appeal to women who want a good income but also a flexible lifestyle to care for their children. That's exactly where she was before Prix de Solde as a divorced mother of two.

Granted, Coty had a few things in her favor when she began her own career journey. The daughter of a general contractor who built condominium complexes, Coty said she grew up knowing what property should look like before it's sold. In addition, she said, her father was always doing projects around the house.

As a result, she came by her neuroses honestly — and early. Stories have been told about having to have everything in its place as a child before she could sleep at night, and even today, she's "always thinking" of ways to improve whatever room she's in.

Thankfully, those obsessions have served her well. In her six years in business, Coty has earned a reputation of helping houses sell, while adding her own eclectic, creative touch. (No doubt, the dozen years she spent in sales and marketing have come in handy.)

Coty usually has three projects going at any one time, including staging, design jobs and post-sales work.

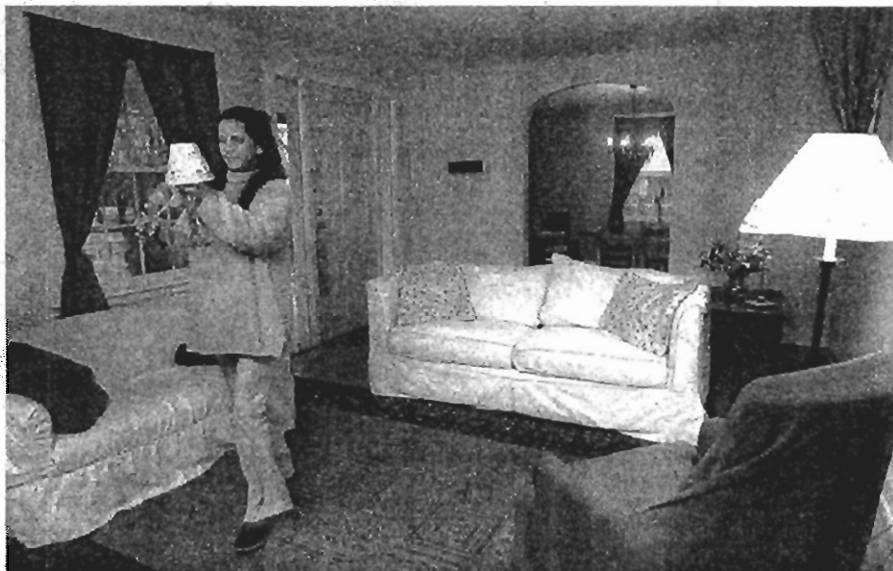
The staging projects usually bring in 1%-3% of the asking price, which is what the average consumer spends doing it themselves anyway, she said.

And if there's friction about having Coty and her workers in a house for an entire week, messing with their "stuff," it's bound to subside when they get what they want out of the sale, she said.

Just ask Susan McBride. McBride, who met Coty about five years ago at the recommendation of her real estate agent, was so pleased with Coty's services the first time around that she hired her again when she sold another house this year.

"When we got ready to sell, we knew we had to get Kelly in here to get the most for our money," McBride said. "She came in and took care of the things I kept thinking I'd get to but never did. Having all that little stuff finished made a huge difference.

"Not everybody has a vision of what something can be." ■



Rearranging the furniture, replacing the drapes and adjusting the lighting, Kelly brings harmony to the room.



Part of the value to Kelly Coty in setting up her own business is the flexibility that allows her to pick up her children, Max Watts, 9, left, Audrey Watts, 7, and their friend Ryan Orr, 7, from school.