

HOME & GARDEN

ONLINE GET THE LATEST HEALTH NEWS, DIET & EXERCISE TIPS, PLUS HEALTHY LIFESTYLE EVENTS



SOLD

ON STAGING



HIRE AN EXPERT TO MARKET A PICTURE-PERFECT HOME

By Michelle J. Mills Staff Writer

There is a plethora of magazines and television shows featuring beautiful homes, and while they are inspirational for home buyers, they've made it tougher for sellers.

Home shoppers are using the Internet to peek at prospects before calling a real estate agent, so homeowners need to have some great-looking photographs of their property in place.

But you can't take those perfect photos unless your home, inside and out, looks great. As for the interior, you might want to hire a stager.

Michelle Minch of Moving Mountains Design in Pasadena was named 2010 Professional Stager of the Year by the Real Estate Staging Association at the group's January conference in Las Vegas.

Minch understands how real estate marketing

works and how home shoppers think. With that in mind, she counsels her home-selling clients to identify changes that can make a house more appealing to a homebuyer, and how to get those changes done in a cost-effective manner. Minch also works with the listing agents for information about the local market and targeting potential buyers.

Whether a house, condo or apartment, a sale or rental property, they all need to look their very best. Minch does that by decluttering, arranging for painters and bringing in furniture and art. She'll even update kitchen countertops.

"If it's a house in the neighborhood where every other house that's for sale has granite counters," Minch will recommend the countertop upgrade so the house can compete in the market.

The homeowners pay the bills for all these improvements.

"We don't want clients to spend more money than is absolutely necessary," Minch said. "But I have never walked into a house that didn't need

STAGING B2



Find a stager

If you're looking for someone to stage your home, you might check out the Real Estate Staging Association. Local members include The Shaping Spaces Group (based in Hawthorne), 323-864-5433; Green Charm Design (Manhattan Beach) 310-877-7180; Home Staging Designs of California (Torrance), 310-809-7467; First Impression (Cypress), 562-421-5970; DC Redesign and Real Estate Staging (Westminster), 714-815-3506; and Sage Home Designs (Hermosa Beach), 310-951-4451. For information on RESA, go to www.realestatingassociation.com.

Michelle Minch, left, and her assistant Michelle Drewry stage an Altadena home that will soon be on the market. Minch, who was named 2010 Professional Stager of the Year, brings in plants and furniture, top left, to make the home appealing to buyers.

Walt Mancini Staff Photographer

STAGE IT YOURSELF

Home stager Michelle Minch shares her to-do list for people before they put their house up for sale: Get your home in move-in condition, whether this means simply clearing out some stuff or repainting and recarpeting. Here are some important points:

- Declutter. Store or give away your stuff. Aim to make your home's rooms feel large, clean and clutter-free.
- Deodorize. "If you can smell it, you can't sell it," Minch said. If your house has a particular odor, such as strong cooking smells, a musty bathroom or an untidy litter box, don't just cover up the annoying aroma, get rid of it. You might not even realize there are odors; invite a friend or neighbor in to

give the place a good sniff.

- Clean and then clean again. Give your house the "Q-Tip clean" treatment. Make it sparkle and shine all the way through. (This includes the grunge that builds up in the corners of your bathroom).

Source: Michelle Minch, Moving Mountains Design ; 626-441-8975; www.movingmountainsdesign.com