



Branching Out

WITH BROKER LINDA PRIDDEN

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A meeting with real estate broker Linda Pridden feels every bit as comfortable as the Blue Ridge Mountain community she calls home. Her love of the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau becomes evident as she shares her knowledge of the area, and a long career in education, club management, and real estate lends her warmth and an engaging character. Those are the qualities that allow Linda to connect with clients, help them define their goals, and turn their visions of a mountain home into reality.

It would be easy — and perfectly enjoyable — to chat with Linda for hours on end. But as we discuss her time on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau and her 20-plus years working in real estate, her depth of experience and knowledge come into focus. Aside from developing her career — first in education, then in private club management, and finally in real estate — Linda has devoted much of her life to church activities, developing deep personal connections, and volunteering in the community.

WHAT'S YOUR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND, AND WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN REAL ESTATE?

"Originally, I was a school teacher in Vero Beach, Florida. I loved working with children, especially first graders. They're like little sponges, just soaking up everything around them. During the school year, we lived down there, but we would spend part of our summers up here. My son and three grandchildren are based in the Orlando area. Back then, we had a condo in Sapphire Valley and would enjoy a few weeks of cooler air and the relaxed pace of life in the mountains each year.

But one summer, we decided to stay longer. My husband was offered a job at one of the private clubs, so we stayed for the entire summer instead of just a few weeks. And in the meantime, I got a job at the same club. I left at the end of the summer and returned to Florida when the school year started, but then I got a call from the club. They wanted to train me so that I could take over the General Manager

position in a few years. It was a tough call because I loved teaching, but we decided to move here full-time.

Eventually, I needed to get my real estate license to sell properties within the club community. So I've been a real estate broker for over 20 years, but about ten years ago, I decided to branch out and sell real estate in more areas around the Plateau."

REAL ESTATE CAN BE AN EXCITING CAREER ON THE HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS PLATEAU. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK WITH SILVER CREEK?

"I had a few different opportunities, and they were all great options. But I had talked to Jochen a few times, and he invited me to come on board with Silver Creek. I saw what they had to offer, and it was just a very clear and obvious choice. Jochen's passion for real estate and dedication to excellence intrigued me, and the way everyone at Silver Creek works together is so positive and inspiring. I'm excited to continue working here and grow as much as possible."

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME WHEN YOU'RE NOT MEETING WITH CLIENTS AND SELLING REAL ESTATE?

"I'm very active in my church — The Church of the Good Shepherd — and I just started volunteering at The Bazaar Barn, which the church owns and runs with volunteers. It's an upscale resale shop where all the goods are donated, and the proceeds go back into the community. So it's a great cause and a lot of fun because we receive many very nice items in the store, and I enjoy meeting the friendly customers who shop there."

Living in Chatooga Club, I've developed a passion for croquet. We have Wine and Wickets every Wednesday during the season, and during the cooler months, a group of us gather in Florida for a week. This year we played in Ponte Vedra Beach.

I also attend any event involving music, like local concerts and shows at the Highlands Performing Arts Center. I've attended the



Highlands Chamber Music Festival in the past, and it was wonderful."

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR ON THE PLATEAU? WHAT ARE THE EVENTS THAT YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO EACH YEAR?

"Oh, definitely fall! It's beautiful any time of year here, but fall is absolutely the best season. The Festival of Trees around the Thanksgiving holiday is my favorite annual event. It benefits Summit Charter School, and it's so much fun to sell trees, wreaths, and other holiday decor at that time of year. It really gets you into the holiday spirit."

I also enjoy the Groovin' on the Green events during the summer. I love that we can head over to the Village Green in Cashiers, hear some live music, get a snack from the food trucks, relax in the big open meadow, and enjoy time with friends. Everyone is there, and it's so entertaining and social."

Every year I attend the Designer Showcase, which is a wonderful opportunity to view some of the most exquisite interior design in the Southeast. I'm also in charge of organizing the annual Author Talks at our local public library."

WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO GO WHEN YOU HAVE TIME TO TRAVEL?

"I've traveled to California numerous times, and I love it because of how diverse the state is. San Diego, San Francisco, and the wine country area

are some of my favorite spots, and yet all so different from one another."

A few years back, I went to Italy with my friend, who is from Italy and lives there part-time and here part-time. I remember the first day we arrived, she saw that I had brought a hot roller set to do my hair every morning. She told me, "You won't have time for that," and bought me some clips for my hair instead. She was right! We packed so much activity into every day that I barely had time to sleep each night before we were off on another adventure. The food was incredible, but I didn't gain an ounce because we were walking everywhere and having such a fantastic time. I can't wait to go back!"



IF YOU MET WITH NEW CLIENTS TODAY LOOKING FOR A HOME ON THE PLATEAU, HOW WOULD YOU APPROACH THAT PROCESS?

"The first thing I would do is sit down, talk to them, and get to know them personally. We have an incredibly diverse range of communities here, between gated neighborhoods, those with golf courses, lakeside homes, more secluded, rural properties, and a range of price points. Some people feel strongly about Highlands, while others want to be in Cashiers, Sapphire Valley, or Glenville. So, I get to know my clients first and become acquainted with their expectations, lifestyle, hobbies, and what they want to accomplish in their new home."



That helps me narrow down our options. But then we need to get out and visit these communities so the clients can get a feel for life here on the Plateau. I familiarize them with all of our amenities here on the Plateau, like our waterfalls, hiking trails, golf courses, tennis courts, and croquet. Usually, new clients will decide that a particular area feels like the perfect fit for them, and then we can focus on finding their new home.

Often when we're out viewing a number of homes, we stop at Buck's, our local coffee shop at the crossroads. It's a great way to get a feel for the town. In fact, a few years ago, I sold a home to a client because he was so impressed by the friendly vibe there. As we sat sipping our coffee and chatting about real estate, several people stopped by our table to say hello and meet the newcomer. My client said he had never

experienced such an outgoing and personable community before, and he made an offer on a house that same day."

WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE THING YOU HAVE LEARNED WHILE WORKING AS A REAL ESTATE BROKER?

"Some real estate transactions can be very straightforward and smooth, while others can be trickier to navigate. One of the most unique deals I brokered was a residential home plus a lot for a commercial business, all on the same property together. That deal felt complicated, but we got it done! I learned if you're determined and stick with it, you can accomplish almost anything.

I've also learned that finding and purchasing the right home can be a very personal and emotional experience. You might be surprised at what



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details appeal to people and how they attach to those details and make a decision. For example, I was touring some clients through a private neighborhood once, where they chose and purchased a property. Later, they told me that the moss growing on the rocks and gate by the front entrance was so beautiful that they instantly knew they had found their future home. We might only see moss, but they saw something unique that appealed to them personally."

THE HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS PLATEAU IS A UNIQUE PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT. WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS OUR GREATEST RESOURCE?

"I've been amazed at the people in our towns — how kind and generous they are. This is such a giving, connected community, and we all look out for one another. We're fortunate to live in a beautiful place, but the people truly make this place feel like home.

The atmosphere we foster here is so amazing! We have incredible people in these towns who are delighted to live here and participate in community events. It's such a nice feeling to know you will see a friendly face anywhere you go. Everyone is always helping each other and supporting local efforts to create a wonderful place for all of us to live."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO ACCOMPLISH IN 2024?

"I'm ready to branch out further! In the past, I've sold houses all over the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, but I often specialized in a few specific neighborhoods. I'm ready to meet new people and explore more areas of our community. There are so many exciting developments out there, and I can't wait to tap into those and bring the exceptional Silver Creek experience to new clients."

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