

New eco-agency: GreenRoads Realty

By Paul Weideman

Real-estate broker, travel writer, owner of a marketing and communications agency, relationship coach, radio news director. Those are a few of the hats worn over the years by Aysha Griffin. Now the Santa Fe resident has started GreenRoads Realty, a virtual, paperless, eco-friendly agency.

People can learn about the business in the online ezine greenlivingnewmexico.com. The Internet-friendly Realtor also has santafehome.blogspot.com and her personal site, www.ayshagriffin.com.

The motivation for GreenRoads Realty is centered on sustainability issues. Griffin, whose dedication to those principles goes back decades, is the author of Santa Fe Area Green Building Guidelines, a 2002 booklet developed by the Santa Fe Area Home Builders Association and Sustainable Communities Inc.

We talked recently over coffee at Downtown Subscription.

Real Estate Guide: The city of Santa Fe used those guidelines in shaping its green building code, is that right?

Aysha Griffin: Yes, and it's very exciting that we're going in this direction, but I think there's a lot of confusion as well. There are a million aspects to the green movement, but at its core is sustainability. Obviously all the systems we've already created, like the monetary and lending systems, are not sustainable because of our dependence on foreign oil.

Real Estate Guide: And because the big bankers can't be depended on to act unselfishly.

Griffin: Yes, Alan Greenspan said he might have been wrong about the free market. The solution will take some real core change. It's like building houses. If wood had to go up against a sustainable panel, it would never



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD HELLING
Aysha Griffin and her beloved standard poodle

be passed: it burns and cracks and warps. We're still cutting redwood trees to make decks, for heaven's sake.

REG: Clients have to want green building and be willing to spend a little more.

Griffin: I don't think it has to cost more, and I've been involved in green building since 1985. We were super-insulating using triple-pane windows, and we would buy construction overruns from skyscraper projects and we were able to heat a home for a fraction of the cost of a conventional house.

Then I moved here with my partner, David Helling, who is a remodeling contractor and architectural designer, and did

an insulating concrete form [Reward Wall] house in 2001. I talked to a lot of agents here about my feeling that our house was worth more because of the quality of construction and they said, "Oh, nobody cares about energy-efficiency." So you can see how much it's changed in just a few years. The resale value is higher knowing that you'll save money over the long haul. And you realize the comfort level of a tight house after you've gone from living in a drafty house.

REG: Your new company is eco-friendly?

Griffin: It is. That's why I converted Go Realty, which was a buyer's agency here in Santa Fe since 2003, to GreenRoads. It's

based on the fact that the Santa Fe Association of Realtors (SFAR) now offers a course to designate green Realtors. It's called the NAR green designation.

REG: How many have done that?

Griffin: I would guess that about 80 statewide have taken that course and also took the two electives and paid to get their certification. I'd say perhaps 20 percent of our Realtors will have an interest in pursuing a green designation. My feeling is that we have a burgeoning group of Realtors who know something more than the average Realtor, more about construction methodologies and about tax incentives that exist for greening your home. So why not create an agency with a platform to market their expertise and that attracts eco-conscious buyers and sellers?

REG: You're president of GreenRoads Realty. Who else do you have?

Griffin: It's me and David Helling and Bob Taylor. David and I are qualifying brokers and I'm the owner. We also have a marvelous web designer. I had a marketing/advertising agency for 20 years in Colorado prior to coming to Santa Fe. I've been using the Internet for a long time.

Lots of people want to move here, for their retirement, for example, so my idea is that if we provide more information we can make the process less confusing by becoming paperless in terms of having all of the transactions stored in secure servers online. I looked at how much paper is generated in a typical real-estate transaction, and with transportation costs it becomes absurd.

We're doing this now. I've had to source the best providers of the various applications, integrate them, and make it possible for our virtual office to exist in such a way that we are doing real estate more effectively.

REG: When did you go online?

Griffin: On Thanksgiving day.

REG: You have a home office?

Griffin: Yes, for many years. It takes up a quarter of my house. This is about not going to the office, but still having a sense of being part of an agency or a team is something that we will build. This is not for people just starting in real estate. I'm looking for agents who have been active at least three years and who have a shared value in the green movement and are excited about what we can offer to our clients.

REG: How many people would you like eventually?

Griffin: I believe that 10 exceptional, experienced, self-directed brokers committed to collaboration, authentic relationships, and making a difference in the world through the Green movement, would create a successful new agency model based on respect and purposefulness.

I have designed GreenRoads to take advantage of what's happening at SFAR right now. The MLS Green Committee came up with 38 green features and they're being incorporated into Rapattoni [SFAR's multiple-listing-service software], so when we have a listing we can plug in more of the green features like water catchment and enhanced insulation.

REG: Your Web presence now includes a Facebook account.

Griffin: Yeah, it's exciting. However, a lot of these experienced agents, since we all tend to be second-career people — the average age of an agent, according to the National Association of Realtors, is 54 — didn't grow up with this and they're daunted. I keep hearing, "All I want to do is work with clients." They don't want to have to learn how to Facebook and Twitter and blog, so what we're doing at GreenRoads is doing that for them. I want this to be really fun, and to be doing a good thing.