

The Power of Community:

The National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals®

By: **Lynita Mitchell-Blackwell** | Photo: **Picture This Studio**

If you have not heard of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals® (NAHREP), you most assuredly have felt the impact of this incredible organization. NAHREP's mission is "to advance sustainable Hispanic homeownership" through education, advocacy, and relationship building with homebuyers, communities, and real estate professionals.

NAHREP was founded in 1999 by Gary Acosta and Ernie Reyes, has 40 chapters across the country, and over 20,000 members nationwide. The 2014 President Elect is Teresa Palacios Smith, who is the Vice-President of Business Development & Cultural Initiatives for Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices - Georgia Properties. Teresa is very passionate about the work of NAHREP, in that it works to benefit homebuyers, real estate agents, and corporations that do business with the Hispanic community. How can one organization accomplish so much? Much is accomplished through strategic programs and alliances, and extraordinary networking with a strong, loyal base.

Examples of the fruits of NAHREP's work are evident:

- The State of Hispanic Homeownership report, an annual NAHREP publication that highlights homeownership growth and household formation rates of Hispanics as well as their educational achievements, entrepreneurial endeavors, labor force profile and purchasing power in the United States. This report analyzes the demographic trends and dynamics that shape the homebuyer market and verifies the rise of Hispanics as a vital force in the housing market and the nation's economy. This report is a most coveted intelligence tool for many corporations and marketing organizations seeking entry and expansion in the Hispanic community.

- The annual Policy Conference in Washington, DC. NAHREP leaders and representatives from all over the country reach out to and meet with congressmen, senators and other leaders to advocate for issues that affect the Hispanic community. The current year's "call to action" includes

Immigration reform, inventory disposition, and housing finance reform.

- Network of professionals that operate like a family. Smith shared, "Anytime I am in a city where we have a chapter, I know that if I make one phone call, there will be someone who will greet me at the airport, invite me for dinner and connect me to their own contacts within the market. This is so powerful! It is almost like I have familia [family] all over the country."

Members, new and seasoned, are groomed and mentored to be successful realtors and community leaders. NAHREP has a professional development Leadership Academy, weekly videos and newsletter, and monthly meetings to ensure its members receive all the support they need to be outstanding professionals.

It is apparent to anyone who talks with Smith how much she loves the organization. Smith will be the first Latina from the South to serve as President of NAHREP. Before joining NAHREP, Smith was already a busy and successful realtor. However, in addition to her loving family and Berkshire Hathaway colleagues, Smith largely attributes her most recent "next level" successes to the NAHREP. "The organization has helped me grow both professionally and personally. Because of the community involvement and my role with NAHREP, I received a contract with the asset managers for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be one of their listing agents. This contract alone created job opportunities for my company, provided 400 closings and over \$33 million dollars in real estate sales."

When asked to summarize NAHREP in one word or short phrase, Ms. Smith did not hesitate in her response: "We are Wealth Creators. We believe that through homeownership, Latinos can grow wealth and as real estate professionals we are the gatekeepers of the 'American dream' and provide the pathway to homeownership." 

To learn more about NAHREP, visit www.NAHREP.org



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