

# The Keyes Company

## A Culture of Excellence

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*by Virginia Nemmers  
photography by Amy Miller and Alex Gort*



*From left to right: Tim Pappas, Chairman Mr. Theodore Pappas, Marie Pappas, and Mike Pappas at a Keyes recruiting function.*



**company  
profile**

“Keep your eyes on Keyes,” the slogan for The Keyes Company, has never been truer than it is today. This 82 year-strong company is the leading independently owned real estate firm in Florida, and it stays right there on top by consistently setting standards and pushing the envelope in its mission to be the best at what it does.

### *Impressive Track Record*

And what it does and has done is pretty impressive. One of the top 100 real estate companies in both sales and transactions out of over 700,000 nationwide, Keyes is anchored in family and community, just the way it has been its entire existence. With 30 offices and nearly 2,000 associates in South Florida, and an international location in Panama, Keyes boasts an enviable track record few can equal. “The key to success in this business is to be adaptable,” says Mike Pappas, the company’s gregarious CEO and president. While other companies are nervously finding their way in a tough market, Keyes thrives, due in part to intelligent expansion; Keyes has purchased or merged with 30 companies in the last 10 years, retaining the majority of seasoned professionals at those firms. The culture of the organization has a lot to do with that. It is a supportive environment where associates are willing to share insights, where top associates can grow and prosper and new ones can thrive. “Our offices are stimulating environments,” Mike says, adding, “our culture is very collaborative. Our ceiling is transparent.” No wonder dedicated associates keep doing better and better in a company that is looking brightly to the future.

### *The Best and the Brightest*

In a real estate world of mega-corporations and single office brokerages, Keyes is a refreshing—and extremely successful—alternative. “We’re big enough to compete with the big boys but small enough to be regional experts. Our roots are here,” Mike

says. He is the driving force. “He’s so cutting edge,” Steven Reibel, senior vice president says, adding, “Mike is a visionary who is beloved within the company.” “He’s very creative,” Andrea Nelson, Keyes’ vice president of marketing and public relations, says. And they both praise his approachability. “One can personally touch Mike,” Steve adds, begging the comparison to heads of other major real estate firms. He is around the branch offices, a phone call away. He attends the weekly meetings, the awards ceremonies and even handwrites birthday cards to every single associate on a monthly basis. “It has always been about blending family with sound business practices,” Steve explains, “and that is one of the strengths of the Keyes organization.”

Theodore Pappas bought the company from the Keyes family in the early 1960s. From the beginning, his vision—and now the company’s—was about creating an environment where the associates could grow and succeed. He sold the company in 1992 to his two sons, but remains its chairman. The fact that it has such a solid, local connection is important to the family. “This is our backyard,” says Tim Pappas, co-owner and executive vice president. “Our families are here; we’re involved.” If Mike is the anchor of The Keyes Company, he is also the inquisitive traveler, making connections and absorbing ideas from around the world while serving as international chairman of the prestigious Young Presidents’ Organization, which recently merged with the World Presidents’ Organization. As Steve says, “Besides the incredible exposure Mike has received, the contacts that he’s been able to foster worldwide for the benefit of the Keyes organization, are very, very strong.”

Mike is at the head of an impressive management staff, one of the best in the industry. He set out to balance a talented family by recruiting experts in their fields at the executive and sales management level. Steve Reibel, head of mergers, acquisitions and recruiting, has extensive experience in real estate and auction services. Fritz Hawkins was a top producer and branch manager for Coldwell Banker, Prudential and Arvida before coming to

*From left to right: Mike Pappas, Marie Pappas, and Chairman Mr. Theodore Pappas, celebrating the groundbreaking of Keyes Coral Gables.*

Keyes as its general sales manager. And Andrea Nelson brings experience from working with giants AT&T and Time Warner.

The sales management team is also top-notch. "By constantly providing our branch office managers with ongoing training in leadership, business planning and motivational techniques, they are second to none," Fritz says.

### *A Leader in Technology*

To fulfill its vision of doing all it can to help associates succeed, The Keyes Company has always sought out new ideas. It has a long history of being on top of the technology boom, adapting and securing the best possible tools. "There's literally no bell or whistle that Keyes does not have in terms of programs to assist our associates to differentiate themselves," Steve says. The company invests millions in consistently improving and adding to what it provides. Agent Productivity Systems is what Steve calls this long list of impressive current options. Internet partnerships such as Realtor.com and Trulia.com, direct mail/farming programs, Hotline systems for immediate response, and analytical tools for residential and commercial deals just scratch the surface of what Keyes offers.

"Keyes gets out there and finds the best programs, the best tools and then provides user-friendly packages for associates, enabling them to succeed in any market," Mike says. Don Willis, who came to Keyes through a merger and is now a district sales manager, says, "The programs that Keyes offers both for management and for the associates cannot be surpassed by any other firm out there today. I wish I had discovered this company years ago." In addition to the programs above, the company offers dozens of training programs and events, with speakers, panels and networking for all associates who wish to participate.

### *Strong Connections*

To provide its customers with the best possible real estate experiences, Keyes has sought out the leaders in their fields to offer a full line of services. Keyes Mortgage partners with Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, the number one residential mortgage company in the country, to provide customers with a menu of 1,800 products, programs and rate combinations with loan officers in all of the branches. Keyes Title is a business relationship with Universal Land Title offering associates and clients easy access to



secure, thorough and accurate information to close a transaction. Keyes offers clients the American Home Shield's home warranty program for peace of mind when the unexpected occurs. Keyes Relocation Services, combined with the firm's status as a founding member of the Leading Real Estate Companies of the World's global network, insures that Keyes provides the most comprehensive services to transferees.

"Keyes delivers a complete set of services under one roof, making the customer experience a pleasant one," says Marie Pappas, Keyes vice president. The company invests millions of dollars in office upgrades and renovations to provide a welcoming environment for associates and customers alike. New, state-of-the-art offices are operating in cities such as Aventura, Doral, Weston, Hollywood, Lighthouse Point, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens, and more—with a brand new flagship facility on the horizon in Coral Gables.

### *A Leap into Luxury*

Over the years, many Keyes associates have effectively represented thousands of luxury properties. To continue to grow in this critical market segment, the company has created the Keyes Luxury Portfolio division with Andrea at the helm. She believes, "Components that are so important for a luxury program, a successful one, include high-end marketing materials, multimedia strategies and global partnerships." With that in mind, the company has aligned itself with two of the top organizations in the world of luxury home sales: Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate and Luxury Portfolio, an arm of the Leading Real Estate Companies of the World. Luxury Portfolio, a proven international network of luxury brokers that includes brand advertising and award-winning Web sites, represents more \$1 million plus properties than either Sotheby's or Christie's.



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*From left to right: Keyes associate Igor Michel, Fritz Hawkins, Andrea Nelson and district sales manager Nita Summers.*

A select group of associates are now Keyes Certified Luxury Specialists and take part in continuing education and networking sessions. "This area, which pulls heavily from a worldwide market, is where Mike's international connections will definitely be a plus," Andrea says.

### *Mergers and Acquisitions*

The fact that Keyes has been successful for many years and is stronger than ever gives it a definite advantage in this marketplace. This is especially true when it comes to growing through strategic acquisitions. "We're in a position now," Steve says, "even in this challenging market, to be looking for the right partnerships. I think this is a really strong statement about the health of the company."

As head of the merger and acquisition team, Steve knows the company has the heart and soul to pay for value. He is currently in negotiations with dozens of interested companies and comments that many brokers frequently ask him for an evaluation of their company. "I'm always happy to do it, with the understanding there is no commitment by either party," Steve adds. One of his biggest

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*-Steven A. Reibel*



selling points is that Keyes can offer all levels of associates a place where they can prosper. Broker/owners are not just concerned with the financial aspects of a merger, but with the environment that Keyes provides. "The associates who join Keyes as a result of mergers and acquisitions," Steve comments, "typically will do more production in our environment than they did at their previous companies." And they stay. The company has an impressive history of keeping associates a long, long time.

### *Success Breeds Success*

Marta DuPree started with Keyes in 1978 and today is one of the company's veterans, and a stellar associate. "I joined the Keyes Company because I wanted to have the best training," she says adding, "My business has grown to a level of success that I never dreamed of." Stan Rosen, who was hired by Mike Pappas in 2001, shares Marta's sentiment. "I have great opportunities to work with the best professionals in the industry to create the drive and motivation that is needed to succeed in this business," he says, noting that as he grew, so did his production levels to over \$40 million.

It all comes back to what it is that makes Keyes the company it is: a unique and thriving family culture, a cooperative spirit, a thirst for the best in technology and what's best for its clients, its associates and its community. With their impressive programs, new and remodeled offices and enviable leadership, the real estate world will be doing a lot more than just keeping their eyes on Keyes. They will be admiring how one company could continue to do so much, so right, for so long. ★

For more information on opportunities with The Keyes Company contact:

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