

PROFILE

Victoria Rong Kennedy, senior associate broker,
Citi Habitats



Million dollar broker holds the balance of power

By ROSLYN LO

As an international Mecca for business, culture and arts, New York City draws in millions with its signature lights and promise of opportunity. Yet living at a break-neck speed of life, it can be easy to get lost in the shuffle. The trick, according to Victoria Rong Kennedy, is to find balance.

"The broker who listens" is her calling card. A senior associate broker at Citi Habitats, Kennedy understands that underneath New York's glamorous façade, she is dealing with real people with real problems.

"We are residential, so we're dealing with a personal side of people's lives," she said. "Life goes beyond their work. So when they come to me, it's not just real estate, it's real life."

Kennedy's business priority is to forge a trust with her clients by accommodating what they need. She said that too often, brokers are too quick to sell, and often don't consider their client's wishes. "We hear them, but do we really hear them?" she asked.

Her empathy and intuitiveness have made her relatable, but when it comes down to business, Kennedy is able to deliver. It is this intricate equilibrium of business savvy and empathy that has earned her a sterling reputation in the business.

Born in Beijing, Kennedy grew up immersed in real estate development and architecture, coming from a family with a long history in these fields dating as far back as the construc-

tion of the Forbidden City. With a strong eye for these nuances, she earned a degree in architectural design and a second in film production, from Tsinghua University and Beijing Film Academy respectively, elite universities in China.

Delivering her words with mellifluous intonations, Kennedy's voice soon became something of a trademark. She landed voiceover work for Rosetta Stone language-learning software and Continental Airlines inflight messaging. She explored these talents early on as an actress, starring in several feature films and stage productions. A member of the Screen Actors Guild, she can be seen in "The Thomas Crown Affair," and "Keeping the Faith," starring Ben Stiller.

After jet setting around the world to act and explore international cities such as Rome, Cape Town, Sydney, Japan and Singapore, Kennedy decided to settle down in Manhattan. She has never looked back since. "Try Paris, try London, try Sydney," she said, "but New York City is the best."

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The budding starlet decided the trade in her acting chops for business suits once she made New York her permanent home. Confident that the Big Apple was the "best city for talented people," Kennedy switched gears and became a licensed residential broker after meeting several professionals and deciding the career was an apt match for her personality and strengths. She recognized that, despite being a newcomer, she had the qualifications, business acumen and ambition to succeed in real estate. "What you can bring to the table, who you are, makes this city special," she said. She joined Citi Habitats in

2002 and quickly rose among the ranks, earning the title of Top Producer and getting inducted into the prestigious "Multi-Million Dollar Sales Club" by the end of her first year with the brokerage. Her achievements have ranked her amongst the top residential brokers, with sales in high-profile properties such as Trump Place and Oxford Condo and current projects in UN Plaza and the South Hamptons.

An aggressive negotiator, Kennedy is also pragmatic when it comes to giving advice and listening. She believes New York as one of the safest and most sustainable cities to invest in property and advises her clients to buy here. "Rent is like throwing money in the water — an expense, gone, washed out," Kennedy said. "But when you invest in real estate, you earn equity, you're forcing yourself to save."

However, humanity always comes hand in hand with Kennedy's business. "What your clients want is the most important thing. Earning their trust comes through intellectual communication. We need to intuitively learn and be able to practice that in our business, because we are in a people business," she said.

"But when it's time to close, a decision has to be made at the right time," she added. "You have to be able to step in. That's the balance, being a good listener. When the time comes, you'll be able to guide your client to take action and close the deal."

Kennedy carries her business philosophy into her personal life, believing that positive energy and a strong drive form a symbiotic relationship in building a happy lifestyle.

She expressed some weariness of the recent economic woes but nonetheless smiled and gestured an imaginary circle of energy around her with her hands.

"There's a lot of pressure. You have to be able to have a peaceful mind internally. If you're positive, I believe things will come. With this state of mind, I can be in this business a lot longer."

WHO'S NEWS

Kevin Mallen has joined the ranks of **CORE**.

Born in San Francisco, Kevin has resided New York for the past of eleven years, and knows the City like a local.

While attending college, Mallen started his own furniture business upon noticing a need for reproduction antique furnishings at a reasonable price. Here, he honed his management skills and developed a sharp eye for helping customers conceptualize layouts.

His background also includes over 14 years in the advertising industry that played an essential part in an ever-changing real estate market. Prior to **CORE**, he was an agent at Halstead Property.



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The **Real Estate Group of New York (TREGNY)** has named real estate agent **Luke Porto** 2010 Rookie of the Year.

Porto did phenomenally well in 2010. In January 2011 he earned in excess of \$47,000, the highest total gross commission for the month. Porto has more than 10 years of business-world experience under his belt with a keen understanding of real estate.

"From rentals to sales to marketing to customer service, Luke has mastered every aspect of his profession, to the direct benefit of his clientele," said Andrew Barrocas, CEO of TREGNY. "Like any great business



person, Luke has an innate affiliation toward working one-on-one with people. He enjoys sharing his passion and knowledge of the city with his customers, making their search for a new home both an enjoyable and efficient experience."

His current sales exclusives include several multi-million dollar listings at 1 Central Park West and Trump International Hotel & Tower.

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Charles Rutenberg Realty, Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Kings and Westchester Counties, announced the addition of **Hal Bernfeld** as associate broker.

Bernfeld started his real estate career buying and selling his own properties over a 30-year period. After selling his company, he bought a RE/MAX franchise in Port Washington. After spending most of his time helping and teach-



ing his agents, Bernfeld sold the business so he could fully concentrate on working with his own buyers and sellers.

Bernfeld is a member of National Association of Realtors and Multiple Listing Services of Long Island. He resides in Port Washington.

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DJK Residential announced that **James M. Vitale** has joined the firm as associate broker.

Prior to joining DJK Residential, Vitale established and ran Welcome Home NY Realty, Inc., a brokerage firm that assisted various not-for-profit companies with relocation services and managed a portfolio of multi-unit buildings.

He played a dual role in brokerage and investment services and was instrumental in the marketing and leasing of a 14-unit renovated luxury building, while managing an eight-building portfolio.

Earlier, Vitale began and cultivated a successful real estate career with Citi-Habitats. Starting as a rental agent, he rose to the position of sales manager/associate broker, responsible for supervising 47 agents in two offices.

During his career with the firm, he was involved with over 300 rental and sales transactions and named Citi-Habitats' Top Sales Listing Agent & Sales Agent in 2002.

Before real estate, Vitale worked on several Fortune 500 accounts at advertising and marketing firms, including Saatchi & Saatchi and Euro RSCG.

He studied psychology at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

...
Matthew Groysman has

earned the February Top Agent title at **Weichert, Realtors - The Franzese Group**.

The Brooklyn agency's broker/owner Anthony Franzese congratulated Groysman for listings and sales in excess of \$1-million for the month.

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Charles Rutenberg Realty, Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Kings and Westchester Counties, announced the addition of **Salim Khan** as associate broker.

Before joining Charles Rutenberg Realty, Khan worked at U.S. Realty Executives (formerly RE/MAX) in Valley Stream. He is a member of the National Association of REALTORS. He resides in Valley Stream.

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Charles Rutenberg Realty, Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Kings and Westchester Counties, announced the addition of **Teddy Livingstone** as

associate broker. Previously, Livingstone owned and operated Century 21 Annette's RE in Uniondale. A Dix Hills native, he is a member of the National Association of Realtors and the New York State Association of Realtors.



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Wilfried Jorand has joined **Weichert, Realtors - Mazzeo Agency** in Manhattan.

He serves clients in both sales and rentals throughout Manhattan with a focus on Midtown West, the Upper Westside and Chelsea, where he has lived for six years.

A six-year Realtor, Jorand is a member of the Real Estate Board of New York and the Manhattan Association of REALTORS.

In addition to real estate credentials, Jorand is certified in organization and executive coaching. He earned a bachelor's degree in education and a business computing degree, as well as certificates in marketing and management from IMM Institute.

Just the Facts

- Most searched neighborhood ... *Upper East Side*
- Average listing price on UES ... \$2.629M
- Manhattan listings for sale ... 6,442
- Manhattan rentals ... 2,309
- NYC mortgage rates:
 - 15 yr. 4.57%
 - 30 yr. 5.21%
 - 1 yr. adj...4.06%
- Exchange rates
 - Euro to USD ... 1.40*
 - Pound to USD...1.63*
 - USD to CAD ... 0.97*
 - USD to Peso...12.01*
 - USD to Yen ... 82.35*

Source: REBNY



Brown Harris Steves welcomed the YRY Group to the company at their booth at the annual AVENUE Show's Antiques & Art At the Armory private preview event. BHS president Hall Wilkie joined in the welcome given to the team, which previously operated at Corcoran Sunshine. Anne Sullivan Young joined as senior vice president, managing director at BHS. The senior partner of Young Randolph Young, a sales and marketing group which specializes in the representation of fine properties and new development condominiums, Young will also focus on expanding the Brown Harris Steves portfolio of luxury new development buildings. Randolph joined Brown Harris Steves as a vice president, director after seven successful years selling high-end condominiums at The Sunshine Group. He negotiated transactions at buildings like The Lucida, Ariel, 15 Broad Street, Miraval, Riverlofts and 4 West 21st Street, totaling well over \$400 million. Pictured l-r: Jarrod Randolph, Amanda Young, Hall Wilkie, Anne Young and Shirley Ritenour.

Photo by Richard Lewin