

## <strong>Former teacher gives back through Homes for Heroes</strong>

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### Content

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While the COVID-19 pandemic changed many people’s lives, routines and work situations, it changed one local woman’s whole professional trajectory.

MaryJo Burd, a history teacher for over 20 years, left teaching to become a real estate agent. Now, her philanthropic efforts are through the Homes for Heroes Foundation.

Homes for Heroes is the largest nationwide network of affiliate real estate, mortgage and local business specialists committed to providing ways for “heroes” to save on buying, selling or refinancing a home, according to its website.

The program was developed shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, to give back to firefighters, EMS, law enforcement, military (active, reserves and veterans), health-care professionals and teachers.

Since 2009, Homes for Heroes Inc. has helped over 62,000 “heroes” save over \$119 million on their real estate transactions, sold over \$16 billion in real estate to heroes, actively partnered with more than 4,400 like-minded real estate and mortgage professionals who’ve joined the mission, and donated over \$1.3 million to heroes in need through the Homes for Heroes Foundation.

Participants also give 30% of their real estate commission back to the buyer or seller if they are in one of the “hero” professions.

Burd taught social studies at Indian Land High School from 2017-21, and said she knows what it is like to live on a teacher’s salary, while supporting a family. Burd wants to make sure she can help bridge the financial gap for teachers in her role as a real estate agent.

She got started in the business in 2019 with guidance from a real estate investor friend, and fully committed to the profession in 2021.

She said during COVID, as teachers' in-classroom responsibilities were halted, the real estate market — particularly in Charlotte — was booming. Almost all of her business — 99% — in the real estate market is through referrals, taking much of the legwork off of Burd.

“Affiliating with Homes for Heroes and being able to help, really, my goal is for every teacher in the Charlotte region who wants to buy or sell a house to think of me,” Burd said.

Burd was quickly incentivized by the increase in pay and ability to make commission on sales. As a single mother, Burd said she has been in the position where she knows what it is like to be “living on peanuts,” to provide for her family.

Over the years as the financial tables began to turn for her family, she looked for ways to give back.

Last month, Burd helped run a Fourth of July fundraising campaign to deliver cupcakes to Lancaster County fire stations, the Sheriff's Office and police officers. This also gave Burd and her team at Better Real Estate Carolinas the opportunity to speak to those groups about how to save on home buying, selling and refinancing.

Burd leads a team of three within Better Real Estate Carolinas called the Red Rose Group. The Red Rose Group is all former teachers, who relate on their common background.

“We're all just excited about the growth and opportunities here,” Burd said. “I lived in Indian Land, (and now) I live in Lancaster; my son is growing up here. This is our home.”

Future fundraisers that Burd's Red Rose Group plan to run are having booths at the Indian Land Fall Festival, donating to Indian Land Elementary's Back-to-School event, donating Amazon gift cards to teachers each year and being a member of the local parent teacher organization.

Her group donated thousands of dollars to Lancaster High School to have its 2020 Thanksgiving meal to be catered. It has also dropped off school supplies at Brooklyn Springs Elementary.

“I want to be known as someone who will educate the clients and make it as smooth as possible and explain everything to them,” Burd said. “I don't want there to be surprises.”

Burd can also personally relate to Homes for Hero's 9/11 mission as she remembers being in her classroom teaching when the planes hit the Twin Towers. She was a teacher in Rochester, N.Y. then, and said it is amazing to now be able to give back through an organization that honors those sacrifices since 9/11.

## **Child images**

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### **LANNWS-08-23 HOMES FOR HEROES 1**





**LANNWS-08-23-23 HOMES FOR HEROES 2**



LANNWS-08-23-23 HOMES FOR HEROES LOGO

