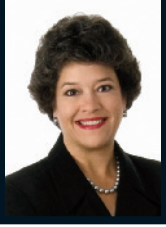


TOP AGENT MAGAZINE



Laura Duggan—Unexpected Treasures

Laura Duggan didn't plan on a career in real estate. She went to the University of Texas, got a degree in education and became a school teacher. In 1979, her dad decided to get his real estate license and asked her to come along to the classes to keep him company. It would be a life changing decision for the whole family.

"I got hooked and I loved it," she said. She taught school during the day and sold homes in the afternoons and summers. "I ended up selling houses to all the teachers I worked with," she says. Duggan still loved teaching, but real estate was becoming her passion. "I married my husband Brad, who was executive director of the elementary principals' association," she says. "I decided that was just too much education for one family, so I came home one afternoon and told him I had quit my job." Duggan had creatively raised the rents of the seven rental properties they owned to cover her salary.

Duggan's husband was surprised, but it all turned out for the best. In fact, she does just as much teaching now as she did back in the classroom. "When you're a client of mine, whether you're buying or selling, I'm going to teach you the process," she says. "It's a collaboration, and we both need to understand and be engaged in the process."

Possibly because of her penchant for learning new things, Duggan loves mastering new technology and figuring out how it can meet the needs of her clients. "I embraced technology early," she says. "When I got into the business, we didn't even have a formal MLS. We all went down to the Board of REALTORS® on Friday mornings, had coffee and exchanged paper listings. When the MLS book came along, we thought it was the greatest invention ever."

Since then, the advent of constant communication, online listings, and 24-hour accessibility have changed things immeasurably. "Every little bit of technological advancement has been a huge leap in what we could do with our business," she says. It used to be that agents withheld information so that potential clients

would have to contact them. Duggan thinks websites save everyone time and trouble, and she uses them to the fullest possible extent. "Your website is your job interview, and the internet listing is the first showing," she says. "If you make it intriguing, people will take the next step in their buying or selling decision."

A few years ago, Duggan helped design a software product for agents that would allow them to easily create a website for every single listing. There were similar products on the market, but none had been created by an agent, so none of them truly fit an agent's needs. Duggan enlisted the help of a technology expert to write the code, and she designed a product that would increase efficiency and ease of use for both the agent and the potential client. "I designed it start to finish, and it went over huge," she says. It's this wise and proficient use of technology that sets Duggan apart from the field. "We are a small company, but we have really big tools that level the playing field," she says.

Technology is important, but it's the personal side that truly matters. Duggan is a third generation Austin resident, and she loves her hometown. She works alongside her husband Brad, who serves as the firm's COO, and her daughter Katy, who is a whiz at marketing through social networking. Duggan's real estate partner is Gail Boston, a lifelong friend and highly accomplished real estate professional. All members of the team share the ethics of providing service, knowledge and integrity. After all, it's the relationship that matters. "Home sales are generally connected to some major life event—a wedding, the birth of a baby, a funeral, a divorce," she says. "This is definitely a people business, and you can never take that human factor out of the equation."

Laura Duggan

West Austin Properties, Austin, TX

(512) 750-2425

laura@westaustin.com

westaustin.com

estaustinmarketplace.com