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Martha Mendenhall
Trained to Succeed



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Raising the Bar

Tacoma REALTOR® Martha Mendenhall demonstrates that success can be achieved at any level



When Tacoma REALTOR® Martha Mendenhall started in real estate four years ago she advertised her new career with a simple card that showed a high jumper along with the words “You say jump and I say how high”. This card was a perfect way of depicting her attitude toward customer service and also a clever way of introducing herself since the jumper in the picture was not only a World Champion Gold Medalist, but also Martha herself.

I'm very different I think than other brokers. I only take five listings at a time. Sometimes I have just one or two at a time. Because when people hire me, they want me and they get me.

Martha Mendenhall is a known name in the track and field circles and her athletic career spans over 28 years including coaching at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) and Bel-larmine Prep. Martha has been competing as a Masters Athlete member for the USA Track & Field (USATF) since 1994 and has achieved the highest status possible—World Champion.

“That was my goal on my ‘Life List’ at one point. I wanted to compete in a World Meet outside of our country. I now have competed in five World Meets; the most recent one was last year in Finland where I won the high jump. In addition to high jump I run the 100 meters and the 200 meters, because it makes me a better high jumper to train as a sprinter.”

Athlete, REALTOR®, mom, coach, artist, speaker—Martha is all of these and more. A well rounded and multifaceted individual, Martha is dedicated to always doing her best in all that she does. It takes drive and determination to compete at a Master level and these traits have served Martha well in her both her career as an athlete and as a REALTOR®.

“My background of competitive track and field and 16 years of coaching experience have instilled in me what it takes to succeed...being a National and World Champion doesn't just happen. I work hard, I don't cut corners and I pay close attention to detail.

“I can be very assertive, and I think that you need to be both ways in real estate. You need to be able to listen and

always successful in real estate and you have to be able to take those times and look at them as a challenge to do better the next time, instead of feeling like a failure. I'm good at that because in high jump even when you win, you fail three times.

“Because you get three attempts at each height, there is going to be a height I'm not going to clear and I'm going to fail three times even if I may turn out to be the winner. You have to be okay with that. This is a good lesson for real estate and for life—things aren't always going to turn out.”

This life lesson hit close to home 4½ years ago when Martha's husband Patrick suffered an unexpected brain aneurism and almost did not survive. This turn of events was the catalyst for Martha's foray into real estate since Patrick lost his job as an airline pilot as a result.

“My husband was not going to be able to fly ever again, that's what they told us. So we had to do some really deep evaluation of where we were in our lives and what we were going to do... I was already taking this online real estate course because I was interested in it. After that happened it became abundantly clear that I needed to go to work right away, so I got my license and went to work.”

Thus Martha jumped full on into real estate and became a REALTOR®, first working for Sterling Brokerage and then



Martha takes her responsibility to her customers very seriously and is inspired by her grandfather who was in real estate when she was a child. Even though he passed away long before she got into the industry, Martha looks to her grandfather's example as a guide for her own career.

“My grandfather was in real estate as long as I remember. I can remember as a child how dedicated he was to being an honest guy, almost a counselor. I remember specifically one time hearing him on the phone talking to this young couple that wanted to buy a house and he very compassionately said “Well, young man you can't afford to buy that house”. He actually would say that. We can't say things like that—real estate brokers today there is so much stuff

can't afford to buy that house, you'd never be able to go out to eat or see a movie.” That's what he said. And it was really wise advice and I thought “that's so honest!” He was very careful. He was truly looking out for his clients and he got to know his clients and got to know what they needed in their lives and he helped them.”

Like her grandfather Martha aims to be fully involved with her clients. She gets to know as much about them and what they want as possible, so she can put her energy into finding them the best home.

“When I first get a client or I go to a listing presentation, I try to find out a lot. I know that they're interviewing me, but I'm also interviewing them in that I want to know

style is, what they like to do, what's important to them in their lives what's important to them in their homes.”

“I'm very different I think than other brokers. I only take five listings at a time. Sometimes I have just one or two at a time. Because when people hire me, they want me and they get me. I do a lot of work for that person and I'm the one that they always see. I can't service more than five listings and do a good job. So that is my policy and the way it's always been.”

Martha's client focus and attention to detail has paid off in many ways, from referrals to friendship.

“Most of my current listings come from

houses and face to face meetings or knocking. I am not a cold call broker. I am in a face to face situation... It's all about the relationships that you create in this business."

Martha also relishes being able to help her clients achieve their dreams.

"I love, love finding the perfect house for my client! It's so much fun. I've worked with a lot of people and usually there is a perfect house, you can get a lot of the things the person is looking for but it's hard to get everything that they're looking for in a home and they know that every once in a while, and twice this year happened for me, I'm working with a young couple or a client and we open a house or to like the 20th house we've been looking at and I walk in first I know "this is the one." And it is and they love it! It's exciting, they're like "there's no question in my mind it gives me everything that I need!" That is the greatest feeling."

Martha's experiences and her own discipline as an athlete, Martha forging ahead in this tough market. She works hard every day, whether she's working out and training, handling her real estate business, or raising her daughter Violet. An athlete at heart, Martha doesn't try to be something she isn't. It's all about being true to the mantra of "just be who you are".

"As an athlete, I'm a mom, I'm a coach—everybody is a coach. At the same time I'm trying to balance real estate and bring my life to help us because I needed to bring in an income, I was still coaching. I was still obligated to my coaching job at the time I was still doing some personal training with some athletes, and I was still training myself for big meets—so there's a lot of things to juggle and balance. I would show houses in the office in my coaching gear, and I would just fit everything around everything. I would even show a house in my coaching gear (even though I won't do an open house in my coaching gear). People know who I am. They appreciate what I do. I've had more than one person say to me, "I appreciate you're just who you are."

"When I got into real estate one of the reasons that I think I did so well is that I had a huge contact base of people that know me from athletics. Those are the people who really know who I am and I got a lot of work that way. It just worked for me. I've always been an athlete and a coach, that's where my heart was, but I've also always had this passion for architecture and homes. It's all about balance."

While Martha sells all types of houses as a REALTOR® it is her passion for architecture that has led her to develop a niche in historic homes, especially in the North End Historic District in Tacoma.

"Most of my business has come from our North End Historic District. Most of my expertise lies there and my interest definitely does. I live in a huge historic home that my husband and I have restored and raised our family in. It's been amazing. Architecture is incredibly interesting to me and historic architecture is incredible."

"I've always been creative... I think I'm a right brained. I loved creating houses when I was a child, drawing houses and things like that. My mother tells me that I used to drive through neighborhoods with them and it would be nighttime and I'd see like lights on in a house, and I'd say "I love looking in people's windows." I love looking at the warmth of the house. There's a big difference between a house and a home. And I would say things like "That looks so homey, look at the bookcases." I just loved houses."

"I (also) love old architecture, I love learning about the architect of a home, what their influences were, and what style of architecture I'm looking at. It's just very very interesting to me. Because of that interest it led us to purchase the house that we live in. Then I got involved with our historic district; I'm on the board of the North Slope Historic District."

The North Slope Historic District is a triangle of historic residential homes in Tacoma and any homes that sit in that area fall under the guidelines of Landmark Preservation. This regulates what can be

done to the homes as a way to preserve the historic value of the area.

"One of the things that I've been trying to do is to find ways to educate real estate brokers about what those guidelines are. Because many times homes are sold to people by someone who really isn't aware that you can't change these windows out or you can't build a porch on here, or you can't tear this garage down. There are a lot of things that you need to know about the district and these homes and about what you can and cannot do without a design review. That's not a terribly difficult process; I've been through it twice. But it's a very fair way for this district to maintain and preserve these properties."

"When I go to a listing presentation or I list a home, if it's a historic home I have a packet of information that I put together for either the buyer or my potential seller that tells you all about the historic preservation. It tells you all about how to get the information about what you can and cannot do to these homes. It tells you how to look up the history of your home, how to use the Northwest room at the library, all the different resources that you can use to try to find the history about your home. I have that all together in a packet and I'll leave it in the home for the buyers for when they have possession or I'll give it to my client at the listing appointment. And it's a nice thing to leave out when you have open houses for people to look at and be better informed about whether they want to take responsibility of owning a historic home. It's a lot of responsibility that goes along with that."

Spending time putting together these packets appeals to Martha's artistic side and she does all her own marketing.

"I specialize in marketing because I have this artistic background and I used to be a graphic artist... I love designing my own marketing cards. I love thinking up a catchy theme for a house."

Living such a busy life, Martha finds it is essential to prioritize what is important and make time for those things to keep from getting overwhelmed. She is also willing to

make hard choices such as recently giving up her coaching position at PLU in order to make sure she isn't stretched too thin.

"I just gave up my coaching position this year because I'm raising my granddaughter and she's 23 months old. You throw something like that in the mix and the balance changes. So something has to give, and the only way I could make this work is to remove some things from my life and then add them back if I see that I can. I know that when track season comes around, I'm going to miss it terribly, because coaching is very fulfilling for me... But I have the joy of this little girl in my life."

"I took away my coaching and I may even have to take away my competitions, but I will not take away my training. I will always show up at that track and do workouts. Because that's my therapy. It really is. It's something that I need for me. It's not something that I do, it's who I am. I need that in my life."

Family and following your heart is very important to Martha and she is grateful to have her family's support. Fortunately her husband did recover fully from his aneurysm and after years of tests received his medical clearance back from the FAA and is flying again.

"Now he's a pilot with Delta, flying again. It is really wonderful... it's almost like somebody is watching from above and watching out for us. He got his life back, really. That's where his heart is." As for Martha, she will continue to follow her heart and be the best she can be. Never settling for just getting by, Martha continues to raise the bar in all areas of her life. She chooses her path and commits to it 100%.

"Be true to yourself. Be honest. Be who you are."

And that is something Martha excels at.

