

Slaying of homebuyer has real estate community on edge

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Mike Marcin, a retired yacht captain turned South Florida real estate investor, tries to buy homes priced from \$100,000 to \$150,000. The search usually takes him to distressed neighborhoods.

In the race to beat the competition to the best deals, Marcin, 66, isn't so concerned about safety as he is walking through the yard, peering in windows and, once inside, leaving the front door open to let a little daylight shine through.

"Maybe that's not the smartest thing," he said.

The shooting Feb. 26 of a prospective buyer during a home showing near Fort Lauderdale has reignited safety concerns for buyers, sellers and agents. Some are planning concealed-weapons training so they can legally carry guns to protect themselves.

The Broward Sheriff's Office on Thursday arrested Vincent Reniard Stanley, 51, of Lauderhill, charging him with murder while engaged in a felony offense. Robbery was the motive in the slaying of Kenol Jean, 51, in the 2700 block of Northwest Sixth Court, a sheriff's spokeswoman said.

Israel Brown, 48, of Fort Lauderdale was arrested earlier and charged with accessory after the fact in a first-degree felony.

Keller Williams Properties of Weston has the home listing, though the firm and the sellers took it off the market for now.

Andrea Leslie, chief executive of Keller Williams Properties, stood in front of a packed office conference room Tuesday, urging agents to take precautions. She was composed, but clearly shaken by the murder.

"It has me unhinged," she told the group.

Keller Williams will host concealed-weapons training classes from 9 a.m. to noon March 14 and March 28 for any agents or clients across the region. Self-defense classes will be held from 9 to 11 a.m. March 21 and April 4.

South Florida agents say the killing appears to be random violence and not easily preventable. But those in the real estate community insist it serves as a somber reminder of the need to remain alert while buying and selling homes.

"It definitely does give you pause," said Jordan Rodack, a 34-year-old, soon-to-be father who's selling his townhome west of **Boynton Beach** and looking to buy a single-family residence. "I know 99 percent of the people out there are good people. It's that 1 percent I'm concerned

about."

It's not uncommon for listing agents to take calls from total strangers who want to see a home that day, within an hour or two. In many cases, they meet at the property before the agent has the chance to screen the potential buyer.

The Broward Sheriff's Office said the killer in this case walked through an open front door. But leaving a door open is a smart move for an agent who doesn't want to be alone inside a house with an unfamiliar client, said Chip Rowand, managing broker of Keller Williams Properties.

About five years ago, Michael Citron, of RE/MAX ParkCreek in Broward and Palm Beach counties, showed a Coral Springs house at night to someone he didn't know. The man flashed a gun once they were inside, though Citron was able to escape through an open sliding-glass door.

"I've learned so much about people, and it scares me," he said.

Some agents say they have stumbled onto squatters and vandals in foreclosed homes they thought were vacant.

Marisa DiLenge, an agent for Better Homes & Gardens in Fort Lauderdale, said she once showed what was supposed to be a vacant property but found the master bedroom door locked and Chinese food on the kitchen counter. She and her client bolted out the front door.

One South Florida broker said some people who aren't serious buyers call agents, just hoping to strike up a conversation and maybe set up a meeting after seeing their pictures on signs or business cards.

Brokers across South Florida are reminding their agents to tell the office staff where they are and not to go on showings alone. They also should qualify potential clients, making copies of their driver's license numbers in the process, before agreeing to show them a home.

While buyers and agents have to be quick in a market short on quality listings, "there is always plenty of time to be cautious," DiLenge said.

Safety prompted DiLenge to get a concealed-weapons permit within the past year. She hadn't been carrying a gun, but will now.

"You just don't know what you're going to find on the other side of the door," she said.

The Keller Williams courses will be at the office at 1625 N. Commerce Parkway. The cost is \$15 a person, and the money will be donated to Children's Home Society in Fort Lauderdale. To register call, 954-358-6000.

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