

PROPERTY SIGNPOST NEWSLETTER

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Your Area Specialist:

Chas Everitt International sales agents have all the latest market information regarding local property values at their fingertips – and are committed to the highest standards of personal service when it comes to selling your home. In addition, the Chas Everitt International property group offers you, the homeowner, the best possible exposure for your property in both national and international markets. So if you are thinking of selling your home, call your nearest Chas Everitt International office today for the name of your local area specialist - or visit www.everitt.co.za

Every month the **Property Signpost Newsletter** will be issued to all our subscribers, filled with real estate information to help you make an informed decision, whether you are buying or selling a property.

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1. Welcome By Publisher

Summertime, and the living is easy... especially if you're one of the 114 Chas Everitt International top achievers who are jetting out to Buenos Aires this week for our annual 'Funvention' – five days of sun, sightseeing and recognition for a year's worth of hard work.

Having taken all our top achievers to Sugar Beach in Mauritius last year, we were looking for a very different venue this year – and where better, we thought, than the capital of Argentina, famous for great gaucho hospitality and great leather goods but most of all for the tango, the ultimate expression of the current Latin American dance frenzy?

But learning to dance the tango (properly) is just one of the items on the recreational itinerary of our high-fliers – each of whom sold more than R15-million worth of property this year. We have also scheduled river cruises, fabulous shopping excursions and a gala awards evening with a distinctly different flavour.

However, more of that on our return. For now, all we want to say is: "Wish you were here..."



2. Keep Your Home Safe This Summer

Reliable home security depends on more than just the latest high-tech alarm system – a bit of common sense can go a long way to making your home your castle.

Sophisticated alarm systems do have obvious advantages. They alert you when intruders try to gain access to your property; they summon help from neighbours or a security company if you are connected to their surveillance network; and they may save you some money on your insurance premiums.

Fear of the murder and mayhem that can occur during a burglary is also often strong enough to overcome homeowners' concerns about the cost, maintenance and monitoring fees on such systems.

But experts believe that the aim of homeowners should be to reduce crime as much as to combat it, and say significant results can be achieved by simply altering one's physical surroundings.

Some house designs, while charming and attractive, can encourage criminal activity. Recessed doorways and alcoves, for example, offer hiding places for criminals while fences or walls with crosspieces can be used as ladder rungs.

On the other hand, simple measures such as pruning overgrown vegetation at entrances and installing garden lights to eliminate dark hiding spots can go a long way to discourage would-be burglars.

The experts agree there are three types of burglars - professional, semi-professional and amateur – and say that homeowners are fortunately mostly exposed to members of the last two categories, who are essentially opportunists looking for easy targets, and will generally think twice about attempting a burglary when the risk of detection is high.

However, if your home has recently been burgled, the odds of it happening again are high, because the criminals will figure on the stolen items having been replaced with new ones.

And when your house is unoccupied – perhaps while you're away on holiday this festive season or just out visiting friends for the day - it will be more vulnerable. You'll need to keep that in mind when reviewing your security arrangements this summer – and it may be well worth your while to seek advice from a security professional.

3. How to Sell Your Home Long-distance

A better job offer or promotion to a position in another town or city is usually a step up the corporate ladder – but can present problems if you have to move in a hurry and still have to sell your house.

One possible solution is to ask your spouse or partner to stay behind to put the house on the market and tend to all the details inherent in selling a property before joining you.

But if that is not feasible, there are a number of things you can and should do to ensure your property remains secure, retains its “kerb appeal” and sells as quickly as possible. These include:

- * Possibly installing exterior sensor lights that automatically switch on when it gets dark and switch off at sunrise. Cancel all deliveries, such as newspapers, and consider leaving the windows curtained.

- * If you have a security alarm, leave it in place – just remember to leave your entrance code with your estate agent.

- * Reviewing the stipulations of your homeowners' insurance. Many companies offer limited cover while a property is vacant and it may be worth your while to hire a house-sitter who will also keep up the kerb appeal by mowing the lawn, raking up leaves, watering the garden and cleaning the pool.

- * Ensuring that all the finishes in the house, especially the paintwork, are impeccable. A fresh coat of paint in a neutral colour may well be a good investment, especially if the house will be viewed when empty. Also make sure that the home is spotlessly clean – get those carpets professionally cleaned.

- * Staying in close contact with your estate agent. Ask for regular feedback such as how many people are viewing the house and what their reaction is.

4. Put a Sparkle in Your Bathroom and Your Buyer's Eye

The bathroom is a key selling point when putting your home on the market, coming a close second to the kitchen. And while luxury homes sometimes offer bathrooms on the scale of a Roman bath house, with stretches of marble and spiralling columns, under-floor heating, steam showers and even fridges and fireplaces these days, even a modest update of an ordinary bathroom can bring about a quicker sale.

What's more, homeowners can expect to recover about 88 percent of the cost of any bathroom renovation once they sell.

If you can afford it, you should consider replacing the old bathroom suite, having the floor and walls tiled and installing a vanity. But if you're on a very tight budget, or need to sell urgently, try repainting the bathroom in a neutral shade and installing a large new medicine/ makeup cabinet and some additional lighting for a quick fix.

Then make sure all surfaces, especially mirrors and fittings, are polished up to a sparkle, hang some new towels and add suitable extras such as flowers, candles and bottles of bath oil for a luxurious look.

5. Simple Precautions to Keep the Holiday Fun Rolling

It's that time of the year again when children can't wait for the last peal of the school bell that will set them free for weeks of holiday fun.

But parents need to be aware that many dangers may lurk in their own back yards and they especially need to check any playground equipment, tree houses, rope ladders and of course, pool fences and covers.

Statistics show that a considerable proportion of children's injuries every year – including severe fractures, internal injuries, concussions, dislocations and amputations – result from playing on faulty jungle gyms, slides, and swings installed at home.

And although this is rather scary, there is much parents can do to prevent these holiday disasters. The following checklist will make the task easier:

- * Make sure possible falls end in a soft landing by maintaining a shock absorbent groundcover. You need a 15cm layer of wood chips, mulch or shredded rubber to offer protection for equipment 2m high.
- * Make sure protective surfaces extend at least 2m in all directions from stationary playground equipment and four times the height of the suspending bar around swings.
- * Make sure no ropes, clotheslines or pet leashes that could be a potential strangulation hazard are attached to the equipment.
- * Sand down any sharp edges or protrusions and remove and replace, or cover open s-hooks and protruding bolts.
- * Check that openings in guardrails and between ladder rungs pose no hazard. Spaces should be less than 10cm or more than 25cm so that little feet (and heads) will not get stuck.
- * Make sure there is adequate spacing between swings. Suspended swings should be at least 20cm apart. The distance between a swing and the support frame and between the ground and underside of the swing seat should also be at least 20cm.
- * Swing seats should be made of a soft material and safely secured and parents should ensure that slide surface do not pose a burning hazard in hot weather.

Parents and childminders should also ensure that older children obey safety rules such as not walking in front of moving swings, while younger children should preferably be fully supervised on playground equipment.