

Did You Know? 5280 Magazine Doesn't Choose 5-Star Professionals

5280 Magazine has a well-deserved reputation for choosing Denver's top doctors, top restaurants, etc., so you might well believe from its September issue that they also choose Denver's top real estate and mortgage professionals. But, in fact, 5280 Magazine has nothing to do with selecting those "Five-Star Professionals."

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

For more years than I can remember, the magazine's September issue has included a paid advertising supplement from a Minnesota company called Five Star Professional. The magazine's publisher told me that he has vetted the company's selection methodology and found it valid, but I have studied their methodology, and I'm not so convinced.

I was led to investigate that methodology back in 2012 when a would-be seller said she selected another agent because she was a 5280 Five Star Professional. I had never heard of that agent, so I did some research and found that she had never listed a home before!

Perhaps as a result of my raising the issue back then, Five Star Professional now verifies that agents not only are licensed, with no disciplinary actions on file, but also have actually sold some homes in the past year. Once the "nominated" agents satisfy those few criteria, they are offered upsells starting at \$445 for a 1/14th page directory listing, up to \$4,695 for a full page ad. An upsell price list I obtained back in 2012 is posted at www.JimSmithColumns.com.

Each year I'm surprised by how many truly successful agents are not listed. In its defense, Five Star Professional will tell you "customer satisfaction" and not sales volume is their criterion. They claim to interview thousands of past clients, but the organization won't disclose — even to the nominated agent — which clients nominated them.

Bottom line, consumers need to realize that it's all paid advertising — *like this ad* — and that "nominees" who decline to pay big bucks get only their name and company published — with no contact information. I figure the Minnesota company earns hundreds of thousands of dollars above what it pays 5280 Magazine for the advertising space.

What bothers me most, as a long-time professional journalist, is that 5280 Magazine is willing to let Five Star "winners" portray themselves as being "5280 Magazine Five Star Professionals," when the magazine has absolutely no role in selecting them or creating the advertising supplement — *and the agents who pay for those larger display ads write the ad copy themselves*.

5280 Magazine and Five Star Professional tell agents who appear in the advertising supplement that they should not state that the magazine *named* or *voted* them winners. However, I see lots of violation of

that guideline and no enforcement efforts.

You'll note that the ad supplement isn't even mentioned on the magazine's cover, in its table of contents or on their website. You can check it out yourself at www.5280.com/magazine. Compare this to their August issue featuring "Top Doctors" — an entirely in-house effort meeting high journalistic standards — and featured on their cover and on their website.

Let's say I bought 16 full pages in this paper and found agents who would pay to be listed as "Top Real Estate Professionals." Then I allowed each agent to

say he/she was a "Denver Post Top Real Estate Professional." Of course, such a claim would be a misrepresentation. Well, it's also a misrepresentation (and a violation of the Realtor Code of Ethics) for any agent featured in 5280's advertising supplement to say that they were selected a "Five Star Professional" by 5280 Magazine. I don't like it.

Today's Jeffco editions of YourHub feature a different column by Jim Smith regarding property tax increases and TABOR. Read it at www.JimSmithColumns.com.

This Week's Featured Listings from Golden Real Estate

Beautiful Lakewood Home on 1/2-Acre Lot with Creek

This home at 825 Crescent Lane is just one block from the Lakewood Country Club. Lakewood Gulch, the year-round stream that runs through the Country Club, also runs through this home's half-acre lot, making for a terrific backyard environment. As you'll see from the still photos and narrated video tour (including drone footage) at www.LakewoodHome.info, the gulch has been beautifully rebuilt by the City of Lakewood, and your mortgage lender will not require you to purchase flood insurance. Among the stand-out features of this home is its magnificently updated country kitchen, extra large formal dining room, radiant floor heating, second master suite in the walk-out basement, and an amazing model train room in which the full-room train layout raises to the ceiling when you want to use the room for other purposes. (This is demonstrated on the video tour mentioned above.) Another feature not found in many homes is a fully equipped workshop, also shown on the video tour. The stone-coated steel shingles on the roof are hail-resistant. Built in 1945, this home has been beautifully updated, is in a great location, and will probably sell quickly. I'm holding it open this Saturday, 1 to 4 p.m. Come and see what I mean!



Home Combines Quiet Location With Access to Amenities



You'll get a sense of its location and lot size when you view the narrated video tour (including drone footage) at its website, www.ApplewoodHome.info. There are no HOA dues. Lewis Meadows Park with Lena Gulch running through it is only a block away. Open house this Saturday, 1-4 pm.

This home at 12095 W. 35th Avenue is located in the Applewood area of Wheat Ridge, a few blocks east of the Applewood Shopping Center on Youngfield Street. Despite its ready access of I-70 and the mountains, it's a quiet neighborhood with little through traffic. It's a traditional bi-level home with an oversized 2-car garage and two bedrooms/one bath on the lower level and three bedrooms plus living room, dining room and kitchen on the upper level. It's on a corner lot measuring nearly a quarter acre.



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