

Agents Claiming to Be '5280 Magazine Five-Star Professionals' Are Bending the Truth

By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

Denver's 5280 magazine is noted for its reviews of restaurants, doctors, surgeons, dentists and other professionals. But one profession the magazine **doesn't** rate is real estate agents.

This may come as a surprise to you because of all the real estate agents, including Realtors, who boast that they have been named "Five-Star Professionals" by 5280 magazine. How can that be?

Every September, this magazine publishes a multi-page advertising supplement from a Minnesota company which claims to have received consumer nominations for top real estate agents and mortgage brokers. They then solicit those agents for display ads ranging from 1/14th of a page (\$445) to a full page (\$4,695). That's according to a 2012 price list. If you don't pay for a display ad, they just list you with no contact information. Agents who buy the display ads get to write the copy themselves, without editing by the magazine.

It's a win-win for everyone except buyers and sellers. 1) The magazine gets to sell a large number of advertising pages without any production costs other than printing. 2) The Minnesota company makes a lot of money on the upsells (which also include plaques for your office and the right to use the Five Star logo in your advertising), and 3) the agent gets to claim he or she is a "5280 Five Star Professional."

I've been writing about this scheme since 2013, because I consider it unethical and possibly illegal for an agent to represent that he or she is an honoree of the magazine, when they merely appeared in a paid advertising supplement. It would be like me claiming to be a Denver Post columnist because this column appears in that newspaper. I would never do that. Instead, I only say that I write a column which is published in the Denver Post and in four weekly newspapers, including this one.

What would you think if I named certain Realtors (who paid me lots of money) "Elite Realtors" and profiled them in a multi-page advertisement in the Denver Post, and let them promote themselves as "Denver Post Elite Realtors." That's no different than agents calling themselves "5280 Five-Star Professionals."

Those agents who are Realtors (members of a Realtor association) are, in my opinion, violating the Realtor Code of Ethics when they claim they were "named" a Five-Star Professional by

this highly respected city magazine which **does** name top doctors and surgeons. As you can imagine, the magazine expends considerable editorial resources in selecting those medical professionals before printing their names and writing their reviews. (The doctors and surgeons don't write **their** reviews!) Those "Top Doctors" are profiled in the August issue, and it's the main headline on that issue's cover (left). By contrast, the September issue of 5280 (below) containing the Five-Star ad supplement doesn't mention it on the cover or in the magazine's table of contents, or even on the magazine's website — **because it's only an ad!**

As a journalist, I'm upset that a magazine would permit an advertiser to trade on its name and reputation in this manner. I think advertisers should only say "As advertised in 5280 magazine." Instead, you and I find agents promoting themselves as "5280 Magazine Five-Star Professional in 2012, 2013, 2014,

2015 and 2016!" or even "Named a Five-Star Professional by 5280 Magazine." It's simply a deception, a misrepresentation and a violation of the Realtor Code of Ethics.

I have been complaining about this scheme since 2013 and no one has acted on it — except one Realtor who filed a Code of Ethics complaint, claiming I violated the provision of the Code which prohibits speaking ill of other Realtors. I was disappointed when **the ethics panel found me guilty as charged!**



Help Raise Money for Habitat for Humanity at Two Pumpkin Patches

Once again, we're selling pumpkins at Garrison & Alameda starting this Saturday and at 68th & Wadsworth starting next Saturday. We're seeking



volunteers to help unload semis full of pumpkins from Four Corners Indian reservations and then sell the pumpkins through Oct. 31st. Sign up as a

volunteer online at www.WestMetroPartners.org. And remember to buy your pumpkins at these two patches. We net over \$25,000 for Habitat from this annual fundraiser. This is our 17th year!

Do You Have Our Smartphone App?

Our smartphone app, available for both iPhone and Android devices, lists over 50 categories of service providers who have been vetted by us or our clients. They do not pay to be on the app.



Morrison Home Just Listed by Jim Smith & Kim Taylor

Feel the love at this meticulously maintained bi-level home at **4665 S Zang Street**. It has a Morrison address, but is in the unincorporated Jeffco subdivision known as Friendly Hills. Minor updates were made to make it a more open living area for family and guests. The wood deck off the kitchen and fenced backyard are great for entertaining. It has two bedrooms and a full bath upstairs with the kitchen, dining and living room, plus a third bedroom and second bath, plus another living area with a wood-burning fireplace on the lower level. The 2-car oversized garage has a professional shop for the owner's woodcarving business. The equipment is gone, but two work benches and shelving is included. A backyard shed with Toro mower & other lawn care items are included, as is a large woodpile for the fireplace. View a narrated video tour at www.FriendlyHillsHome.info. We'll be holding it **open on Sunday, 11 am to 2 pm**. Or call Kim at **303-304-6678** for a private showing.



Meadowlark Hills Ranch Just Listed by Chuck Brown



This ranch style home at **40 S. Ammons St.** is located just a few blocks west of the Belmar shopping center in Lakewood's Meadowlark Hills neighborhood. At 2,930 sq. ft., this 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom home is priced at just \$135 per sq. ft. — quite a bargain compared to the most recent sold properties in the neighborhood. The lot is approximately 1/3 acre and features a large front yard, large backyard with a gazebo, and a well for irrigation. The house needs some updating, but major items such as the roof, furnace, water heater, flooring and paint have been done recently. For all of the details about this home, view the narrated video tour at www.MeadowlarkHillsHome.info, then call your agent or Chuck Brown at **303-885-7855** for a private showing. There will be an **open house this Saturday from 1-3pm**.



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