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Jill C. Kline & Brenda K. Odenbaugh



Owners
Jill: 970-388-2926
jill@kandorealty.com
Brenda: 970-381-1169
brenda@kandorealty.com
www.kandorealty.com

K & O REALTY, LLC

K & O REALTY, LLC
P.O. Box 1103
607 Main St
Platteville, CO 80651

HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

Digital Solutions for a Relational Profession

The real estate industry is all about personal relationships. Typically, everything from client consultations to the final walk-through involves in-person interactions. Due to COVID-19, real estate professionals are shifting to digital solutions to prioritize the health of their clients while helping them move forward with their goals.

"While open houses or showings may not be easy to arrange because of quarantine or other safety issues, real estate listings have stepped up to the plate by offering virtual tours," says *Realtor.com*®.

Many agents are turning to video showings or livestreamed open houses to help buyers view listings. For sellers, virtual staging can help their home look its best. In some areas, in-person showings are possible for serious buyers. Agents are helping their clients navigate a variety of precautions, such as wearing gloves, masks and booties; avoiding touching surfaces; and spending limited time inside the home. When it comes to notarized documents and closings, remote solutions are becoming more acceptable.

If you're hoping to buy or sell a home this year, opportunities are out there. If you'd like to discuss the current market and best practices in your area, please call anytime.

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Stay-at-Home Projects

Most Americans have been spending more time at home than usual this year. If the prolonged time has left you looking for ways to improve your space, try tackling one of these easy but gratifying projects.

Rearrange a room. While a kitchen renovation or master bathroom makeover may not be in the cards right now, try rearranging the furniture in a room or two. A new layout will help refresh your space – no major costs or supplies required.

Use up spare paint. Pull out any partially used paint cans from storage, and touch up nicks on walls and trim. Try using leftover paint to update a bathroom or laundry room, create a bold accent wall or give old furniture a new life.

Conquer the dust. While disinfecting has understandably been front-of-mind for a few months now, this is also a great time to clean easily overlooked items, such as ceiling fan blades, baseboards, vent covers, and window treatments. After you rid your home of accumulated dust, change the air filter in the HVAC unit while you're at it.

Tackle the closets. Pull everything out of a closet, and purge anything that you no longer use. Wipe down the walls, sweep the floor and then experiment with ways to make the best use of the space. If needed, order hangers, shoe racks and storage bins to make sure each item has its place.

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Hang up artwork. If you've had paintings or photographs stacked in a closet, take time to finally put them on the walls. You can also move existing artwork around from one room to another to change things up.

Grow a garden. Try your hand at growing your own food. You can start small with an indoor herb garden on the windowsill, or consult a gardening guide online to see what produce will grow well in your area for each season.

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4 Unexpected Uses for Rice

Rice isn't just a trusty dinner staple. Try out these handy ways to use it around your home from *HGTV.com*.

- **Rust prevention:** Rice helps absorb moisture from the air. Store tools or silverware in a container of uncooked rice to help them resist rust and last longer.
- **Coffee grinder cleaner:** Try grinding 1 tablespoon of uncooked rice in your coffee grinder. The rice will absorb oil from the coffee beans and sharpen the grinder's blades.
- **Plant spray:** The next time you cook rice, soak it in water for 30 minutes first. Strain out the rice and save the water in a spray bottle. Rice water has nutrients that can benefit your houseplants.
- **Air freshener:** Add a few drops of your favorite essential oil into a small bowl of uncooked rice, which both wicks moisture away and adds a pleasant scent to any room.

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Benefits of a Living Wall

Vertical gardens known as "living walls" have become a popular interior design trend in recent years. These plant-covered features offer both wellness and aesthetic benefits. Here are four reasons to consider installing a living wall in your home.

Improve air quality. Plants capture carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the air and replenish it with more oxygen. A living wall can improve the air you breathe on a daily basis, which could lead to other health benefits, such as fewer headaches and respiratory issues.

Connect with nature. Regular exposure to natural elements can reduce stress, enhance creativity and provide a deeper sense of well-being. A living wall allows you to experience the benefits of nature even when you're on the couch.

Regulate indoor temperature. Plants absorb a significant amount of sunlight, which can lower the temperature of your space. You may even be able to run the air conditioning less often while still keeping your home comfortable.

Boost aesthetic appeal. Just like gallery walls or bold accent colors can add variety to interior design, vertical gardens offer a unique, ever-changing point of interest in a room.

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S'mores Nutella Pie

Ingredients

12 graham crackers
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
½ cup butter, melted
2 cups Nutella Hazelnut Spread
1 (8 oz.) container Mascarpone cheese, room temperature
¼ tsp. salt
1 cup heavy whipping cream
2 cups mini marshmallows
Chocolate syrup

Directions

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a food processor, pulse graham crackers and sugar until finely ground. Add butter and pulse until combined. Press evenly into an ungreased 9-inch pie pan. Bake for 15 minutes. Cool completely.

Beat Nutella, Mascarpone and salt until fluffy. In a separate bowl, beat whipping cream on high until stiff peaks form. Fold whipped cream into Nutella filling. Spread over pie crust, cover and refrigerate for 4 hours. Sprinkle marshmallows over top of chilled pie. Broil for 1-2 minutes on top rack until golden. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Drizzle with chocolate syrup before serving.

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The Personal Marketing Company
11511 W. 83rd Terrace
Lenexa, KS 66214