

Boot Camp

What makes a professional stand out in his or her field of expertise? It is usually a personal passion. This passion is what has driven attorney and lobbyist Donna DiMaggio Berger to the top.

Donna and her family live in the Lago Mar Country Club community in west Plantation, a place she describes as a welcome haven after a hard day at the office. A few years ago, she took notice of a large cellular company who was planning to install a huge cell tower just at the entrance of her neighborhood. Feeling this would be unsightly as well as unnecessary, Donna organized the Lago Mar homeowners and urged them and neighboring communities to lobby the city commission to find a better location for the tower. The tower site was ultimately placed along highway 595 where its looming presence made more sense. "From this experience," Donna claims, "I understood firsthand how powerful it could be to teach residents in community associations how to come together for a united cause."

As a partner with the law firm of Katzman & Korr in East Fort Lauderdale and the Executive Director of the Community Advocacy Network (CAN), Donna recently unveiled a "Board Member Boot Camp" program which CAN is offering at no charge to community associations around the State. The goal of these boot camps is to heed the call from both the Legislature and the Office of the Condominium Ombudsman. Boards of directors running approximately fifty one thousand community associations in the State of Florida desperately need greater training and educational materials.

"Since my Firm only represents community associations and not developers or municipalities, it is easy for us to concentrate on what is needed to truly advocate on behalf of those communities without having to straddle a fence over competing client interests," Berger advised. Communities participating in CAN have unique passwords to log on to the site at www.canfl.com and to use the Capitol Connection email tool to quickly and easily communicate with members of the State Legislature, county and city commissions as well as local media outlets to advise them of their community's stance on a particular bill or government agency mandate. "I can't imagine teaching communities how to effectively lobby a city to prevent a commercial development going up next door, if I represented the city or the developer," Berger said. "Fortunately, we don't have to compromise our clients' positions since our advocacy mission is clearly driven by what is best for communities and no one else".

Donna's obvious passion and commitment underscores what she does and says. "Community members and their elected boards absolutely need to be aware of the local and state laws and how they affect each of us. These boards also have to be taught practices to employ and ensure they are meeting the expectations of the owners who elected them." During the [Free] Board Member Boot Camp, attendees will receive information on a number of topics to help them streamline operations, save money and boost their community's voice in the political arena. For more information about Donna Berger and Board Member Boot Camp call 954.315.0372 or e-mail her at dberger@katzkorr.com. **EL**

