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Creative condo boot camp comes to Century Village

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The attorneys arrive in fatigues like Army sergeants, with whistles and bullhorns. One lawyer, in fact, is an actual former Army major who saw active duty in Iraq. But any of these attorneys could pass as one. They stride through the conference room blowing whistles to get the group's attention. But they aren't commanding soldiers — instead, just board members.

This is what organizers call a Board Member Boot Camp, a sort of crash course for board members of condo, time share and mobile home community associations taught by local attorneys.

Organized by the nonprofit Community Advocacy Network, the program is aimed at familiarizing board members about new association laws and educational requirements.

Last year, Florida legislators passed a law requiring newly elected or appointed board members to complete a board certification course or sign an affidavit within 90 days of being elected stating that they have read Florida Statute 718 and all of their association's governing documents. It is dry stuff indeed: technical legal information about association laws.

To combat that dry material — enter Donna DiMaggio Berger, executive director of the Community Advocacy Network. The Plantation lawyer saw the Board Member Boot Camp as a great way to educate board members about association law in an entertaining way. This is just the third time the nonprofit group has offered the Boot Camp program, which is a five-hour course open to the public. In addition, at the end of the course board members will get the certificate they need to satisfy the certification requirement. The next Boot Camp will take place on Feb. 5 at Century Village in Deerfield Beach.

Don Kaplan, area chairman for all 11 of the Lindhurst buildings at the 10,000-resident Century Village, said the seminar is valuable especially given the experience of the volunteer board members.

"This is a good thing," Kaplan said. "Everybody is going to learn what [they're] responsible for — as an owner, as a building and what the community is supposed to do to help each other."

Berger said 700 people have signed up for the upcoming session in Century Village, and that some are coming from as far away as Orlando.

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But Berger said the trip is worth it, since the Boot Camp is designed to take the boring out of legal education.

"It's a good time. We're not talking down to [anybody], but working with them on these issues," she said. "Almost every attorney [involved] has either lived in an association or served on a board."

For information or to register for the Board Member Boot Camp visit <http://www.BoardMemberBootcamp.com> or call 954-315-0372.

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