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Oceanwalk's Keith Ginsburg: A "Supernatural" Manager

Older Elevators; New Requirements



Oceanwalk's Keith Ginsburg

A "Supernatural" Manager

by Kathy Danforth

Oceanwalk Condominiums at New Smyrna Beach is a growing development which currently stands fourteen communities strong. Each individual association consists of 33 units with its own board of directors. Developer Franco Silvestri is still building in the complex and is in charge of the master association, which maintains the pools, landscaping, clubhouse, and two condominium buildings. He plans to continue building another five buildings of condominiums, with the possibility of an additional commercial building on the 75-acre site.

Since December 2007, Keith Ginsburg of Sentry Management has been in charge of twelve Oceanwalk associations, after managing six of them (with additional properties) for over three years. This was where he started property management, though Keith says, "I've been in management all my life so this goes hand-in-hand with all my past experience." Though the details have changed from his experience as a catering convention service manager and barter business owner, the basics of managing have remained the same. "I love directing people to get the job done," Keith explains. "Most of the time, I don't feel like I go to work. I really enjoy what I do and my attitude shows it. Everybody knows me as 'supernatural'—because whenever anybody calls and says, 'How are you?' I say, 'Supernatural.'"

Keith says, "I really enjoy the property that I have to the extreme that I feel like I live there, even though I don't. But I'm on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that's the fun part for me. I am only a phone call away."

The individual condominiums are 1700–2000 square feet and Keith says the size of the units and the multitude of amenities distinguishes Oceanwalk from some of the older communities in the area. The site offers an exercise room, a pool with decks and walkway, a poolside spa, tennis and shuffleboard courts, a basketball hoop, a barbeque area, and a clubhouse. Currently, construction of a new



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\$1.5 million clubhouse is under-way. Keith says, "A theater room, offices, and an exercise room will be on the second floor. The whole first floor will be a common area with a plasma TV and a fireplace—a real social gathering place. It also has a bocce area."

Keith explains, "It is a gated community in the aspect that when you drive up there is a gate where you have to put in a code. All the buildings have a garage gate with underground parking and there are four doors around that are all locked with key access." The master association has two security personnel, and the developer has decided to add a guardhouse.

Though each building has its own board of directors, they join forces on common issues. "The landscape committee and the social committee are intertwined with members from the different associations," says Keith. The social committee coordinates monthly Saturday morning coffees, cruises, cookouts, and parties, which are typically very well attended.

The landscape committee is newly-formed and will have responsibilities regarding protection

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of the estuary behind the building as well as the usual grounds maintenance. This is a plus, though, as Keith explains, "The landscaping is unique. They've kept native plants as much as they could, and the property backs up to the wetlands." This provides a view of natural surroundings out the back, and the ocean is visible between buildings across the road to the front.

Since the twelve associations have just recently been united with the same firm, Keith says, "I think the buildings will start gelling as a community even more than it has now that there is one management company on board. I think the management company can bring everyone together as one community speaking with one voice. That's my goal, that we're all speaking with one voice together."

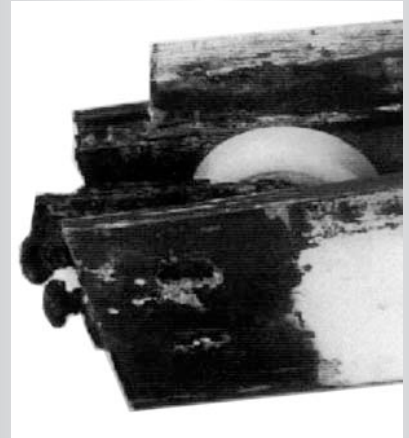
"Now that we have twelve buildings," says Keith, "we're looking at economy of scale. We're looking at reducing telephone costs and pest control costs by combining contracts. By going together for a group discount, we're looking at getting a better rate for trash pick-up, and cable television versus satellite television. Sentry Management is looking at having insurance for all the condominiums they manage, and that's going to save them about 20 percent. I implemented pre-pay monitoring for the fire alarm system and different things to give them a discount of about five percent."

"We are starting to feel the effect of the foreclosures," comments Keith. "Most of the newer condominiums were purchased with the purpose of renting or flipping [reselling], and we're getting a handful of people that are being foreclosed on. Obviously, it's really important to the associations to have units occupied and paying maintenance fees."

One new management issue for Keith is understanding the homeowner versus renter strain and what the needs of both are. Keith says, "The community is a 50/50 split between renters and permanent residents. As with all communities, there's a concern about the rentals. We're trying to bridge that gap. The owners don't feel that the renters take responsibility for the property like they do. And of course they

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don't—they're on vacation." Once the associations are all turned over by the developer, they may consider the option of handling all rentals internally by a division of the master association if the governing documents can be satisfactorily amended.

Because the people business was already familiar, Keith says, "My biggest challenge has been developing the preventive maintenance program and learning the buildings." This has involved learning the when and how of various tasks, and then keeping track of the schedules for all twelve buildings. Keith enumerates some of their tasks: "We clean and lubricate roof fans; we lubricate locks and anything that moves; we check the fire pump for oil, water, and antifreeze. I spend quite a bit of time researching better ways to do what we do. For example, we're always trying to look at new and better products for our fire alarm system. And living across from the beach, we're always looking for new lubricants."

Keith's advice for a new manager is, "Don't be afraid to take your own initiative. The most important part of being a manager is to take initiative and make things happen. I love to see results; that's why I love this business." Though Keith says, "My enthusiasm sometimes gets in the way of the details," his conclusion is: "Most boards are waiting for your direction—that's what you're hired for." Keith loves the challenge for himself, and Oceanwalk can enjoy the fruit of his enthusiasm in getting things done! ■



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