

Nan Fischer of Salsa Realty realtor profile

Nan Fischer: A Passion for Green

Story by Eileen Kalinowski / Photo by Megan Avina

Nan Fischer is a certified eco-broker — the first and only one in Taos — ready, willing and able to discuss energy efficiency, lead, mold, asbestos and radon with her clients who are buying and selling homes in Taos County. Nan has lived here seasonally with her family since 1988, and has been a year-round resident since 1996. Interviewing her is like opening a talking book with colorful illustrations, big print, a huge index and an animated narrator. She is eager to help you understand the stories she loves telling about building science, the study of going green one home at a time, and she is chock full of resources.

How does that work to her clients' advantage? "I've learned a lot, first and foremost from the work I've done on my own home here," she said. "I was very interested in learning and applying what I learned both in the 18 hours of Eco- Broker International classes online and in Larry Mapes' energy basics class at UNM." Hers is the kind of learning that is reinforced by hard-won, hands-on experience.

"For over 30 years, I have lived what is now labeled a 'green' lifestyle, from recycling and driving fuel-efficient vehicles to using native building materials in passive-solar applications and gardening organically with water-wise plants. With my professional training and personal experience, I have plenty to offer clients and others in our industry when you are looking to live lightly on the planet."

Nan found, for example, that her \$35,000 remodeling project (initial estimate) for her home, would end up costing close to \$65,000, but that's because of decisions made along the way that included re-plumbing bathrooms and building a greenhouse.

Some of the most effective changes she made didn't cost much money at all, but were extremely savvy investments. One was to insulate the ceiling. Nan found that they were able to blow in R-30 insulation rather than the R-19 (code requirement, but lower quality) for only \$200 more than the R-19 would cost. That one change alone resulted in much lower heating bills last year. Also, she replaced her old reliable top-loading washing machine with a front-loading one, which uses one-third the water of the older machine and less energy.

More and more passive homes are being built, airtight structures that can reduce

heating bills by 90 percent. In order to find out how much heat your home is losing, you can hire an energy rater like Alva Morrison to do a blower-door test. The house will be sealed to reveal leaks by using a computer generated model. By knowing whether the windows or doors need to be replaced, raters can take the guesswork out of energy-saving home improvements.

One option Nan is exploring that may be available to qualified people is an energy-efficient mortgage. For example, if a homeowner installs new energy-efficient windows or insulates the ceiling and compares old to new energy bills, the owner can actually refinance, hopefully getting a lower interest rate with the money saved on energy counting as income. With more and more people eager to save on their heating bills, this may be an excellent resource in the coming year.

In her role as a realtor, Nan is prohibited from giving advice to clients, although she can make suggestions. Recently, she is finding other avenues to more directly share what she knows and is so passionate about by becoming a building advisor, which she finds a natural extension of her business. In this role, she can tell people, "This is what I did, and this is how you can do it, sometimes for less." She is also co-teaching a course on building science to realtors in Taos in the coming year with Carl Rosenberg, a home energy rater.

Whether at home, work or play, Nan's passion for 'green' shines through in every facet of her life, and sharing that knowledge makes the experience all the richer.

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–Nan Fischer