

You'll be surprised where it can take you



condo life

By Jim Lundstrom

W What comes to mind when someone mentions condo?

A large multi-unit, multi-story building, right?

That would be wrong, says Christine Shaefer, condo owner and executive vice president of the Valley Home Builders Association.

"A condominium is a form of ownership. It is not a type of building," she says, adding that the condominium lifestyle in the area has taken some interesting turns in recent years.

"We're seeing some very exciting things about bringing people back to the idea of

community," Shaefer says. "You can choose to live on water, a golf course, in an urban setting. The choices are definitely there. In our area prices range anywhere from \$150,000 upwards of \$500,000, depending on what you want."

Even if you do think of a condo as a building, to think of it only as a multi-unit complex is to miss the point of why condo life has become more popular in the area.

"We do have some large multi-family, multi-unit condominiums in our area, but that's really not what is prevalent," Shaefer says. "What a lot of people don't realize is that a single-family detached home can also be a condominium."

"Once people get out looking around at



what we have in condominiums in the area, they're usually very surprised at the variety, at the choices."

Construction is expected to begin this summer on an urban condo development near downtown Appleton, the RiverHeath condominium complex next to the Fox River. The units are scheduled to be ready for occupancy in 2009.

"We're just starting to create more of the urban environment for our condo developments," says Kris Oates, RiverHeath community director. "Wouldn't that be nice to have groceries and a coffee shop and riverfront to be handy for you to enjoy? There's almost an emotional connection when it's an urban feel."

Making the decision to move into a condo can take years, she notes, as the options are weighed.

"You're balancing ease of living, not having to do yard work or snow removal or maintenance on your home, vs. having usually a larger amount of space in an older home in a familiar neighborhood with the responsibility of maintenance," Oates says. "Most people only live in half of their square footage if they live in a large house.

"Do your research and do what feels the best for you and don't look back. Condo owners are generally very happy and satisfied with the lifestyle and do not miss what they left behind."

In order to display the diversity in condo living, the Valley Home Builders Association is sponsoring its third Parade of Condos over two weekends, May 31-June 1 and June 7-8.

Included in the Saturday, June 7, ticket price is an 8:30 a.m. education session at Hollywood Cinemas in Appleton that is designed to arm the seriously interested with the questions they need to know before sealing a condo deal.

"We have attorneys, we have condominium association management professionals, financial professionals, who will give you the questions to ask," Shaefer says. "They go in-depth to help people understand when you make that decision, these are the things you want to ask your lender about. These are the things you want to know about the particular condominium community.

"We provide answers so they know what to go out and talk about on the parade," she says. ♦

