

New business spotlight

Fish Real Estate and Fish Property Management

220 N. Jay St.,
Lock Haven

570-326-1561

(EDITOR'S NOTE: New Business Spotlight is a regular feature of the Sunday Business section and is meant for businesses that have been operating for up to one year. If you own such a business and want to be considered for a New Business Spotlight, email mmaneal@sungazette.com)

By WENDY STIVER
westiver@lockhaven.com

LOCK HAVEN — As the new year dawned, the leading real estate company in Lock Haven received a new name through a business merger.

Clients still will see all the same faces and can look forward to even better service now that Brigandi Kissinger Realtors/ Brigandi Kissinger Property Management has merged with the familiar Fish agency, according to the new entity.



SPENCER McCOY/THE EXPRESS

Brent M. Fish, left, president and owner of Fish Real Estate and Fish Property Management, is seen with company vice president Jennifer S. Ruelens, of Fish Property Management, and Thomas F. Brigandi, former broker-owner of Brigandi Kissinger Realtors. They announced the merger of the Fish and Brigandi Kissinger companies Thursday in the former Brigandi office at 220 N. Jay St.

Fish is the leading real estate company in Williamsport, and owner and president Brent M. Fish said the two businesses are a good fit.

The new entity will operate under the already established names of Fish Real Estate and Fish Property Management.

The transition process has started, and the Brigandi Kissinger Realtors sales associates and staff will all remain after it is completed, Fish said. The Lock Haven

office still is at 220 N. Jay St., behind The Roxy Movie Theatre. Thomas F. Brigandi has been the broker-owner and will stay with the company.

Clients, however, will see new, easy-to-use benefits from the advanced technology and constant updating that have become a Fish hallmark.

"We are excited for this explosive growth opportunity and look forward to sharing our mod-

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Spotlight on real estate merger

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ern services, tools, and technology with consumers in the Lock Haven region," the Fish agency stated. "Whether it is Fish Real Estate, Fish Property Management, Fish Commercial Group, or Fish Outdoor Properties, we are here for your real estate needs in the North Central Pennsylvania region."

The combination of modern services technology with the quality staff who already are here is a winning one, Brent Fish said.

The financial terms of the merger were not disclosed.

Fish Real Estate was founded in 1956 in Williamsport by Brent's grandfather Luther Fish and continues to be a family owned and operated company today.

In the early 1980s, Brent's father, William F. Fish, opened an office in Lock Haven, so the name is a well known one here. The late Deb Shirey managed this local office, then went on to purchase it. She kept the Fish name and operated under it until the early 2000s.

"It's all come full circle now," Brent said.

He bought the company from his father in 2008. A Williamsport native, Brent went to college in Baltimore and worked for a commercial real estate company in that city for six years, learning about the industry. He returned to his home town and entered the family business in 1997 as a sales agent, selling real estate until he bought the company. It was important to his father that he work as an agent, he said, and "in hindsight, I would agree with him."

Will there be a fourth generation of Fish owners? Brent said he has two sons but expects them to follow their own dreams, whatever they may be.

In 2012, the company started the separate service Fish Properties Management and brought Jennifer S. Ruelens on as vice president to run it.

Real estate agencies in most small cities did not regard property management services as a specialized business until recent years, Ruelens said. The Fish company treats it as a specialized skill set and offers these services with a different staff of four people and a different way of doing business than selling real estate, she said.

constantly changing in the real estate business and Fish has been keeping up with the changes, he said. The company recently rebuilt its website and also offers a mobile site for phones that looks like a regular app.

Ruelens said she has used the mobile site and it's nice for people looking to buy a house. Potential buyers driving through a pleasant neighborhood can consult the mobile site on their phone, then drive around the corner to see one or more homes listed for sale in that location.

Brigandi clients will enjoy an even better, faster level of service with the innovative, paperless technologies. Fish will bring to the office. These include professional photographs of properties (instead of tasking sales agents to take their own photos), new marketing techniques using targeted internet strategy, and what the Fish company calls world-class training for the staff.

"If you liked working with the Brigandi Kissinger team, you will really love working with us," Ruelens said.

In 2012, the former Brigandi Renninger Realty company merged with KBB (Kissinger Bigatel and Brower) Realtors and became Brigandi Kissinger Realtors, creating what the business called a "super agency" that offered clients 80 years of real estate experience and local knowledge and expertise.

"Our office has been successful because of the high level of energy and service we bring to our customers," Tom Brigandi stated. "Under the Fish Real Estate and Fish Property Management banners we will continue to provide the area with the same quality service that we have for the past 80 years. However, with the exclusive services and tools that only Fish can provide, our customers and sales associates will see even greater benefits of partnering with us."

The Fish company's web-based and mobile sites provide both buyers and sellers with instant access to information. Fish also provides a sellers market report that

illustrates valuable market statistics, and relocation solutions through its partnership with Leading Real Estate Companies of the World (a network of independent real estate companies covering more than 55 countries worldwide).

Keeping on the cutting edge of technology, Brent said, gives the company "a lot of different ways we support and enhance the agents. That's our job as a broker."

Fish also practices tried-and-true marketing, like print advertising. The company is announcing this merger with two jigsaw puzzle pieces and the words "We're better together."

The two companies both have good employees, good property management business practices, and good sales people, making them a good match, Brent said. And both are governed by the same board of Realtors, he said.

The Fish company has grown in Williamsport to have a roughly 20 percent market share and is the market share leader in the West Branch Valley Association of Realtors.

The former Brigandi Kissinger company has the largest market share in Clinton County, at more than 30 percent.

"With the residential real estate market in an adjustment phase, mergers and acquisitions are a good sign of a growing market," Brent said. "The high customer satisfaction philosophy of Brigandi Kissinger Realtors and their award-winning staff make this a smart move."

Tom Brigandi affirmed he is staying with the Lock Haven office as a consultant and a real estate agent.

And, Brent will be in town more often, attending business events and re-introducing himself to the community. His goal, he said, is to lend support to Lock Haven, Clinton County, and local worthy causes, just as Tom Brigandi has over the years.

"Fish Real Estate has been really, really active in the community in Williamsport, and we would have the same philosophy here, being involved, giving back," he said.

She has been in property management since 2004, she said, and although she has held a real estate sales license — as required — all those years, she has never sold houses.

The benefits of using a real estate agency that understands property management are seen in the results clients get. Sales agents have the incentive to close a sale, Ruelens said, but property management is an ongoing process which she describes as “finding great tenants, preventing risks, keeping the property going.”

Brigandi Kissinger also was offering property management services with a separate staff and technologies, so the two companies are a good match, Ruelens said.

“Our ways of thinking are very much along the same paths,” she said.

Fish will bring two other specializations to the Lock Haven/Clinton County market: Fish Commercial Group that deals with commercial properties only, and Fish Outdoor Properties that specializes in recreational properties, anything from land and waterfront to cabins.

The company offers unique marketing programs for each division, Brent said.

Internet technology is