

VICTRIX LUDORUM

Pauline Larsen interviews Toronto CREW 2008 President Andrea Kraus

Andrea Kraus is one of that rare breed of women who can balance a healthy sense of competitiveness, thrive in a fast-paced business environment, and still find time to contribute positively to both her industry and to society at large.

A successful athlete, an astute real estate professional and a true humanitarian, Toronto CREW's 2008 brings energy, passion and drive to her role. And she'll need it – the learning curve is a steep one.

"I'm filling some big boots," she says, pointing to the benefit of a year as President Elect learning the ropes under the guidance of mentor and 2007 President Caroline Laidley-Arn.

Kraus was born and raised on the Niagara Peninsula in the City of St. Catharines. Her first career choice was in fitness as a qualified kinesiologist, but Kraus soon took an unexpected leap into real estate.

"I jumped in blind," she says. "That was two decades ago - and I've never looked back."

Today, Kraus holds the position of Vice-President at Lennard Commercial Realty. She reckons about 90 percent of her time is focused on office leasing, with the balance targeted at investment sales.

After 18 years in the industry, her client list is testament to her professional determination and discipline. She's worked on tenant mandates from Explorator Resources, Bates Barristers, Good Life Fitness and Equicom Equity First. She's handled owner-manager assignments for clients like Sterling Karamar and H&R Developments.

"My work gives me diversity and stimulation," she says.

And she gives that passion back: a characteristic that helped her handle listing assignments representing more than 1 million square feet during the course of her career as an office leasing specialist.

Kraus gives something else back, too: her time, to a host of worthy causes.

Every year, Kraus dedicates one trip to humanitarian work, and has been involved in a range of empowerment projects in places as far-ranging as El Salvador, Belize and Israel.

Last year, she took on the role of Chair of Ladies Severn Getaway for the Cure for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. This year, she is planning to climb Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro and then dedicate some time to volunteer in a children's home, working with the young victims of Africa's HIV/Aids pandemic.

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She's also a member of the Women's Executive Network which supports leaders in business, government and the not-for-profit sector.

It is this passion and energy that originally brought her to the attention of Toronto CREW.

A decade ago, Kraus received a phone call from Toronto CREW founding president Danny Klempfner asking her to join the fledgling organization. She jumped at the chance.

"It made such great sense to me. I've always been involved in charity work and here was an opportunity to do it in my own industry," she explains.

Her rise through the ranks over the past ten years has included a year as fund raiser for the Toronto CREW conference in 2004; a two-year stint as Chair of Corporate Sponsorship; and a year as the Board's membership liaison. Her knowledge and experience is being put to good use in the hot seat as 2008 President.

The world of business has a great deal in common with competitive sports, another area in which Kraus excels. She's a highly versatile athlete who has competed in adventure racing for many years.

As a sport where all four team-members have to race together for 36 hours and stay within 100 meters of each other, Kraus understands the meaning of team-work better than most.

"You're only as strong as your weakest team-mate," she says. "And that applies to real estate as much as to adventure racing."

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