

# BROKERS WEEKLY

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

THE RESIDENTIAL MARKETPLACE

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Rental market running rings around landlords.  
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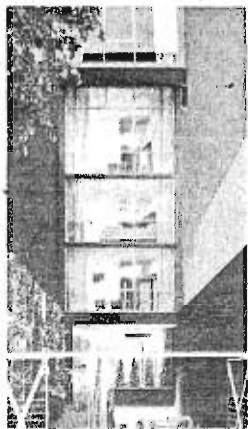
**Heart felt**



Dottie Herman lines up alongside Christie Brinkley to collect leadership award.  
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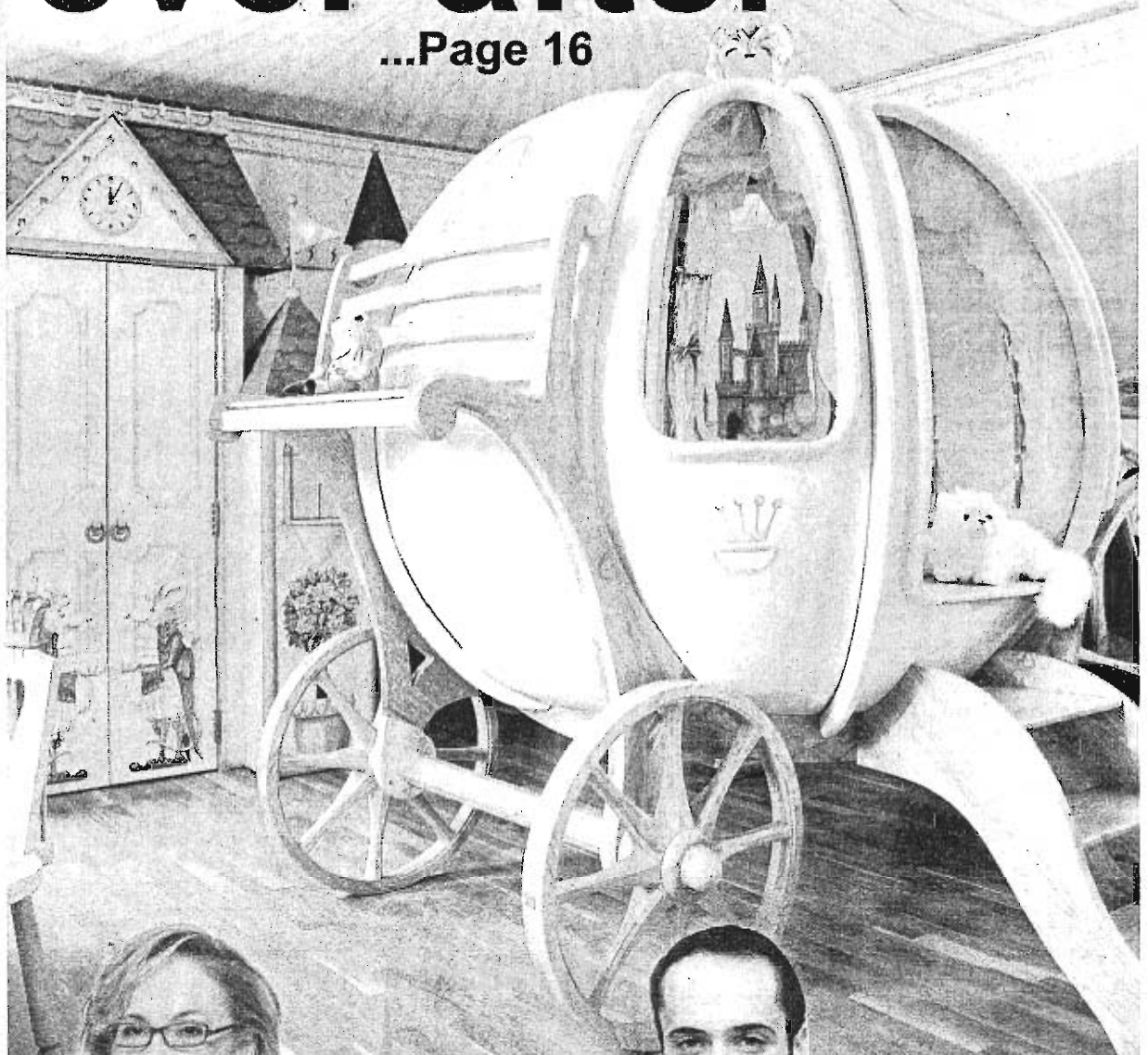
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## Fairytale endings to outrageous demands

# Happily ever after

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**\$80M condo**  
**15 CPW unit**  
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**with a splash**  
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**Scene stealer**

The Corcoran Group's Deanna Kory puts the art into party.

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**Coffee mate**

Iman Bacodari stirs up business at the city's top coffee shops.

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## COVER STORY

## Happily ever after

BY MAGGIE HAWRYLUK

We've all heard about the extravagant, lavish, outlandish requests of top celebrities — from Jennifer Lopez asking for an all-white dressing room with low watt light bulbs, to Madonna's demands for a new toilet seat and 25 cases of Kabbalah water — but celebs aren't the only folks getting the star treatment.

With higher expectations of a full-service approach when one is plunking down millions for a new home, city home owners are also demanding more from the concierge and realty firms that operate their buildings.

Just ask Abbie Newman and Michael Fazio, principals of Abigail Michaels Concierge and former top New York hotel concierges.

The pair's white glove service has exploded since its founding in 2003, with 50 residential and two commercial buildings that they service, primarily virtually. And the recent slowdown in the economy hasn't done much to dampen their business.

One member wanted a section of grass from the Lords Cricket Ground laid on their own lawn. Someone else had put in a request for a mountain goat as a joke just to see if we could get it.

—Lisa Winning, Quintessentially Estates

"We're all stressed. Especially with the new economy, people have been utilizing us more and more," said Fazio. "People may no longer have the luxury of a professional support staff."

So with cutbacks at many top Manhattan companies, time-pressed professionals are now turning to the services offered at their luxury buildings, such as The

the service as a way to stand out.

"Developers are always looking for ways to retain residents and set themselves apart," she said.

And what better people to turn to than a firm like Abigail Michaels, where the 18-person staff dedicates their time to not only servicing clients, but also keeping tabs on the latest trends in fashion, entertainment, dining and more. Fazio and Newman pride themselves in their networking skills that allow them to directly contact those on the inside to pull some strings.

"You're getting a personal assistant just for living in a building," Fazio said.

The pair have fulfilled such nearly-impossible requests as helping clients' children get into elite private schools, snagging the latest fashions from the runways in Paris, obtaining a Playstation 3 before the gaming system hit the market, closing Barney's for an hour-long shopping spree and securing an appointment with celebrity stylist Sally Hershberger. And the Abigail Michaels team will stop at nothing to make their clients happy.

"Sometimes, it's really difficult to get a table, we're racking our brains," said Newman of scoring reservations at such hot spots as the Gramercy Park Hotel and Rao's. "But where there's a will, there's a way."

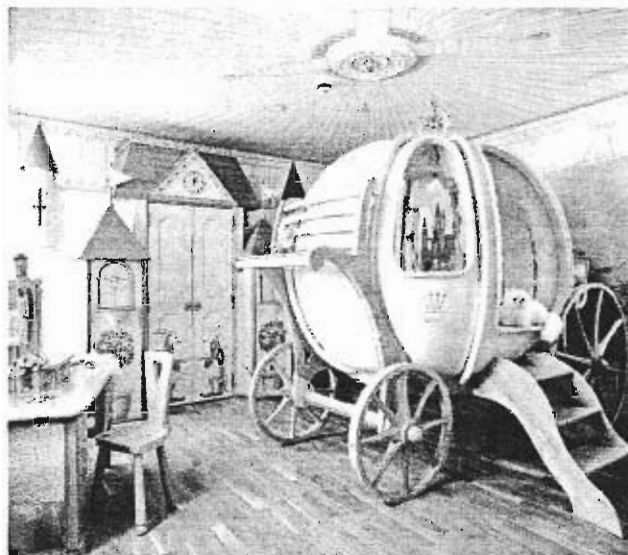
The team at the global property service firm Quintessentially Estates is no stranger to making the seemingly impossible possible, either.

A sister company of Quintessentially, a global private members club and concierge service that lists Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow as clients, the firm was established by Quintessentially co-founders, Aaron Simpson and Ben Elliot — coincidentally, nephew of Prince Charles of England's wife, Camilla Parker-Bowles — along with Lucy Russell to help A-listers around the world find high-end properties to call home, home away from home or smart investment.

Quintessentially Estates will help with everything from finding a property to providing after-sales care that includes the concierge service, legal advisers, relocation, builders and staff.

"The company started as a concierge service that provided members with anything you could think of, but [Simpson and Elliot] found that along with this, people were asking for real estate," Lisa Winning, head of Business Development for Quintessentially Estates, said. "So they set up a property side rather than outsourcing."

And this property arm of the Quintessentially



One home-buyer asked for a children's Cinderella pumpkin bed. The realty service obliged with this fairytale setting that came with a \$157,000 price tag.

umbrella, which also provides interior design, fine art and wine services, will remove any stress involved in the process of finding, closing on and moving into a property.

The home search starts with chauffeured showings in one of Quintessentially Estates' fleet of luxury vehicles ranging from a Jaguar to a Maybach or a Range Rover, private jets for more distant locations and even helicopters for a thorough showing that could be scheduled during lunch time. But the real fun starts once a client purchases a property, as part of the firm's after-sales care. Winning said the firm will service a client "as long as it is legal and reasonably ethical," and the requests have been flowing in.

"There have been lots of funny requests," she recalled. "One member wanted a section of grass from the Lords Cricket Ground laid on their own lawn. Someone else had put in a request for a mountain goat as a joke just to see if we could get it."

If that client had actually wanted the goat, the Quintessentially Estates staff would have likely gotten it. Judging from the list of the firm's already accomplished tasks, the sky's the limit for these high-end clients as long as they have the cash.

Among some of the most memorable requests, the firm has installed a bright orange Cinderella pumpkin bed for a client's daughter, costing more than \$157,000; transformed a client's garden into a snowy winter wonderland complete with fake snow, fir trees, reindeer and a log cabin; created a 1:10 scale replica of a client's new home for their cats to live in; find a private island where mosquitoes don't breed for one client fed up with pests; and installed Swarovski-covered doorknobs inspired by artist Damien Hirst's diamond-covered skull, each costing more than \$500, and two knobs covered with 4,328 real diamonds for the master bedroom and reception, totalling more than \$78,000 for the studded pair.

In addition to the extravagant requests, many have been on the practical side as more and more clients are concerned with security. The firm has done the basics like installing the most advanced Biometric Access Control Systems available that can identify visitors through iris and retinal scans, speech, facial thermograms and hand geometry to the more unique — they have installed a panic room in the apartment of a Russian client and a "Batman Cage" behind the library of one young bachelor. Additionally, Quintessentially Estates is working with an undisclosed development — for security reasons — to offer a private car elevator to all penthouse residents, bringing their cars right to their doors.

While these requests seem amazing, it's all in a days work for these people-pleasers. "It's a fixing service," Winning said. "It's someone with an amazing address book."



Abbie Newman and Michael Fazio, principals of Abigail Michaels Concierge, cater to their clients' every whim.

Atelier, Sheffield 57, 25 Broad Street and Sky House, to help them plan events, book reservations at the hottest restaurants and assist in moving in and setting up their apartments, or simply drop off dry cleaning and walk their dogs.

"We're fast becoming brokers' best friends. As an apartment buyer or renter, we attach ourselves to brokers as our best friends and ask them about the best dry cleaners, restaurants, shopping in an area," added Fazio. "It's not their specialty. Life is complicated; we're specialists at lifestyle services."

Newman added that developers are also turning to