

RISING STAR

By **EDDY LANDRETH,**
CORRESPONDENT

CARRBORO -- "Idle" is not one of Eric Miller's personal gears.

His gears all propel him in one direction -- forward.

"The busier I am, the more I get done," said the 31-year-old Miller, a real estate agent with Terra Nova Global Properties, which is on West Main Street in Carrboro. "Just sitting around, I can't do that. I have too active a personality for that."

The Chapel Hill Board of Realtors is one organization to which Miller devotes his off-hours. He recently received the board's Rising Star Award.

"Some may feel the pressure of being nominated as the Rising Star," said Sue Millager, executive officer for the board, "because you are then expected to serve in a leadership position on the board of directors for the Chapel Hill Board of Realtors. But Eric welcomed the challenge. His intent is to serve as president of the board in the near future."

A need to remain active helps to explain the many community projects in which Miller is involved. Fellow Terra Nova employee Tom Wiltberger said that Miller's personality is the engine that drives him.

"Eric is outgoing, personable and works well with people," Wiltberger said. "He is also very involved in the community, from volunteering to participating on boards such as Habitat for Humanity, to helping his neighborhood obtain historic preservation status.

"Eric has a positive attitude, a good sense of humor and pays good attention to

detail. He is a strong supporter of continuing education to keep his skills honed. He helps others when they need advice, and he brings a good spirit to the office."

The Board of Realtors offers continuing education classes for agents, and education is an important aspect of Miller's life. He graduated Rutgers University in New Jersey with a bachelor's in environmental engineering, and worked as a fund-raiser for the school for several years before moving to the Triangle as a fund-raiser for the Duke University Law School.

His wife, Crystal, is a fund-raiser for UNC Hospitals. The two met at a convention in Arizona. One just happened to be from Duke, the other from Carolina. They now have a 3-month-old son named Marshall.

Miller had a family background in real estate sales. His grandfather and his father were both in the business.

"I (worked at Duke) for about three years," Miller said. "Then I was working with an environmental nonprofit. That actually is how I met the folks at Terra Nova. That's how I made the jump into real estate."

Urban renewal is one of his interests, so he and his wife bought an older house in Durham. He then directed some of his energy to overseeing the remodeling of the house.

"I'm glad we got a lot of it done before our son arrived," he said. "It can be very trying. For about three months, we lived in one room of our house and had a

combination bathroom-kitchen for a while."

Miller said the family had a hot plate sitting on top of the toilet. The microwave



Photo by Atoyia Deans

Eric Miller received the Chapel Hill Board of Realtors Rising Star Award. The award is granted to real estate agents who have a maximum of five years in the industry and have demonstrated leadership and involvement in their Realtor association.

was on the night table. And the refrigerator sat in the foyer.

"My patience wore thinner quicker than my wife's," he said. "My wife was quite a trooper through all of this. She was very supportive. She's been through my creative process."

As for his style in selling real estate, he said listening is a key trait. A lot of salespeople, he said, do not listen carefully enough to determine what a customer's real needs are.

"Eric is a good listener," said Mariana Fiorentino, co-owner of Terra

Nova, "and he believes everyone should have the opportunity to achieve the American dream of home ownership. He works hard for first-time home buyers to educate them on the home buying process.

"He knows about construction and has torn down a wall or two in his personal home he is lovingly restoring himself. He has a keen sensitivity and is comfortable working with investors, high-end clients and those buying their first homes."

It's all about being a keen listener and an educator, Miller said.

"In sales and working with your clients, it's really important to listen," Miller said. "Everybody's situation is different. Clients are often very concerned about the investment side of what they are doing, but when you're working with them you are either selling or helping them find their home. Many times you are listening to what two different people are saying. They may not always be saying the same thing.

"You're trying to connect the dots to figure out different thoughts on style, requirements on space, how long someone wants to be in a house. A huge part of what we do is education. Buyers and sellers can come armed with a ton of information. It's still our job to help them sort through all that, what's good and what may not be reliable information."

Spoken like a true Rising Star in real estate sales.