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Mid-Florida Realtors Unite

By RACHEL GOMEZ
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Signing of New MLS will assist realtors with transactions

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE—Local real estate agents now have the opportunity to access property listings throughout the Florida region due to a contract signing for a regional MLS.

Realtors in mid-Florida are banding together, creating one of the country's largest multiple listing services—a computer database that provides real estate agents with detailed information about most homes on the market. The MLS will contain comprehensive residential listings and some commercial real estate sales information, Sarasota Association of Realtors President Kathy Roberts said.

The Sarasota Association of Realtors, the Englewood Area Board of Realtors, Manatee

Association of Realtors, the Punta Gorda–Port Charlotte–North Port Association of Realtors and the Venice Area Board of Realtors have all joined the Mid-Florida Regional Multi-Listing Service (MFRMLS). In total, the MLS will join more than 8,000 Realtors from Southwest Florida and more than 32,000 real estate professionals from eight current Central Florida member associations.

"Consolidation is probably the primary goal because of the way the market is right now," Roberts said. "You have these large companies like Michael Saunders and Gulf Stream that have offices in all these areas, and they belong to different MLS's. Now with the regional one, they will all belong to one."

Starting in March 2008, a vendor will begin an implementation process where each group's data will be added one at a time to the new system. "Because each of us has a different vendor current-

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MARKETPLACE HOW ARTS IS YOUR CITY?

Baltimore-based *American Style Magazine* has ranked Sarasota as the #16 top small city cultural capital in 2007.

ECOLECTUAL means guided or motivated by an intelligent respect for the environment, or by taking action with respect to protecting the environment. OBLI Organics, a new clothing company owned by two sisters, has trademarked the term "ecolectual." The two owners say they hope to "spread the ecolectual initiative," through their clothing line which uses 100% certified organic cotton and manufactured under Fair Trade practices. Many companies have been combining words to show their support for the environment, like GE's Ecomagination. Michelle Young, an owner of OBLI Organics, said other companies that are putting ecolectual ideas to work are Bloom Organics, Whole Foods, and Vivaterra (an online and catalog company with green tips in their newsletter).

Sarasota's \$2.9 Million Brand Campaign

By LINDSAY DOWNEY
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The Sarasota Convention and Visitors Bureau launches its campaign.

MARKETING—The theater lights dim and the crowd grows silent. "There's something about this place. Another sunset brings the night into focus." A scripted, white font dances across the screen as a woman's soothing voice emanates from the speakers. "Yesterday was full of adventure on the ocean, paddling and diving. Today is alive with culture. A festival morning and a museum afternoon." As the soft music dies down and the screen goes black, the audience of business people

erupts in applause. The Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau unveiled its new, \$2.9 million advertising campaign at Mote Marine Laboratory's Immersion Cinema last week. After speaking with various county partners last year, SCVB began strategizing a more sophisticated positioning for its Sarasota and Her Islands brand. The campaign will officially launch in print and on the Web in January. "A lunchtime stroll took us past boutiques, through parks and children giggling from the circus. We shared a drink in

good company. As the sea breezes tousled our hair and broke our stride, we found ourselves again, here... "Flying home it hit me: I came here for a great seaside vacation and I found it—beyond the beaches."

Casual Elegance

The SVCB's previous brand used a whimsical font and focused largely on the area's circus culture—something that didn't fully resonate with all out-of-town visitors, said SVCB Public Relations Manager Erin Duggan. While it

doesn't deny the area's circus heritage, the new campaign plays up Sarasota's beaches, dining and eclectic, cultural attractions. After convincing the Sarasota County Commission that the money for the new campaign—which comes in part from funds collected from the fourth penny of the tourist development tax—would take tourism to "the next level," the SCVB hired a team that began working to implement the "Beyond the Beaches" campaign about a month ago.

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