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PIONEER

Pioneer Agency: Taking title to a community

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Mandy Mann and John Kuban stand in the lobby of Pioneer Title Tuesday afternoon. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun)

November 10, 2013 5:00 am • KATHLEEN STINSON Sun Staff Reporter [\(0\) Comments](#)

Pioneer Title Agency in Flagstaff, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, is more than a business — it's a way of life for the families and friends connected to it.

Whereas a number of companies are going national, and corporate is the face of their business, Pioneer Title has its roots deep in Arizona. A continuity exists between the owners, the employees and their community that can be all too rare today.

"This anniversary is a big deal because in our profession, companies come and go — even when the economy was suffering, we were able to maintain our staff and offices in the county," said Brenda Silveus, marketing director for Pioneer Title in Coconino County.

Pioneer Title is a full-service title and escrow agency based in Sierra Vista with 51 branches across Arizona. But the story behind how Pioneer Title got started in Flagstaff involves two different families who today still maintain ties and work together.

The story begins in Flagstaff in 1975 when Bob and Neldeanne Kuban bought Minnesota Title and Trust, changing the name to Minnesota Title Agency, according to John Kuban, their son.

Keith Newlon, later founder and co-owner of Pioneer Title Agency, took a job working at the Minnesota Title Agency while he was attending Northern Arizona University.

A relationship developed between Newlon and the Kubans that continued throughout the years, John said.

Moving forward to 1985, Keith's parents, Betty and Bob Newlon, and Keith and his wife Cindy started the Pioneer Title Agency in Sierra Vista, buying the business from Title Guarantee, Keith said.

"My father and mother ran Minnesota Title Agency until they sold the business to Keith and the Newlon family in 1993" when Bob Kuban retired, John Kuban said.

"I feel the relationship between my parents and Keith — because they kept (in touch) — influenced my parents to sell to Keith," he said.

Today the Kuban's son John is the top escrow officer for Pioneer Title Agency in Flagstaff.

"We are a company that allows families to work together — it's not frowned upon, whereas in other companies, it might be," John Kuban said.

John started out working for his father's agency in 1990, at first carrying documents for his family while attending Northern Arizona University.

John went to work for Pioneer Title Flagstaff when Keith bought it, he said.

"Keith is a great mentor, like an older brother to me," John Kuban said. "He is one of those persons that everybody would like to work for."

CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY

Not only is this a story about family but also about Pioneer Title Agency's close connection to the community.

Silveus said employees at Pioneer Title are encouraged to get involved with the community as volunteers.

"We're involved with the community in a lot of ways. This community has provided us with a very good living," Silveus said. "We as a company and individuals give tons of volunteer hours to the community, something Keith fosters."

Currently, the 30 employees in three Pioneer Title Flagstaff branches, are variously volunteering at Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Northland Family Help Center, Hope Cottage, serving meals at the Flagstaff Family Food Center, Boy Scouts of America, Literacy International and Hope Closet, to cite a few examples.

"I really agree with Keith, living in Flagstaff the past 30 years, it is a community of great people," Silveus said. "To keep it great, we have to give back to the community."

She said company employees volunteered after the Schultz fire four years ago caused a lot of flooding the Doney Park area.

"As a company we went out and filled sandbags, delivered county information door-to-door to people affected by the flooding, and we were recruited by the United Way, which knew we could put a group together to help," she said.

Pioneer Title also helped after the tornado in Bellemont that same year, she said.

"They needed volunteers to clean out the downed debris," she added. "During the holidays last year, the company wanted to try to do something for its employees since we were just coming out of the recession."

Keith wanted to give the employees each \$100 gift certificates, but stipulated they be from locally-owned, small businesses in Flagstaff, she said.

"It was eye-opening because we needed 30 gift certificates and we got the most unique gifts," she said.

ATHENA AWARD WINNER

Silveus won the 2010 Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce Athena Award for her service to the community.

Mandy Mann, escrow officer at Pioneer Title Agency Flagstaff, received the Affiliate of the Year Award from the Northern Arizona Association of Realtors at the annual installation breakfast last week, according to a company press release.

"This award is not given out every year, but only when they feel someone has been of great service to the association."

Keith said the family has created two scholarships at NAU.

"NAU has always been really good to me — I met my wife there — and we do like to give back to the community," Keith said.

The family created the Dr. Betty J. Newlon Memorial scholarship for a graduate student majoring in counseling, another scholarship at the business school and gives to the Lumberjacks Athletic program, to cite a few examples, Keith said.