



Scent a message



Doreen Bollhofer: 'Scent is the most powerful way to reach our emotions, because our sense of smell connects to the part of our brain associated with emotion, mood and memory.' (Photo by Ron Denenberg)

By: Bernadette Starzee

When residents and apartment-seekers walk into the main lobby at The Shipyard at Port Jeff Harbor, a midrise luxury apartment complex in Port Jefferson, one of the first things they notice is that it smells really good.

And it's no accident – the scent was carefully selected to complement the property and to appeal to tenants and potential tenants on a visceral level.

“Choosing a home is an emotional decision, and scent is the most powerful way to reach our emotions, because our sense of smell connects to the part of our brain associated with emotion,

mood and memory,” said Doreen Bollhofer, founder and principal designer for Scented Interiors by Design in St. James, which creates custom scents for residential developments, private residences, showrooms, fitness centers, hotels and other properties. “When a nice scent welcomes them as they enter a building, people are emotionally engaged before they even think about it.”

Bollhofer does much of her work with developers and management companies of multiunit residential properties, providing them with custom scents for lobbies, common areas and model units.

Her company created the signature scent at The Shipyard, which is managed by Philip Chiovitti, Long Island regional property manager for Greystar, the global property management firm.

“I met Doreen through the owners of The Shipyard, who used her services for another property that they own,” Chiovitti said. “She used more organic products than the previous company that we used, and that was important to us.”

When developing scents for a client, Bollhofer takes many attributes of the property into account, such as target demographics, colors, structure of the building and whether it is located near the beach or in a wooded area, and creates a signature scent tailored to the particular property. She typically presents three options to a client. “The average person can't smell more than three,” she said.

Chiovitti also chose a scent from Bollhofer's company for The Cornerstone in Hauppauge, a residential community for active adults ages 55 and older that opened last October.

A garden-style community, The Cornerstone does not have a traditional lobby, but the scent is diffused in a section that contains the leasing office and common areas, as well as two model units that are used to market the apartments to potential tenants.

“On a subconscious level, a nice smell influences someone to like the apartment,” Chiovitti said. “And when people see that you pay attention to this detail, it shows that you pay attention to every detail.”

Scents are also used by real estate agents who show single-family houses.

“When you walk into a home, the first thing you notice is the smell if there is one,” said Ellen Zipes, an associate broker in the Wheatley Plaza office of Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty. “Just as staging and de-cluttering are important, the smell is just as important. A musty smell or heavy cooking odors or smells from dog bedding or litter boxes or old shoes in closets can turn off a buyer. It will make the buyer feel the house is not properly cared for. But a positive smell is very appealing to buyers and even the real estate agents who are showing the house.”

Scented Interiors By Design's product comes in a variety of forms, from a mini-plug-in that real estate agents can carry from open house to open house, to free-standing or wall-mount units to ones that connect to the HVAC system. Through the use of cold-air diffusion technology, scents are consistently released in a dry, microscopic mist.

Early in her career, Bollhofer worked in product development for Estee Lauder. She later was the senior manager of fragrance marketing development at Elizabeth Arden Cosmetics and vice president of global fragrance development for Ralph Lauren Fragrances before founding her own fragrance and brand development firm. She has developed signature fragrances for celebrities including Sarah Jessica Parker and Gwen Stefani and for the retailer American Eagle Outfitters.

Some of the scents she has created for the real estate market include “Printemps,” which means “spring” in French and features a blend of citrus and herbs accented by orange flower, cedar and musk; and “Sage, Amber & Mint,” a medley of sage, mint and rose water wrapped in orris, amber and musk.

According to Bollhofer, properties will typically use the same scent throughout the year, which becomes their signature scent, but they may change it up by adding a special scent for the holidays, such as “Siberian Fir,” featuring evergreen and fir balsam scents.