

BUSINESS

Mission accomplished

Sino Swearingen's SJ30-2 jet completes a test flight to West Virginia

PAGE 6E

Broker looks to help children while selling houses

List for Kids trades listing fees for referral fees, and charities win.

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Giving to children's charities instead of a real estate agent is one way to ease the pain of parting with money, and broker Bo DePeña thinks the idea is ready to take off.

It took DePeña two years to develop, he said, but the List for Kids business plan is simple. The seller of a house pays the buyer's agent her usual fee. But the seller pays DePeña's company only a \$500 administrative

fee to list the house through the Multiple Listing Service and Realtor.com.

The seller also commits to making a donation equal to 1 percent of the sales price to an affiliated charity. It is similar to a discount brokerage, but with a twist sufficiently different that DePeña has filed for a patent.

"I don't want any copycats," DePeña said. But he does want to franchise the system, and several charities already have lined up to participate.

"I think it's a great idea," said Ruth Reitmeyer, development director at the Healy-Murphy Center, a school for at-risk children. "It's a wonderful way to contribute."

After receiving a proposal from DePeña, Healy-Murphy

contacted Big Brothers Big Sisters, one of the charities that was already on board, Reitmeyer said. An interview with DePeña followed and the charity now praises the List for Kids as a "ground-breaking fundraising venture."

Its Web presence, listfor-kids.org, breaks down costs to the seller on a typical \$100,000 sale: a \$1,000 donation, \$3,000 for the buyer's agent, and a \$500 administrative fee.

However, DePeña does not expect to see revenue from the administrative fee. The real money, he said, is in referral fees. Agents who agree to affiliate themselves with List for Kids become third-party agents

See LIST/3E



ROBERT MCLEROY/STAFF

Bo DePeña, inventor of List for Kids, a brokerage that benefits children's charities, meets with Ruth Reitmeyer of the Healy-Murphy Center for at-risk children, one of the first participating charities.

List for Kids' sales benefit charities

CONTINUED FROM 1E

for the buyer. They receive calls that go through List for Kids.

"Whether that person buys that house or another, List for Kids receives a referral fee," he said. "Off one house, we could generate five to 15 leads that could develop into sales."

The charities are required only to assist in promoting List for Kids. The Children's Associate for Maximum Potential, or C.A.M.P., which offers recreational programs to children with disabilities, is already announcing the arrangement on its Web site.

"We're very pleased to be aligned with List for Kids," said Regina Anderson, special projects coordinator. "Mr. DePeña's innovative idea is a powerful fundraising tool that we have added to our overall development strategy in order to better service families."

Advertising on the Web site is expected to be another revenue source, DePeña added.

The system is untested. DePeña will launch the first fran-

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JOE CASTRO
California franchising director of List for Kids

chise next week, but there is already interest for franchises and from six charities. DePeña said four franchises are soon to launch for Boerne, Helotes, Converse-Schertz, and New Braunfels-San Marcos.

A California associate is looking to start several franchises as a result of a relationship that developed between DePeña and the head of a West Coast firm. DePeña owns Fidelity Partners, a company that represents tenants in need of new office or retail space.

DePeña worked out a lease in San Antonio for CityCal Financial Corp., a mortgage company based in the Oakland, Calif., area. He became friends with one of the founders, Joe Castro.

"He'd been working on this for quite a while," Castro said. "Last year, he asked me if I'd be interested. We kind of brainstormed on it."

DePeña originally thought of it as a nonprofit organization. But that would entail distributing the contributions and maintaining accounts and other administrative costs.

"Instead of ever touching this money, it goes straight from the seller to the charity," he said. "That eliminates any possible handling of money, any possible gray areas or misinterpretations down the road."

Castro liked the idea enough that he will be the franchising director for California. Three franchises soon will launch in Dublin, Sacramento and San Diego, he said.

"Being in the industry, and understanding the product he has, I see no reason why the consumer would not list their product with us," Castro said. "It isn't logical for someone to want to do business somewhere else."

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