

The Duffy Team Story

Duffy Team Realtors has always been a family affair.

“We all kind of grew up together,” says patriarch Pete Duffy of himself, his siblings, and cousins in the early days of Duffy Real Estate Company. “We all kind of got in the business doing property management or real estate sales, or the management of the real estate company. Everybody had their responsibilities.”

Duffy Real Estate company was founded as a small, local real estate business on the west side of Cincinnati by Pete Duffy’s father, Pat Duffy, and Pat’s brother Tom Duffy in 1963. From there, in 1976, the company grew into a franchise called the Duffy Gallery of Homes, expanding from just one office up to a total of eight by the end of 1978. Belonging to a national franchise (later joining with Better Homes and Gardens) is what allowed the small, local company to compete with the larger real estate brokerages of the time, like Parchman & Oyler and West Shell, says Pete.

By the time Pat and Tom had established Duffy Gallery of Homes as a formidable force in the Cincinnati area, their children already were an integral part of the team. “You got home from school, and some of us worked for the property management company, some of us cleaned the offices, some of the others—Tom’s kids—answered phones as receptionists, and that was kind of the catalyst of the Duffy Real Estate company,” Pete says.

Adapting and Growing - 90s-2000s

Pat left big shoes to fill when he passed away in 1988 after a long and prosperous career. Nominated for Realtor of the Year in 1978 and with positions as a Director and later President of the Cincinnati Board of Realtors, Pat instilled his values of tenacity and using a personal touch into his children—the same values that Pete carried on when he took the helm of the company along with his uncle. These values also guided the Duffy Team through many transformations and mergers throughout the years. The company merged into Coldwell Banker in 1993, and then in 1998 Pete and his business partner Bob Neal opened a RE/MAX franchise called RE/MAX Results Plus. Despite losing the family name branding, Pete says he and Bob wanted to continue the small company atmosphere that had started with The Duffy Team’s family roots.

“Our company [RE/MAX] was built on the same foundations—[that] all of our agents and families were prominent in our companies,” Pete says. He and Bob kept up the Duffy tradition of involving their children in the day-to-day operations of their company, having them clean offices or answer telephones. But it wasn’t just all about work. “We had holiday parties and lots of family functions that were all part of our real estate company in our day to day business,” Pete remembers fondly.

That friendly atmosphere allowed the RE/MAX era to hold on to its reputation and Pete's personal motto of "family realtors helping families," even when they grew larger still and absorbed smaller franchises into their fold. They had the resources to give agents more tools in their belt, but they paid attention to individual needs, too. "When somebody was new to our company they could get training and have access to relocation and still feel like they were part of a family team," Pete says.

But something was missing from the RE/MAX days. That something became more and more apparent as the company grew and changed. Things started to feel too big and too disconnected from the Duffy Team's values. The company's scope was too broad, not focused enough on the client experience that Pete holds so dear. Shortly after the market crashed in the late 2000s, Pete opted to merge with Comey and Shepherd, a large, local brokerage in the Cincinnati area. "[Comey and Shepherd] had the family name and reputation of being a very strong family-oriented company," he says. "So that felt very good and comfortable, and it being a locally owned company was important to us—to be able to go from a national name to a local name."

So at the start of the 2010s, the Duffy Team, Comey and Shepherd Realtors was born.

The Present

Of Pete's six children, three ultimately followed in their father's footsteps to join the real estate industry. Oldest daughter Jessica was in the business for a few years before she married and moved out of the city. Sons Joe and Brenden are the current generation of Duffy Team, obtaining their licenses in 2014 and 2020, respectively. The children got their start in a typical Duffy fashion, helping their father with menial office tasks while they were growing up.

"Saturdays were designated workdays [growing up]," says Joe of his childhood. All the other neighborhood kids would be out playing or doing their thing, and Pete would have his children helping with emptying out listings, moving or painting offices, and cutting the grass before open houses. And of course, the tradition of Duffy kids answering the telephone continued. "We really were just involved with the work—with the labor part of real estate. And we *hated* it [working on Saturdays]," Joe says with a laugh. As kids often do, the Duffy children weren't always keen on doing what their father wanted them to do. Especially working on Saturdays when the weekends were supposed to be for fun. But they came around.

"I appreciate it now as an adult," Joe says. "It's given me such a good work ethic. I am more than willing to help anybody that needs help—do extra things you gotta do." Joe also recounts the number one motto that his father has taught him: "If you're gonna do something, do it one-hundred percent right. I remember that, it's burned into my brain. *If you're going to do it, do it right.*"

Joe wasn't always on the path to become a Realtor, however. Initially, he says he wanted to do his own thing first. He wanted to find his own path. He went on to work in restaurants and bars and eventually obtained a license in professional dog training. While he enjoyed dog training,

Joe says it wasn't something he wanted to make a career out of. So he returned to his roots and took his real estate license exam.

Joe started out working part time alongside Pete after he received his license, building up his skills as Pete's right hand man. Joe also was always very interested in the technology side of the real estate industry. His first taste of the business was in assisting his father with inputting information into their early website, and he's only grown more passionate about the technology since.

"There's tons of tools [in the real estate technology industry], but they don't talk to each other. Figuring out how to make all that stuff work together in a systematic way has been—it's really lit a fire for me because I really enjoy that," Joe says.

Youngest son Brenden joined Joe in the real estate business in 2020. Like Joe, Brenden initially didn't want to start out in real estate. "I enjoy being able to help people in general," Brenden says, and he graduated from Miami University with a degree in criminal justice. After some shadowing in the social services industry, however, Brenden decided that it wasn't the career path for him. Like Joe, he was drawn to the family business of real estate, and thus the self-described "caboose" joined the "family train".

"I was like, you know what, it might not be what I was looking for when I was wanting to help people originally," says Brenden. "But it is a different way of helping people. And that's definitely something I wanted to do." Real estate is also an active career, Brenden says, which fits his active lifestyle. "I don't like just sitting in the office and just hunkered down behind a computer working. You get a chance to go out and kind of be active, show houses, you're not just sitting there all day behind a computer screen."

What the Future Holds

Pete says that both of his sons have been instrumental in overhauling old systems to bring the Duffy Team into a new era. "Now, we're trying to put more systems in place because dad [Pat] always kind of ran things out of folders and paper documents," Pete says with a laugh. "Now with Joe and Brenden's help we're developing really good technology systems that better inform and better schedule, and help make the whole transaction much smoother and enables everybody to be a whole lot more productive."

"I just want to be able to take care of people, not paperwork," Joe says. "I want to have things run in this way, not so I don't have to do work, but so that I can put my time and attention toward people, not the minutiae, the paperwork, stuff like that."

That drive is a core tenant of all three Duffys—the overall commitment to superior service for their clients, no matter what form it takes. Brenden says he wants his clients to feel like "we gave them the best customer service we possibly could. We treat everyone we work with as family and we hope they do the same thing with us."

For years, Pete says the Duffy Team has had the motto of “Family Realtors Helping Families”, and to some extent this is still true. “I’ve worked with people for over 40 years— I’m now into the second, third, fourth generation of people I’ve worked with,” says Pete. “Their grandparents, then their parents bought houses from me, and then the kids are buying houses from me. And now their kids’ kids, I’m handing those relationships off to Joe and to Brenden. That’s what really excites me, having worked and gained the trust of so many people.”

That trust has solidified Duffy Team as a force in the Cincinnati area, conquering changing markets and accommodating buyers and sellers from all walks of life. So rather than considering their clients as separate, individual family units, Pete says the Duffy Team would rather adopt their clients into their fold as they look towards the future. No longer is it simply “family Realtors helping families,” it’s “family Realtors inviting you to join our family.”