



Director of Photography Colin Boettcher and camera operator Robin Smith have the cameras on homeowner Lori Ceasor and co-host Penny Southam.



everyone wins on ALL FOR NOTHING?

by MEAGAN HANES
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The morning begins quietly in Cornwall: sunshine floods the cornfields on the outskirts of town and the traffic on country roads picks up slowly as people start the day. This mellow pace is a far cry from the hustle and bustle of the city.

So it's quite a surprise to turn the corner and find a street brimming with activity. Cars and trucks emblazoned with logos are parked along both sides of the road. Equipment in all sizes and shapes is being unloaded, and it appears an entire carpentry workshop is being set up on a wide trailer bed. Excitement in the air is palpable. Something is energizing this sleepy street, but what?

The answer is hidden on the property of Lori Ceasor. More accurately, the answer is the property of Lori Ceasor. Lori is the newest contestant on *All for Nothing?*, a TV show in which two homeowners compete while readying their fixer-uppers for sale. The twist? They have to do the much-needed home updating with zero budget! Locally produced by Mountain Road Productions, this fun series offers

it all: a look into other people's houses, drama, suspense, engaging stars and professional reno and real estate tips. More importantly, it helps viewers understand how to increase the curb appeal of their homes without spending a fortune or doing labour-intensive renovations. As for the two contestants? Guided by advice from Ottawa experts, they spruce up their properties and vie for a commission-free house listing from Paul Rushforth Real Estate Inc. Thanks to the publicity generated by the show, a sale is virtually guaranteed. But everybody benefits from the know-how of co-hosts Paul Rushforth, a top-ranked realtor, and Penny Southam, a registered, award-winning designer. *All For Nothing?* has helped more than 70 homeowners directly, with the value of each of the homes increasing by about \$26,000.

"Location, showing and price are the three factors that influence home buyers," says Paul, CEO of Paul Rushforth Real Estate Inc. "Homes that don't show well don't sell."

"It's all about presentation," agrees Penny, who is the owner of Southam Design Inc.

For Lori, a mother of three, the presence of these two advisors makes for a lucky day. She explains her situation while showing her home. The large space and open backyard provided the

perfect family setting as she raised her active children. Then after they all headed off on life adventures, she realized it was time for a new adventure of her own in Ottawa. When the Cornwall home was put up for sale, there were many showings but no offers. After hearing about the *All For Nothing?* show from her daughter, Lori applied to compete and was selected a week later. Hers is the first Cornwall property to be featured.

The Mountain Road Productions team arrives early at Lori's place. Once greetings are out of the way, team members are off in a flash to get gear unpacked, lighting set up and camera positions established. Crew members radiate enthusiasm, even the worker operating a light outside in order to illuminate a scene in just the right way. No detail is overlooked when making television magic.

And what magic it is! There is a constant buzz of activity as cameramen wield recording devices, lighting technicians adjust equipment and an audio specialist fiddles with knobs and dials. Two detail-oriented producers with checklists assist the director, moving from room to room every few minutes.

Paul appears just as setup is completed and production begins with a guided tour of the main rooms. In all of them, Lori offers a snippet of backstory while Paul, acting as real estate advisor,



The cameras are on co-host Paul Rushforth.

mentions potential changes that would add value. The dialog between Paul and Lori is filmed numerous times in each room, depending on the producers' feedback. But the atmosphere is relaxed; misspoken words are cause for laughter.

During the filming of Paul's scenes, Penny arrives and is whisked away to get ready. Once Paul is finished on set, it's Penny's turn and she repeats the house tour from her perspective, offering advice about decluttering for home showings and landscaping to increase curb appeal.

"There's a common misconception about the amount of money improvements require," she explains. "Many of the most desired improvements are low-cost, such as a fresh coat of neutral-coloured paint, new light fixtures and hardware, and updated window treatments." As for decluttering, she points out that it doubles as an opportunity to increase household funds. "Why bother packing and moving boxes of unused knick-knacks? Have a garage sale, make some extra money and do less work for the move."

While Penny talks on camera, the production crew rolls along, functioning much like a high-performance power tool. On the spot, an episode is being meticulously constructed and the nature of the process mirrors that of its subject-home improvement. There's plenty of hard work behind the dazzling end-product.

Certainly, the magic of *All for Nothing?* is not just for viewers, home sellers and on-set observers.

Between scenes, Paul and Penny discuss the effect the show has had on their lives. When asked if they're recognized in public, they confirm with a smile. Penny mentions she now has fans asking for autographs. It's a very new experience for her, but she's glad to oblige. And while the exposure certainly helps their respective businesses, both Paul and Penny note that publicity is not the reason they participate in

the show. Instead, a desire to share the knowledge they've accumulated fuels their passion to participate.

"What we do here helps homeowners understand their offering in a different way and increase its value," Paul says. "You don't need to be selling your home to want to increase its value. This program lets all homeowners learn new and interesting ways to turn a house into their home."

Thanks to Paul and Penny's input, it's all but certain Lori's small-town days in Cornwall are numbered. You can see *All for Nothing?* on OWN Canada: Oprah Winfrey Network. The show airs Mondays at 10 p.m. and is repeated Thursdays at 5 p.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m. For details about the broadcast, you can follow *All For Nothing?* on Twitter @AllForNothingTV or visit www.facebook.com/AllForNothingTV. ♦



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