

long beach/south bay/southeastern l.a. county edition

BROKER *AGENT*

LeFrancis Arnold

broker/agent of the month



LeFrancis Arnold

The BusinessMan's Man



With his commanding presence, it's easy to see why the President of Century 21 Excellence in City of Lynwood, California, LeFrancis Arnold, has succeeded.

"I'd have to say that the most rewarding aspect of this business has been my spiritual calling to do what I'm doing, to be the best at it, and to be involved in my community," he said. "I feel as if I am actually making a difference in my community."

The former Denver Broncos football player works side-by-side with his mother, Evelyn, a real estate legend in her own right. The dynamic duo have been working together since 1976 and they continue to reap the rewards of their hard work and their dedication to the real estate business. LeFrancis, 54, earned his real estate license in 1975, a decade after his mother introduced him to the profession.

Today, the 6-foot 4-inch LeFrancis, who is over 240 pounds, can be found running several companies in addition to Century 21 Excellence. For example, he is also the president and the primary owner of Hub City Construction and Development Co. Inc.; All Communities Escrow Services, Inc.; and L.E.D. Financial Group Inc..

Some of the many services provided through these companies range from real estate sales and services of residential and commercial property, business consulting, property management, escrow services, mortgage lending and construction and development.

But, his duties don't stop there. He has served as chairman of the Lynwood Economic Development Committee, he is currently the president of the Southeast Los Angeles County Development Corp., and secretary of The Los Angeles County Board of Real Estate, to name a few.

"I'm building wealth in our community through ownership," he said.

He certainly is, in more ways than one.

Early On

LeFrancis is the proud son of parents who were married for more than 50 years. Dad, Francis O. Arnold, was a truck driver/business owner and mom, Evelyn, was and is in real estate. His great-grandfather, Francis Miriam Henderson, was the first African-American Police Officer in the Los Angeles Police Department in 1927.

The L.A. born and raised LeFrancis started early on in a leadership capacity, serving first on the Student Council at Compton High School. An Honor Student he later landed a football scholarship to the University of Oregon. While attending college, he won the prestigious Koyl Club Award as Oregon's most outstanding Junior. He was also the captain of the football team before signing with the Denver Broncos.

While in the NFL from 1974-75 as an offensive lineman for the Broncos, he always made sure that he had a back-up plan should football not pan out. That's why he studied and earned his real estate license while going to college, and later earned his Broker's license in 1976. He decided to head back to his native California where he joined his mother, Evelyn, in her real estate business. Within two quick years upon his return, LeFrancis became the Broker and President of Century 21 Arnold, which was then owned by Evelyn, in Compton. "I knew that there was going to be an end to football," he said. "Once I got into the real estate world, I loved it. I think my fame is that I came back to Compton and that I have been doing business here for 30 years," he smiled.

Evelyn later sold the company, which became Century 21 Arrow Realty, and eventually turned into Century 21 Excellence, a franchise that he and his mother purchased together.

Always one who was interested in learning and being at the top of his game, LeFrancis, which is a French name, also went back to school to earn his contractor's license, his fire insurance, life and disability license in 1981 and 1982, followed by a NASDAQ Broker dealer's license in 1983.

Today, LeFrancis, Evelyn, and a third partner, Mike Oyoque, run the estate business; Oyoque became a partner in 2004 and they all get along great, according to LeFrancis. LeFrancis said he leaves the “people-person” part to his mother. In turn, he handles the day-to-day operations, serving as the agency’s business manager, in addition to working on and at his other many business ventures.

Evelyn said of their relationship, “We know what our strengths and weaknesses are and we have great respect for each other. We allow each to excel in those areas that we are the strongest in.”

Fast-Forward

Now, three decades later, the mother/son team has built a strong Century 21 franchise in the heart of Southeast Los Angeles, where they continue to serve the community with pride.

“We get along great, she is a wonderful consultant to me,” LeFrancis said. “We own the real estate business together, and the building together. It works because we respect one another to the fullest degree.”

They recently renovated the building, where they have been housed since 1980, which was also a former real estate agency in the 1950s. LeFrancis expanded the building to 5,000 square feet and added state-of-the-art computers, wireless devices, complete automation, private offices, African violet furnishings and other high-end amenities. There are 40 agents and other staff members who are stationed in Lynwood.

His other businesses are also located in the same building; however the real estate portion takes up most of the space. “This building was built in 1955 and it was only 2,000 square feet ... we added 3,000 more square feet,” he said. “All of the old doors were taken out and we added cherry wood, glass, recessed lights to replace all of those old lights, and added new paint, the new green, as well as new carpet.”

And while the offices are busy and he is still selling properties, he has taken a new direction since the market has slowed. He is spending more time with Hub Construction concentrating on building and developing more residential properties and subdivisions. He is also in the process of looking into limited partnerships, purchasing more commercial properties and management rentals for his long-term retirement plan.

“I have a passion for this business and I need to make sure that there are job opportunities for people in communities where construction development is taking place,” he explained. “My call is to create fair opportunities for all and that, for me, means bridging the gap.”

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~ Evelyn Arnold



Evelyn and LeFrancis

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LeFrancis Arnold **Century 21 Excellence** **Phone here** **Website and email address**

LeFrancis said the way that he tackles this is by using what happens in one community to help benefit another community. "You can go anywhere in California and there will be thousands of people elsewhere in the State affected by the same issue," he shared. "They may not be around the corner from you, but they have the same issues. You can cooperate with one another and deal with those issues and find out how other areas have handled them. We can take the good stuff and give it to somebody else who needs it."

LeFrancis also believes that people need to share ideologies, technologies and techniques in order to get ahead of the game. "For example, we share what happens with our building agencies about trying to reduce the process of getting permits through," he said. "A lot of the development of a city or a county starts with C.A.R., as our motor. We'll put the car together, but we need C.A.R. to put some of the engine together."

Of course, there are always challenges in the real estate business, or in any business, LeFrancis added. "Our business can be altered by the whim of a politician," he said. For example, he mentioned that in 1984, when President Reagan said he was going to change everything, LeFrancis said, "How is one person going to change how we do real estate?"

Thanks to his background and expertise in finance and business economics, LeFrancis understood about taxes and capital gains. "I said, he's going to blow the real estate securities business out of the water," he recalled. "And he did, he torpedo it. The passive-loss rule blew the syndications and the real estate partnerships out of the water."

Be Ready

LeFrancis said in order to make it, real estate agents today need to be ready and get involved.

"That's why C.A.R. and N.A.R. have calls to action, to make calls, and write letters, even to the President," he said. "My whole experience with this business has made me understand that we have to be involved with the political process. It's an absolute must if we're going to continue in this business."

"I was elected for 2007 and this year for 2008. We got an N.A.R. Director at this location when we reached 2,000 members and stayed there," he said. In addition, over the past year, LeFrancis has served as 2007 Vice Chairman for C.A.R.'s Housing Opportunity Committee and will serve as Chairman in 2008 for that same committee. He is currently President-Elect for Los Angeles County Boards of REALTORS®, (LACBOR).

"I believe very strongly about the REALTORS®' ability to work together with our legislators and city councils representatives to promote housing issues in positive ways," he said. "The FHA Housing Reform was passed recently, HR 1852, called the Maxine Waters Bill with Amendments ... this is the first step in Washington's attempt to correct the financial markets."

Spare Time

When he isn't involved in all of the above, LeFrancis enjoys spending time with his wife, Sheryl Turner, the daughter of William Turner.

William Turner, in 1959, brought legal action against the Los Angeles Board of REALTORS® Southwest Division for discrimination. It was a landmark case that forced N.A.R. and C.A.R. to change its policies at the local level regarding equal opportunity.

Sheryl, also an appraiser, has recently gone back to work at Century 21 Excellence as an agent. The couple has two sons, LeFrancis II, who works for LeFrancis' construction business, and Jason, 25, a student at Wheaton College near Boston, who recently got his Real Estate license. The Arnolds enjoy attending concerts, as well as visiting with their new grandson LeFrancis III.

How does LeFrancis, a top producer, wear all of these hats and continue to be successful?

"Easy," he says with a smile. "You have to know where your 'bread and butter' comes from. You need to budget, and manage and tie your business models to one another. The secret to my success is working my businesses, and if one is not as fruitful as it has been, keep working and playing off the others. My mother and I know this business and we are two of the best in the business ... and we will continue doing what we have been doing. This is the time when the strongest survive."