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RICK ELEZI

Rick Elezi is the energetic owner of R.E.M. Residential, a real estate property management company based in midtown Manhattan. The company manages more than seventy residential and commercial buildings, specializing in rentals but also managing co-ops and condominiums throughout the New York City area. With more than twenty years' experience in property management, Elezi is able to run his company efficiently as well as create a great experience for his numerous clients. His hands-on attitude and ability to think like a property owner, cut costs, and increase the efficacy of management has inspired a new kind of management in the industry. His thorough knowledge of New York rent laws and regulations is another great advantage that he offers his clients.

Rick Elezi's family is from the highlands of Dragobia in Tropojë, Albania, but he was born in Ferizaj, Kosova. The family immigrated to the United States when Rick was just 2 years old, settling in the South Bronx. His father, Mustafa Elezi—whom he lists as one of his inspirations—has written two memoirs about his life, including his struggle to escape the brutal Communist regime in Albania, his years in Kosova, and the new life he built in the United States.

"The trials and tribulations that my family went through helped my outlook and instilled in me an ardent pride for my Albanian background," Elezi says. It also encouraged him to work hard to achieve success.

Elezi graduated from Iona College with a Bachelor's degree in 1989. Even though

"Success is definitely not measured by the amount of money you make, but rather by the way you enrich the lives of the people around you and how people will respect your memory when you leave this world."

he was a college student, his father insisted that he work full-time as a doorman to support himself. His customer skills quickly got him promoted to concierge, and after graduating, Elezi returned to his porter position and met the second most important influence of his life, Resident Manager Joe Espailat. Espailat taught him the business and encouraged him to do more with his life. His mother, too, inspired him to strive for more. Her dedication to a backbreaking job, one that provided for the family for more than thirty years, inspired Elezi.

Elezi took the advice of his father-in-law, Sejdi Husenaj—also a Resident Manager, with decades of experience—and decided to make a foray into building management. He obtained a job as an on-site manager, but it meant a cut in his salary. Still, he saw it as a necessary component of his long-term career. Elezi was rapidly promoted to higher positions until he decided to establish R.E.M. Residential. Nowadays, he looks forward to a bright future for his business and turning the company into one of the largest in the industry in New York City.

As an adage proclaims, "Behind every strong man, there is an even stronger woman," and so is the case with Rick Elezi and his wife of twenty-five years, Shpresa. She has been working alongside her husband since R.E.M.'s inception in 2000 and runs her own brokerage service, Julianna Realty, named after their daughter.

But life is about more than professional success to Elezi. He believes that helping people in the Albanian community get great jobs is one of his biggest achievements. He knows that helping them leads to them also helping newcomers who support their families back home, and he is grateful to be in a position that allows him to assist. This was especially evident during R.E.M.'s Hurricane Sandy relief project, where a small effort to send donations to the Sandy victims in Staten Island turned into an outpouring of donations and support from Albanians throughout New York.

He advises other Albanian Americans to cherish their culture. "Albanians are ambitious, hardworking, and goal-oriented," he says. "I strongly believe in showcasing Albanian American success because it strengthens the community and boosts its pride."