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# MEET THE DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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# Q & A

## WITH Janet Bednarek

### President, Women's Council of REALTORS®



**Q: Is Women's Council of REALTORS® (WCR) just for women, or are men active in the Organization as well?**

**A:** Although the Women's Council of REALTORS® focuses on advancing and educating women in the industry, men are also invited to be members for the same purpose, to advance and be educated. For example, Brian Kwilosz, the current President of Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS®, is a Past President of WCR's West Suburban Network.

**Q: What is the mission of WCR?**

**A:** We are a network of REALTORS® advancing women as business leaders in the industry and in the communities we serve.

**Q: In your time as a member, what positive impact have you seen WCR make in the lives of REALTORS® and in the community?**

**A:** WCR has given REALTORS® a place in the industry to learn about leadership and how to be active in the communities they work and live in. More and more each year I see many brokerages encourage their agents to join WCR because they know the additional education and networking opportunities we provide will help them in their journey as a REALTOR®.

**Q: What happens at a typical WCR event?**

**A:** We begin by choosing a local venue to support local business, and have a time of networking at the beginning of each event. We provide a variety of meetings. Some are educational with speakers or panels of successful colleagues in the industry. Some will be in collaboration with RPAC, YPN of Mainstreet, or other WCR Networks. Other events include trivia night, or member and strategic partner appreciation nights.

Sponsorship opportunities for strategic partner members help provide a great venue with appetizers and beverages. This also provides the strategic partner an opportunity to share what they have to offer to REALTORS® and other industry partners.

**Q: Have you seen the West Suburban network grow since you joined? Why do you think the network is growing?**

**A:** I have noticed growth in our network since I joined. Each year brings new REALTORS® and strategic partners that are either brand new to the industry, or have heard about WCR through a member. Once they come to a meeting or event to check it out, they wish they had sought us out sooner! WCR West Suburban meetings and events are on Thursdays from 5:00-8:00pm, which seems to work for most of the

members. This year it is a bit different, and we have been doing our meetings using Zoom. The "Who's Who" and "Safety Month" meetings were recorded and can be found on our Facebook page.

**Q: Why should REALTORS® and vendors join WCR?**

**A:** When you attend an event or meeting you will most certainly see what we have to offer in education and skills to advance in leadership roles as well as building their business. Networking opportunities allow you to meet quite a few people you may not have ever had the opportunity to meet otherwise. Many times guests from other networks attend, creating a possibility for referral business. Other WCR Illinois networks include North Shore, Northwest, Fox Valley, Chicago, Elgin Area/McHenry County, Rockford, and Peoria.

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# DIANA & CHUCK IVAS



## SELLING IN STYLE

Diana Ivas grew up in a middle-class Chicago suburb surrounded by a loving family who taught her the value of hard work and kindness to others. Her family always told her she could be anything she wanted, and that she should strive to be the best at whatever it was. Her hardworking parents instilled a hard-driving mentality in Diana and her sister, so when she developed an early interest in dance, there was a natural transition to the structure and discipline required for success.

Through high school, Diana persevered through weekly ballet lessons and hours of practice at home. She went on to dance in Chicago and around the country. In college, she continued her passion as a performing arts major and earned a master's degree from the University of Illinois. After graduation, she worked as a professional dancer, model, and choreographer while teaching at Oak Park and River Forest High School.

"I absolutely loved teaching and loved all my students, but after 17 years of working 8am to 7pm with coaching and dance and after school and weekend performances, I decided to do something different," says Diana. "A friend of mine was a REALTOR®, and I thought 'if she could do it then I could do it, too.' I liked that real estate was about serving people."

About five years after starting her new career, she convinced her husband, Chuck, to join as her partner. Chuck's background as a decorating contractor offered the ideal balance of skills and strengths. The team has become a top-selling tandem at the Hinsdale office of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services.

"I'm usually the first contact with the buyer and seller," explains Diana. "Once we are under contract, Chuck takes over and works with the seller on inspection issues. We both show homes to our buyers, but Chuck is the one with better insight into the structure of how homes are built. That really helps our buyers feel comfortable with purchasing. He also helps the sellers through the inspection process and negotiation process with buyers."





The Ivas home is tastefully accentuated with artisan-painted frescoes and trompe l'oeil.

This chair and ottoman from the Miami mansion of Gianni Versace were acquired at auction.

For over 30 years, Diana and Chuck have sold homes big and small, with every imaginable design style. When it comes to their own home, however, they both share a passion for French Empire antiques and Italian interiors. Recently they acquired a very rare desk produced by François-Honoré-Georges Jacob-Desmalter, the famed designer whose early 19th century designs outfitted aristocratic estates and palaces. When the desk's history was traced to the palace Château de Fontainebleau, Chuck jumped on a plane and immediately acquired it from a gallery in Switzerland.

Diana and Chuck have become well known for their collection of Gianni Versace furniture, fashion, and accents. "Chuck was taken by Versace's home design while I was trying on clothes at the Versace boutique many years ago on Oak Street," Diana remarks. "After Versace was tragically killed we attended the first auction of Versace's incredible collection at Sotheby's in New York and then later at Sotheby's in London. We purchased Gianni's own pieces at auction and now have pillows, furniture, rugs, lamps, and paintings from his collection. Our house is very vibrant and full of color!"

Diana and Chuck's home also includes famous pieces from the French Empire. They are constantly searching, attending auctions, and researching new additions for their collections. Over the years, Diana served on the board for the Hinsdale Center for the Arts through which their home was included on tours. Their love of Italian masterpieces has even extended to their automobiles, including Ferraris and Maseratis.

"Last summer, we hosted an event for Continental Motors in Hinsdale, with Ferraris filling our driveway," says Diana. "Ferrari is Italian and we have an Italian house, it was a natural fit. A chef made lunch and dinner, there was a jewelry demonstration and a rare cognac tasting, we sipped Italian drinks out in our Italian garden, and guests saw our Italian furniture. It was simply lovely and all the guests of Continental enjoyed the experience."

When not attending auctions or entertaining in their home, Diana enjoys staying physically active. With her habit of disciplined routine from ballet and dance, she maintains a robust exercise and strength training schedule. Plus, a passion for golf for good measure.

Diana and Chuck are also committed contributors to charity organizations like the Silver Lining Foundation. The charity supports cancer patients and provides for women who cannot afford mammograms. "It's an area that hits close to home since Chuck had prostate cancer that spread to the bone," explains Diana. "We try to work with these foundations where there is some type of cancer remediation because we know how important it is. We recently hosted a Versace boutique event in Chicago and a portion of the proceeds went to one of our client's foundations, Patty's Pals, to help raise funds for cancer prevention."

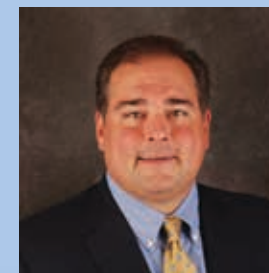
From first-time buyers to luxury listings, Diana and Chuck have been recognized time and again for their work and strong connections with clients. "New homeowners especially appreciate our experience knowing the importance of location," says Diana. "We also love to work with luxury clients. We are skilled at positioning million dollar plus listings to the right consumers."

As they look forward, Diana and Chuck are adapting their offerings to meet changing client needs. Their goal is to earn clients' trust and serve them for a lifetime. So far they have been successful at this since 60-70% of their business comes from satisfied past clients and their referrals.

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# Kim Cosentino



## of *The De-Clutter Box*



Enjoying time with the family, clockwise from left: daughter-in-law Suzanne, son Mike, daughter Katie, Kim, and grandson Anthony

*Professional Organizer Kim Cosentino has a long history of organizing for others. But one moment confirmed it was her life's calling. When her second child was born, Kim left the hospitality industry and, with the encouragement of friends she had helped organize, started The De-Clutter Box Organizing Services. This was in 1994 when the Container Store had just opened in Oak Brook and there were only 400 professional organizers in the world.*

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER HAS BEEN  
DE-CLUTTERING SINCE CHILDHOOD

### ▶ partner spotlight

Written by **Lauren Young**  
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**

Fast forward five years, when her second child was ready to start school, and she was contemplating going back to corporate America. Family circumstances had her returning to her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. One of her grandma's friends made a point of approaching her. "You may not

remember me, but I remember you," she said. "When you were three years old I caught you organizing my utensil drawer." Kim let her know that is what she was doing for a living and the lady responded, "That's exactly what you should be doing!" and walked away.

...

“WHEN  
SOMEONE  
HAS REACHED  
THE POINT  
OF BEING  
OVERWHELMED,  
WE’RE ONLY  
A PHONE  
CALL AWAY.”

•••

Nearly 20 years later, Kim could fill a book about her organizing endeavors. Obviously, she enjoys making sense out of cluttered countertops, closets bursting at the seams, and kitchens unpacked by Uncle Charlie on moving day. She now approaches an organizing job with many questions for her clients and an ability to quickly process each person’s struggles with their environment.

“In a five-hour day of working together, my clients and I can tackle one area, as long as we can see the floor,” says Kim. “When working in a space I am helping make sense of my client’s puzzle. Each open corner in a room will have a broad but specific purpose. Sorting and storage are based on the client’s needed purpose of each corner.” By working together in whatever area overwhelms them, each client makes choices that fit their everyday needs. With a more hands-on organization process, it’s easier for them to maintain systems that are set up. “So much of what we truly use, need, and enjoy is always moving until it no longer fits in one of these categories,” explains Kim.

Organizing comes naturally for Kim. She studied marketing and communications at Miami University of Ohio and was fortunate to have the opportunity to apply that schooling in her various hotel endeavors from the Cleveland Airport Holiday Inn to The Radisson and Marriott Hotels on Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Kim’s attention to detail, project management, administrative, and customer service skills were honed in these catering and sales positions. She’s worked with girls planning their proms, orchestrated catering for the first Bud Lite Marathon and Chicago Triathlon, and myriad corporate functions, conventions, and political events. “It’s interesting to look back on my career choices and life changes,” says Kim.

Kim has been named one of eight professional organizer “experts” out of the 600 in the Chicago area, for three

consecutive years. She has become one of the leaders in the organizing industry, speaking at various engagements, on local TV, and is often quoted in major magazines and local newspaper features. She has always helped educate the public about the benefits of the organizing profession. Kim is a past president of the National Association of Professional Organizers’ Chicago Chapter and is an affiliate member of the Mainstreet Association of REALTORS®. Her concern these days involves the environment and she monetarily supports the Charity Water Fund to help provide underdeveloped countries with clean water.

When Kim is not managing her business, she escapes to her backyard garden retreat where she can unwind and enjoy Mother Nature. She especially loves weekly family dinners and playing with her grandson, Anthony. Eight-month-old Anthony belongs to her son Mike, an attorney with Verizon, and his wife Suzanne, an executive with Groupon. Kim’s daughter Katie is a Preschool Teacher in District 100.

These past few months under shelter-in-place due to the Coronavirus pandemic have changed the dynamics of working with her overwhelmed clients. Online consults and helping people set up a game plan, time management coaching, and downsizing have replaced hands-on organizing. Moving sales have been by appointment only.

Much of what Kim does is listen to what the homeowner wants and then actively work on making that happen. “Helping homeowners downsize has become a big part of our business,” says Kim. “We do programs at REALTOR® offices, park districts, and for villages to help people with a step-by-step game plan of how to attack this daunting project. When someone has reached the point of being overwhelmed, we’re only a phone call away,” says Kim.



Kim at one of many media appearances in 2019, with Wendy Snyder and Bill Leff of The Bill & Wendy Show on WLS

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# TOM

MAKINNEY JR.



cover story

## THRIVING DURING CRISIS: Resilience, Perseverance, and Decency

Written by **Lauren Young**  
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**

“My father is a third-generation owner of his family truck leasing business,” says REALTOR® Tom Makinney. “And my mother comes from multiple generations of self-employed carpenters. That entrepreneurial gene is there.”

Tom’s business mind led him to earn a degree in Operations Management and Information Systems from Northern Illinois University after graduating from Elmhurst’s York High School. Following graduation, he supported commercial real estate software programs at different companies before he realized the office environment

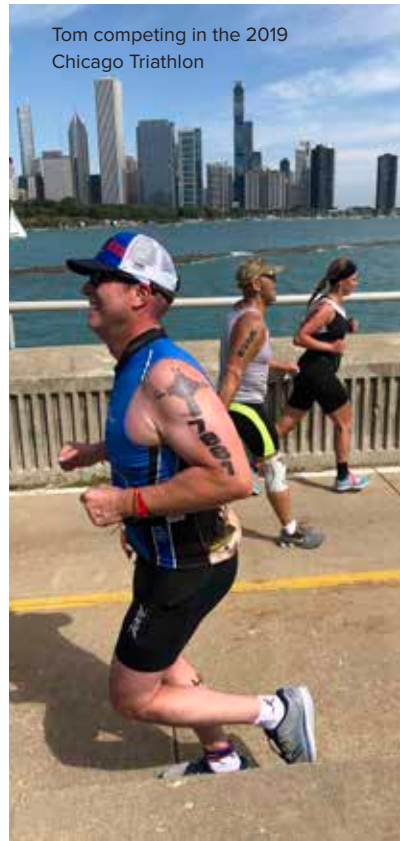
wasn’t for him. In order to best support the software, he was required to earn his real estate license, which brought him into contact with many REALTORS® and other industry professionals.

“I reached the point where I didn’t want to work in that corporate world,” says Tom. “So when my REALTOR® colleagues were describing what they do and the income potential I thought: I can start my own real estate business!”

It took Tom six months to close his first real estate deal. Then business slowly grew from month-

to-month. In the 23 years since, Tom has faced and overcome a number of crises and challenges in the industry. From 9/11 to the Great Recession to Coronavirus, he’s always found ways to adjust his business and keep it thriving. “I consider myself a pretty resilient fella,” says Tom. “I’m not afraid to be wrong or to get uncomfortable trying new things. When that happens, good things can come out of it.”

For the first 10 years in the industry, Tom had a thriving solo real estate business. From 2009 Tom had a successful business



Tom competing in the 2019 Chicago Triathlon



The family taking the Elmhurst pride to the beach at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina



Meet the Makinneys, top to bottom: Tom and Sarah with daughters Grace, Lauren and Devin, and dogs Smokey and Lucy

partnership until 2019 when he decided to develop his own team as part of @properties. He'd been at a number of other brokerages and found @properties to be the best fit for him, getting needed backup while still feeling independent and empowered. "Their values are in line with mine," he explains. "@properties is independent, local, and able to pivot on a dime in this ever-changing world. They stay relevant with all the real estate disruptors out there. I've enjoyed being part of @properties."

2019's business makeover was certainly the correct decision, as it ended up being one of the most successful periods of his career. Now that he has his own team, it has helped him navigate these challenging times. "It takes a team," says Tom. "It takes a nimble group of self-starters

to make it happen, and I couldn't do what I do without them. I am grateful for them and really enjoy working with them." The group includes Krista Waski, his licensed operations manager since 2012; Jana Krausfeldt, social media manager; and REALTORS® Jill Giorno, George Kafka, and Jen Goodale. Jill was recognized as a *DuPage Real Producers* "REALTOR® on the RISE" in the February 2020 issue.

Right now, Tom and his team are adjusting to the new normal and rallying sales. They've been working hard to balance increased business demand with client safety concerns. As clients come out of shelter-in-place, the team is responding by masking up, washing hands, and accompanying showings to make sure everyone feels safe. "I would say this crisis has been less painful to business than the Great

Recession," says Tom. "We've managed to do more business during this pandemic than in 2009. It's because of my strong support system and community that I'm feeling very blessed and thankful during this time."

When Tom is not selling real estate, he enjoys spending time with his wife and three daughters. He and his wife, Sarah, just enjoyed their 20-year anniversary last year. Oldest daughter Lauren (18) is heading to Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music to study double bass performance. Grace (17) recently got her driver's license and is a senior at York High School. Devin (13) loves to read and also likes to run cross country with her father.

The family enjoys nature, especially vacationing at state and national parks. Tom also

enjoys participating in triathlons, yoga, and meditation. He recently completed the annual Murph Challenge on Memorial Day, which is the official annual fundraiser of the Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Scholarship Foundation. "The Murph" consists of a one-mile run, 300 air squats, 200 pushups, 100 pull-ups, and another one-mile run.

Tom and his wife also support local charities and causes, including Second City Canine Rescue. "We've fostered almost 50 dogs over the years," he says. "We have two wonderful dogs, Smokey and Lucy, that are very good with the fosters we bring in. They set the tone of a healthy environment for new dogs." The couple recently participated in a rescue vehicle transport from Chicago, IL, to Louisville, KY, collecting 15 dogs in the rain

and then distributing them to foster homes. Sarah and Tom even helped demo the organization's new facility in Palatine to ready it for construction.

Tom and his wife are also active advocates of the Elmhurst Center for Performing Arts and the Elmhurst Pride Collective. "Elmhurst is for everyone. That is pretty much what we embrace," explains Tom. "LGBTQ rights are important to us and I've found Elmhurst becoming a more welcoming place." As part of their group, the Pride Collective hands out stickers and T-shirts to participating businesses. "There is a list of requirements if you are going to post the sticker on your business. Be kind to your fellow human and be nice to each other. Welcome and include everyone." They also raise funds to support local LGBTQ organizations.

Consistent with this mindset is Tom's belief in The Four Agreements. These include: be impeccable with your word, don't take anything personally, do not make assumptions, and always do your best. "They translate into how one should treat others," says Tom. "I think, especially during this time in our world, the Four Agreements are extremely handy."

Tom brings these ideals into every client relationship, which he considers to be the key to his success. "The people you work with need to know, like, and trust you, and I like to think that a lot of folks recommend me because of their experience," says Tom. "Taking care of my clients is more important than any award or recognition because that's where I really make an impact."

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## CARL CHO'S JOURNEY

### from Investments to Ministry to REALTOR®

At each stage of his career journey, no one, especially not Carl Cho, could have predicted his next move. From multinational global financial analyst to ministry worker in Asia's poorest regions, successful REALTOR® seemed a world away.

"As we were preparing to graduate from Boston College, my friends were going into investment banking, but I wanted to do something more tangible within finance," says Carl. "Eventually, a mentor introduced me to the vice president at a Boston real estate investment firm. They offered me a job that I just couldn't turn down."

The firm opened a branch in Hong Kong and sent Carl to help establish the office and scout for investments. While there, he was recruited by and joined another firm that was consulting on development projects with large companies like Hyatt and Hyundai. During this time abroad, he also saw the region's less fortunate citizens.

"I worked and traveled extensively in Asia during that period," remembers Carl. "I was exposed to a world I'd never seen, a larger world outside the bubble I'd known my whole life." After years of traveling the world, he began to reflect on how fortunate he was to have been born in the US. A personal conviction began to stir inside.

"Here I'm seeing so many people in these countries born into poverty, and it didn't



realtor® feature

Written by **Lauren Young**  
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**

seem fair," he said. "They didn't have a say in being born in poverty and neither did I in being born in the US with all its affluence and privileges. I felt tremendously thankful, but I also felt a great deal of responsibility that all the things I've been allowed to accomplish couldn't just be for me and my personal advancement."

Carl's new change of focus led him to resign from his consulting role and head to Myanmar, where he lived amongst the poor for several months. He eventually settled in Singapore, the strategic center for that region and served in various roles at a Christian ministry.

After several years overseas, Carl briefly returned to the US so that his girlfriend, now wife, Theresa, could finish her degree at Wheaton College while he completed his master's degree. The pull of ministry couldn't be denied, so after graduating both headed back to Singapore for five more years. "I wore many hats," he said. "We helped re-integrate Red Light District workers and youth just released from prison



The Cho family relaxing in their Wheaton backyard: Theresa, Ellie (10), Olivia (6) and Carl



MOVING INTO REAL ESTATE ALLOWED ME THE FLEXIBILITY TO REST AND WORK WHEN I COULD, UNLIKE ANY OTHER JOB. I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE IT A SHOT.

back into society, and also consulted to small local entrepreneurs on basic business principles, among other things.”

Returning to the States in 2010, Carl was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease which left him bedridden for nearly a year. “When I finally recovered enough, I attended a men’s retreat through my church,” Carl says. “It just so happens my roommate had recently started a real estate brokerage. We started talking about our pasts and when he heard about my time in real estate investments he said he could use more people. I thought ‘I’ve never done sales...that’s so not me’ so initially, I said ‘no.’”

But because of his diagnosis, Carl had found it difficult to get out of bed and be productive. He had successfully invested their life savings and thought he could go back to trading as a means of financial support. One side effect of his autoimmune disease, however, is short-term memory loss or “brain fog” which made it difficult to hold or process information clearly. After significant losses to their nest egg, Carl began to think twice about real estate.

“Moving into real estate allowed me the flexibility to rest and work when I could, unlike any other job,” says Carl. “I had no choice but to give it a shot.” Like many new REALTORS®, Carl started slow, especially being new to the area. His first transaction didn’t come until almost a year after he became an agent. Yet, his inner drive and need to provide kept him going. “That year was difficult, thinking, ‘I don’t know what we are going to do,’” says Carl. “I just focused on what was before my family and me, and tried to make the most of each situation.”

In 2013, Carl closed nine deals at a volume of \$2.5 Million. Since then, he’s completed over 370 transactions and over \$100 Million in sales. The secret to his success, he maintains, is a change in the way he thought about real estate sales and how it relates to his past careers. “I realized my job wasn’t really about sales,” he says. “It’s being a guide to others on their journey and helping them achieve their goals. It goes back to the idea of building relationships and serving others, which is similar to my time in ministry.”

When Carl isn’t hard at work or playing tennis, he enjoys traveling locally with his wife, Theresa, and daughters Ellie (10) and Olivia (6). After years of globe-trotting, they get their share of thrills from the scenic small towns and food of the Midwest. Olivia is passionate about dance and Ellie loves making movies, which makes for a lively household.

While no longer working for a non-profit or ministry full-time, Carl and his family are still active in giving back to many charities. “Outside of giving to our church, each year we donate to causes and organizations we’ve always been connected to and new ones that we come to learn about,” he says. “One year at the end of December we maxed out our credit cards with our donations and had to quickly pay off the balance so we could finish the rest of our planned giving before December 31. Year-end can be a bit stressful, but also fun.”

“Looking back, we’ve been given more than what I could have imagined,” says Carl. “This certainly wasn’t something I was going after or part of my plans or where I thought I’d end up.”

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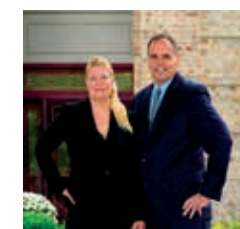
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