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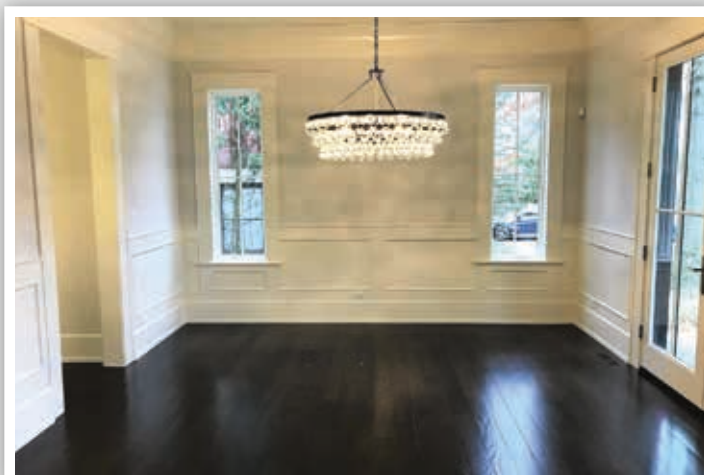
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MEET THE DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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Welcome to the second issue of *DuPage Real Producers* – the local, REALTOR®-centric publication covering the lifestyle and success of the area's top producers. Inside, you will find exclusively curated content for you, the best and brightest brokers, with the mission to connect, elevate, and inspire.

We consider it an incredible privilege to spend time with DuPage's finest REALTORS®, learn your stories and challenges, and celebrate your accomplishments. While there is so much in common among top-performing brokers such as dedication to service, caring for clients, knowledge of the market, hard work and persistence, every one of you has a distinct approach and unique personality that makes you special. Top 500 REALTORS® are featured based on nominations by their Designated Managing Brokers or peers. If you have a recommendation, let me know!

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to us by REALTORS® like you. If one of your favorite vendors is not on our list, let us know about them.

Special events are another part of the *DuPage Real Producers* community. Beginning this spring, we will be hosting complimentary quarterly events just for you. No long agenda – just camaraderie and casual collaboration bringing together the top agents from all four corners of DuPage. Watch for details on our Facebook page and an invitation through Eventbrite.

If you're not already a part of our online community, like and follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



Wishing you a successful Spring Market,

Joseph D'Alessandro
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Dan HOLZER

of Castle Home Inspection

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SUCCESS: SERVICE, COURAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Castle Home Inspection is one of Chicagoland's top inspection companies. With over 20 years of experience, Dan Holzer knows the industry inside and out. The success of his company proves that a lot of diligent hard work and a willingness to consistently improve are the keys to accomplishment. He's built his company through his courage, a sense of responsibility, and a tireless effort to continuously improve his services.

A former ski instructor and First Mate on a salmon boat, Dan Holzer got started in home inspections in 1996. An active person who enjoys interacting with people and being on-the-go, Dan was looking for a career that would not be "nine to five." Through a stroke of good luck, Dan met Tom Hener, the founder of Castle Home Inspection. They hit it off. Tom hired Dan, took him under his wing, and taught him the business. Dan excelled in the position. Over time, Dan helped grow the company through his dedication to providing excellent customer service. In 2014, Dan bought Castle from Tom.

Castle provides its clients with home inspections, multi-family building inspections, commercial inspections, and radon testing. In recent years, Dan

partner spotlight ◀◀

Written by **Nora McDevitt**
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**

“ We want to be an extension of the agents' business. Their clients are our number one priority.”



...

has cultivated a robust list of agents he works with consistently. He says, "We want to be an extension of the agents' business. Their clients are our number one priority. We can help with lead generation through our pre-listing inspection program, and we also offer \$100,000 worth of warranty coverage for free with every inspection."

Dan focuses on ways to exceed customer expectations through innovative programs. He explains, "Castle offers sellers free \$500 mechanical coverage until closing if we inspect their house. This coverage helps not only the seller but also our clients. If something breaks between inspection and closing, then the seller receives some compensation to fix whatever breaks."

Dan also advocates for pre-market inspections. He says, "With pre-market inspections, no one is caught off guard by a needed repair right before closing." It helps the agent and the seller accurately price the home and find the right buyer for the property. He continues, "It puts both sides of the negotiating table in a win-win situation. It prevents last-minute surprises and scrambles that can cause deals to fall through."

Dan says, "At Castle, we dedicate one hundred percent of our time and energy to deliver excellent service to our agents and our customers. Our philosophy about real estate is simple. We put ourselves in your shoes, treat you like family, and manage your client's money like it was our money."

Dan puts a lot of energy into building strong relationships with agents. He says, "Real estate transactions require agents to call upon a lot of different players to ensure a successful transaction." He prefers working with agents



he knows and trusts. He says, "It creates a smoother customer experience and improves the level of service provided to the seller."

Dan credits much of his success to the support he has received from his wife, Michelle. Happily married for 21 years, they have developed a strong partnership built on mutual respect and understanding. He says, "This industry is not easy on marriages. It requires six days a week, late nights and always being on call. But she has been my biggest supporter over the years." They have two biological children together, Lexi, 18, and Ben, 16, as

well as two adopted children, Max, 13, and Ava, 5. Dan works hard to keep his family his first priority.

For Dan, success is achieved by sticking to your principles. Dan says, "Some of the most successful business owners I know live by these four principles: take responsibility, lead courageously, reject passivity, and live for something bigger than you or your company. If you live your life doing these four things, I believe you will be successful in whatever you do."




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▶▶ REALTOR® on the rise

Written by **Nora McDevitt**
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**



JILL Giorno

Appreciation Is the Key to Success and Happiness

A fast-rising star in the DuPage real estate scene, Jill Giorno has sold over \$16 million in her first three years as a REALTOR®. She attributes much of her success to a passion for helping people achieve their goals. This desire sparked her early career as a social worker, next as a fitness studio owner, and now as a REALTOR®. It's Jill's innate sense of gratitude and energetic personality that drives her success and sense of well-being.

Jill and her husband Wade had settled in Elmhurst and after the birth of their second child in 2006, Jill started to go stir crazy staying home and felt called to transition out of social work. She started working in fitness as a side gig, and by 2012 she was a partner in a studio. While working in fitness, Jill developed a robust network. She says, "Helping others was always important

to me in whatever I did. As a small business owner, I was grateful to have met so many wonderful people and develop a nice network."

Jill's network included Tom Makinney, a real estate agent and team leader with @properties in Elmhurst. ...





••• Jill approached Tom about possibly working for him as an assistant. He urged Jill instead to become a real estate agent. She took his advice and joined @properties as an agent in 2017.

Jill's business took off, and she closed \$3.3 Million in her first year. Jill says, "The hardest part about succeeding in real estate is establishing your network, and I was able to bring my network from working in fitness with me." After her first year in real estate, she committed to double her sales the following year and she did, closing \$6.7 Million in sales in 2018.

As Jill's real estate business expands, she challenges herself to keep growing as a person. She says, "I consider myself to be a lifelong learner, and love that every day is different in real estate." For Jill, clear communication with her clients is the key to negotiating a successful deal. She says, "Always accept the fact that every day will bring new challenges. To learn from them will make you a better person and REALTOR®." Success comes from meeting and overcoming those challenges. By learning from the inevitable obstacles that arise in life, she grows as a person. A naturally upbeat individual, Jill always looks for the silver lining.

When asked her motto Jill simply replies, "Be happy." Jill continues, "There are so many ways to define success. If I had to define it, it would be the ability to leave a lasting impression on people whose lives you've touched." Jill continues, "Appreciate others, and they'll appreciate you in return." Showing appreciation is the secret to building successful relationships. At the heart of Jill's success is her innate sense of gratitude for her life and the people in it.

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▶▶ REALTOR® feature

Written by **Nora McDevitt**
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Kelly worked long, hard hours on the corporate fast-track for years before deciding to step away. Happily married and a mom, Kelly's priorities shifted. What was gratifying when she was 25 was not so gratifying many years later. She says, "My priorities shifted over time." A balance between work and life became a priority for Kelly. Her first priority became creating a healthy relationship with herself and the people in her life.

The turning point for Kelly occurred while her daughter was in preschool. She asked her boss for time off to go to her daughter Abby's preschool graduation, and her boss refused. She says, "I knew we were only going to have one child, and I didn't want to miss her milestones. When my boss wouldn't allow me to take time off to attend the event, I had an 'aha moment.' I knew I didn't want to be on anyone else's schedule. Shortly after, I left the corporate world." Kelly took a step back until her daughter entered kindergarten.

This moment marked the next transition in Kelly's world. She says, "I knew I wanted and had to return to work at that point." It was time to pursue a second career. One that would allow her to set her schedule, utilize

her skill sets, and enable her to earn according to how hard she worked.

Kelly had a long-time persistent interest in selling real estate. The idea tumbled around in the back of her mind. Growing up, her father had a construction company. She spent summers working alongside him, learning the trade. She even roofed a house when she was 12. When she was considering different career options, she thought fondly about her experience and thought real estate a good fit.

Kelly's priorities changed from a fast-track corporate career where she quickly climbed the ladder to wanting more out of her relationships, both personal and professional. Real estate allowed her the freedom to be there for her husband and her daughter without sacrificing a fulfilling career.

Moving from corporate sales to real estate, Kelly went from practicing a hard sell to a soft sell. Real estate is relationship-driven, and you are mingling in people's personal lives. These situations require a lot of discretion and tact. It's





Kelly with husband Alex and daughter Abby at the Rose Bowl parade.

...

not about putting pressure on people to close a deal; it's about taking care of people and working to make sure their needs get met, and as a result, the sale happens. She says, "You don't approach real estate from a sales perspective; you approach it from a relationship and service perspective. The deal is a byproduct of effectively doing your job."

As an entrepreneur, she gets to set the terms. She expects to cross \$100 million in career sales volume in 2019, which is a pretty huge accomplishment. Her secret lies in the soft sell and her relaxed nature. She focuses on building relationships, and everything else seems to fall into place. As an independent agent with RE/MAX Action in Lisle, she has created a full-service business almost 100% referral-based. She says, "I work by referral, so all my clients are like-minded." As Kelly explores her future in real estate, she is considering hiring a Buyer's Agent and creating a team.

Kelly keeps her family first and foremost and then lets everything else fall into place. She says, "I used

"Don't wait for opportunity. Create it."

to think success was the position you held or the money you had or the car you drove. Over time, I have come to realize true success is an individual with inner peace and genuine happiness. When an individual can master these gifts, they are in a good place, and everyone around them wins." Wise words from a very talented woman.

Her advice to those just starting out: "Don't wait for opportunity. Create it."



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Lance KAMMES

God First, Family Second, Work Third

As one of Chicagoland's top agents with almost \$800 million in career volume and the leader of a high-performance team, Lance Kammes of RE/MAX Suburban in Wheaton shows no signs of slowing down. For Lance, faith comes first, family second, and work third.

Raised in a church-going home, Lance's faith grew as he progressed from church attendee to having a deep personal relationship with God. Over the years, that relationship has shifted how he conducts himself and makes decisions. His parents were educators, and his father was a coach who became a mortgage loan officer, then a real estate agent, and ultimately a brokerage owner. Lance was a dominating outside linebacker in high school and continued playing football while earning a bachelor's degree in education at Taylor University. It was at Taylor where he met Kellie, his wife of 33 years.

Lance and Kellie have raised three children: Paige, Michael, and Kayla. He says, "My wife and I have created a faith-based family, and she can certainly tell you I am a man who needs redemption because I am far from perfect. We understand as a family that there is more to this world than the earth itself. There's another life than this one. I will be spending a lot more time in eternity than on earth, so I take that seriously. That's something we focus on together."

Lance's family did not always come first. Early in his career, work took the front seat. Over the years, Lance and Kellie have worked together to reprioritize family over work. He says, "My family is ultimately more important to me than what I do. I've had to wrestle with balance over the years. That's hard in our 24/7 world." As the kids got older, Lance worked hard to attend all of his kids' events. Lance also takes off at least one day a week from work to be with his family, being careful with his schedule to protect his family time. He adds, "There are ways to anticipate what will happen and how you are going to handle it. When I'm in an appointment, I do not answer the phone unless it's family. Preparation is key to achieving successful outcomes in every area of life and in honoring one's commitments."

Real estate was not Lance's first choice of careers. Upon college graduation, he was searching for a job as a teacher. He says, "I thought I was going to be a teacher and a coach. In 1985, there was a glut of teachers, and I was not able to attain a job. My dad had just started a real estate company, and he was talking to me about becoming an agent. I didn't want to do it, but I didn't have any other options at that point. I was working an hourly job just to make money and I wasn't that passionate about anything besides wanting to be a professional athlete, but that ship had sailed. So, I was kind of like, 'What the heck? What do I have to lose?' So, I took a one week course and started selling real estate on November 5, 1985." Suffice it to say, Lance has never regretted that turning-point decision.



••• In his 35th year as a REALTOR®, Lance has managed never to burn out. “I’m blessed with great energy,” he says. “I hate to sit. I get bored easily.” Lance does CrossFit three times a week and is an avid golfer during warm weather months, always trying to improve upon his nine handicap. He and Kellie travel as much as they can. They will jaunt a few times a year to watch their beloved Bears and Blackhawks in other U.S. cities, but they have the most fun on international trips, especially to Europe.

customer service possible. Lance’s mentorship and coaching create a loyal culture, and there are many long-tenured professionals on his team such as Don Westerholm (20 years), Hana Braun (nine years), Joe Soto (five years), and trusted personal assistant Roxy Roberts (13 years).

By setting healthy priorities and then creating appropriate guidelines to meet his goals, Lance accomplishes what he sets out to do in real estate. He approaches his life with a strong sense of purpose rooted in the Christian faith and does his best to treat everyone with consideration and care. For Lance, the real reward comes from serving others.

Over the years, Lance and Kellie have sponsored and supported several philanthropic causes. Lately, the not-for-profit Shelter For All has been dear to their hearts. This organization is dedicated to housing the homeless in Northwest DuPage County and providing a range of support services to the disadvantaged as a path to healthy living and self-sufficiency. They have ministered to many people, giving generously of their time, talent, and treasure over the years. Lance says, “People are put into our lives for a reason. We have a responsibility to that, and because of that responsibility, we try to treat them how we would like to be treated. Sometimes those decisions may not be the easiest from a monetary standpoint, but we feel like they are the right decisions.” He continues, “One day, I am going to be looking God straight in the eyes and give an account of my life. I better have my house in order.”

Lance says, “You have to believe you can accomplish your vision. Success starts between your ears.” He knew he needed to adopt this positive mindset and then take the action required to develop the type of career he envisioned for himself. Lance continues, “The first step is to get clear on what your goals are and where you want to go. Next, you have to get crystal clear on what it is you need to do. Our job as real estate agents is to provide the consumer with expert advice and counsel. Residential real estate is a very emotional game and working successfully with clients requires a lot of emotional intelligence. The job of the real estate agent is to provide great counsel to the consumer; otherwise, they can buy and sell properties online.”

Lance takes great joy in the team he has cultivated over the years, currently comprised of nine licensed brokers and three administrators. While Lance spends most of his client time with sellers, he devotes a great portion of his time to training and developing his team. He helps them set proper goals and develop winning mindsets so they can deliver the best



Lance is on a quest to collect all Chicago Bears hall of fame player jerseys.



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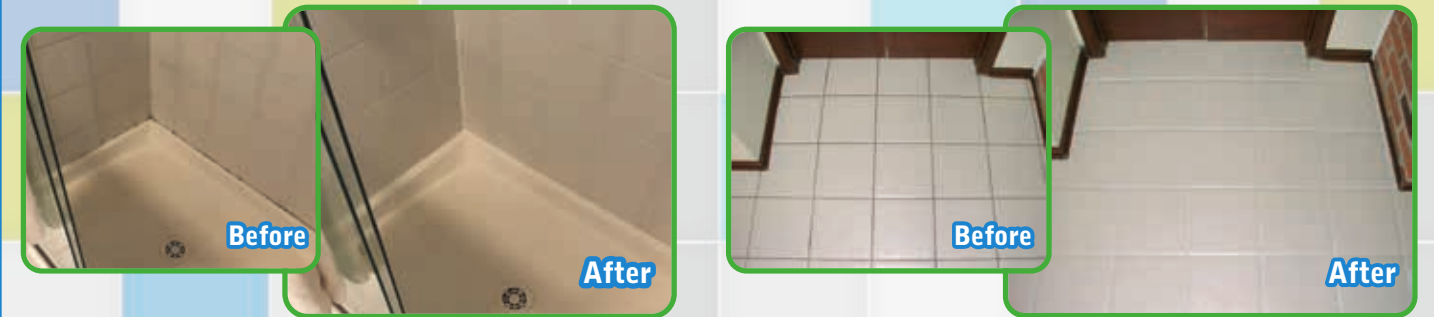
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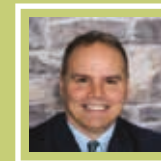
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