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TOP PRODUCER

**AMELIA
SUMERELL**

RISING STAR

Desiraye Speer

CELEBRATING LEADER

Marti Vo

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Christy Almquist, RCB Bank

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

ICT Impact: Ty Patton

Honoring Heroes: Heather Holmes

Launch Party Details Inside!

FEBRUARY 2020

Gabe McKeever



Gabe McKeever
Real Estate Loan Originator
P: 316.252.8030
NMLS# 680676
Gabe.McKeever@meritrustcu.org

Meritrust loves having Gabe McKeever on our team.

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WICHITA REAL PRODUCERS[®] LAUNCH PARTY

It's officially here! February is upon us, which means our Wichita Real Producers Launch Party is just around the corner.

We are excited to host our REALTOR[®] friends and trusted business partners at Mark Arts.

This fabulous location boasts stunning views and Instagram-worthy photo spots, all among its vibrant regional art hub.

During the event, we will be honoring featured Top Producers, Industry Leaders, Rising Stars, Community Heroes, and more.

We will have a variety of complimentary dishes, drinks, music, a step-and-repeat and a beautiful red carpet...just for you!

Don't miss this opportunity to network with other agents and connect on a personal level. After all, connecting, elevating and inspiring are what we do.

Join us as we launch Real Producers with the who's who in Wichita real estate.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH, 2020 12PM-3PM

MARK ARTS

1307 N. ROCK ROAD WICHITA, KS 67206

Contact Samantha Lucciarini
with any questions
316-258-4855
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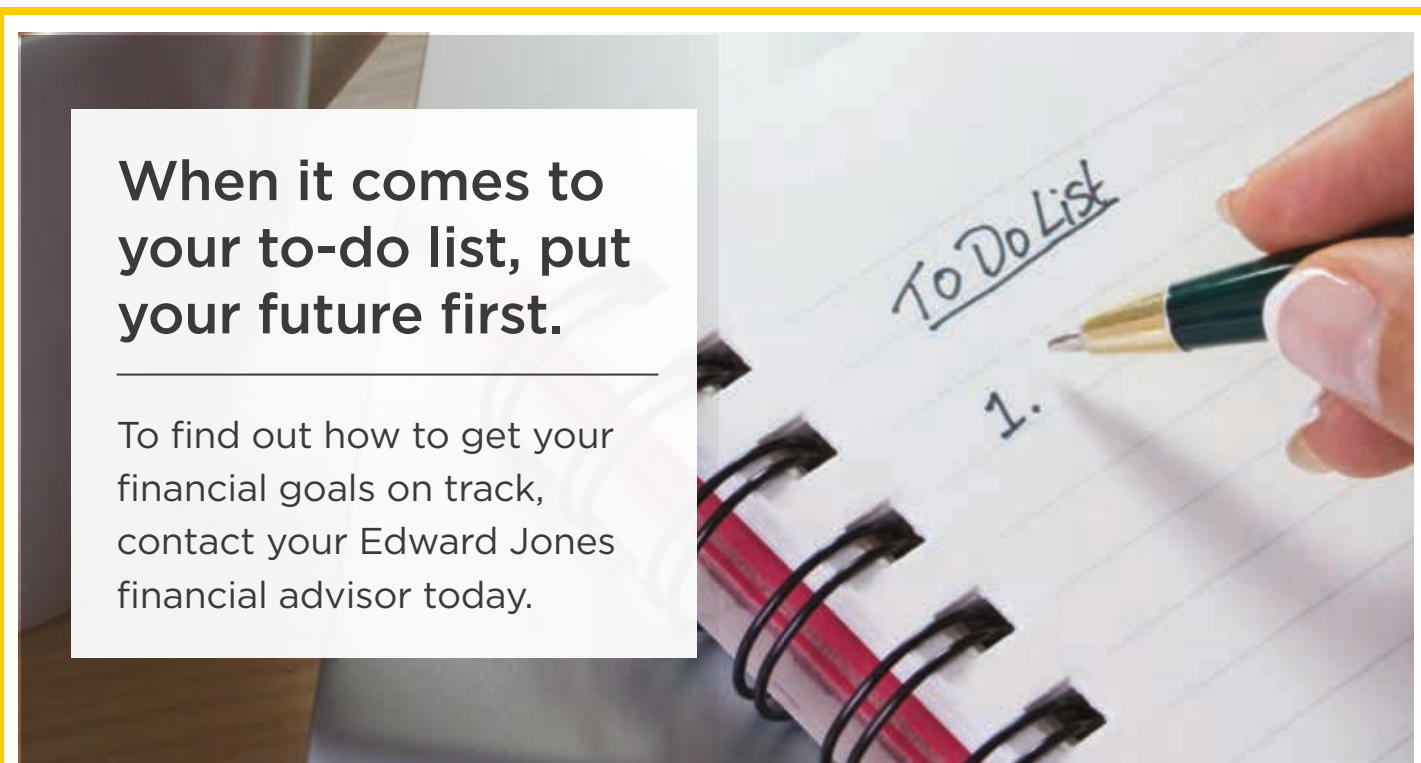


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LOCAL EVENTS

Tuesday, February 4
9:00am -12:00pm
Kansas Required Salesperson & Broker Core
Career Education Systems 3450 N Rock Rd., Ste 404
Agency, misrepresentation, contract law, advertising and new ways of presenting contracts that increase odds of acceptance. **316-651-0652**

Tuesday, February 4
1:00pm - 4:00pm

Scruples: A Guide to Ethical Decision Making
Career Education Systems 3450 N Rock Rd., Suite 404
REALTORS® are required to take an ethics course every two years, and this is the one for you. **316-651-0652**

Wednesday, February 5
9:00am -12:00pm
Why Do You Do What You Do?
Career Education Systems 3450 N Rock Rd., Suite 404
Personality type? Generation? Birth Order? We analyze the NAR 2016 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers to see both "how" and "why" our customers buy and sell **316-651-0652**

Wednesday, February 5
1:00pm - 4:00pm
New Home Construction
Career Education Systems 3450 N Rock Rd., Suite 404
So you'd like to sell new homes, at least once in a while? Come learn the steps in the building process. **316-651-0652**

Thursday, February 13
9:00am -12:00pm
Health & Fitness of your Business
RSCK
3 Elective Hours of Continuing Education **316-263-3167**

Thursday, February 13
1:00pm - 4:00pm
What Would You Do?
Code of Ethics
RSCK
3 Elective Hours of Continuing Education **316-263-3167**

Friday, February 14
8:30am - 5:00pm
Performance Leadership - Coach, Manage and Mentor
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Self-Love

OPEN YOUR HEART

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During this month of February where romantic love is most notably celebrated, I want to offer a different way to think about love—Self-Love—specifically forgiveness. The lack of forgiveness only hurts the one harboring it. Like my father, a 30-year real estate agent has always said, "There's no sense in letting someone or something

live rent-free in your head." We all have someone who has wronged us, whether it was intentional or not. And, I'm positive you agents have had a bad experience with a client, or even with another agent. Perhaps you are the one that you need to forgive. Open your heart to forgiveness, evict the grudge and make room for love to take its place. Happy Valentine's Day agents! See you at the Launch Party!!



Sincerely,
Your friend, publisher, and
fellow REALTOR®,
Samantha Lucciarini

MEET THE WICHITA REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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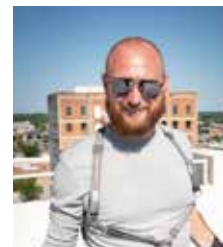
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Tim Davis
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Jennifer Ruggles
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Adam Dreher
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Dave Danielson
Writer



Heather Pluard
Writer



If you are interested in contributing or nominating Realtors for certain stories, please email us at samantha.lucciarini@realproducersmag.com.

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Written by **Dave Danielson**
Photos by **Jennifer Ruggles**

Through Hard Work **Amelia Sumrell**

Has Created Her Own Luck

The A-Team

When you're given a great opportunity or experience rewards in life, it's natural to feel lucky and blessed.

Amelia Sumrell feels that way, too. In fact, this top-producing REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Plaza Real Estate feels blessed with the gifts she's been given, but it's no coincidence or matter of chance.

When you meet her, you quickly realize that, through her 34-year career, Amelia has a knack for creating her own luck through good, old-fashioned hard work.

That approach to life was put in motion when Amelia was a little girl growing up in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Newton, North Carolina.

"Growing up, if I wanted material things, I had to work for them," she recalls. "At any given time, I had two jobs. I made biscuits at Hardee's at 5 a.m. I've also been a waitress, a bartender, a lifeguard, and a babysitter. My first job when I turned 16 was sewing crotches in pantyhose at a hosiery mill."

Leading by Example

For the past 20+ years, Amelia, and the A-team have consistently been the top-producing agent/

team at Coldwell Banker Plaza Real Estate for the entire state of Kansas.

Yet there is no hint of ego. The only thing at work for this humble leader is Amelia herself. In fact, hard work is part of Amelia's DNA. She still remembers the words from her father that have helped set the stage for her drive, work ethic, and talent for getting things done.

"My dad told me, 'No one ever drowned in their own sweat.' I think about that quote a lot," Amelia smiles. "Because of this work ethic that was instilled in me, I knew that whatever I did, I would be successful because I know how to work hard!"

Amelia attended the University of North Carolina, where she earned a degree in Spanish and International Relations.

After graduating from UNC, she moved to Wichita in 1986 — and to her exemplary career in real estate.

"I worked as an assistant for REALTOR® Vivian Hardage," she remembers. "I think I was maybe the first or second assistant in the city. At that time, the top agents in the city were selling about \$3 million

...

•••

to \$4 million a year, and there really wasn't a need for many teams or assistants."

Amelia enjoyed the experience of working with Vivian. She was learning and growing.

After three years, Vivian moved to California. So, Amelia decided to continue on her own—but still staying with Coldwell Banker Plaza Real Estate (at the time, known as Plaza Del Sol).

Drive and Determination

Not everyone was so sure that Amelia had what it took to succeed in the business.

"When I went out on my own in 1989, many people told me, 'You probably won't make it as an agent in Wichita, because you're not from here originally, you didn't go to high school or college here, you're not in Junior League, and you talk funny (referring to Amelia's charming southern accent),' she smiles.

Luckily, like with all success stories, negative opinions from others have no real bearing on success. The only person

who needed to really believe in Amelia was Amelia. She knew she could supply the hard work it would take.

Along the way, Amelia encountered other helpful mentors and supporters.

"There were several people who helped me and answered my questions. Sharon West gave me so many ideas and advice that I still use today. She made selling real estate look 'fun'—she has always had a positive attitude and a smile on her face," Amelia says. "I also looked up to Mary Jane Pankey and Marcille Wohgleumuth. These two ladies were the kindest, most selfless ladies you would ever meet. They were a true credit to our profession and are very missed."

Their influence is part of what guides Amelia's efforts today.

As she emphasizes, "I enjoy helping new agents and taking time to explain things. They don't know what they don't know. There were agents who helped me, so I want to pay it forward. I'm not necessarily a great teacher, but I have a passion for helping new agents."



Team Spirit

Amelia is quick to give credit to her team (the A-team) that consists of five other people, including her husband, Marty Schlatter, who started working with Amelia in 1993.

"I couldn't do what I do and sell what I do without their support," she says. "They always work hard and have my back. They're loyal to me and genuinely care about our clients. We all office in the same large room. I love their company!" Deb Gardner has been on the A-team for 15 years, Lindsey Hess for 10 years, Nancy Johnson for 6 years, and Katie Hill Leiding just started January 6!

Working with Marty is one of the favorite parts of what Amelia does.

"Marty handles the repair requests with our buyers and sellers ... which can be the toughest, most thankless job on the team," she explains. "He is very patient and calm. We are opposites, but I think this is why we can work together and be happily married for 28 years. He is a great person!"

In their free time, Amelia and Marty cherish time spent with their children, including their 21-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, who is a junior at the University of Arkansas, and their 18-year-old son, Sam, who is a senior at Wichita Collegiate, and who plans on attending Kansas University in the fall.

Together, they enjoy traveling, having family dinners almost every night, or a friendly-yet-competitive game at home. Amelia also has a passion for the Game Show Network on TV, eBay, Sudoku puzzles, and being driven around town.

"I know it may sound funny, but I love being driven around. Fortunately, our son Sam loves to drive, and we go out driving around about three nights a week," she says with a smile. "I will miss that when he heads to Lawrence next year for college. It's great one-on-one time, and it allows me to decompress."

Sharing Her Gifts

One of the things about her profession that drives Amelia the most is "the thrill of seeing other people be happy."

"In what we do, I really try to look at things from every side, and I try to walk in our clients' shoes and think about what the seller wants and what the



buyer wants," she points out. "In this business, when the buyer and seller get what *they* want, then you get what *you* want."

For all that Amelia has accomplished, and for all the lives she has touched in a positive way, her drive to keep serving shines bright each day.

As she says, "I'm just a normal, hard-working person who happens to be really lucky in real estate. But I do believe that the harder you work, the luckier you get."

“ I enjoy helping new agents and taking time to explain things. They don't know what they don't know.”

▶▶ rising star

Written by Heather Pluard
Photos by Jennifer Ruggles

Desiraye Speer

H O M E S

PLATINUM REALTY

Desiraye Speer is Going for the Gold Medal in Real Estate

She's Olympic-level fast, and she knows how to run circles around the competition. Desiraye Speer is a former professional track star who exploded onto the Wichita real estate scene, closing out her fourth year in the business with more than \$3.5 million in property sales. She credits racing with teaching her to trust herself and dream big.





"I fell in love with running when I was in Junior High, where I had dreams of college and going to the Olympics," Desiraye says. "I was placing first in all the meets." But when she was in high school, someone in Desiraye's small town took her aside and told her she wasn't good enough to run Division I. "That sat in my heart," she says. "Why did this person say that when I knew I was good enough? I was shy back then, so I didn't say anything. I just worked harder, and I learned to trust myself."

Wichita State University, a Division I school, recruited Desiraye to run. Once again, she proved herself to be a winner. She ran Nationals both her junior and senior years and was inducted into the WSU Sports Hall of Fame. "Sports agents were waiting for me as soon as I crossed the finish line at my last race in college," she says. "I picked up a New Balance sponsorship and started my professional career that summer, in 2006. I qualified for four USA teams, traveling the world running



aces." That's also the same year she started dating her soon-to-be husband, Paul, who ran track with her at WSU.

In 2007, Desiraye decided to enter Steeplechase. It's a two-mile race that includes hurdles, which excited her even though she had never jumped them before and didn't have a hurdle coach. "It sounded like fun because it wasn't just running in circles," she says. "I gave it everything I had."

Her effort paid off. She hit the Olympic B standard, which meant she qualified to attend the Olympic Trials. Not satisfied, Desiraye ran Steeplechase several more times until she hit the Olympic A standard. In between Steeplechase races, she placed 4th at the USA Nationals, got married, and ran in the Pan American Games in Brazil.

But then Desiraye had to make a big decision. "I beat my foot up with all those hurdle landings during Steeplechase. It got to the point where I could barely walk without pain. I needed to have foot surgery, so I elected to skip the Olympic Trials and take care of my body instead."

She also decided to grow her family. Desiraye and Paul have three boys. Braxtyn is nine, Beckam is seven, and Brodi is five. Desiraye

worked as a personal trainer while contemplating her next steps. Buying two houses in 2016 sparked her interest in real estate, so she got her license and went to work with Platinum Realty.

"My first year, I didn't make much," says Desiraye. "I was reading books and learning the ropes. In my second year, I sold \$1.2 million, mainly to my sphere of influence. My third year was down, with just \$233,000 in sales, but I heavily invested in myself. That's the year I created my company name, logo, app, and website, so it was great professionally."

Ironically, when Desiraye and Paul married, she changed her last name to Speer but combined her maiden name with her middle name. Her initials backward are SOLD. "We joked when we were engaged that I was 'pending' and 'sold' when we got married," laughs Desiraye. "Hindsight, I guess real estate was always my calling!"

Having just finished her fourth and best year yet, Desiraye set a new goal for 2020 - to hit the Master's Circle. "The thing I love about real estate is you're not running the same lap all the time," she says. "I get to help people out in so many different situations and scenarios, and I like building relationships. My clients know I'll be there for them from start to finish."

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Written by Dave Danielson
Photos by Jennifer Ruggles



RCB Bank

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Comprehensive and Comforting

Christy Almquist is a Senior Mortgage Loan Originator with RCB Bank in Wichita. As she explains, RCB Bank provides a full range of innovative and helpful products and services.

"We definitely have some unique products, including our Physician program for dentists and doctors. It features 100 percent financing with no PMI," she says. "Also, in the Wichita area, typically, people will go with a FHA program for its low 3.5 percent down payment. However, we actually have 3 percent down conventional loan programs available. That's important, because conventional lending is typically easier with fewer requirements."

As Christy says, RCB Bank works with a number of programs that offer grants to qualifying first-time homebuyers.

"We try to do what we can to help make it affordable to purchase a home. We know how to work outside the box and often help borrowers who wouldn't qualify under normal Freddie Mac or Fannie Mae guidelines," Almquist explains. "It's nice to have other in-house options with our own underwriting team. In fact, one thing I always tell REALTORS® is if they are running into an issue with a deal, give us a call, because we may have another option that can work."

Best of Both Worlds

As Christy points out, RCB Bank offers the power of a large institution with the flexibility and effectiveness of a local partner.

"Sometimes with a large bank you have to go through layers of people for answers. We are a big enough bank that we can handle large loan amounts, but we have maintained a small community bank mentality," Christy emphasizes. "REALTORS® don't have to wait for days to get answers. Typically, they get an answer within an hour or so."



Christy has a clear passion for her work as a loan officer.

"I love teaching and educating people about buying a home. That includes spending time talking with REALTORS® about the options that are available," she says. "Educating clients is also part of what we do, so they know exactly what they're signing by the time they get to the closing table."

...

I love teaching and educating people about buying a home. That includes spending time talking with REALTORS® about the options that are available



...

Dialogue Makes a Difference

Communication is one of the most important and rewarding parts of Christy's job.

"Communication is number one. I had a REALTOR® tell me, 'It was so awesome working with you because you communicate throughout the process.' When I'm working with REALTORS®, I know they have other parties who are waiting for them to get back to them, so I make myself available anytime on my cell phone. For example, I don't want them to stress over the weekend if they need answers on something," Christy says. "Also, if there is an issue that comes up with a property, I make sure I contact the agent first, so we can come up with a solution, and work as a team to get to closing together."

Christy's family is at the center of her world. Christy and her husband, Shawn, enjoy the time they have with their daughters, Sarah and Aryn.

"Shawn has definitely supported me through the years. We've been married for 26 years and he has always encouraged me to do this. He's always said I can do anything I set my mind to," she smiles. "The love and support my family has given me through the years is amazing. I wouldn't be where I am at today without them."

In her free time, Christy also gives back to the community through her work with Children's Ministries, United Way, and

events such as the We Care Dinner, which is held annually to serve families with a known need through YMCA staff and other family-service agencies.

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"I have customers and REALTORS® who say after talking with me they feel like I'm their best friend. I truly care about each person I come across. I want them to have the confidence to know that I'm here for them," Christy says with a smile. "I go to all my closings. I do that because I'm there from the beginning of the process and the closing is the happiest day. I want to be remembered for caring about people and helping them reach their financial goals. I'm here to partner with them to help them achieve their goals."

Christy Almquist, NMLS # 754429

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Marti Vo

LEADING WITH A HELPING HAND

Nikkel and Associates, LLC

True leaders share key qualities. One of those is the willingness to step forward and help when they're needed the most.

That's the way it is with Marti Vo, who serves as Broker at Nikkel & Associates in Wichita. Through time, she has led the way by fulfilling a variety of needs for her team, her clients, and those around her.

The Road to Real Estate

Marti's path to real estate began before she officially entered the field.

As Marti says, "I had thought about entering real estate when I was 21, but I was raising a family, so I wanted to wait. I had a busy home life, and I worked another job."

With a college degree in counseling, Marti worked for several years at El Dorado Correctional Facility.

"After a few years at the super-max prison, I had enough of it. I wasn't happy with the work any longer, and I knew I needed to do something else," Marti recalls.

Marti went on to own a bakery for 10 years in which her older children liked to help out, but she still had the desire to sell real estate.

So in 2001, Marti set her sights on a career in real estate.

"I started taking my classes, and I really enjoyed them. One day, our teacher said, 'Look around at all of the people here in this classroom. Next year at this time, there will likely only be three of you who will still be in real estate out of this group of 30,'" Marti says. "I remember thinking, 'I'm going to be one of the three.' That year, my son joined the army and my daughter went off to Camp Pendleton with her husband who was in the service, so the time was right for me to move ahead."

Fulfilling a Crucial Need

Through time, Marti not only survived ... she thrived in the business, eventually meeting Vince Nikkel and Kathy Heacock. When Vince started his own brokerage, Nikkel & Associates, she joined as an established agent.

Unfortunately, within three months of Nikkel & Associates being established, Vince passed away suddenly.

In the grief of losing their friend, mentor, and leader, the team at Nikkel & Associates considered their next steps.



"I really liked Vince and Kathy ... and had been the first agent in the office. I had some listings there and some transactions I needed to close, but I wasn't able to do it without a managing broker," she recalls. "I had my broker's license that I had gotten when I was with a previous office. That's when Kathy said, 'We can do this. We can build this company together.'"

Marti agreed, became the Managing Broker, and Kathy filled the position as Office Manager. Together, they haven't looked back.

"I really appreciate Kathy. She is one of the best things that ever happened to my career," Marti emphasizes. "I can't say enough good things about her."

Nikkel and Associates is built on a foundation of friendship, and cultivates a family atmosphere within the office. Today, Nikkel & Associates has a team that includes over 30 agents.

Gratitude and Giving

As she considers her path in the business, Marti knows she is in the right career.

"I really enjoy it. I like being in real estate, because it gives me the opportunity to make a big impact on someone's life and to make a new friend in the process," she points out. "I like working with other agents, and I like the small, close-knit group we have here."

Due to having children and other family members that serve/have served in the military, Marti especially likes helping veterans with their housing needs.





As a Broker and a personally producing agent through time, Marti has earned different accolades, including an award for the top residential agent last year. Her areas of emphasis have included working with both buyers and sellers, investors, and foreclosures.

As she notes, “Each area is unique, and they all have their own distinctive demands.”

The work Marti does in REOs and foreclosures can be very difficult. Yet, at the same time, she knows that she can provide an important service through the way she conducts those difficult deals.

“The word ‘foreclosure’ sounds rough and hardened. But that’s not me,” she explains. “I’ve had to be part of the foreclosure process for a number of people through time. But in the process, I try to be decent. I think we all can keep in mind that there are stories behind those circumstances. In those situations, I know I need to go in and be kind and work with people. I’m here to help them, as well. That’s where my counseling degree comes in handy.”

What Matters Most

Family is at the center of who Marti

is, and she cherishes time together including with her daughter, Erica, and her husband, Ryan, and their four children; Marti’s son, Beau, and his three children; Marti’s daughter, Crista, her husband, Eric, and their two children; Marti’s son, Michael, his wife, Tawny, and their child; and Marti’s daughter, Mariah, and her husband, Matt.

As she considers her career, Marti’s family and the team at the office are essential to her enjoyment and success.

“I really value having people around me who are positive,” she smiles. “If I didn’t have the support and love from my family and the love from the people at our office, I couldn’t do what I do.”

Marti’s father passed when she was 30, with her mother passing 12 years later. As she thinks about their example as parents, she considers her own role in the lives of those around her.

As she says with a warm smile, “I’m not done mothering my kids ... and I’m that way with our team at the office, too. I mother all of our agents. I always feel that if there’s anything I can do to help them in a way even outside of real estate, it will help them with their business, as well.”

Whether at work or in life, Marti Vo is one who leads ... by stepping forward and helping when it’s needed the most.



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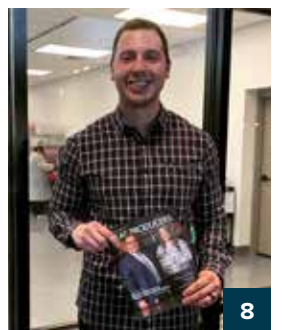
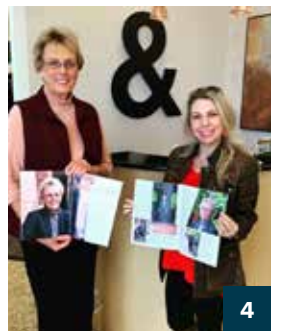
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3. Desiraye Speer
4. Sue Wenger
5. Desiree Cody
6. Heather Holmes
7. John McKenzie
8. Kooper Sanders
9. Lindi Lanie
10. Marti Vo
11. Sissy Koury
12. Michael Unruh



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Written by
Dave Danielson
Photos by
Jennifer Ruggles

Ty Patton

is giving rise to a city's renaissance

Connecting ICT

If you think Wichita is in the midst of an exciting renaissance, you're right. It's definitely a city and region on the rise ... and the best is yet to come. One of those who is integrally involved in supporting the next chapter of Wichita's success story is Ty Patton, who serves as General Counsel and Auctioneer with McCurdy Auction, LLC.

Coming Home

A Wichita native, Ty started his career as an attorney at a firm in Topeka.

"After school, I worked with a firm in Topeka, and my area of practice was in bank work, community bank clients, lender liability litigation, estate planning and probate work," he recalls. "After being there six years, my wife and I decided to move to Wichita. We're both from here, so we wanted to get back and be closer to family."

Five years ago, Ty took a position at McCurdy Auction.

"McCurdy was exploring having an in-house counsel, and the opportunity really appealed to me. That's what really got me into the real estate business. In time, I grew into the roles of auctioneer and real estate professional. I remember talking with Braden McCurdy, and he told me, 'You might as well become an auctioneer so you can do the fun part, too'."

Today at McCurdy, Ty gets exposure to a wide range of projects.

"I enjoy the attorney side of things and get to offer a different lens to look at problems. I work on a lot of different things internally. I'm a troubleshooter, and I have a chance to get out and be an agent and meet people. Each situation is different, and you get to work with all kinds of people and help solve problems," Ty shares with us.

Connecting ICT

In the meantime, through his role and his return to his hometown, Ty has enjoyed getting involved with Connecting ICT.

"We're at a pivotal and exciting time in Wichita, and we can do some neat things and make big decisions," he emphasizes. "We have this momentum. It feels a lot different than it has in the past. There's an energy in the community right now, and we are ready to step forward in new ways and become a first-class city and a city of choice at an even higher level."

As Ty says, the natural next question is, how do you make that happen?

"I think the way you do that is you have to connect people and see that vision ... and rally them around these big, bold decisions and create the pipeline of where they can become better informed and provide input," Ty explains. "Our role with Connecting ICT is creating those connections. We don't need to be the task force or the chamber. But through the connections we are building, we're able to provide the people who will show up, become involved and become that conduit between all of these great entities."

Tapping and Energizing Resources

The response from people is exciting. As Ty says, there's an untapped pool of people who are eager to fuel Wichita's next chapter. And the opportunities are there for involvement.

"We have West side, Central, and East side groups. The idea is one of those groups can fit your schedule or even more than one group," Ty points out. "We have about 650 people in our plugged-in group, but one of the things we love to do is partner with other organizations that can expose our group to that, and then when that group is working on something, we can help them. There are many more on the periphery."

The variety of opportunities to support Wichita's growth is impressive. One example involves Wichita State University.

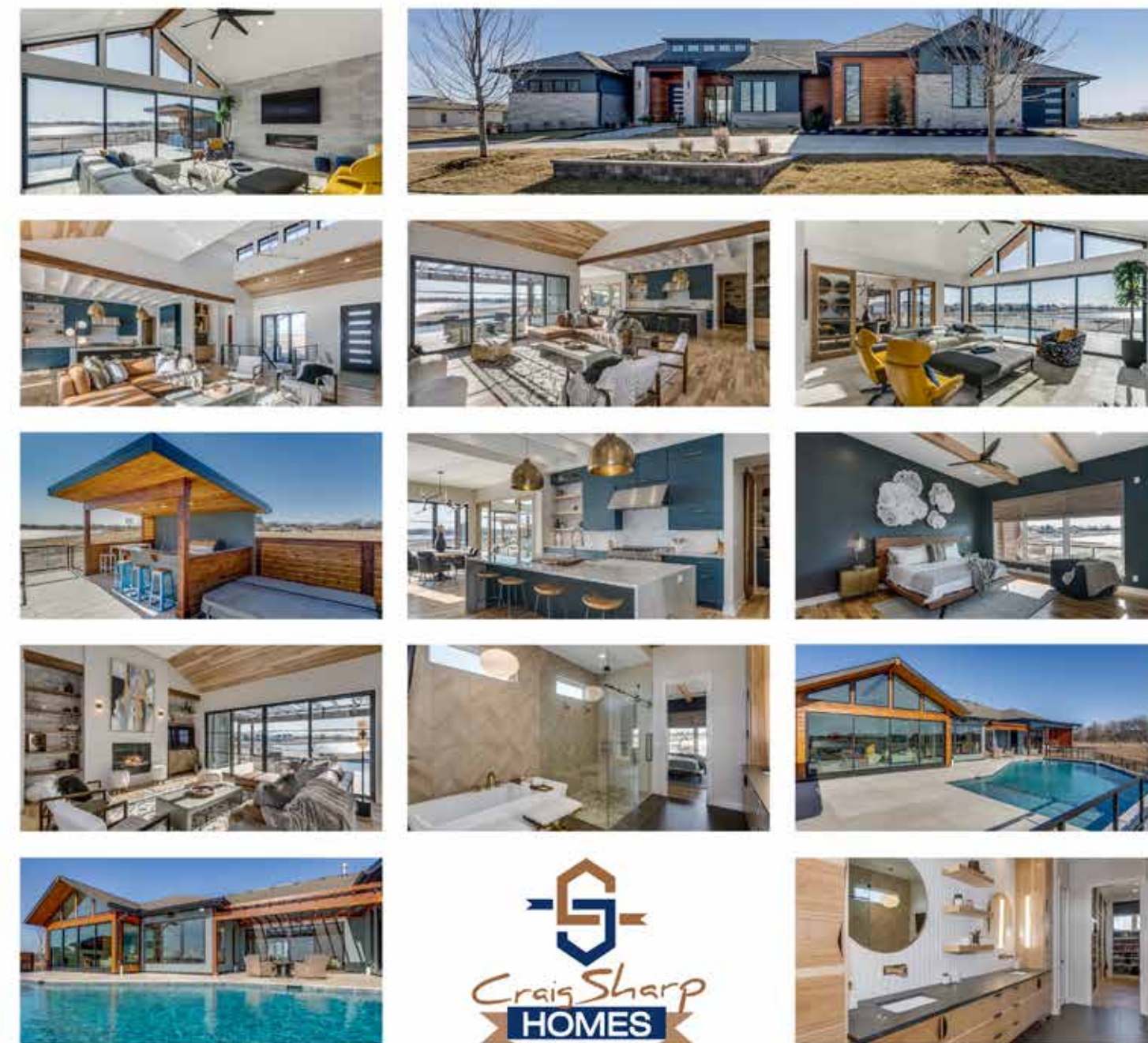




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“In 2019, Wichita State University approached us. They were in the middle of assessing their strategic plan and looking for people outside the university to get involved and provide a non-academic perspective,” Ty says. “They are looking at WSU’s role outside education as part of the community. We did a joint event with them ... and we were able to plug in a bunch of our folks into activation teams as part of their strategic plan.”

Ty and his wife, Chelsea, have three boys, including 5-year-old Asa, 2-year-old Josiah, and 5-month-old Caleb. In their free time, they soak up memories at their kids’ activities. They also enjoy golf, camping, reading and hiking.

In addition to his career and work with Connecting ICT, Ty has served on the board for the Old Downtown Museum, and has also served as Chair for Wichita Festivals, Inc.

Big Steps Forward

As Ty looks to the future, he feels the excitement of a great city that’s poised to take a big step forward.

“Looking forward, there’s a lot to be excited about. Our focus over the next year is to develop our city’s core further

and push that forward, as well as providing non-profit support and assisting the great groups that are working on net migration into our community to rally support for them.”

Connecting ICT provides an important resource for area residents to engage in an exciting future.

“Whether you’ve been here your whole life, or you’re new to the area, you can jump in with both feet and have this network of people outside your neighborhood or industry ... knowing you’re going to be welcomed with open arms and feel like you’ve lived here a decade after just six months in the community.”

With Connecting ICT, the city has a resource that can be used in a number of ways to fuel growth.

“We’re really proud of how this effort is turning out. Our leadership team has been such a pleasure to work with ... it’s been a chance to make some great friendships, and it’s rewarding to see how the community is rallying,” Ty smiles. “There are some great things happening, and it feels like we’re on the edge of doing some remarkable things here.”

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HEATHER HOLMES

KIDNEY DONATION SAVED THE LIVES OF MANY

honoring heroes 
Written by Heather Pluard

Realty Executives/Sudduth Realty



saying how he could attend school his senior year now.” In actuality, six people benefited from Heather’s singular act of kindness. Three people got new kidneys, and three more moved up the organ donation waiting list.

A lot of people tried to talk Heather out of her decision, including her husband. “He was scared for me,” she says. “He didn’t want me putting my life at risk for someone I didn’t even know, and my two boys were proud, but worried. I had a mental health evaluation as part of the donation process to make sure I wasn’t crazy! But I wasn’t scared at all – I prayed about it and had a sense of calm. I felt good about being able to help; that’s just who I am.”

Heather says her real estate business slowed a little because she had to take a month off work and didn’t feel fully recovered until three months after surgery. “The laparoscopic surgery itself isn’t a big deal,” she explains, “But you’re exhausted for weeks afterward as your body adjusts.” Heather was writing contracts from her couch and back in the office two weeks post-surgery. “I just had to take naps for a while,” she smiles. “But I still managed to obtain my Broker license and start teaching other real estate agents at Career Education Systems. I’m thankful for all of the support my friends, family, and church gave me as I recovered – including lots of prayers and lots of meals.”

Now Heather feels great and says she has more energy than ever. Her business at Realty Executives/Sudduth Realty is back to normal, and she hopes to sell 80 properties in 2020. “Anytime something is put on your heart – you should do it,” she says. “Whether it’s buying coffee for someone or giving a kidney, kindness makes a difference. Do what you can do. It all matters.”

By donating her kidney, Heather Holmes gave the gift of life to three different people - and she didn’t know a single one of them. “I was an altruistic donor,” she explains. “My office manager mentioned in passing that her mom would have to start dialysis soon because she couldn’t find a match. At that moment, God put it on my heart to give her mom my kidney as an act of kindness.”


Heather went to The University of Kansas Health System for testing and found she was indeed a match. A month before the transplant surgery, her care team called with a compelling proposition. If Heather would be willing to donate her kidney to a stranger at Children’s Mercy, then that person, her office manager’s mom, and another woman, would all get new kidneys. It’s called a paired kidney exchange, and it lets would-be recipients with willing-yet incompatible donors match up with others to “swap” organs.

“All three of us donors had surgery at the health system on June 17th last year. My kidney went to a 17-year-old boy, who wrote me the sweetest letter



For more information about living kidney donation, please visit the National Kidney Foundation at <https://www.kidney.org>.

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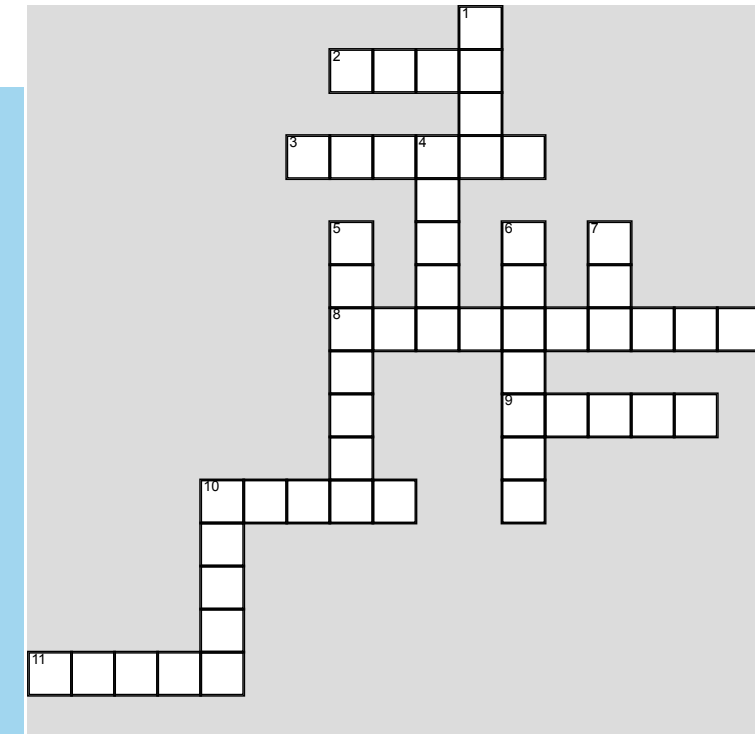
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ACROSS

- Cost of attending the Launch Party...starts with a Z
- Marti Vo owned this business for 10 years before starting her real estate career
- Heather Holmes was what kind of kidney donor
- First name of Christy Almquist's husband
- First name of Marti Vo's office manager, friend and right-hand woman
- Number of new trusted business partners to join Wichita Real Producers this month

DOWN

- How many US Teams did Desiraye Speer qualify for once she started running professionally
- Our Preferred Partners can be found starting on what page in the magazine
- Amelia Sumerell has a degree in International Relations and this
- Ty Patton's day job at McCurdy Auction includes Realtor, Auctioneer and In-House General _____
- Will you be attending the Launch Party
- First name of Amelia Sumerell's newest addition to the A-Team



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