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# MEET THE DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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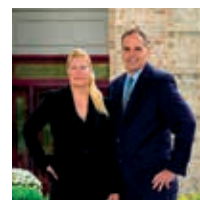
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► publisher's note

## SPRING MARKET... IN SUMMER

Several of you predicted a delayed spring market, and the spike in listings in early June would indicate that you were correct. So, this summer will hopefully be busier than ever and make up for ground lost in the first half of the year. And as Illinois opens up, that means more time outside doing what you do best!

As I write, summer has officially arrived in DuPage County. More days of warmth and sunshine that last far past dinner time. We long for these days in February, so it's so great to see so many of you soaking in some sun between showings, closings, inspections, and shoots!

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Wishing you a safe, healthy, prosperous, and **fun** summer.



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# BRIAN KWILOSZ



Ultimately, real estate is about adaptability if you want to be successful,” says Brian Kwilosz, Designated Managing Broker at EXIT Real Estate Partners in Downers Grove. “An important characteristic of a successful agent or broker is to be able to adjust and pivot to market the position of what’s around you.”

Over the years, Brian has needed to adapt to different environments and careers, before finally settling into life as a REALTOR®. Born in Fort Lauderdale, FL, he moved to just outside of Baltimore during grade school, and again to Geneva, IL, for middle school and high school. During his moves, he was able to make new friends and adapt to new places quickly.

He and his older sister and younger brother lived in a two-bedroom ranch home with a packed house including his mom, grandmother, aunt, and a dog. Together, they renovated the house, finished the basement, and even added additional bedrooms. “Because of that time, I gained a real appreciation for being in close quarters and respecting others’ privacy and space,” says Brian. “But I also gained a desire to be out on my own and gain independence.”

Next, he graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in Computer Science and a minor in Business Administration. His first career was in information technology as a programmer for a large bank. He then jumped into consulting during Y2K before moving to a financial firm in 2000. During the economic downturn, Brian started to look into different career opportunities, again needing to adjust to a new line of work.

“I was living in Chicago in my late 20s when, with my then-fiancé, Nadda, I bought a restaurant with her family,” remembers Brian. “Several years later when we had our first child, Camron, we realized it wasn’t the lifestyle we wanted to raise a family in, so we sold the restaurant, and I became a stay-at-home dad, which was amazing!”

“Around the time Camron turned one, I felt the urge to get back into the workforce. By this time, we were pretty into HGTV, and one day Nadda turned to me and said, ‘You could do this,’” says Brian. “That was the spark that led me into real estate. I called up my REALTOR®, Tom Sailer, and asked him for more details about this whole real estate thing.” It was exactly the next move Brian was looking for. Kwilosz earned his real estate license and entered the world of real estate in 2008. When he called his family and friends to tell them of his new career, he received mixed responses. ...



••• “Some people said ‘Have you watched the news? The market is tanking!’” says Brian. “But I actually did pretty well those first couple years despite the economy, thanks to my history and experience adapting to new things.”

In 2010, Brian and the office founders, Chris Hochstedt and Tom Sailer, joined forces in ownership. That’s when business began to take off, with rising sales and numerous awards. They received Regional Brokerage of the Year from EXIT Real Estate in 2013.

Over the years, Brian has held many positions of leadership in the industry. He is currently the 2020 President of Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS® (MOR), which is the largest REALTOR® association in Illinois and the sixth largest in the United States with over 18,000 members. In 2019, he received the President’s Award from MOR, and in 2017 he received the MOR Committee Chairman of the Year award. Brian was also the 2018



The Kwilosz family, left to right: Camron, Brian, Nadda and Madeleine

Women’s Council of REALTORS® Illinois Network Member of the Year.

Brian is on the board of directors for his homeowners’ association, and he and his family frequently help pack and sort food for Feed My Starving Children. EXIT Real Estate Partners participates in events for the Illinois Food Bank and Relay for Life on a regular basis.

In his off time, Brian and his family enjoy spending time outdoors as much as possible. Both his children, Madeleine, 9, and Camron, 13, are involved in several after-school programs and athletics. Brian coaches his daughter’s soccer team through the Naperville Park District. Camron enjoys basketball and video games, and is getting into programming (like Dad) and designing his own games. Collectively, they all enjoy going to parks and forest preserves with their adorable puggle, Ruby.

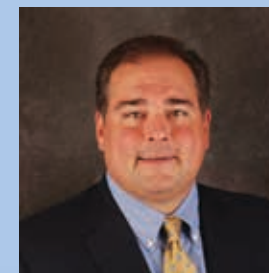
As Brian looks forward to what the rest of 2020 has in store for the real estate market, he is focused on taking precautions to ensure sellers and buyers feel comfortable. He predicts the traditional spring market shifting to early fall, similar to 2019.

“I have a positive outlook for the rest of the year,” says Brian, excitedly. “I think we are going to be in a good place. We’ve seen increased values over last year, and activity is really picking up. We’re seeing this stay-at-home time as a temporary impact, which will certainly be recouped in the future.”

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# JBI STAGING

**GEEK TO CHIC:**  
Two Tech Pros  
Find Success In  
Home Staging

## ▶ partner spotlight

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



Before forming JBI Staging, home stagers Theresa Johnson and Nora Berghorst both held careers in technology fields. Deep down, each knew their passion for design would eventually lead them down a different path. Little did they know, their paths would someday cross – thanks to mutual REALTOR® friends.

Theresa Johnson grew up in a family of DIYers. Her parents were always creating something, like converting a porch into a living space or making custom clothing. Her mother worked as a graphic artist. Theresa followed her family’s passion for design, graduating from Ball State University in 1995 with degrees in interior design and marketing; but her first job was in a completely unexpected field. “I actually got a job in computer programming after school,” says Theresa. “Which is so ‘not me,’ but I saw things in software programming more creatively and that skill made me an asset.”

Theresa met her husband Robert through a softball league, and they married in 1998. They started a family and, in 2004, Theresa decided to stay home to raise her three children. She started a purse company called

Tess Bags, after a nickname given to her by her grandma. “I sold the bags at our elementary school craft fairs,” says Theresa. “Then I started getting more into interior design and helping my friends decorate their homes.” In addition to Tess Bags, she started another company with a friend called Two Mums Curtain Company. “I was always doing something on the side to keep up my design passion,” she says.

In 2006, Theresa became close friends with Diane Crisp and Tracy Driscoll, REALTORS® with Platinum Partners in Downers Grove. Their children shared the same preschool class and hosted play dates together. “It was right about this time that Diane and Tracy asked me to help out at a house that wasn’t selling,” says Theresa. “They wanted my designer’s eye. They brought the furniture and accessories and I arranged them.”

This continued for a few years, with Theresa re-staging furniture at various listings. As more REALTORS® from their office heard about Theresa, she got more calls for staging help, and her business grew from occasional hobby to busy occupation. It was about this time she met another aspiring home stager, her future business partner, Nora Berghorst.

Nora’s father emigrated from Ireland when he was in his early 20s, and he and his wife raised their family in the Chicago neighborhood of Mount Greenwood. Nora and her three siblings lived there until her father built a house in Orland Park. “I guess I just loved the smell of new construction,” reflects Nora. “It was the first time I was getting my own room, having grown up in a family of six. I got to pick out my carpet and window treatments and spent a lot of time organizing my closet and outfits.”

She declined a Division III volleyball scholarship to attend University of Illinois, where she earned a Business Administration degree in 1989. The tech industry, quite literally, came calling. At AT&T, eventually Lucent Technologies and then Avaya, she designed and sold phone systems to Fortune 500 companies like Abbott Labs, Northern Trust, and Office Max. While she was successful, she often dreamed of returning to design.

“It was great work, but not my passion,” says Nora. “I tried to quit the job, but my boss told me to take the summer and think about it. During that break, one of the ladies I worked with told me to look into home staging because of my passion for interior design.”

Nora married her husband, John, in 2000, and they started a family. Coincidentally, their kids ended up attending the same elementary school





•••

as Diane Crisp and Tracy Driscoll's children. One morning, Nora told Diane she was thinking about pursuing home staging. "She told me she used Theresa Johnson for her listings," says Nora. "I was disappointed they already had a stager, but asked to be connected to Theresa to ask her about her business and how she manages everything."

The two agreed to meet and hit it off immediately. During her off hours, Nora began to join Theresa on appointments. "We were getting to this place where we both agreed we couldn't move a couch individually but could move one together," says Nora. "It seemed to be a fun way of saying we needed each other to be successful."

When they staged their first home together, it sold right away, and Nora was hooked. She left her full-time job in 2016 and began discussing partnership plans with Theresa. From that moment, people referred to the two as "peanut butter and jelly." They agree it's almost as if they had known each other their whole lives.

With Theresa's recurring clients, Nora's family and friends, and more business referrals, "Johnson-Berghorst Interiors" exploded. They've built an impressive collection of furniture to meet the demand, and have shifted away from other types of design work to focus on real estate staging, now under the name "JBI Staging."

"We've developed a base of REALTORS® that consider us a part of their team," says Theresa. "When they get a new listing, we are their first call. Our styling reports tell the homeowner and REALTOR® what needs to be done before the property can be photographed and listed online. Many real estate agents use us as a selling point with their clients to sign the listing, sell faster, and for more money."

When Theresa and Nora are not staging homes, they spend time with their families.



Theresa has two daughters, Lily, 17, Hope, 15, and one son, Reid, 11. Hope loves gymnastics and recently redecorated her room while Lily enjoys running and being creative, often with drawing. Reid prefers staying active and playing with their dog. The whole family vacations at her parents' lake house in Michigan where tubing, swimming, and relaxation is the norm. Theresa enjoys yoga. Her husband plays the drums for the worship team at Immanuel Lutheran Church, where the family attends.



The Johnson family, left to right: Lily, Theresa, Reid, Robert, Lily ... and Moose the Golden Retriever

Nora's family also has a cottage in Michigan, that they visit regularly. Daughter Shelby, 18, is a first-year nursing student at St. Louis University and is fluent in Spanish. Justin, 16, is



The Berghorst family, left to right: John, Nora, Shelby and Justin

a junior at Downers Grove North and plays violin. The family is involved in their church, Bethel Lutheran, in Westmont. Nora volunteers in the church kitchen, creating lunch and snacks for Vacation Bible School every year. The family enjoys serving at Feed My Starving Children as many times as they can and helping out at the local PADS location, making lunches on a regular basis. You'll also find Nora working out three days a week at the neighborhood boot camp.

The changing needs of today's real estate market have required Nora and Theresa to adapt. They've been offering remote consultations, and talking with REALTORS® about how they can refresh spaces they haven't yet sold. Repeat clients from as far as Florida are contacting them to stage online through video, even

consulting on paint colors for homes readying for sale.

"We have a great relationship with the REALTORS® we work with," says Theresa. "We are a part of their team, and they trust us for results. Our talent lies in evaluating homes and all the flaws that come with them - from renovation costs to buyer wants, where to focus first to what materials and vetted vendors to use. We pride ourselves in being a selling resource to our REALTOR® partners."

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## Courtney Bohnen Stach Extends Legacy of Family-Owned Brokerage

**W**hile John Bohnen was working to build high-rises in Chicago, he dreamed of running his own real estate company in his native Hinsdale alongside his wife, Penny, a successful real estate agent in the area. County Line Properties opened its doors in the early 1990s. John's construction background combined with Penny's knowledge of the local market made the firm an instant success.

The second part of John's dream was to pass down the company to one of his three daughters. "I remember my father saying that one of us girls had to get into the business. That he hadn't worked this hard on his dream to have no one else continue the business for the family," remembers Courtney Bohnen Stach, now leader of her own group at County Line Properties.

At 11 years old, Courtney was answering phones at Adams and Myers. She recalls the MLS "books" and typing contracts for the agents on a typewriter, not a computer. But before pursuing a career in real estate, Courtney decided to explore her own route. After graduating with a degree in communications and visual arts, she stepped into advertising in the B2B corporate world. With stops in telecommunications at Lucent Technologies, she ended up in sales at tech giant MCI WorldCom. In 2001, she finally decided to earn her real estate license and join the family business.

"It was right around the downturn in the economy that I began practicing real estate," says Courtney. "It was a difficult time, and you had to become a problem-solver. You had to be determined and never stop looking for work. I sold about 10 houses that first year. It took creativity and perseverance to build up a solid client base."



The Stachs, left to right: Courtney, Henry, Charles and Eric



That same determination has brought Courtney to where she is today. With multiple awards and recognition, she has consistently placed in the Top 25 of DuPage County Real Estate Agents since 2017. She says her growth has always been stable and trending upward because of her innovation and personal service.

“I like to manage the right amount of inventory, keeping the housing stock fresh and moving. Every client is served the same way,” says Courtney. “I always keep in touch with each of my clients from the beginning to end and afterward.”

Over the last several years, Courtney has been building a team to ensure every aspect of the transaction is cared for. Jack Brennan is Courtney’s partner and full-time broker. Jack oversees marketing and helps Courtney be “in two places at once.” He grew up in Hinsdale and knows the market well. Together, the Stach and Brennan families co-own County Line Properties, one of the last remaining independent firms in the western suburbs.

“This will be a year of change and flexibility,” says Courtney. “Our team has always mastered service, and our number-one priority is to put the client before us and be a few steps ahead. Their feelings, needs, and finances need to be taken care of. My goal is to provide a financial game plan and help them

achieve their own dream – finding the right home.”

When not selling real estate, Courtney chooses activities and hobbies that keep her close to family. She is married to Eric Stach, an attorney whose practice focuses on municipal and public sector law. Sons Henry and Charles are active, which keeps her active, too. Henry, 14,

loves basketball and wants to be an engineer. Charles, 12, has a passion for swimming and writing. Each year, the family travels to northern Wisconsin for their traditional cousin vacation. They meet up with her two sisters and their husbands and kids for a special time together. Courtney volunteers as often as possible to be close to her boys and help within the community.

She is a faithful and participating member of The Garden Club of Hinsdale, and is proud that her family has been involved for generations. Courtney and her family also raise books for Bernie’s Book Bank, a nonprofit that is committed to providing free quality books to under-served children throughout Chicagoland.

While Courtney considers herself competitive and at times “unstoppable,” she also lives by the Golden Rule, and believes that doing business

honorably will always lead to success. Looking forward, Courtney’s focus is to make sure the world keeps moving forward for her clients. She will be working diligently to keep them feeling safe during the ever-changing market conditions.



Partners: Courtney Bohnen Stach and broker Jack Brennan



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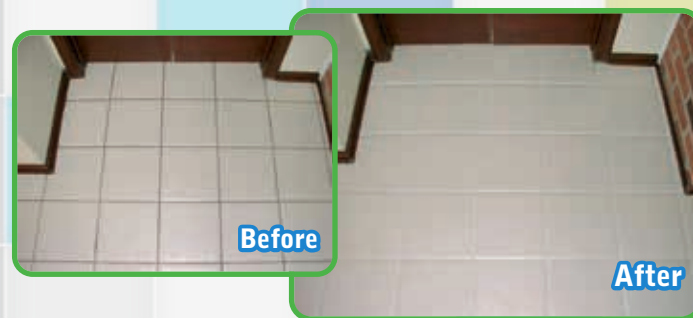
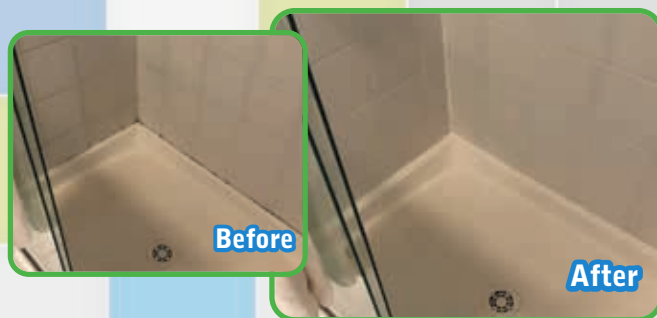
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# JOSIE MORRISON

Get By Giving – How A Change in Philosophy Changed Everything

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

It all changed for Josie Morrison when she embraced the philosophy “you get by giving.” It’s a way of thinking that she has followed in her personal life with family, friends, and church. But when she shifted to the same approach in her job as a REALTOR®, she noticed everything fell into place.

Josie grew up around the Chicagoland area, but her family of five moved around often, to Wisconsin and even out to Colorado. Eventually, she ended up in Santa Barbara, CA, to pursue training in restaurant management. “Even though I earned degrees in culinary arts and hotel restaurant management, I realized I did not want to own my own restaurant,” she explains. “I started my own catering business instead, coordinating and planning weddings and social events in southern California.”

After living in California for 10 years, in 1991 Josie moved back to Chicagoland with her husband and their first child. They were seeking more affordable housing, better schools, and for her husband to grow his business. A branch of their church was in Wheaton, so they moved here and helped build up the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church. In their 30th year as Wheaton residents, they are in their second house and have been at the same parish.

“After my second child was born, I wanted to get back to work,” says Josie. “My mom had been a broker with RE/MAX for 30 years, so I decided to get my license as well. As my kids got older, I started spending more time developing business. Now, I’ve been a licensed broker for 27 years.”

Originally receiving her training through Coldwell Banker, she moved to RE/MAX Suburban and then RE/MAX Action. It’s here where an amazing broker/manager/owner, Gary Jacklin, introduced her to an ideological shift that made her rethink her business strategy. Gary recommended I go through Master Sales Academy with the Floyd Wickman Team,” says Josie. “They teach ‘you get by giving,’ which caused me to retool the way I approach my clients. Now I focus on what I can give people I’m working with, not what I can gain from them. I can’t recommend a better manager to work with. Gary helped me double my business in only two years.”

This thinking also motivated Josie to join the board of directors for two local charities, H.O.M.E. DuPage and Warrenville Youth and Family Services. At H.O.M.E. DuPage, she works to help homeowners through foreclosure prevention, homestead programs, affordable housing for low income families, budget counseling workshops, reverse mortgage education, and first-time home-buyer training. Warrenville Youth and Family Services gives back through services to at-risk youth and families.

“The ‘get by giving’ mindset is all about asking myself how I can help others be their best,” explains Josie. “If it is a seller or buyer, how can I work to accomplish their unique goals? It is the spirit of your heart being about others and not just yourself. The rest, like success and sales and individual awards, will come.”



Josie and Bill enjoying the haven that is their Wheaton backyard

real estate career. We never take those for granted.”

In her spare time, Josie and her husband, Bill, enjoy traveling and staying active. They’ve explored many parts of Europe and recently visited Yellowstone to hike and bike. Josie has three children that also enjoy the outdoors. The oldest, Justin, works as her buyer’s agent and also runs his own landscaping business. Son James is a dive master and boat captain in Ft. Myers, FL. The youngest, Katherine, has finished her degree at the University of Missouri and will follow up with veterinary school.

“I’ve been very blessed to be very successful in my business, and it actually changed when that mindset of giving changed,” she says. “My advice: Always be looking to do better to help others more and leave a lasting imprint. We are only here for a short time, so be remembered for doing good and being good.”

Below: The Morrison family together in California, left to right: Justin, Katherine, Josie, Bill, and Alex



Josie has received plenty of recognition for her success, from awards for sales to top area rankings, to high customer ratings. She’s been voted one of the Top Chicago Real Estate Agents four years in a row by *Chicago Magazine*. She’s also scored in the top three percent for client satisfaction out of the REALTORS® licensed in Illinois and has been awarded Best of Trulia Top Agent.

When people or clients talk to her about their concerns, she strives to let them feel heard. In all things, she gives thanks. “I feel very blessed and thankful,” says Josie. “I’m incredibly grateful for everything God has given us – health, family, a thriving

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