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# MEET THE DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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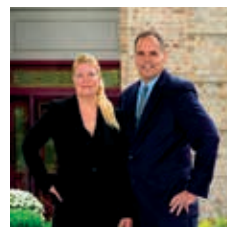
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▶ REALTOR® feature

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

# Sheena BAKER

## Part-Time REALTOR® to Full-Time Star

**F**or many REALTORS®, buying and selling homes starts as a hobby or weekend gig. But eventually, many part-time REALTORS® become full-timers. After seven years of doing it on the side, Sheena Baker finally went all in.

Sheena grew up as the youngest girl in a family with three siblings, two older sisters and a younger brother. Her mother is a registered nurse and manages a hospital clinic in Chicago. Her father was a truck driver. They grew up in a small three-bedroom ranch in Bellwood, but the family moved around a few times before she went to college. While in college she worked at a trucking company. She moved to a position in Chicago managing payroll and at age 18 her career took off. By 19, Sheena had purchased her first house. Soon after, she got her real estate license to help her family and friends.

“Because my family had moved around a lot, I wanted to buy a home and have some stability in where I lived and worked,” explains Sheena. “It’s also why I first entered corporate America. I liked the stability. My family and friends began asking me to help them with the home buying process and I thought it would be good for me to pick up my real estate license to help everyone on the side.”

What began as just a way to support friends and family turned into something more. Throughout her 20s, she flipped homes as investments. By the time she was 25, she owned and managed three rental properties.

At her day job, Sheena ran and managed huge payrolls for the corporate offices of fortune 500 companies like ADP and Midas. Her career expanded to human resources, HR information systems, and even leading payroll system implementations and employee benefits programs for multiple corporations. She was certified as a Professional of Human Resources (PHR) and Certified Payroll Professional (CPP).

After 14 years, Sheena made the decision to transition into real estate.

“In 2013, I had a life change, and I always wanted to pursue being a full-time REALTOR®,” says Sheena. “I knew it would take some work to make a great living with a good salary. Because I knew a lot of people and had a strong network I felt it was time to step out on faith to do it. I could always go back to corporate America if need be, but it was time to try this new endeavor.”

That first year was filled with hard work and renewed focus. Sheena had connections to get deals moving, but took a consulting job on the side when she wasn’t selling real estate. To move her career forward, she marketed herself constantly, worked open houses for other agents, networked within the real estate industry, and took as much training as possible.

...







**“I really care about being around others and being there for them.”**

•••

Sheena makes a point to support the people in her life and makes the effort to connect with as many people as she can by attending birthdays, baby showers, and other events. “I wasn’t working the corporate 9-to-5 anymore, so I was able to be there for people the way I couldn’t have been before,” says Sheena. “I really care about being around others and being there for them.”

Connecting with her community network made a big difference. The following year, business more than tripled. Since then, Sheena has been recognized for many impressive accomplishments.

In 2018 and 2019, she was a Platinum Top Producer with CarMarc Realty Group. In 2018, she was awarded the Quad County African American (QCAA) Chamber Aspiring Entrepreneur Award in front of a crowd of over 400 people, including Aurora’s mayor and other city officials. In 2019 she was honored by She Rocks It. In 2020 she was selected as one of 12 REALTORS® for Illinois REALTORS® Leadership Development. She was also selected by Illinois REALTORS® to be state legislative contact



Sheena in her brand new office in downtown Aurora.

for Karina Villa, District 49 State Representative. She was also the 2015 Vice President of Membership of the Women’s Council of REALTORS® West Suburban Network (WCR) and President in 2017. In 2018, WCR awarded Sheena with the honor of REALTOR® of the Year.

Sheena is always looking to support her community. She donates to multiple organizations and is always willing to help those who are passionate about a cause. During her

free time, Sheena enjoys catching up with her large family and friend group. Sheena also hosts many client events to keep in touch with customers and remain connected.

“When I’m not working you can find me out and about in the evening, spending time with my friends and trying new restaurants,” says Sheena. “It is important for me to laugh with my friends, try new food dishes, and workout at spin classes. I also love to travel anywhere with a beach.”



For the rest of 2020, Sheena has put energy into growing her new downtown Aurora office location and its team. “I’m also focusing on advising my clients for today’s market,” says Sheena. “No one knows what will happen in six months, but what we do know is what is happening right now. The sellers are getting top dollar and buyers are getting really good interest rates.”

“No matter what happens with the market, we should always advocate for what the best move is for our clients,” she adds. “It is important, now more than ever, that we help them navigate obstacles.”



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# Home Warranty of America

## Warranty Women Trio Has You Covered

*With nearly three decades of experience between them, the dynamic trio of Kim Chalekian-Bisaillon, Tia Duderstadt, and Liane Luckett, nicknamed “The Warranty Women” from Home Warranty of America (HWA), have achieved a great reputation within the Real Estate community. That reputation is built upon strong relationships, excellent service and a product that is designed to protect homeowners from costly repairs or replacements of major mechanicals and appliances that fail unexpectedly.*

“Our whole job is serving REALTORS® and real estate attorneys,” says Liane. “We educate them on the value of a home warranty and give them resources to equip their clients. We’ve been doing this over many years and have seen it all.”

This team is uniquely positioned to help agents and clients who need the security of protection against the unexpected and often costly repairs of major mechanical issues or replacement of appliances that may occur either prior to, or right after, the closing of a home. HWA’s competitive advantage is offering the only national 13-month home warranty with the highest liability limits in the industry, minimizing huge out of pocket costs for homeowners. Their passion for remov-



**Top:** Tia on an excursion with her son Richie.

**Bottom:** Kim and Kenny with McKenna (left) and Wesley (right).

**Right:** Liane on vacation with her boyfriend Jay.



ing the fear and confusion from home warranty shopping has established them as the leader in the field.

Kim, Tia, and Liane love to partner with REALTORS® and clients to provide them with the education and care that is important to seamless and stress-free closings. The trio also works hard to be a vital part of the teams REALTORS® build to serve their clients. Kim notes that

they will conduct two or three office presentations each week and three to four one-on-one client training conversations per day, to ensure that customers understand what is covered and how to use the product. From the listing to the closing, Kim, Tia and Liane are confident of the benefits of their home warranty product.

“A REALTOR’S® name is on the line when they make professional recommendations, like warranty companies,” says Tia. “We want the homeowner’s experience to exceed expectations every time. A happy customer for us is a happy referral from REALTORS®.”

The Warranty Women often use an acronym device to help clients remember what things are covered in a home warranty policy. When it comes to remembering what’s covered in a home warranty, think of the word peach. The letter “P” refers to plumbing, “E” stands for electric, “A” for appliances, and the “CH” represents







the cooling and heating. In addition, HWA covers things like rekeying the locks (six locks and four keys), and things that other home warranty companies do not, such as the recapturing of Freon with no cap on coverage.

Home Warranty of America was founded in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, but today there are local representatives in all 50 states. The company is confident not only about its product, but also about its competitive pricing, offering comprehensive coverage at a great value.

Kim, Tia and Liane aren't just the Warranty Women. They're all also wives, mothers, athletes, hobbyists, volunteers, and much more.

Liane, who was worked in the home warranty industry for 20 years, loves to golf, garden, read, downhill ski, and travel, but she especially loves spending time with her three grandchildren.

Kim and her husband, Kenny are celebrating their third year of marriage together, and have two children, McKenna and Wesley. Kenny and



**Top:** Kim's kids Wesley and McKenna sharing a seat.  
**Bottom:** Liane taking in the sights with boyfriend Jay at the waterfront in Monte Carlo.

“

*We understand our customers' needs and we always put ourselves in our customers' shoes, working every claim as quickly as possible to satisfy their needs.*

”

Kim are “sports nuts” and met while playing in a softball league downtown Chicago. Kim played college softball at Loras College in Dubuque, IA. She gained many leadership skills while being a college athlete and captain of her team, which has been quite valuable in business.

Tia, her husband Alton, and their 8-year-old son Richie enjoy hiking, gardening, bird watching, biking, and volunteering at her son's school events.

HWA has partnered with Children's Miracle Network's “Miracle Month” every October for the last four years. Children's Miracle Network is a group of hospitals that provide the best care for children and the funding gaps between insurance programs and the full cost of care. To date, HWA has donated over \$4.3 Million to this worthwhile cause. They believe in the mission and health services Children's Miracle Network provides to those in need.

Beyond supporting charities, the team gives special emphasis on caring for its REALTOR® and homeowner partners. Protecting on-market homes during the sales process is an important, often forgotten, part of real estate. A surprising number of costly repairs, major mechanical issues, or replacement of appliances can spring up right before or after the closing of a home. To protect against second-thoughts, HWA has one of the best compensation packages available. Especially during the current economy, The Warranty Women want to make sure REALTORS® know of their free seller's coverage, which protects a property while it is listed, and the need for additional protections for their clients.

“It is more crucial than ever to have a home warranty,” says Liane. “Because of the state of the

economy, homeowners cannot afford to pay huge sums on repairs or replacements. Home warranties limit the out-of-pocket costs and financial burdens so that they have one less thing to worry about.” Kim adds, “We understand our customers' needs and we always put ourselves in our customers' shoes, working every claim as quickly as possible to satisfy their needs.”

The Warranty Women will always emphasize “above and beyond” service to their customers!

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Joe

# PIRAINO

*Promising Prodigy: Childhood Pastime Becomes Grown Up Passion*



Joe creates fun and creative marketing campaigns, including this billboard.

## ▶▶ rising star



Written by Lauren Young | Photography by Katherin Frankovic

***Growing up in a new development community, Joe Piraino was given an early behind-the-scenes look at real estate. “I would take walks through the homes after the construction crews left for the day and pretend to design the homes and pick out my favorite features. When there were open houses, I would walk through to see how different they were. I had no idea real estate would become my job. As a child, it seemed impossible.”***

Joe grew up the oldest of seven kids in central Illinois. When he was in high school, the family moved to Palatine and has been in the area since. He studied accounting at DeVry University, but after graduation wasn't sure what area of business he wanted to go into. During college, he worked with his dad at his painting company while trying to figure out what to do next.

He also watched his entrepreneurial uncles run their own businesses with interest. One uncle founded the prominent Michael Anthony Salons in Chicago. Another uncle owned a successful salon in the suburbs. On his mom's side, his grandfather owned and managed a siding and windows business in Arizona.

“I always knew at some point I was going to run my own business,” says Joe. “I just didn't know where

or how. I've tried and dabbled in many things, but it always came back to real estate for me.”

Joe eventually settled into a job in the corporate world. His work required frequent travel, so when he and his wife started thinking about a family, the idea of being local and working with the community was exciting. Real estate came to mind immediately. When he approached his wife about becoming a REALTOR®, Joe was caught off guard by her reaction.

“She was so supportive and said I would be good at it,” says Joe. “Usually she is the type of person who asks, ‘Really? Are you sure?’ That's how I knew it was the right decision.”

Soon after, Joe found out his brother also decided to get his real estate license. The two went through ...



**Pictured:** Joe with Yiota and their first child, Penelope

•••

courses together, supporting each other throughout the journey. For Joe, it took some time to build up his client base in the first year. He found success through building awareness and developing referrals with social media, billboards, and unique local promotional events.

“I would pick a restaurant close to an open house and have them sponsor with food,” he says.

“For one with Chipotle, I called it ‘Build A Burrito, Buy A Home.’ I think we had about 15 people show up. The awesome thing is I sold the house at the open house. It makes others enjoy visiting the property and keeps it entertaining for me, as well.”

Joe didn’t realize exactly how well he was doing that first year. But as sales mounted, he was surprised to receive an award from Baird & Warner for his performance.

“I actually won the Rookie of the Year award and had no idea I even qualified for it,” says Joe. “During my first year, I closed \$7 Million. There were amazing agents in the office doing \$20 Million and \$30 Million, and I was just fortunate they were willing to spend time with me and help me get my process down. When I met with one of the very top agents in my brokerage he said, ‘You have it. You’re going to do well.’ That’s all I needed to hear to affirm my decision.” Now in his second year, Joe has already risen to the top 15% nationwide, accord-



***We all need a calming voice when everything else seems crazy. I want to be that for my clients.***

ing to HomeSnap. He’s had multiple monthly Outstanding Producer awards from Baird & Warner.

Aside from staying active and visible in the community, Joe has used his personal experience with connect with customers. In 2012, Joe and his wife built their first home, so he often shares his learned lessons to prospective buyers and sellers. “Building a home is a fun and interesting adventure,” he laughs. “Every person has their own ideas and opinions about how it should look. Through my experience, I’m able to advise on the process for a lot of clients who are thinking about new construction and for existing homes as well.”

When Joe is not working his business, he and his family enjoy traveling. His wife, Yiota, had their first child, Penelope, in 2019. Together, they have

enjoyed bonding during this year’s extra at-home time. Yiota and her family are from Greece so they’ve enjoyed visiting relatives that still live there. They also enjoy watching baseball together, and Joe loves golfing with his uncles and cousins when there is extra time. As a librarian, Yiota is also closely involved in the community, and Joe often joins her at local programs.

As Joe considers the future of his real estate career, he is determined to keep every part of the process fun and enjoyable. “Everyone’s situation is different right now,” says Joe. “I feel like everybody is tired of hearing the word ‘uncertainty,’ so I choose to stay positive often using humor to lighten the mood. During uncomfortable scenarios, we’ll just work through it together. We all need a calming voice when everything else seems crazy. I want to be that for my clients.”

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# LARYSA

# DOMINO

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

## TOP AGENT WITH CPA AND MBA USES DATA MASTERY IN RISE TO SUCCESS

*“I saw my parents demonstrate grit and a hard work ethic,” says Top 50 DuPage REALTOR® Larysa Domino. “They had their dreams and taught me that nothing comes without effort.”*

Larysa’s parents, George and Donna, both emigrated from Ukraine to the U.S. in their teens. They met at the University of Illinois at Chicago and started a family while earning advanced degrees and working on their impressive careers.

Donna earned her degree in Medical Dietetics and later went on to get a master’s degree. She worked as a registered dietician and eventually became the Director of Food and Nutritional Services at a prominent Chicago hospital. Meanwhile, George graduated with a degree in accounting and earned his CPA license. After graduation, he worked in a large accounting firm before starting his own business.

...

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“

Buying and selling real estate changed drastically over the last year. I just want to respond to the new needs of the market and help people make the wisest choice, for the short-term and the long-term.





•••

While their parents juggled studies and jobs, Larysa and her two younger brothers spent a lot of time with active grandparents. With so many parental figures in their lives, the bar for life and career aspirations was set high from the beginning.

“Their expectations were high for us, since they came to the United States without many resources and worked their way through higher education and into successful careers,” she says. “They tried to establish a strong foundation for our family, so they hoped for more from our performance and achievement.”

Larysa set her sights on making them proud. Attending prestigious Northwestern University, she was initially a pre-med major until she switched to economics at the end of junior year. Next, she earned her CPA. Then, she pursued an MBA in Strategy and Marketing at Northwestern’s renowned Kellogg School of Management. Between studies, she worked in corporate finance.

“I loved that I was working on the internal consultant team in the corporate world dealing with projects, efficiencies, cost savings, and optimizations,” says Larysa. “It’s because I loved learning and growing so much that I decided to get my MBA. The MBA really broadened my knowledge base in marketing and strategies and exploring different industries.”



When Larysa began focusing on her growing family, she reconsidered the appeal of her demanding corporate life. Having lived in four primary residences and dabbling in investment properties, she already had hands-on experience in buying and selling real estate. Personal interest added to many other factors that made becoming a REALTOR® an attractive possibility.

“My daughter was in the first grade, and that’s when I started looking at a new career that would let me work more locally and still be involved in the community,” Larysa explains. “And that’s been one of the most fulfilling parts of the job, actually. Being able to meet new people coming into the Hinsdale area for the first time and getting to know them on a personal level.”

The first few years of her new career were difficult. Larysa found it harder to break into the industry than she initially thought. By year four, however, she had become the

number one REALTOR® by volume individually in Hinsdale. With hard work and determination, an example set by her parents in childhood, it’s a title she’s held in 2019 and on track to hold in 2020.

“I realized starting in my second year that you get what you put in,” says Larysa. “Once I figured that out, I started working around the clock and trying every avenue and angle to grow the business. It really picked up and there was a lot of elbow grease and effort behind it.”

Using her background in economics, finance, marketing, and strategy, Larysa has a unique ability to sort through detailed industry data. This helps her spot trends to predict where the market is going and gives her insight into how to position a property for faster sales.

“If you know the home’s target buyer market and overall supply/demand in the target segment, you should be

“

I’ve always loved giving back to the community. I think it is important to model that for my daughter and it is also personally rewarding.

able to sell relatively quickly,” says Larysa. “I’m a very honest person, and I give a direct opinion about the properties I’m working with. I think that evaluation based on my experience and research makes a difference in the listings I manage. It also helps that I have lived in a wide range of price points personally, so I am now able to understand home values going all the way up the luxury market.”

•••



Larysa's hard work and dedication have paid off, and it is evident in her growing sales numbers. In 2019 she closed \$24.5 Million in total volume. And for 2020, she is on track to surpass over \$30 Million.

Aside from sales goals, Larysa is passionate about community involvement. She has served as co-president of her daughter's PTO for two years and as treasurer prior to that. She's been the chair in multiple roles in the Hinsdale Junior Woman's Club and values a philanthropic life. "I've always loved giving back to the community," says Larysa. "I think it is important to

...

model that for my daughter and it is also personally rewarding."

When Larysa is not working her real estate business, she and her 12-year-old daughter, Nadia, enjoy traveling to warm-weather destinations such as Longboat Key and Cabo San Lucas. She'll even visit Lake Geneva for shorter day trips.

"I also love getting out and about in the area to experience the outdoors with a run or bike ride," she says. "I'm community-focused and enjoy going to all the events in the area including dining out. All the seasons in our community, like apple and pumpkin

seasons and wintertime walks around town, are so wonderful."

As Larysa looks forward to 2021, she is as optimistic about innovation and client support as ever. "In 2020, the value of a home has never been more important," says Larysa. "I'm focused on helping my clients through this challenging time while they are evaluating their space and whether it meets their needs."

"Buying and selling real estate changed drastically over the last year," she continues. "I just want to respond to the new needs of the market and help people make the wisest choice, for the short-term and the long-term."



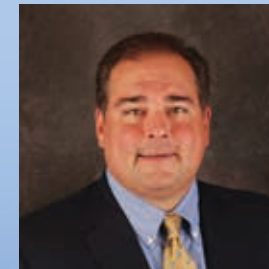
Larysa and her daughter Nadia are together as often as possible, whether shopping in Hinsdale or on out-of-town excursions.



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# TOP AGENT POP-UP *Happy Hours*

» events

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Thank you to Judy and Kate Martin at The Perfect Thing for hosting our Wheaton Pop Up, and Sarah Bogaczyk at Oakley Home Builders for hosting our Downers Grove Pop Up.

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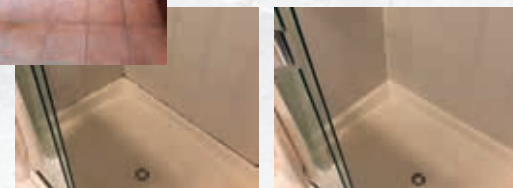
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# SHELTERS

*for all*

Written by **Joe D'Alessandro**  
Photography by **Katherin Frankovic**

▶▶ dupage philanthropy



## *Providing Transformational Change in the Heart of DuPage*

*David Dornblaser has over 40 years of experience ministering to the homeless. After continually seeing the same faces in homeless shelters year after year, he got a vision to provide a facility that could provide more than meals and warmth. He saw a place with more services where people would be mentored and encouraged to transition to independent living.*

That vision became reality at Shelter For All in West Chicago.

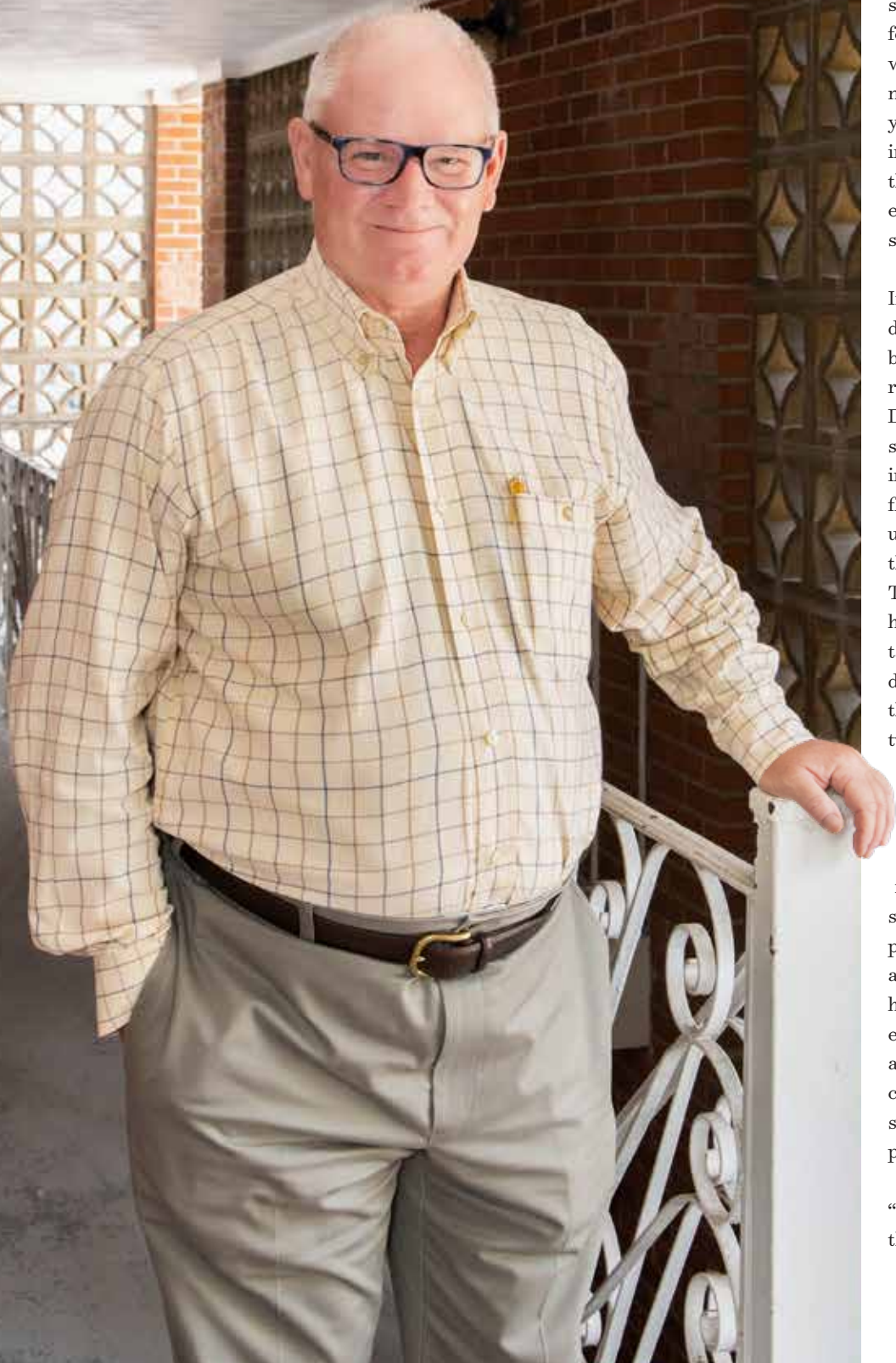
David studied at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago before a family crisis pulled him away from seminary. Professionally, he became an options trader, attorney, and successful entrepreneur. But David's true passion has always been provid-

ing aid to people in crisis. Residents of Glen Ellyn, David and his wife Lynn would organize and provide community meals for up to 400 underprivileged families in Chicago housing projects for many years. A parishioner at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Glen Ellyn, David served as PADS coordinator for the church for eight years. ...



“It takes a while for people to unpack the stress of being homeless, and they have to get through that stage before they can really get traction on their way to independence.”

-DAVID DORNBLASER, FOUNDER



...

So when David set out to put together a team to make Shelter For All a reality, he had a lot of credibility to leverage. He formed a 501(c)(3) and campaigned to raise money to buy buildings, but potential donors wanted to see an on-going organization before committing funds. David reached out to his friend, REALTOR® Lance Kammes, who grew up in West Chicago and shares David's passion to serve. Lance provided several of his own apartment buildings for David to use to prove his idea could work. The movement was up and running, but David's biggest challenge was yet to come: purchasing and transforming a 17-unit apartment building. Today, that building is thriving as David envisioned, but it was a bumpy road, to say the least.

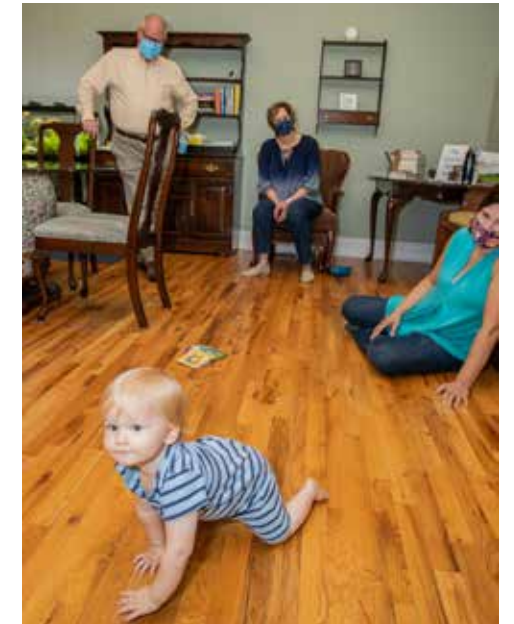
In 2019, Shelter For All was in the middle of replacing the roof on the 17-unit building. The roofer had tarped the roof, but not pitched the tarp. While David was in London, there was a seasonally-unexpected storm that dumped inches of snow on the property. Water flooded the building damaging every unit all the way to the basement. Even the electrical system was destroyed. They moved everyone into a hotel and had to relocate some of the residents, taking their resident count from 14 down to eight. As you read this though, they have rebuilt and are adding one to two residents every month.

The strength of the organization is the mentors. Their primary purpose is to guide the residents in addressing any problems or issues and to support them on their way to self-improvement and self-sufficiency. There are two mentors for every person they house. All mentors are volunteers except one who is an employee. Two are psychologists. Two are retired special education teachers. David is very selective about the mentors. It's a slow process to select and develop them.

“It takes a while for people to unpack the stress of being homeless,” says



Lori and Aiden, Justin with mentor Kara, and David at the Shelter For All office.



Victor proudly showing off his apartment and discussing with David the upper kitchen cabinets, which are on backorder because of the pandemic.



Resident and Shelter For All employee, Justin, discussing with David the final trim out of one of the apartments.

David, “and they have to get through that stage before they can really get traction on their way to independence.” As a firm rule, addicts must be in recovery first before becoming a resident. Shelter For All receives many referrals from churches, and their goal is to grow to about 20 residents.

New residents are provided a fully furnished apartment, \$100 cash, quarters for laundry, and food in their refrigerator. The apartment building is just a few blocks from the Metra West Line West Chicago station, and residents are provided a 10-ride ticket for trips between Wheaton and Geneva, to increase their employment prospects. New residents are taken for a new state ID and for a library card. They are introduced to the nearby food pantry and taken on a tour of West Chicago. Shelter For All offers yoga, a book club, free legal services, and a chaplain.

Residents are required to work 20 hours per week or, if on disability, do volunteer work.

Many new residents feel overwhelmed when they move in. They have an increased level of interaction for the first 30 days and are urged to strictly follow their mentor and psychiatrist's advice because there is a 30-day probationary period. Shelter For All has frequent social events to help residents integrate with the group for additional support. They also organize special events such as a 2020 camping trip to Wisconsin, which was unfortunately rescheduled due to the COVID-19 crisis.

David is excited about the future when he states, “With the completion of the reconstruction of the West Chicago apartments, Shelter For All stands poised to grow and to help more and more people achieve self-sufficiency.”

No setback will keep David from transforming the vision he was given into reality. The Gospel of Luke tells us, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” David is humbly living out his calling, and blessing the lives of many DuPage residents.



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