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A HOME RUN HOME SELLER

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THE DECLUTTER BOX

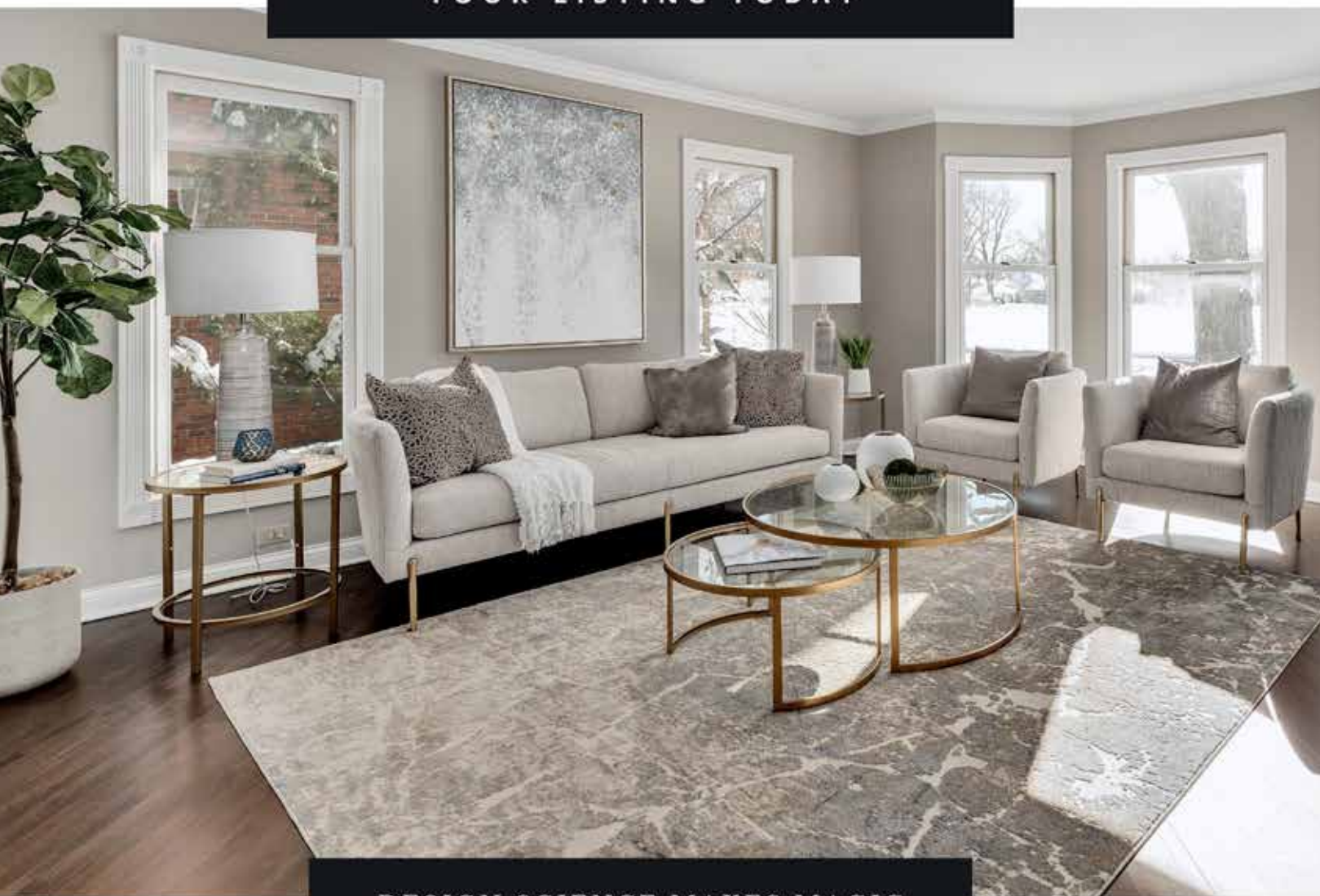
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PUBLISHER'S note

Our wedding anniversary, our youngest child's birthday, park district camps ending, all combined with preparing for and starting a new school year, make August one of the busiest months for the Burton Bungalow. I am grateful for the time we get to spend together as a family building memories and creating experiences for our kids, but there are times when I miss my wife. We recently were given a kid-free night away from some great friends of ours, and it made me think back to the days when it was just us before the chaos ensued. What a blessing to get a little reminder of the "good old days"!

It allowed me to just sit with my wife and appreciate her. We dreamed about the future and expressed gratitude for how God has blessed our past. It was fulfilling to just be and not have an agenda for 48 hours. The alone time we spent together affirmed the fact that our relationship needs this more often.

For the most part, the activity in real estate has been non-stop for all of us since the beginning of January. As the summer comes to a close, my encouragement to our DuPage Real Producers community is to carve out quality time to spend one-on-one with those with who you are building your life.



I am proud to say that we are planning to resume our quarterly events later this year! We are extremely excited as this will be our first event since the COVID-19 shutdown. Be on the lookout for details via email and future issues of DuPage Real Producers.



Fighting the good fight,

Andy Burton
Publisher, *DuPage Real Producers*
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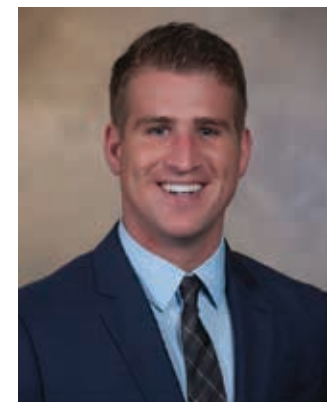
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Virtual JAM SESSIONS



DUPAGE RP REAL PRODUCERS

JAM SESSION #5 **f LIVE**

An intergalactic conversation about DuPage real estate

ALICE CHIN **EVA BURNS** **LEE ERNST** **WENDY PAWLAK** **TINA MARIE MATEJA**

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events

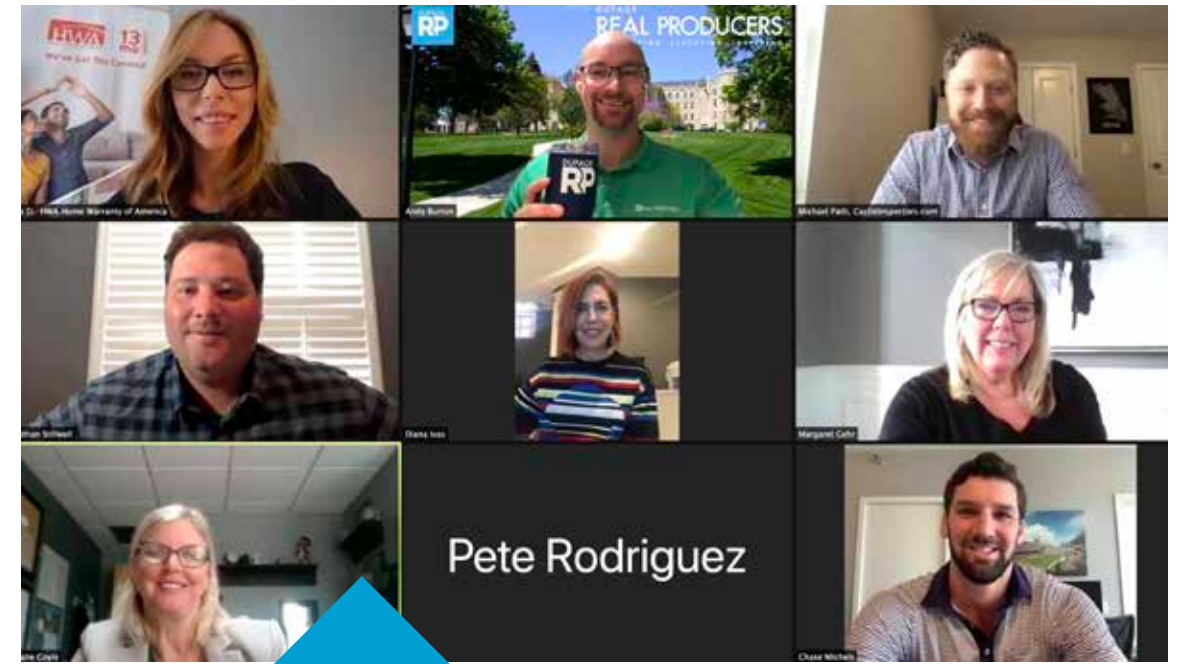
Top REALTORS® and Preferred Partners Engaging Virtually

As an organization, we are fully aware of the need to create more opportunities to connect, inspire, elevate, and add value to both our REALTORS® and Preferred Partners. As a response to this need, we are continuing to host virtual jam sessions with the *DuPage Real Producers* community.

Jam sessions are small group Zoom calls designed to get a handful of experts on a call (both REALTORS® and Preferred Partners) to discuss what they are seeing in their industry and to help add value to the individuals who are able to tune in. This is a great way to meet people on a more personal level and to get to know what's happening in different industries in the real estate community.

Jam sessions have been filled with creative ways to encourage our *DuPage Real Producers* community to continue to engage and serve as a way to build relationships. Plus, it has been great seeing even more engagement as we have recently been hosting sessions on Facebook Live!

A huge thank you to all our amazing REALTORS® and Preferred Partners for your willingness to join together as a community and maintain our human connection!



DUPAGE RP REAL PRODUCERS

Jam Session #6 **f LIVE**

An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Chase Michels **Diana Ivins** **Diane Cyrille** **Nathan Stillwell** **Pete Rodriguez**

Michael Patti **Tia Dufrenstalt** **Margaret Gahr**

HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON

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Tuesday May 18th 9:15 am CST

DUPAGE RP REAL PRODUCERS

Jam Session #7 **f LIVE**

An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Deneen Ruffolo **Shanon Tully** **Meredith Van Syckle** **Debbie Pawlewicz**

Kelly Bennett **Scott Brower** **Woytek Niemiec**

HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON

DuPage Real Producers invites you to tune in via Facebook Live

Tuesday June 15th 9:15 am CST



We have received great feedback about these events, so we are continuing to schedule them for the fall! Want to join one? Let us know by emailing us at andy.burton@realproducersmag.com.




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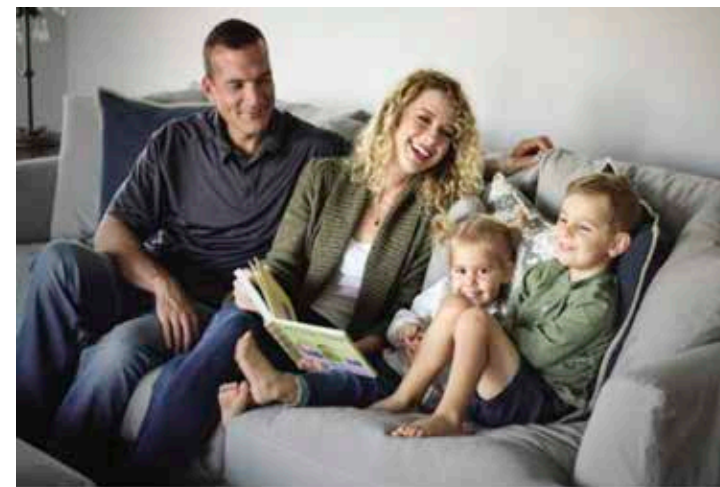
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partner spotlight 
By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

WITH THE DECLUTTER BOX SPRUCING UP WHEN DOWNSIZING

“I’ve seen an excess of unwanted items donated or placed out on the curb during this new wave of decluttering and recent downsizing,” says Kim Cosentino, professional organizer and founder of The DeClutter Box. People often have so many things that will not fit into their simplified dream home.

“Many people struggle with deciding what to keep, what not to keep, and where to put things,” she says. “[This is when] The DeClutter Box steps in and creates custom-tailored systems and solutions to both make sense of and solve this problem.”

Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, Kim was put in charge of keeping the toy room organized for her three younger siblings. This weekly routine is where she honed her skills for sorting things quickly and decluttering. During her college summers and holiday breaks, she was a Stouffer girl and waitress, and she quickly learned that you should never go in or out of the kitchen empty-handed. It was a perfect job for learning about customer service and time management.

After graduating from Miami University of Ohio with a degree in communications, Kim spent ten years in the hospitality industry, working both in Cleveland and downtown Chicago, as a sales/catering manager. A hotel is open 24/7 and so are customers’ wants and needs; Kim saw how success depended on following through on what was promised.

Kim left corporate America to concentrate on raising a family. When her second child was a toddler she started The DeClutter Box, initially helping friends unpack and organize their homes. At the time, Kim was one of only a handful of professionally recognized organizers in the United States. Shortly after, during a visit to her hometown, one of her grandma’s friends told her a story that confirmed her new calling.

“She came up to me and said, ‘You may not remember me, but I remember you,’” recalls Kim. “When you were three years old, I caught you organizing my utensil drawer.”

...





“Clutter is unmade decisions,” she explains. “When you declutter, you give people space to enjoy and room to think.”

“People become brutally aware of how much stuff they have once they are ready to make their move and downsize after twenty, thirty, or forty years of living in a home, and they are often overwhelmed,” she continues. “The DeClutter Box steps in to help them pair down to what they truly use, need, and enjoy. Some items can be enjoyed at other people’s homes, but the majority of items that are not stained or broken are part of a moving or estate sale or are ultimately donated.”

Over the years, Kim has served as president for The National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals (NAPO), and has been involved in the Main Street REALTORS® Association and Westmont Chamber of Commerce. She has been named among the top

nine organizers of 2021 in Chicago by Expertise.com, and has been enlisted by the local news.

When Kim is not helping her clients, she enjoys gardening in her backyard and spending time with her family. She has a nineteen-month-old grandson who amazes her every week with his new skills. She also takes time to support local and global causes, like Charity Water.

In addition to home organization, The DeClutter Box assists clients with home staging (using items and furniture they already have), packing and organized unpacking, and estate/moving sales. They also offer consignment advice and a donation outlet as part of their service offering. The DeClutter Box’s services and expertise are what make it one of the most sought-after organization companies in the Chicago western suburbs for sellers who are moving into smaller spaces or out of state.

“Over the past two years, most of our clients are [people who are] going through downsizing,” she says. “We’ve become well-versed in the selling or donation of unsold items that are in good condition. In this way, all of our clients’ unwanted items are no longer a burden.”

Because a home is a private place, and a client can feel embarrassed by their mess, Kim brings empathy, humility, and her expertise to every session. And when asked the secret to her success, Kim says it’s about being a good listener and always starting with understanding the desired end result—understanding her clients’ lifestyle goals is crucial before the first room is decluttered. “I pride myself on taking people from overwhelmed to overjoyed,” she says.

To learn more about how Kim and her team at The DeClutter Box can help you organize and make the best use of the space in your home, or approach your downsizing project efficiently, visit their website www.DeClutterBox.com or call **630-542-8782**.



CLUTTER IS UNMADE DECISIONS. WHEN YOU DECLUTTER, YOU GIVE PEOPLE SPACE TO ENJOY AND ROOM TO THINK.

“When we were done laughing, I let her know about my new decluttering business and she responded, ‘That is exactly what you should be doing!’ It helped me feel confident about my decision to change my career path,” she says.

Now, more than twenty-seven years later, Kim has become one of the leading experts in the now-thriving organization niche. She has been featured across mainstream media outlets—she makes guest appearances in many TV interviews and shares

helpful tips in popular publications, including *Parents* magazine, *iVillage*, *WGN*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *Real Simple*. One such tip? “I often tell people to ‘think of your home as your personal department store,’” she explains. “Keep like things together (and close to where they’re used), and maximize your space by thinking vertical not horizontal: ‘file, don’t pile.’”

Kim has also helped educate the public about the lifestyle benefits of organized spaces in everyday life.

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A man in a grey blazer and blue shirt stands in a bright room with large windows and a brick fireplace. The room has light-colored walls, a wooden beam on the ceiling, and a grey floor. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

Nathan Stillwell

A HOME RUN HOME SELLER

“Growing up, a common family saying was ‘those who work are those who get,’” says Nathan Stillwell, REALTOR® at John Greene REALTOR® in Naperville. “I live by the belief that you control how hard you work, and no one can take that away from you.”

This ideal was demonstrated every day by his father and grandfather, who owned successful car dealerships in the Lisle-Naperville area. Nathan worked for them as a car porter and was able to witness firsthand the requirements of running your own business and its reliability on tireless service.

Always a talented athlete, Nathan earned a baseball scholarship to attend Northern Illinois University, where he studied sports management. “The same hard work and competitive drive that pushed me in sports is what makes me so results-oriented in real estate,” he says.

After graduation, he pursued his goal of playing baseball professionally. While he chased his dream, he audited a real estate class not realizing it would be his future career. “Real estate flipping was big on TV at the time,” he explains. “It looked interesting and exciting, so I wanted to learn more. But I never thought I’d eventually become a REALTOR®.”

When his major league dreams faded, Nathan decided to interview at area real estate agencies. He instantly hit it off with Jack Persin of Baird & Warner in Naperville, an experienced pro and fellow baseball nut, and quickly accepted an offer to join his office. Jack became Nathan’s first mentor and go-to guide.

“Jack liked baseball too, and we really got along well,” says Nathan. “With his mentorship, in the first year I made \$50,000. This was right out of college, and I thought I was living the high life. From there I gained more passion for the job and people.” ...

cover story ◀
By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

•••

Eight years later, after meeting with Tim Greene, Nathan transitioned to the John Greene REALTOR® group to run his own office, and his career has been on an upward trend ever since.

“They’ve made my career explode in ways I never thought possible,” he says. “I think the synergy of the group and the local branding, along with the support from Tim Greene, really help us grow.” Nathan notes how much the support of the team and his fellow agents at John Greene has really made the difference for him.

Since joining John Greene REALTOR®, Nathan has seen it all—from renovations to new construction, to luxury homes, and working with first-time buyers. During that time he has been named a top broker six years in a row, a leading individual agent in Illinois for production, a top 1% national producer, and has received other recognitions. He credits his “can-do” attitude and “all-in” approach to his success.

“No’ hasn’t been in my vocabulary since I started as an agent,” says Nathan. “It doesn’t matter if a property is fifty-thousand dollars or five-million dollars, I am up for it. And I put in the same effort with all my clients.”

When not giving maximum effort to his clients, he gives his extra time to causes in the local community. Two charities he prioritizes are Little Friends, which gives support to those with developmental disabilities, and Naperville Responds For Veterans, because he has military members in his family.



“NO’ HASN’T BEEN IN MY VOCABULARY SINCE I STARTED AS AN AGENT...”

“I feel veterans have done so much for us, and, especially now, we should be thankful to them,” he says. “It is a group that gets left behind sometimes, so giving back to them is important to me.”

Nathan has been able to pass down his passion for baseball to his three sons, Colton, Connor,

and Bennett. All three play on traveling baseball teams, which Nathan helps coach.

“I am a baseball fanatic and am so excited that my boys love it too,” he says. “Spending time with them in sports is so rewarding. It’s been nice to be able to continue on that gift that I have.”

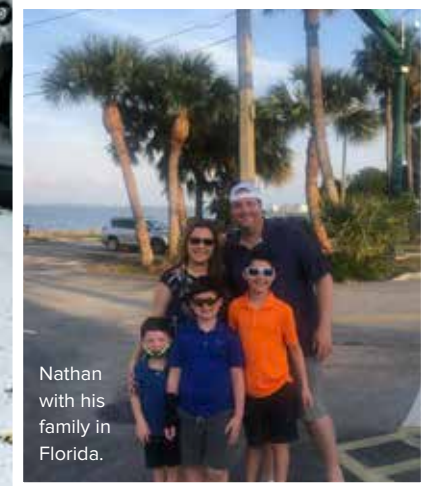
“I’d also like to give a shout out to my wife, Cheryl,” he adds. “From the business to the boys, she is a total rock star. None of it would be possible if she didn’t hold down the fort at home. She really is something special.”

As Nathan looks forward to the rest of the year, he reflects back optimistically and enthusiastically on his nearly two decades in real estate. “Seventeen years is just the beginning,” he says. “Over the last year, we have seen our real estate market rebound. Families can, and will, be able to find places to live and thrive again. I can’t wait for what’s next.”

Now, he is focused on developing a brand with a proven reputation for service, just like his grandfather’s and father’s car dealerships. To carry on the old-school work ethic he learned from his family, he’s looking forward to building a team with the same principles over the next few years.

“I always tell my kids to lead by example and be good to other people,” says Nathan. “It is as simple to say as it is hard to do. I think those principles relate not only to their everyday lives and baseball games, but also to work and how we live.

“Be a good person on and off the field,” he explains. “Be strong and a rock for other people. I try to live and work that way in all I do and be that person for my family and all of my clients.”



Nathan with his family in Florida.

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JOAN WAYMAN

From Barbie's® Dream House™ to Clients' Dream House

As a child, Joan Wayman spent hours in her room drawing house plans. She would stay up past bedtime, meticulously tracing blueprints with graph paper and a ruler, sketching front porches, couches, and rocking chairs with precision. Then she'd use the plans to stage her Barbie® Dream House™, complete with couches made out of Kleenex® boxes.

Her passion for dream homes has fueled her real estate career. Eighteen years into her life as a REALTOR®, Joan has a career sales volume of over \$62 million, serving clients in the western suburbs where she has lived for nearly thirty years. Her life there started after making a few stops in other parts of the country.

She grew up in the idyllic Stop 35 in Duneland Beach, Indiana. "As kids we played Ghost in the Graveyard after dark, had bonfires on the beach, and wandered trails through the woods," she remembers. "It was so fun and built independence from an early age."

Next, her family lived in Tennessee before her father's job loss forced them to move from a five-bedroom house to a two-bedroom apartment in Countryside, Illinois.

"Through our multiple moves, especially after my father lost his job, I learned the importance of feeling 'at home,'" she says. "Today, it's a big motivator for me to serve my clients well."

After graduating from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a degree in mechanical engineering, she worked as an engineer and route manager for MCI. In her role, she managed the under-sea cables between the United States and Europe.

In 1995, Joan transferred from Plano, Texas, to Chicago to help take care of her terminally ill father. A knowledgeable Keller Williams agent named Suzanne Athey helped Joan rent out her house in Texas until she returned. But while living in Chicago, Joan met future husband, Jeff, and never went back.

After many years as an engineer, Joan felt the calling of her childhood passion. In 2003, Joan earned an MBA with a concentration in real estate finance from DePaul University. She started helping friends analyze their rental properties and that opened the door to her future as an agent.

"That's when I began to lean out of my engineering career and into real estate—so I could balance my family life," Joan says. "My old career required a lot of travel, and I wanted to be home to raise my children."

Over the years, Joan has developed many efficiencies and techniques to help herself become successful. She credits "listening to the great agents who had gone before me" and her background in engineering for the soundness of these systems, structures, and strategies.

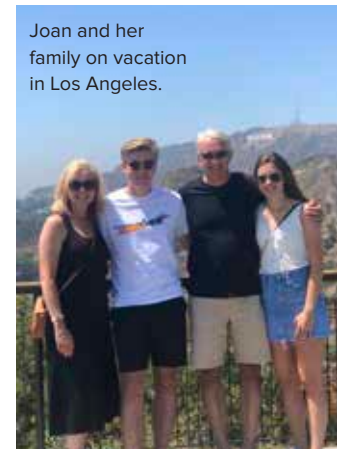




“
I'M FORTUNATE
TO HAVE A
GREAT TEAM OF
CREATIVE
GO-GETTERS...”



“I suggest to new agents that they learn from an experienced agent or to be on their team when first starting out,” says Joan. “Next, systematize your interactions so you don’t have to recreate the wheel every time. And [learn how to] qualify clients so that you can save your energy for the ones that really mean business and not waste your time. There are many valuable lessons you gain with experience.”



Joan and her family on vacation in Los Angeles.

Now leading her own group, Joan is eager to pass down those lessons to her team. “I’m fortunate to have a great team of creative go-getters,” she says. “Like Melissa Bowen, our admin; Chris

Nava, our REALTOR® buyer’s agent; and our latest addition, Bridget Bishop, our transaction coordinator.

When not working for her clients, Joan enjoys spending time with her husband, Jeff; their children, Chris (twenty years old) and Danielle (nineteen years old); and their dog, Lexi.

“We like to travel and do home improvement projects,” she says. “We own a bunch of rental properties and have become handy over the years.”

Joan enjoys taking walks, no matter what the weather, and she considers herself a movie buff. Joan is also an avid reader of history and historical fiction. In fact, she has been known to drag her family to historical reenactments.

An active participant in giving back to her community, Joan is involved in the Rotary Club of Darien and is a founding member of their Food for Kids program. Food For Kids has served over

300,000 weekend meals to food-insecure school children over the years. An ovarian cancer survivor herself, Joan also supports the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund.

Funny how drawing those floor plans as a kid connected Joan to a real estate career later in life. She now gets to move real couches instead of Kleenex® boxes when she stages homes. Joan says she loves the peace that overcomes people when they find their dream home: “Their shoulders relax, they smile, and they laugh when they have found ‘the one,’ and I’m so happy to be a part of that process.”

As Joan reflects back on the most rewarding parts of her second career as a REALTOR®, she focuses on the opportunities it has afforded her. “I am so grateful I was able to see my children grow up,” she reflects. “Being a REALTOR® has allowed me to do that. I’ve also been able to get to know some amazing people and see some amazing houses along the way. That means a lot to me.”

The Legacy Ranch

making a difference



An Equine-Assisted Therapy Facility in the Southwest Suburbs of Chicago



By Sandi Moleski

In 2016, our friend Anne Swaney was the victim of a homicide while she was on a horseback riding trip in Belize. Anne was an avid philanthropist and equestrian in the Chicagoland area. In effort to provide her with a living legacy, we created the Anne Elizabeth McComb Swaney Foundation to provide financial support to existing equine-assisted therapy programs in the area. Anne was passionate about the healing power of animals, specifically horses.

Then in November 2017, we purchased a ten-acre farm on Farrell

Road in Lockport, IL, to begin to build The Legacy Ranch, and have since developed it into the premier equine-assisted therapy facility in the Chicagoland area. At the beginning of 2019, we finished our first heated indoor arena and some new stables, and we followed that up with the creation of an office space and a party/viewing room.

At The Legacy Ranch, we provide equine-assisted mental health; behavioral, physical, and occupational therapy; and therapeutic riding all under one roof. We host hundreds of



special needs children and adults and their families, and veterans, as well as members of the general public, each year to provide a well-rounded suite of therapy services in a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.

Equine-assisted therapy has been scientifically proven to help heal people when other types of therapy fail. The horses provide a calming influence as well as a mirror to the individual client—that is, the horses help clients to better recognize their own feelings and actions. The horses also provide a means of healthy movement, and that helps strengthen muscles in clients who are dealing with physical disabilities.

The Legacy Ranch provided over 9,000 therapeutic sessions in our first two years of business and the requests/demand continues to grow. We are always in need of financial support in order to provide needed tools like adult-sized changing tables, wheelchair ramps, additional

horses, and an array of equipment to make this therapy possible for people of all ability levels.

Donations also allow us to provide treatment, through our scholarship program, to individuals who couldn't otherwise afford our services. The ranch also provides an onsite work skills program that is part of the young-adult special education programming run by the local schools. We also partner with many organizations who serve the special needs community to develop new and ben-

eficial programs. Our goal is always to provide support to our clients and their families, as well as a nurturing and open atmosphere.

We are primarily a volunteer-run organization that relies heavily on our wonderful volunteers and staff to care for our animals and clients alike. We are always in need of volunteers for our equine-assisted programming. We fully train our volunteers to assist in our programs and have a variety of roles available. Our volunteers are the people who make this work possible by donating their time and effort to our animals and our riders.

Due to the pandemic, our fundraising efforts over the past eighteen months have been thwarted to a large extent, and this has hampered donations coming into the program. Therefore, our biggest need at this point is financial assistance—assistance that allows us to continue to offer financial aid and programming for many in need to get the help they require.

We have ongoing sponsorship opportunities for individuals and businesses alike. Whether they prefer to sponsor a horse or rider or provide financial assistance for farm necessities, our donors are our lifeblood.

We are thrilled to announce that our first Legacy Special Olympics Equestrian Team is currently in training for the Special Olympics 2021 Fall Games. These athletes are working hard with their equine partners to fulfill their dreams of becoming medaled Special Olympians. Any and all donations to help offset travel and other costs for our Special Olympians so they can compete at the regional and state levels would be extraordinarily appreciated at this time.

We hear so often from our clients and their families about how their lives have changed for the better since coming to The Legacy Ranch. Whether it's calming their anxiety, strengthening their body, or creating opportunities for developmental growth, the miracles that happen by horseback every day are magical to watch and heartwarming to hear about.

About the Author:

Sandi Moleski is the founder of The Legacy Ranch. She works as a relationship manager in the financial services industry to support the work at the ranch. She is originally from the Kansas City, Missouri area, but now lives with her husband Mike and their two children in Lemont, IL. When she's not working or volunteering at the ranch, she can be found watching her son play baseball and football or watching her daughter dance competitively.

If you'd like to get involved with us or make a donation, please visit our website at www.thelegacyranch.org. If you have any questions about our services or are interested in volunteering, please email us at info@thelegacyranch.org or call 630-601-8920



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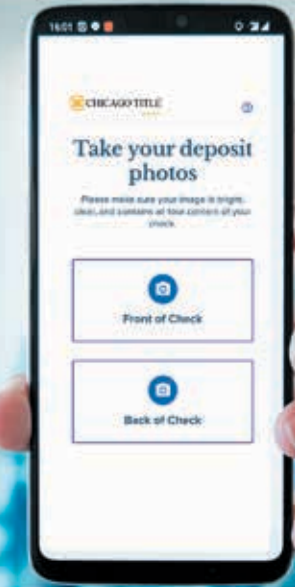
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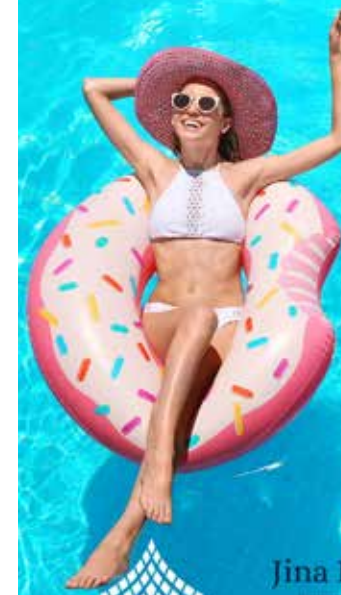
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CONSTRUCTING HIS FUTURE IN REAL ESTATE



Photo credit:
Bob Brisky

Wayman Group team photo - Chris Nava, Joan Wayman, and Melissa Bowen (not pictured Bridget Bishop).

Growing up with a union carpenter father gave Chris Nava the inside track for his future career as a REALTOR®. Now an agent at Keller Williams Experience in Downers Grove, Chris lived in the West Lawn neighborhood of Chicago until the age of twelve. That's when Chris's father surprised the family by following through on his promise to build them a home in the suburbs.

"I look up to both of my parents," says Chris. "It's inspiring to hear their stories and where they came from. The life they built for our family is truly amazing."

Chris spent the rest of his childhood in Burr Ridge, then pursued a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice from the University of Illinois Springfield. After graduation, his father got him into the construction trade as a union laborer for several high-rise projects in Chicago. In April 2016, while working on-site, Chris suffered an injury that almost took his life. As he recovered, he relied on his future wife, Sinem, for support.

"We were newly engaged at the time, and it's because of her that I was able to take the time to pursue my career in real estate," says Chris. "At the age of twenty-six, I underwent two major surgeries within a year. It affected my [physical] ability to continue working in construction."

It was then that Chris decided to transition into real estate. He credits the early mentorship from his team leader, Joan Wayman, for his instant and lasting success. "She has allowed me to gain the knowledge and experience needed to excel in this industry," says Chris. "I couldn't be more grateful to be on her team."

Chris's extensive knowledge of construction quality and architecture has earned him praise from clients. He was recognized as a Rookie of the Year in 2018, his first year as an agent, and given the Executive Club Award in 2019 from his previous brokerage office at Realty Executives Midwest.

•••

▶▶ on the rise

By Lauren Young
Photos by
AbiV Photography

CHRIS NAVA



Submitted photo

•••

After a long day, Chris enjoys working out and spending time with his family, especially his four-month-old daughter, Mila Marie. "My family and I enjoy having cookouts and watching movies or playing board games at home," says Chris. "I've also recently discovered that dancing (mainly to Cumbia music) with Mila Marie in my arms calms her when she cries."

“
AS MY DAUGHTER
GETS OLDER, I HOPE
TO TEACH HER THE
SAME CHARITABLE
VALUES MY PARENTS
HAVE INSTILLED IN ME.”

Giving back to his local community is another way Chris stays active. He volunteers for HCS Family Services and donates to the homeless, his church, the Red Cross, and families in need. "I could not imagine the hardships many people face in their lives," he says. "As my daughter gets older, I hope to teach her the same charitable values my parents have instilled in me."

Looking back at the obstacles he has overcome makes Chris proud of his achievements, and he's confident about his future success thanks to the



Chris with his four-month-old daughter, Mila Marie.



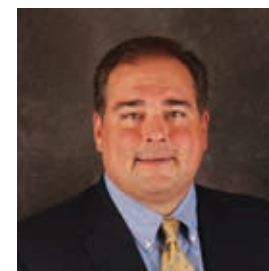
relationships he's built and the experience he's gained in his short time as an agent.

"I am thankful for my team at the Wayman Group, and the attorneys and lenders I work with," he says. "The hard work they put in makes the transaction process seamless for me, which I am able to pass down to the clients who have entrusted me with their sale or purchase. It is because of them that I am able to do what I love."



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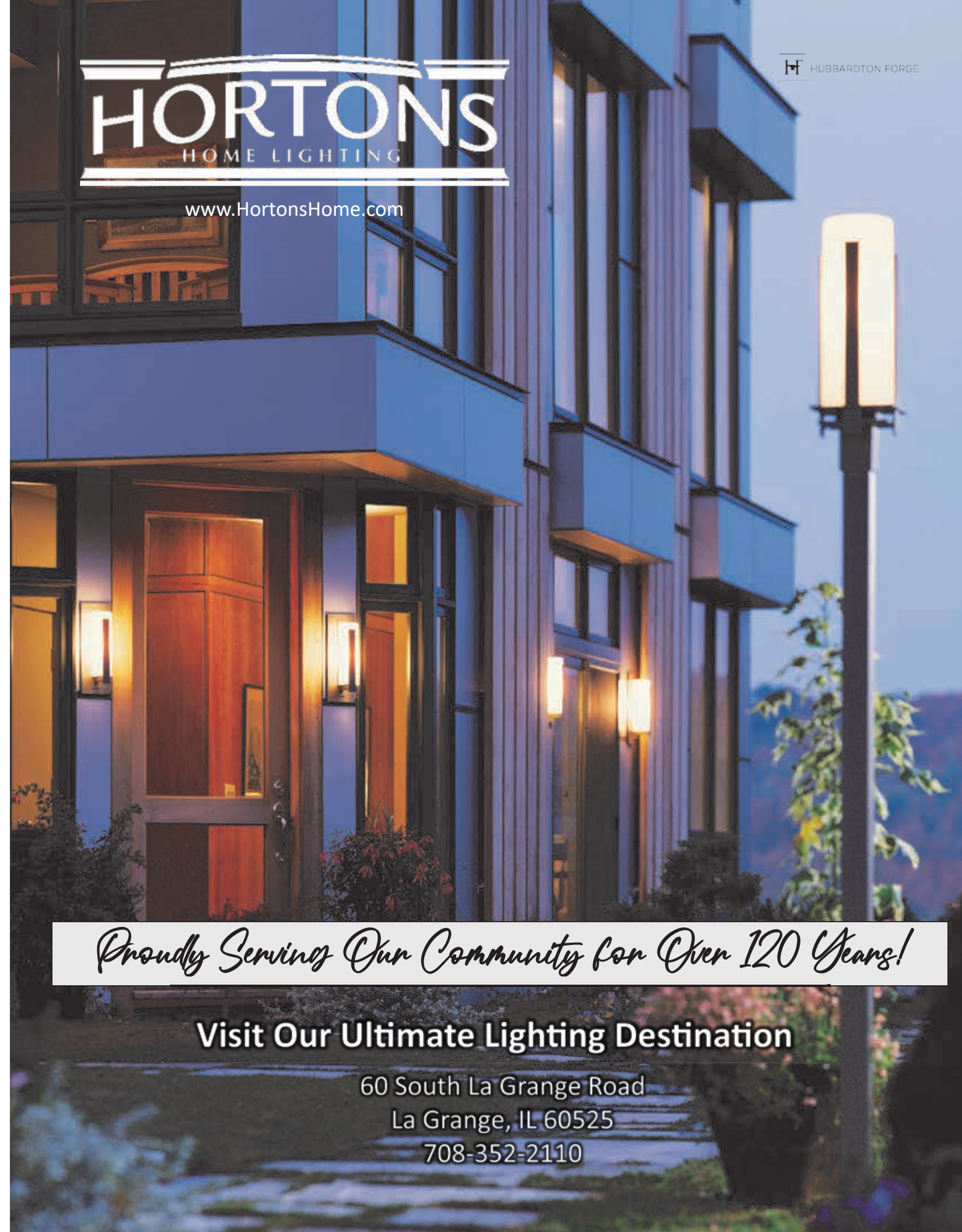
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