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Happy BIRTHDAY, DuPage Real Producers!

publisher's note

Can you believe it? It's already been one year since we launched *DuPage Real Producers* with its inaugural issue in January 2020. And what a year it has been...

A year ago, it was "business as usual." But that would soon change, with pandemic fears crowding the headlines. Then in March came the official shutdown. Our community was pretty stunned, but through those first Zoom calls, we pulled together.

As a community - REALTORS®, affiliates, associations - you made every necessary accommodation to serve your clients and the public safely and effectively.

And by the time you adjusted to your "pivot"...BAM...the delayed and compounded Spring Market came on like a tsunami starting in May. The spike in volume persisted through the summer and into fall. So many of you bested your personal bests. Congratulations on your achievements!

It is awesome to hear how much the real estate community is enjoying *DuPage Real Producers*, both in print and our digital version. A huge THANK YOU to our PREFERRED PARTNERS who make this platform possible. Because these affiliates are trusted and recommended by you, the top agents, we know they are the very best in the business!



Cheers to a healthy and prosperous 2021!

Joseph D'Alessandro
 Publisher, *DuPage Real Producers*
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RYAN HORVATH

OF CHICAGO TITLE

From Father to Son: A Foundation of Service

“I was incredibly fortunate to see my Dad excel at his craft and provide for his family,” says Ryan Horvath of Chicago Title. “He certainly laid down the foundation for me to achieve my goals.”

Ryan’s father served in the military, then worked as a union carpenter before starting his own construction company. Ryan was able to see first-hand what went into the build of a new construction home, the remodeling of an existing home, and the type of superior customer service needed to maintain a successful company.

“Growing up as the youngest of four boys, I was always around new construction or rehabs because of my father,” says Ryan. “My passion for real estate and entrepreneurship started at an early age.”

After graduating from Hinsdale Central High School, Ryan attended the College of Commerce at DePaul University. While there, Ryan got the



The whole Horvath gang in the backyard, left to right: Dominic (2), Kelli, Jamie (3), Sebastian (6), Franki (5), and Ryan with dogs Koa and Kona

itch for something new. It led him to live for a year in Hilo, Hawaii.

“Being able to live in Hawaii was such a blessing,” he says. “I was able to truly embrace the Aloha Spirit, the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It taught me to be patient, which in today’s trying times is especially needed.”

After returning home and resuming his education at DePaul, he completed an internship at Capital Funding Mortgage Company during his senior year. When he graduated in 2002, he stayed on as a loan officer for the firm for a few years. He held different positions with mortgage companies, title companies, and even helped the family construction business.



...

"I eventually realized that other opportunities were my calling, so I went back into originating mortgages," he explains. Ryan ended up joining a Chicago-based title company that was developing an attorney agent program for real estate.

"The company grew really fast," he says. "The year I started, 2010, we closed about 450 purchases. When I left in 2019, we were on pace to do over 5,000. I learned a lot about innovation and marketing myself."

When he transitioned to Chicago Title in September 2019, he brought his experience with building attorney partnerships to a new team. His focus now is helping attorneys get more business from REALTORS®, using all the innovative resources at his disposal.

"The company is obviously a huge full-service firm working in residential, commercial, land trust deals, and 1031 exchanges," he explains. "Plus, we are leading the way in applying new technology and the latest marketing techniques to all areas of real estate, which is where the world is moving. Being able to share these with my customers has been invaluable."

His marketing team at Chicago Title, called Castle Marketing, helps attorneys increase their visibility. From websites to new graphics, informative content to lead generation, Ryan is able to use these internal marketing resources to boost their businesses.

"We've been able to grow their existing firms and bring on new attorneys to help them grow, as well," says Ryan. "I introduce them to technology that will save them time and money."

Ryan also brings many creative talents to his job, growing his presence

"We are leading the way in applying new technology and the latest marketing techniques to all areas of real estate. Sharing these with my customers has been invaluable."



Ryan with his father, Bob, on a recent trip to Mexico

in the real estate community. In addition to Chicago Title's many innovations to keep everyone safe during the

pandemic, Ryan initiated Cocktails and Calculations for REALTORS®, attorneys and loan officers. He also recorded the instant classic "The Fresh Prince of Chicago Title" video that went viral in the DuPage real estate community!

Outside of everyday partnerships, Ryan is also active in local associations to promote the industry's success. This includes the Chicago Association of REALTORS® and Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS®, where he has previously served as Affiliate Chair and received the Affiliate of the Year Award in 2019. Staying active in these groups allows him to stay up to date on industry trends.



"Each of these philanthropies provide hope, resources, and positivity when needed the most. I truly cannot say enough good things about what they do."

Spending time with family is also a top priority. Ryan and his wife, Kelli, have four children, boys Sebastian (6) and Dominic (2) and girls Franki (5) and Jamie (3). They also have two dogs with Hawaii-inspired names, Koa and Kona.

"As hectic as this family life can be, we wouldn't change it for the world," he says. "Blessed and never stressed' is our motto!"

Looking forward, Ryan maintains optimism about a strong and stable real estate market. Especially with his growing team at Chicago Title and their new ways to get things done.

"We've kept all our business partners and clients safe during this time," says Ryan. "And our technology and approach continue to evolve. We offer a wide variety of closing options that include traditional closings, curbside closings, email closings for cash transactions and Audio Visual Online Notarization (AVON) through our Castle Signings department. These closings are done through video technology to eliminate the risk of in-person closings."

"These are great organizations that provide a wealth of information on real estate," he says. "I am able to effectively network with industry professionals while sharing valuable resources my company can provide."

Ryan's dedication to his career has not left him without time to give. He gives back to his community through several local charities. The Chicago Area Alternative Education League (CAAEL)

provides a full spectrum of academic and athletic programs to thousands of Chicagoland's most at-risk kids. The Nora Project teaches empathy and sparks friendships by promoting meaningful connections between students and their peers with disabilities. And H.O.M.E. DuPage, focuses on increasing accessibility to and preserving homeownership, with an emphasis on serving first-time buyers and low- to moderate-income people.



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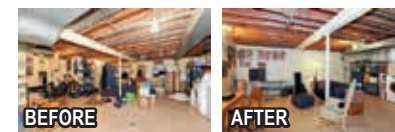
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Kim Scott

A First Impression That Inspired a Career

First impressions leave a lasting impact. For Kim Scott, moving from England to the U.S. in 2002, her initial introduction to the American approach to real estate stuck with her.

“When we first arrived in the States, our REALTOR® was actually the one who picked us up from the airport,” she says. “She showed us around the area, drove us to houses, and guided us through home showings. I was in awe.”

“In Britain, a REALTOR® sits behind a desk and schedules your open houses,” she adds. “But here, they are so much more, and I loved it! I was intrigued at how the real estate market worked here.”

Kim grew up in a family of four in Rotherham, a town in South Yorkshire, England. “It is a big steel-works area. My father worked as an athletic coach and in the steel industry, and my mother was a tailor,” she says. “I went to college at Granville Academy and then Leeds University.”

After college, Kim held a diverse range of jobs in various industries. She was a





regional manager of bars and restaurants for Bass Brewery. Next, she worked as general manager at David Lloyd Clubs, a group of health centers owned by the famous English tennis player. She also helped launch the Borders bookstore chain in the UK.

“When we moved to the States for my husband’s job, I had a 5-year-old and 7-year-old,” says Kim. “I always had nannies and au pairs in the UK, so I tried staying home with the kids. That lasted for all of six months. I got my personal training certification and helped my girlfriend run a gym.”

While staying busy as a personal trainer, she couldn’t shake that first experience with real estate from the back of her mind. In 2006, Kim decided to pursue her real estate license. “We were right around the corner from the economic downturn when I started,” says Kim. “I learned



“ Everything depends on the price, location, and timing. I am confident that I will get my clients the best price for the sale or the buy.



The Scotts pause for a pic on the island of Ko Samui, Thailand

the business through short sales and foreclosures because that is what was available at the time.”

“You had to know the facts and be straightforward with your listings,” she explains. “There was no messing around with the price, so I had to learn to advise my clients on the best strategy to sell. That is really where I grew my confidence. That period influenced how I work with clients to this day. “

Nearly 14 years later, she’s moved from RE/MAX Professionals Select to Baird & Warner Real Estate Naperville and now specializes in luxury listings. Her goal is to educate her clients and help them get satisfaction out of pricing properties the right way. “Luxury homes can sit forever on the market if they are not priced correctly,” says Kim. “I am pretty confident in my ability and approach to move luxury listings. I have a detailed action plan to get them sold in 90 days.”

With that confidence comes top rankings and a consistent flow of referrals, her primary source of clients. Kim has consistently rated in the top 1% of agents in Chicagoland and has earned a luxury portfolio certification as well. And one of her favorite parts as a REALTOR® is to mentor new and up-and-coming agents.

“I enjoy helping newer agents grow in their skills and confidence,” says Kim. “My son recently started selling real estate, and it makes me happy to encourage him and others with what I have learned over the years.”

Kim’s son, William, attended the University of Arizona and now works in commercial real estate. He has a license with Baird & Warner and has taken a position in Chicago. Kim’s daughter, Georgina, is a marketing professional living in Sydney, Australia.



Kim, Guy and William in one of Kim’s luxury listings

“I think this year, like then, is going to be all about educating the buyer and seller for what the market needs.”

When not managing her business, Kim and her husband, Guy, spend time traveling, backpacking, and exploring the outdoors.

“My daughter and I do travel together, too,” says Kim. “We journeyed to India to volunteer at the Agape Orphanage for children impacted by HIV and AIDS. We also raised funds for the location, but it’s amazing to be in direct contact with kids that need our help.”

Another family pastime is staying physically active. Kim and Guy enjoy

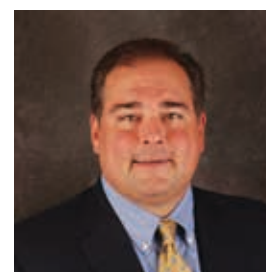
running together competitively. She has completed 15 marathons, including in Chicago, London, and the Boston Marathon twice, including the year of the bombing.

As Kim looks forward, she reflects on all she learned during the mid-2000’s recession. “I think this year, like then, is going to be all about educating the buyer and seller for what the market needs,” says Kim. “Everything depends on the price, location, and timing. I am confident that I will get my clients the best price for the sale or the buy.”



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

A Rising Star to Cheer On



Meredith with her husband Matt and sons Luke and Logan

“ I strive to understand my clients’ needs, keep them in the loop on neighborhood and community trends, and advise them to best serve their individual real estate goals.”

Originally from small-town Burlington, Iowa, Meredith Van Syckle watched her parents and grandparents constantly exhibit can-do, go-for-it attitudes. Combined with their entrepreneurial real estate passions, it was no wonder that Meredith ended up pursuing a career as a REALTOR®.

“My dad worked for my grandparents who started their own home improvement store, selling windows and doors,” says Meredith. “By the time I was born they had begun designing and selling kitchens and bathrooms, and my dad took over as president of the company.”

Her father branched out into other facets of real estate, buying, building and managing rental properties with Meredith’s mother, Lana. Her mother managed the financial side of the rental business while also teaching high school business and earned her master’s degree when Meredith was in high school. All the activity instilled a strong work ethic in Meredith and her older sister, Andrea.

“My family had so many things going on as their own rental business grew,” says Meredith. “As a kid, I would often go out with my dad to showings and meet rental clients. I’d see how he worked to serve them and juggled

everything successfully. It’s where my love of real estate was sparked.”

While attending the University of Iowa as a finance major, she was a collegiate cheerleader for the Hawkeyes. Because cheerleading took so much time and energy in addition to her studies and part-time job, her time in college developed discipline and a competitive edge that would serve her well in the future.

“After college, I started my career in finance here in the Chicago area,” explains Meredith. “I met my husband, Matt, during my freshman year of college, and his family lived in



a monthly top-three seller in the Downers Grove office four times in 2020. She has also recently joined the Downers Grove Junior Women's Club and is on the new membership committee, in addition to supporting her sons' extracurriculars.

"When I'm not busy with real estate, my time is devoted to my kids' activities," says Meredith. "My kindergarten-aged son loves hockey practice, gymnastics, and karate. I'm also involved in my younger son's preschool social committee. I'm happy to see them involved in the things they love. It gives me great joy."

the Chicago suburbs. This is also where my sister moved after college, so it was a natural place for me to end up."

Meredith continued working 12 more years in corporate finance, eventually co-managing a team of almost 60 people. "I just loved that about my job," says Meredith, "I was able to give career advice, mentor others, and help new analysts grow their careers. It was the people side of it that I enjoyed most."

After 12 years in finance, Meredith started to feel a pull to her childhood passion: real estate. "It was something that was always in the back of my mind, but early in my career, I felt I needed business experience first," she says. It wasn't until she was on maternity leave with her second son that she finally started the journey toward becoming a REALTOR®.

"My husband and I were driving through Downers Grove, and saw a sign that said real estate classes were starting Monday," says Meredith. "Matt told me I should go for it, and, even though the timing with a newborn was going to be a challenge, we could work through it together. I was excited but had my doubts. I went to class two nights a week and got my license. All I needed was that boost of confidence."

In April 2019, Meredith joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Chicago as a licensed REALTOR®. In that short time, she has gotten attention as a rising star with an impressive understanding of the financial side of real estate. She has been recognized as

Meredith's family, husband, Matt, and sons, Luke (5), and Logan (2), live together in Downers Grove, where they enjoy being active in their neighborhood. They also enjoy traveling and are looking forward to skiing together as a family for the first time this winter. "We are excited to take my oldest skiing this year," says Meredith. "It is something Matt and I did a lot before we had kids."

As Meredith looks forward, she maintains a positive and hopeful attitude toward her future in real estate. Her main goal is to continue to grow her business and serve her clients well.

"I am very happy with how my first year and a half of real estate has gone, and I want to continue to grow," says Meredith. "I strive to understand my clients' needs, keep them in the loop on neighborhood and community trends, and advise them to best serve their individual real estate goals."

““

I am very happy with how my first year and a half of real estate has gone, and I want to continue to grow.

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Jim » celebrating leaders BARCELONA

Written by **Lauren Young**
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“I grew up with a father who was a real estate entrepreneur, which sparked my interest in the business at a young age,” says Jim Barcelona, Vice President of Brokerage Services for @properties.

Jim’s father was a lawyer turned real estate developer who would bring him along to scout development sites and walk through model homes. The family of six moved from Palos Heights to Hinsdale while Jim was entering middle school, and after high school, he headed to the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota to study accounting.

“I found out midway through college that I was bored to tears and that I did not want to pursue a career in accounting,” he says. “During my senior year I was introduced to a course in real estate. It all clicked and from then on it was a no brainer as to what I was meant to do.”

Fresh out of college and eager to get into real estate, Jim took a chance on an assistant position with a national commercial real estate company even though there were no benefits and the pay was low. “I’m not sure initially that I made my parents

...

“

I have a more personal model of service which is to be as attentive and responsive to the agents as possible. If I can attend to their needs and support their businesses at a high level, the rest will take care of itself.



The Barcelonas in Punta Mita, Mexico, left to right: Elena, Jim, Vince and Lily.

facilitating deals for large multi-family residential buildings throughout the Midwest. When the housing market dipped in the mid-2000s, he was recruited by a Chicago bank to head up their disposition of nearly \$300 Million of distressed commercial and residential properties and loans.

“It was the right transition at the right time,” says Jim. “The move continued to round out my skillset and gave me the banking side’s perspective of real estate. It was a wild ride in those years, but everyone learned a lot.”

After three years, Jim was able to combine all his knowledge and experience in sales, management, lending, and negotiating for both residential and commercial real estate within a new position. He joined Coldwell Banker as manager of its Elmhurst, and then St. Charles offices. Under

his leadership, both offices enjoyed successful growth. In 2018, he teamed up with @properties to lead the company’s west suburban expansion.

“Now approaching my third anniversary with @properties, I can’t thank the founders, Mike Golden and Thad Wong, enough for putting their trust in me to accelerate the growth of the company in the west suburbs,” says Jim. “I’ve been fortunate to be a leader in the expansion of @properties in Western Springs, Hinsdale, Downers Grove, St. Charles, Naperville, Orland Park, and now Northwest Indiana.”

Jim would be remiss if he did not mention his “partner-in-crime” Tricia Riberto. “In building a lot of the west suburban opportunities for us, Tricia and I work incredibly well together to open and develop offices,” he says. “We’ve grown to



the number one market share in more than half of the markets in the area in a very short period of time. We’ve been moving quickly and efficiently.”

When Jim is not busy coaching his teams of REALTORS®, he likes to spend time coaching his kids’ sports teams. His son, Vince (11), is active in basketball while his daughter, Elena (13), favors volleyball. Jim and his wife, Lily, have a passion for travel they share with their kids, as well.

As Jim looks forward, he is focused on doubling down on growth efforts for @properties. For him, that starts with agent development and support. “The only way growth happens is through our agents and their success,” says Jim. “My first and foremost goal is to meet my agents’ needs. I have a more personal model of service which is to be as attentive and responsive to the agents as possible. If I can attend to their needs and support their businesses at a high level, the rest will take care of itself.”

Currently, Jim is embarking on his most key project for 2021: building up their newest office in the heart of Naperville.

“Those agents have taken the leap of faith with us and are going to be with us to build something dynamic and fun in such an enormous market,” says Jim. “Naperville is where we are going to put our west suburban flagship location, right on Washington Street. Our fabulous agents are doing something wonderful and memorable. That’s what 2021 is about.”

proud, but after being partnered with an incredible mentor and learning the art year after year, my growth accelerated quickly,” says Jim. “It brought me a deeper understanding of business, and I was able to gain exposure to big business and successful entrepreneurs while in my 20s.”

“Most of my early opportunities included high-level sales of \$5 Million, \$10 Million, and \$15 Million apartment properties,” he explains. “Because I was so involved in these transactions, I was able to develop sales and negotiation strategies that have helped me to this day.”

During his first decade in real estate, Jim concentrated mostly on



Happy New Year!

Give the gift to choose this year



TRACY Tran

cover story

INVESTING IN HOPE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

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

“My parents always wanted us to have an education and put a lot of emphasis on that as we were growing up,” says Tracy Tran. Her parents moved from Vietnam to Chicago with Tracy, her sister, and younger brother in 1991. Thanks to their encouragement, Tracy graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1999 with a degree in Computer Information Engineering.

After graduating, she started working for manufacturing giant Siemens, where she would spend 14 years. “Even though I was in the corporate world a long time, it was always in the back of my mind that I wanted to have a career where I wasn’t dependent on someone else,” Tracy says.

While at Siemens, Tracy started her own nail salon in an effort to become more independent. After the market crash in the 2000s, she sold the business and

considered her next investment and career opportunity. She settled on real estate but getting there wasn’t without challenges for a busy working mom.



Tracy with her sons Lucas (left) and Brandon (right)

“I had two beautiful children, a full-time job, and needed to get my real estate license,” remembers Tracy. “I had to wake up at 4:30 a.m. to study for certification because that was the only time I had for myself.”

It took Tracy six months of early mornings to complete her license. Then she started as a REALTOR® part-time while still work-

ing full time at Siemens. While juggling both careers, Tracy made sure to keep a positive attitude.

“My mindset was always, ‘If it works, it works. If it doesn’t, then it doesn’t. But I have to give it my all,’” says Tracy.

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“When you work with your heart, with honesty and passion, not only do your clients come out ahead, you do as well.”



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Tracy with her daughter Skylar

party every year and invites everyone she can. “We bring every person we know, including family, friends, and clients,” she says. “It is open to the public, and my goal is just to get to know as many people as possible. It is important to share our culture with the next generation.”

While Tracy is consistently rated as a top agent and has been awarded for her accomplishments, she dedicates much of her spare time helping others reach their full potential. She especially focuses resources on causes in Vietnam and the next generation she cares so much about. “Because I grew up in Vietnam, my heart will always endeavor to help where needed,” says Tracy. “The village where my grandfather grew up is a poor area. They harvest all



their own food and have to work very hard to make a living. I think about them often.”

Tracy focuses much of her energy on the kids in her extended family that don’t have the resources to get an education. When a member of the family becomes sick, children often can’t afford to attend school. Tracy regularly sends funds and supports in

“ Education is the key. It’s how I can contribute something for the future.”

...

“ When I show homes, I am able to determine what updates are needed and how much they will cost.

...

other ways whenever she can. “I have six kids who don’t have family or parents, so I support them, pay for school, and whatever else they may need,” she explains. “Education is the key. It’s how I can contribute something for the future.”

Tracy wants to see every single child get a quality education, no matter their circumstances. She sees it as her way to continue the legacy passed down from her parents. “If you have some sort of education, you are way ahead of others that don’t,” she says, echoing lessons from her mother and father. “I always tell my kids that education is the key. No one can take your knowledge out of your brain. When you have it is always there for you.”

When she’s not working, Tracy enjoys cooking and spending time with family. Tracy’s three children, Lucas (16), Brandon (12), and Skylar (9), keep her busy. Though she considers herself a workaholic, she always makes time to attend her two sons’ soccer games, whether close by or when they travel. She also makes time to bake with her daughter.

As Tracy looks forward to the future, she is as confident as ever in her knowledge, experience, and positivity. “I know the inside and outside of a home like a contractor,” says Tracy. “But, more importantly, I advise my clients on the right way to proceed. When you work with your heart, with honesty and passion, not only do your clients come out ahead, you do as well.”



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