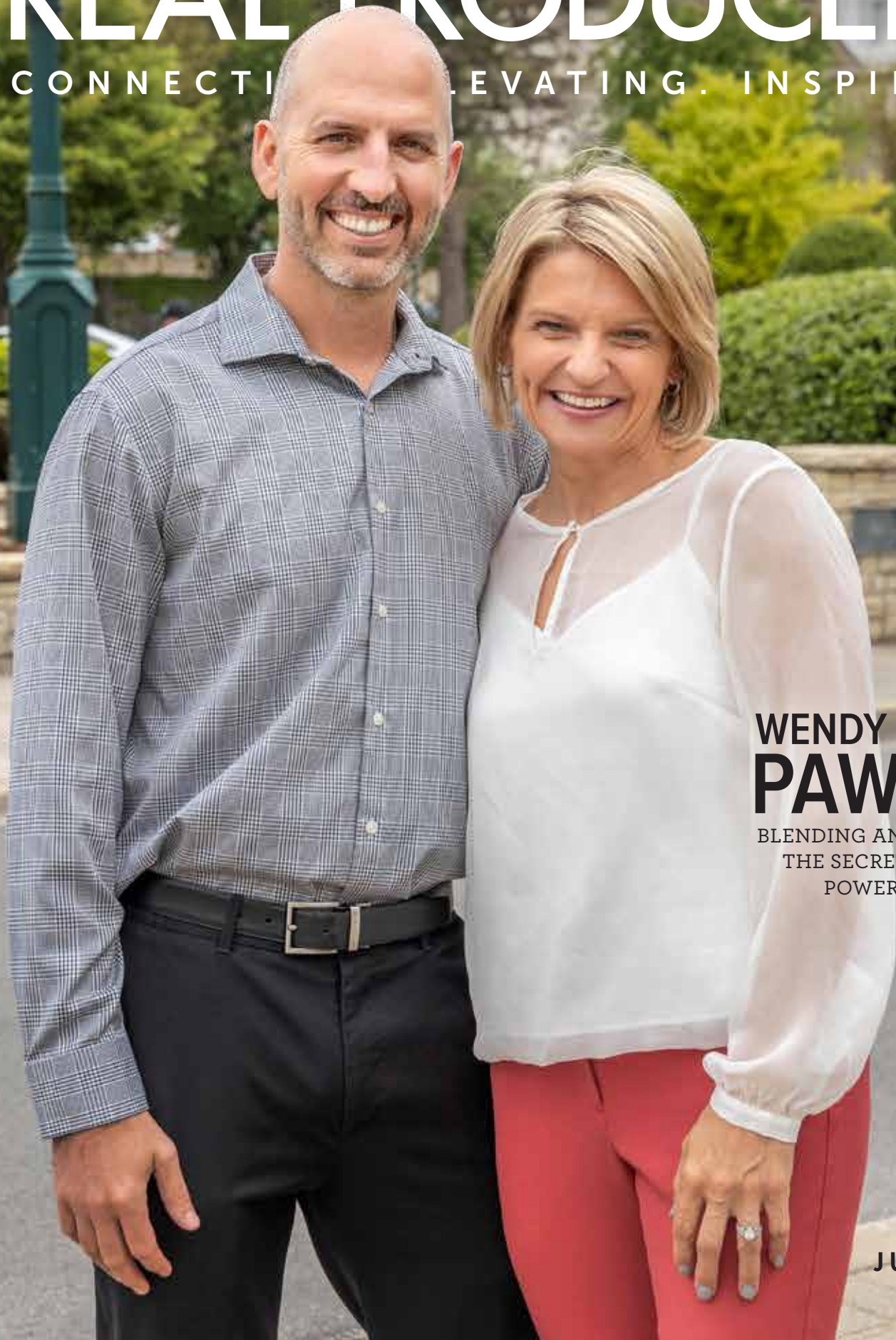


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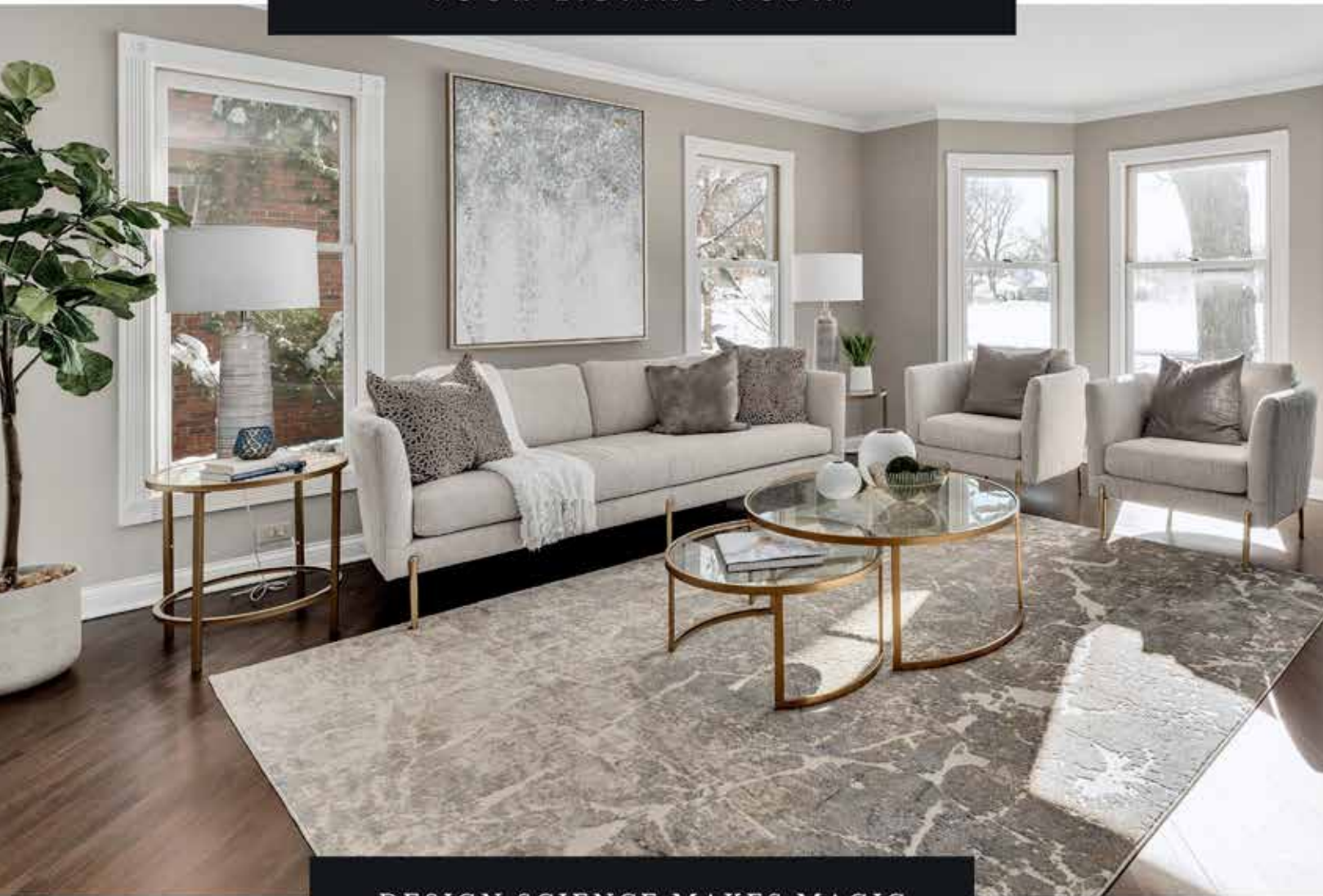
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<p>08 Publisher's Note</p>		<p>12 Events: Virtual Jam Sessions</p>		<p>16 Partner Spotlight: Prager Moving & Storage Co.</p>
	<p>22 Cover Story: Wendy & Mark Pawlak</p>		<p>28 REALTOR® Feature: Walt Burrell</p>		<p>32 REALTOR® Feature: Shanon Tully</p>

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PUBLISHER'S note

It was a typical Friday morning, so we naturally picked up donuts on the way to school. I dropped off my older two girls, and then it was just my son and I driving home. He was eagerly awaiting the sugar rush he was about to receive from his yummy treat. We walked through the door, I set the Dunkin' Donuts bag on the counter, pulled

out a donut, and took a bite. In a nanosecond, this son of mine went from positive anticipation to the most ungrateful little boy. He thought I was taking a bite of HIS donut, and he was not happy. I had to talk him off the ledge and say, "Son, this donut is mine. I did not take a bite of yours," as I proceeded to pull his whole (unbitten) donut from the bottom of the bag.

His countenance changed as a subtle smile spread across his face. I knew this was a teachable moment, so I asked him, "What if I *did* take a bite of your donut? Who paid for it?" "You did, Dad, and I love you," he sheepishly responded.

Kids have a way of shedding light on our own selfishness and ungrateful attitudes as adults. The only difference is that it is on a smaller scale. Living in America, I get the same way at times. I have a dozen donuts, and I get upset when someone takes a bite of one of my donuts, but I know there is plenty to share.

As we remember the freedom and independence we have living in the United States, let's not forget to be grateful. Be thankful that we have the opportunity to be entrepreneurs, to make money, to save money, to give money, and that our government actually allows us to own property. America has its problems and is far from perfect, but residing in this country comes with great privilege.

Fighting the good fight,



Andy Burton
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UNTIL ALL ARE FREE

Right now, around the globe, there are approximately 40 million trapped in forced labor or sexual exploitation. The N2 Company – the company behind this publication and 900+ others like it – is proud to help fund the life-saving efforts of nonprofits fighting this injustice. Through N2's giving program, N2GIVES, we've donated more than \$13 million to the cause. This was made possible by the hard work of our Area Directors, the partnership of our local advertisers, and engaged readers like you.

Love Justice International

There are many tactics used by traffickers to trick vulnerable people into slavery. In an all-too-common scenario, victims are lured away from their homes and escorted into bordering countries by the promise of a much-needed work opportunity. It's only when the victim arrives as a complete outsider, with no one to turn to for help, that he or she realizes the true nature of the "work."

This is just one of the tactics Love Justice International (www.lovejustice.ngo) is on a mission to disrupt. The nonprofit currently operates 56 transit monitoring stations at prime border crossings in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and South Africa that are known for their unassuming role in a victim's journey into slavery. By crowd-watching for any suspicious behavior and questioning potential traffickers and victims, Love Justice has successfully intercepted more than 22,000 people from exploitation.

Rescue:Freedom International

We've supported Rescue:Freedom's (rescuefreedom.org) mission in the past, yet one of our biggest changes in giving

this year is supporting their Local Partner Network (made up of smaller nonprofits fighting sexual slavery). This model shares best practices, consults in helpful areas, and financially supports a part of each local partner's budget for the year. We are excited to give to RFI's network and to connect smaller local groups we've supported in the past so they can receive more than just financial help along their way to making a greater impact.

International Justice Mission

IJM (ijm.org) believes every person deserves to be free, and they partner with local justice systems to end violence against those living in poverty. Restoring victims from slavery and then bringing the criminals who committed this crime to justice – ensuring traffickers cannot exploit anyone else – is how they work toward ending slavery in our lifetime. IJM works with local authorities in 13 countries to restore victims of violence, forced labor, and sex trafficking, fight in courtrooms until slave owners are put behind bars, and provide training and support for local law enforcement to end the cycle of violence and injustice.

Through the years of giving to many nonprofits with big hearts and dreams to end human trafficking, it became clear we needed to focus our giving on organizations that provide a web of support in the anti-human trafficking realm: nonprofits who work together, creating an effective force and network where their impact is greatest. Love Justice International, Rescue:Freedom International, and International Justice Mission, are our 2021 N2GIVES nonprofit partners. All three organizations pour their heart and soul into their work, each serving as a separate but vital player in the anti-trafficking movement by employing their own unique strengths and working with those who have specific expertise in combatting slavery. Here are their stories.

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Virtual JAM SESSIONS



DUPAGE RP REAL PRODUCERS

JAM SESSION #5 **f LIVE**

An intergalactic conversation about DuPage real estate

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events

Top REALTORS® and Preferred Partners Engaging Virtually

As an organization, we are fully aware of the need to continue to connect, inspire, elevate, and add value to both our REALTORS® and Preferred Partners. As a response to this need, we have started hosting 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 #4 **f LIVE**

An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Maureen Rooney **Samantha Bauman** **Gail Niernmeyer** **Kris Maranda** **Jackie Angiello**

Janelle Iaccino **Woytek Niemiec** **Gary Giovannelli**

HOSTED BY **ANDY BURTON**

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Thursday April 8th 9:15 am CST

DUPAGE RP REAL PRODUCERS.

Jam Session #6 **f LIVE**

An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Chase Michels **Diana Ivan** **Diane Coyle** **Nathan Stillwell** **Pete Rodriguez**

Michael Patti **Tia Duderstadt** **Margaret Gehr**

HOSTED BY **ANDY BURTON**

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Tuesday May 18th 9:15 am CST



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



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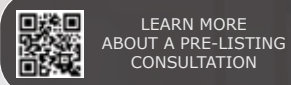
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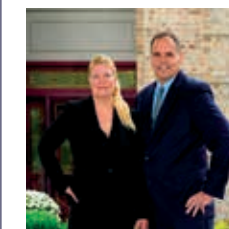
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JOHN PUSCHECK & JOE SPOONER

WITH PRAGER MOVING
& STORAGE CO.



▶ partner spotlight

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

MOVED TO DELIVER THE BEST

“Just like REALTORS®, all moving companies are not the same,” says John Puscheck, president of Prager Moving & Storage Co. in Naperville. “Our people and company culture make a huge difference in the success of each move and help reduce the stress on the homeowner.”

John’s father purchased Prager Moving & Storage Co. in 1961. At that time, it was a small company still owned by the original founders, the Pragers, who launched the business in 1954. In 2001, upon the passing of his father, Chuck, John took over ownership of the company.

“I’ve worked at Prager since I was 13. I’ve done just about every job in the company,” says John. “Now my role focuses on positioning our company for the future and ensuring that we are evolving right along with how our industry is evolving. We stay in front of changes and adapt with the needs of customers.”

About seven years ago, Joe Spooner joined the team, taking on the responsibilities of vice president and general manager. Joe began with Prager in 2014 and brought his logistics knowledge and people skills to a company whose culture is heavily built on taking care of its team members.



“I found my way into the transportation industry by chance and never looked back,” says Joe. “Before coming to Prager, I worked as a fleet manager in Chicago within the intermodal sector. Working closely with the drivers, I gained the perspective [and understanding] that if I can help the driver be successful, that helps the company be successful. Since then, the importance of supporting my team has been a key value I stand by!”

For nearly sixty years, the Prager name has been respected in DuPage County, and the company continues to service its communities with pride and dedication. Personal moves make up the bulk of their business, which involves packing, loading, transportation, and even the storing of personal belongings, both locally and nationally. Prager’s office and industrial moving services help clients move the contents of their workspaces,





“
**JUST LIKE
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 ARE NOT
 THE SAME...**
 ”
 - JOHN

hiking, biking, fishing, skiing, and even snowshoeing. Every Memorial Day, the family participates in the Murph Challenge, an annual fundraiser for the Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Scholarship Foundation. The fundraiser supports a cadet training facility and scholarships.

Joe recently married his best friend, Laura. They enjoy spending time with their large family, and they make it their goal to stay fit and active. When they are not at their local CrossFit gym, they can be found exploring new local restaurants and clubs with friends.

“Even with our growth and international reach, we still view our company like a family business,” says John. “Being able to share the reviews, feedback, and letters we receive about the great service [we’ve provided] with our team is very fulfilling. But seeing

our employees make careers being part of our company is the most fulfilling part.”

“People may not always hear what you say, but they always see what you do,” notes Joe. “That goes from frontline service folks to our leadership. If we expect our people to bring it every day, then we need to also.”

“Each member of our team has to do their best every day, knowing the reputation and expectations associated with our company,” he adds. “Our job is to support them so they can be successful.”

To learn more about the high-quality services Prager Moving & Storage Co. provides their clients, particularly their REALTOR® concierge services, please visit their website, www.PragerMoving.com, or email SteveB@pragermoving.com.

•••
 warehouses, or other commercial goods. Finally, the company’s high-value products group takes care of their medical, telecommunications, data centers, and other specialized industry clients.

Prager has grown from a local moving company to one that services the entire

lower 48 states and handles international moves. Its success has been recognized with multiple awards by their national network, Atlas Van Lines.

“No two shipments are exactly alike,” says Joe. “Each day presents new challenges and, with them, new opportunities to find creative solutions.”

When not managing their business, John and Joe enjoy spending time with their respective families and staying involved in community causes.

John and his wife, Julie, keep an active family. Their daughter, Lauren (20 years old), and their son, Camden (18 years old), participate in sports,

Left: Joe completing the CrossFit open at his local affiliate, Amplify.

Middle: John with his paddleboard partner, Cooper

Right: John and Joe with their wives, Julie and Laura, at the Atlas Van Lines annual convention.






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WENDY & MARK PAWLAK

Blending and Sharing—the Secret
Sauce of a Powerhouse Team



cover story

By Lauren Young

Photos by Katherin Frankovic

“My defining path has been presenting to and teaching others,” says Wendy Pawlak of Keller Williams Experience in Downers Grove. “My passion for teaching started in the school classroom, evolved into real estate listing presentations, and continues now with training businesses and other agents.”

Wendy was born and raised in Downers Grove. She obtained a bachelor’s in health science and a master’s degree in elementary education before teaching kindergarten for six years. In 2006, Wendy moved into real estate for the freedom and flexibility it offered her growing family.

“I was pregnant with what we—my late husband, Ray, and I—thought was our baby number three, but it turned out to be babies three and four,” she says. “That meant we’d soon have four kids under the age of four. It became clear that my original career path was just not going to work.”

Since making the transition to REALTOR®, Wendy hasn’t looked back. Along with opportunities to continue teaching, she has found accomplishment in helping others gain financial wealth and security. Wendy sees real estate as a way to fund a life worth living—for herself and those around her.

“My goal is to help others live their best lives, along with constantly trying to elevate the industry,” she says. “I believe that if agents work together, we will all succeed. There is enough business for everyone, and the more we collaborate the more we can better serve people.”

Wendy and Mark Pawlak met through their sons who were in Boy Scouts together. “We were acquaintances who became fast friends and the rest is history,” says Wendy. They married in 2016.

Mark was a vice president of investment management at Morgan Stanley and held various technology roles—application developer, database administrator, security analyst, web developer, and project manager—for over 20 years. After attending several annual training sessions with Wendy, Mark decided to follow her into real estate in 2017. ●●●

... “I went to these training sessions with no intention of becoming a REALTOR®,” says Mark. “[I went] just to spend time with Wendy over Valentine’s Day weekends and to learn more about the cloud technology that Keller Williams was rolling out.”

“After the third event, I knew that with my technology and management background and Wendy’s experience, we could make an amazing business together,” he says.

When Mark and Wendy are not managing their business, they stay active in local causes. One of these organizations is The Legacy Ranch, an equine-assisted therapy farm in Lockport. They also support the Hope and Friendship Foundation in Lemont, a group that connects those in need to community resources.

Wendy also serves as a certified trainer for The ONE Thing; a training platform that’s based on the best-selling book by Gary Keller, the founder of Keller Williams; to help people form habits to achieve extraordinary results.

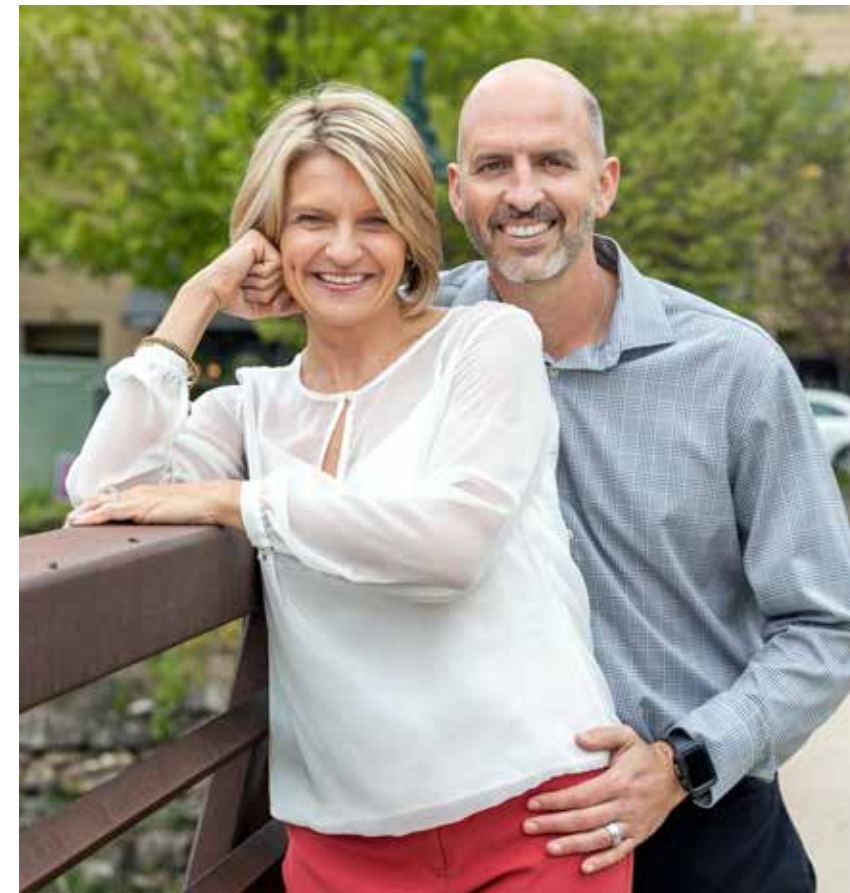
Mark is a commissioner on the Lemont Planning and Zoning Commission, a Lemont Lion, and member of the Lemont Rotary Club. He and Wendy have even emceed the Rotary’s beer and wine tasting events.

The Pawlaks like to call themselves a “big, blended family” that loves to do anything outdoors. Their family includes seven kids ranging from age 14 to 22: Luke, Nathan, Maximus, Daleigh, Ben, Sylvia, and Ella. Favorite activities include running, DIY projects, gardening, and beekeeping.

As the duo look forward to this year, they’re focused on helping their team thrive. “I think 2021 is going to be an amazing year in real estate,” explains Mark. “Especially with the vaccine becoming mainstream and inventory starting to increase.”

“We are constantly casting our vision and going back to our team members’ ‘whys,’” adds Wendy. “Success for us is simple: it is defined as always learning, always growing, and getting one percent better every day. And that’s our goal for everyone around us as well.”

**“SUCCESS FOR US IS SIMPLE:
IT IS DEFINED AS ALWAYS
LEARNING, ALWAYS GROWING,
AND GETTING ONE PERCENT
BETTER EVERY DAY.”**
- WENDY



Mark and Wendy's dogs

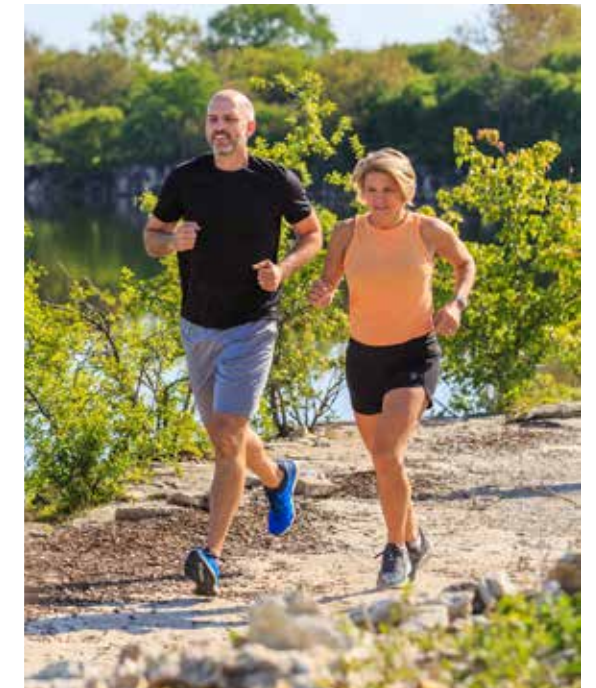


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Wendy and Mark with family (Ella, Daleigh, Nathan, Ben, Maximus, and Sylvia) in Sedona, AZ.

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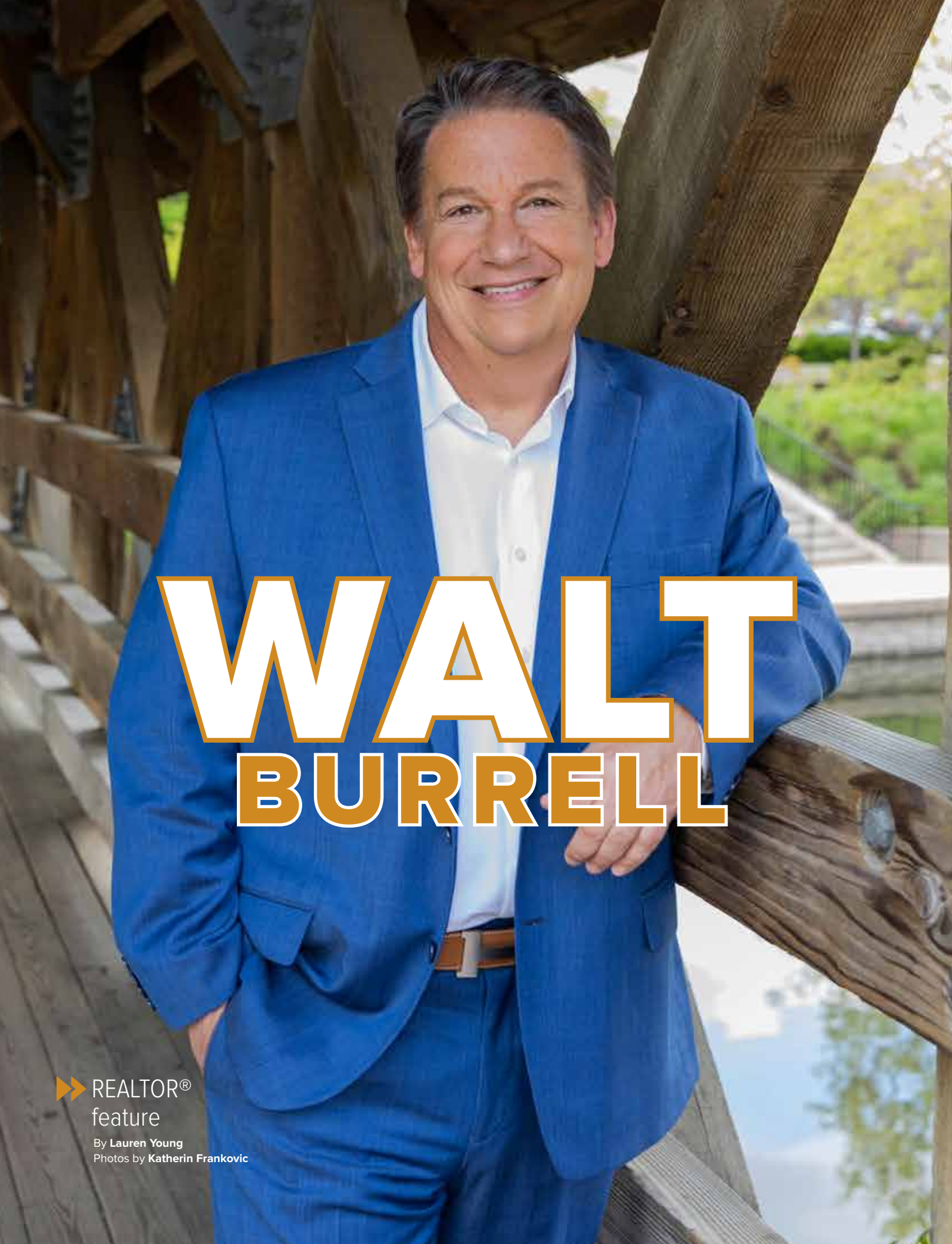
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WALT BURRELL

▶ REALTOR® feature

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic



The Visible Strength of Experience and Great Relationships

When you meet Walt Burrell, REALTOR® and co-founder of the Ville Team at Coldwell Banker in Naperville, it likely comes as no surprise that he's spent all of his adult life in sales. His love for good conversation and warm, personal relationships is obvious, and it's something that he inherited from his socially active, salesperson father.

"I have always admired my father. He was in sales his whole career, and I marveled at his stories about the variety of people he met through his job," says Walt. "Our house was always a social environment. From him, I learned the importance of building relationships, and I have emulated his sociable personality."

Walt grew up in Northbrook before moving to Naperville, where he has lived for 28 years. He graduated from Southern Illinois University with a double major in business and photography before jumping into sales. Shortly out of college, he started a California Closets franchise with a childhood friend.

"I was owner of the Chicagoland franchise for 22 years," says Walt. "Constantly working in homes helped me learn a lot about the housing market. When I decided to make a career change, it was a natural transition to real estate."

Walt became a REALTOR® in December 2014 after selling his franchise. An instant success, he

earned the Rookie of the Year award in 2015. Over the next few years, he developed a vision for an ideal real estate office he would either run by himself or with a partner. The lessons he learned as an owner-operator, especially during the tough times of a down economy, shaped that vision.

"In the early 2000s, I had 49 employees when homeowners' discretionary income dropped," says Walt. "I stopped taking a salary so I could keep as many employees as possible. In reflection, that time was the crucible that shaped the way I run a business today. It taught me how to manage effectively, how to creatively cultivate sales, and it crystallized the meaning of loyalty as well as the importance of supporting one another." ●●●



His past also taught him the importance of appreciating a client's experience during a potentially trying process. "Having seen how stressful it can be to buy or sell a home, I wanted to develop a total real estate experience so as to make the transition for the buyer or seller less difficult, even enjoyable," he says.

Walt found the perfect partner with his family friend and neighbor of 17 years, Bridget Salela. Like Walt, Bridget had decided to switch careers and share his desire for creating a better buying and selling experiences for clients. In 2018, the two joined forces to form the Ville Team. With Walt's background and valuable access to a variety of properties, the two were able to grow their new career together. Their shared expertise in luxury homes gave them the foundation to understand and sell to that market.

Four years later, the Ville Team has a total revenue of \$131 million, with Walt alone topping \$53 million. In 2019 and 2020, they were awarded the President's Circle Award. The office has grown to a team of seven agents, serving customers in a broad area throughout Naperville and beyond.

When Walt is not managing his real estate business, he enjoys family



Walt with his family.

“ I strive to be a person of **INTEGRITY,** and I believe in the importance of building and maintaining healthy **RELATIONSHIPS.** ”

dinners with his wife, Angelique, and their daughter, Hadyn, and their son, Chase—especially when both children return from their college studies. Together, they regularly visit Lake Tahoe for skiing, hiking, and paddleboarding. You'll also find Walt on the riverwalk in downtown Naperville with his dog, or on his front porch, chatting with family and neighbors.

As Walt reflects on the events over the past year, he offers this advice to other professionals in the industry: "Never slow down. Real estate is full of peaks and valleys, and you need to work hard through the peaks to keep the valleys at bay."

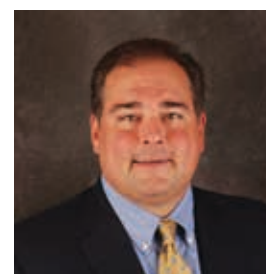
Through surviving the housing crash of the 2000s, building and selling a successful company, and launching his own new business in a new field, Walt has seen it all. But like his father before him, his enduring relationships stand out.

"The most rewarding aspect of real estate comes from creating a positive experience for the people we work with," says Walt. "I strive to be a person of integrity, and I believe in the importance of building and maintaining healthy relationships."



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Shanon *Tully*

Former Nurse Has Pulse of Downers Grove Market

“I learned from an incredibly young age that you needed to be responsible for your own success and participate in your own survival,” says Shanon Tully, Broker/Partner at Platinum Partners REALTORS® in Downers Grove.

Since childhood, Shanon has had to overcome significant challenges, including living with chronic illness, through hard work and perseverance. Growing up in a family of six children, budgets were often tight. Everyone was expected to do their share and make their own way.

“I had lemonade stands on the corner, shoveled snow for my neighbors, and to get extra money for the family, I helped my mother sell housewares at a flea market almost every weekend,” she says.

“I also worked throughout college, financing all of my own education,” she adds. “In order to do so, and put food on the table, I had to work night shifts at a nursing home and attend classes and clinicals during the day. I like to think of myself as someone who is always moving forward to reaching my goals, and never backwards.”

While working multiple jobs, she earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Northern Illinois University. After graduation, Shanon worked at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in a unit that specialized in the treatment of adults with cystic fibrosis and patients requiring peritoneal dialysis. Later, she received her master’s degree in nursing from Rush University and changed specialties to case management, utilization review, and discharge planning of patients requiring high-tech home care.

Eventually, the long hours and physical demands took a toll on her health. That’s when she knew it was time for a change.



Shanon with her family on vacation in Ireland.

▶▶ REALTOR® feature

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

“I’ve lived with type 1 diabetes since I was nine years old,” says Shanon. “At times, it has been incredibly challenging. Working as a nurse and the amount of time I needed to spend caring for others caused me to not care for myself as much as I should.”

When Shanon decided to change careers, a requirement she set was that it had to provide flexibility so she could take care of her own needs. Plus, it was important to her that in her day-to-day, she could share in the happier times in others’ lives—a change from the emotionally challenging environment she had worked in in health care.

“When you think about it, most people are so excited when they find their perfect ‘forever home,’ or when they achieve a successful sale so that they can move on to the next phase of their life,” she explains. “I wanted to be a part of those happy times and take a break from the health care chapter of my life: too often, the everyday involved patients of family members who had experienced some form of tragedy.”

In 2014, Shanon transitioned into real estate and applied the same skills of communication, empathy, professionalism, and commitment that she had honed as a nurse.

“I feel it was an extension of my natural abilities,” she says. “Working as a nurse allowed me to develop skills to care for people during the most challenging times of their lives. I think that is why I demonstrate so much devotion and professionalism to my clients,” she adds. “It comes from my health care training.”

Shanon was born in Chicago, but she grew up in Downers Grove and considers it home. She shares her love of the local area with her family: her husband, Martin, and their two sons, Martin Jr. and Ryan.



Shanon with her husband, Martin, and their two sons, Martin Jr. and Ryan.

“There is something about Downers Grove that keeps people coming back even after they’ve moved and lived in other places for a while,” she adds. “The people here still say hello to one another as they pass each other on the street while taking a walk. That’s a place I can call home and others feel that way, too.”

Her husband recently completed two consecutive terms as mayor of Downers Grove—a role he took on in addition to his full-time job.

“Martin would routinely stay up until two or three in the morning to finish work from his ‘mortgage-paying job’ on top of the other work he needed to do as mayor,” she says. “But it was an incredible experience for all of us, and an amazing way to give back to a town we love so much.”

The Tullys have long been active in local charities and community not-for-profit groups. These include the District 58 Education Foundation, the Wounded Warrior Project®, Navigate Adolescence, Sharing Connections, the Downers Grove Junior Woman’s Club, the Bonfield Express Foundation, Hope’s Front Door, and many more.

Shanon is also an original member, and currently the co-chairperson of, Friends of the Edwards House. This local 501(c)(3) organization was created to help private homeowners voluntarily landmark and preserve their historically significant homes. So far, the group has helped facilitate the granting of landmark status to twenty-eight beautiful historic homes in Downers Grove, and more are in the works.

Over her career as a REALTOR®, Shanon has received the Top 25 Percent award from Homesnap (2021) and the Five Star Real Estate Agent award from Five Star Professional (2020 and 2021). Her success, she would say, reflects her goal of providing high-quality service that’s above and beyond the norm, and treating every client as an individual with unique and very personal wishes.

“My clients are never a means to an end or a way to reach a quota,” she says. “I honestly believe that all clients, no matter what type or price point of home they live in, deserve the absolute best in representation. That is why I move heaven and earth to get their homes bought or sold.”

“The people here [in Downers Grove] still say hello to one another as they pass each other on the street while taking a walk. THAT’S A PLACE I CAN CALL HOME...”



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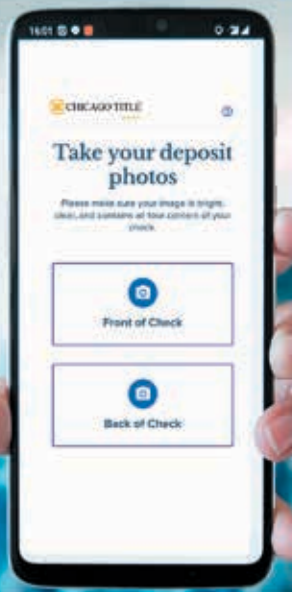
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