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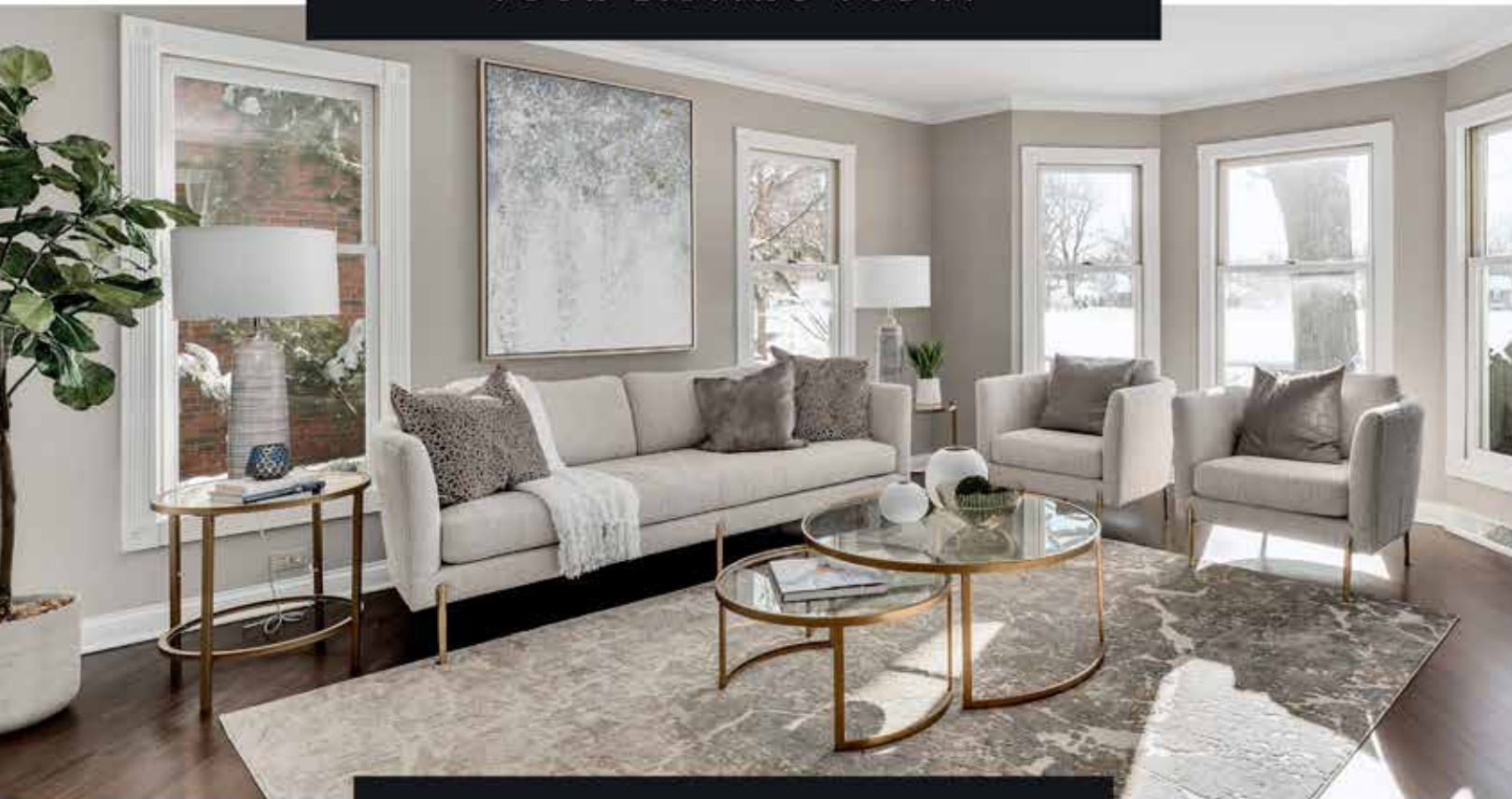
REALTOR[®] FEATURE
MATT PITTMAN

ON THE RISE
SHELLEY
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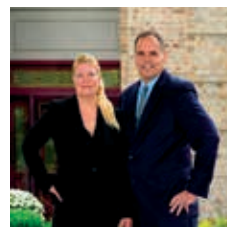
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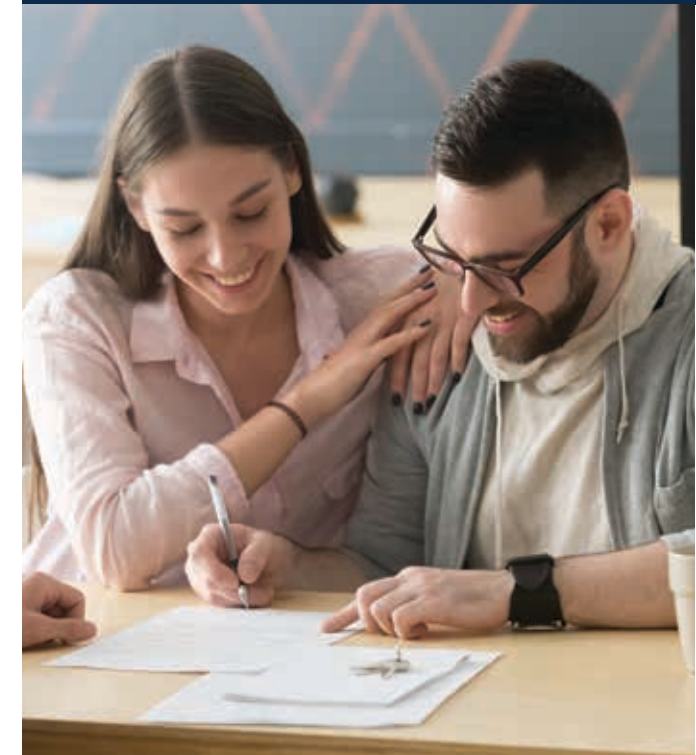
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DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS!

Greetings, *DuPage Real Producers*! Most of you have heard the news that Joe D'Alessandro is no longer running *DuPage Real Producers*. My wife and I are excited for the new opportunity to grow the *DuPage Real Producers* community, while maintaining *Chicago Real Producers*. This was a methodically and prayerfully considered decision and we do not take this venture lightly. I have already had the pleasure of meeting with a handful of you over the course of the last couple months and I'm looking forward to connecting with many more of you throughout the year.



Meet the Burton Family! Photo by Heather Allison Love Photography

In the spirit of being real, when I was first presented with the idea of expanding our *Real Producers* reach to DuPage County, my first instinct was to resist. My initial thought was, "Naw, I'm good." I had a steady workflow running the *Chicago Real Producers* platform and my wife and I were FINALLY in a solid groove juggling four children, remote learning, delegating small tasks to our kids, grocery shopping, preparing meals, and debriefing from the day almost every evening. The routine took us eight months to figure out, but I felt we were at a point where we finally arrived and hit a positive consistent stride.

There is a quote in the TV series *New Girl* when Nick Miller says, "I'm not convinced I know how to read. I've just memorized a lot of words." I laughed out loud when the line was delivered. However, the underlying meaning kept gnawing at me because

of where I was currently positioned in my family and business life. I began to question myself, "Am I just memorizing some weekly actions until COVID subsides?" Ashamedly, the answer was yes.

I understand that this opportunity is a colossal undertaking and I know in my soul it will be anything but routine which solidified the decision. I wanted to thank those of you who have already reached out willing to offer support for a smooth transition. I am available to listen and open to hearing your feedback on ways to add value to the *DuPage Real Producers* community. I would love to grab a virtual coffee with you, so don't hesitate to email me if you'd like to connect.

Joe wanted to let everyone know, "It was such a joy to meet and work

with so many leaders in DuPage real estate. I have been truly inspired by the dedication of our Preferred Partners and REALTORS®. I am going to miss everyone!"

Fighting the good fight,

Andy Burton
 Publisher, *DuPage Real Producers*
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SHELLEY BRZOWSKI-O'GRADY

SERVING UP SALES



Shelley and her family on a trip to Canada.

When Shelley Brzozowski-O'Grady's mother-in-law earned her real estate license at the age of eighty, it was prototypical of the family lineage. And became a point of action for Shelley to step out into her own professional journey.

"It is so funny," says Shelley. "When my mother-in-law became an agent at eighty, I was envious and wanted to do the same! To me, it sounded like the perfect career."

Shelley grew up in the southern suburbs, Flossmoor, in a family of creatives and entrepreneurs. The Brzozowski family owned the Chicago Grain Company at the Chicago Board of Trade. Her husband's family is also made up of go-getters, owning O'Grady Advertising Arts and responsible

for the creative work for many Chicago companies. Both sets of parents bought and sold many homes during their childhoods, which gave them early exposure to the real estate process.

"As a kid, we were always going to open houses or looking at properties," says Shelley. "I've been passionate about real estate ever since."

After high school, Shelley attended Northwestern University on a full scholarship to play volleyball. Out of college, she was recruited to be a sales rep at an insurance company in Chicago. Over the years, she worked at Cigna and Aetna, eventually reaching regional vice president of sales.

"I learned a lot about customer service and client management

during my time as an executive," says Shelley. "I now use the sales training I had in my corporate jobs, as a REALTOR®. Especially to identify what personality types of buyers or sellers I am working with. Do they prefer lots of information and statistics? Or would they rather have high-level facts and cut to the chase?"

In 2015, while raising three sons, she decided she wanted a career she could own and control for herself. She became a REALTOR® and has never looked back.

"My schedule today gives me time for my family," says Shelley. "Being able to cheer on my sons at all of their sporting events is exactly the type of freedom I was looking for in a career. I wouldn't miss those moments for the world, while also being completely focused on my work. That balance is key!"

Like many agents making a career switch, Shelley's first year as a REALTOR® was an eye-opening learning experience. Thanks to strong friendships and a strong work ethic, she was able to overcome those initial challenges and reach her current heights.

"I had to get my feet wet, learn all of the new systems and apps, and develop a system for how I managed my business," says Shelley. "My high school teammate, Nancy Gaspadarek with @properties, has been my mentor all the way through. I encouraged her to get her license twenty years ago when she moved back to Chicago.

...

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Then she encouraged me as I was leaving my corporate career.”

Together with husband, Tom, she has also personally plunged “all in” to real estate, owning eleven different properties. These range from investment properties to personal homes in Chicago, Evanston, and Glen Ellyn. Some of those properties include flips and rentals in the city and southwest Michigan.

“I now know the city and suburbs like the back of my hand,” says Shelley. “I grew up in the southern suburbs; attended college in the northern suburbs; worked in Chicago; and we now live in the western suburbs. I know it all! I love helping people find their forever home or move into the next phase of their life, wherever that may be.”



Shelley and her family at a lacrosse game.

When Shelley is not managing her business, she enjoys continuing the athletic competitiveness from her university days, playing platform tennis in a competitive league and regular games of pickleball and golf. She has two yellow Labs and enjoys walking them around Lake Ellyn in Glen Ellyn. The O’Gradys also travel to many of her two older sons’ collegiate lacrosse games. Her youngest son is a freshman in high school and is very active in club sports, as well.

Shelley is an active supporter of her community. “I’ve supported Bridge Communities in Glen Ellyn, Glen Ellyn Infant Welfare Society,

I love that @properties encourages and nurtures personal growth and helps to make my job easy and enjoyable.”

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Glenbard West Boosters, and Benet Academy for many years,” says Shelley. “These are important organizations to me because of what they mean for our local area, giving key resources to those in need.”

As Shelley looks forward to the future, she is most excited about expanding her team into different communities in order to help more people. Especially during one of the biggest decisions of their lives.

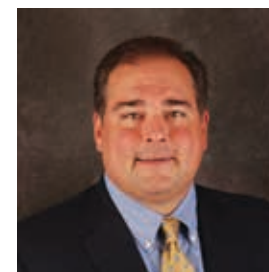
“I love that @properties encourages and nurtures personal growth and helps to make my job easy and enjoyable,” says Shelley. “This past year has been such a challenge for many people, and I want to be there to help make the buying or selling process as stress-free as possible.”

I learned a lot about customer service and client management during my time as an executive.”



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▶▶ cover story

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic



Diane *Coyle*

PLATINUM PEOPLE PERSON





Diane with some of her team (Nancy Thornton and April Fernandez).

“I believe my degree in social work prepared me for my career in real estate,” explains Diane Coyle, founding partner and owner of Platinum Partners Realtors. “That background helps me have a better understanding of people’s needs, which is the core of real estate. It’s not just a transaction.”

A lifelong resident of the western suburbs, Diane was born and lived in LaGrange until her family moved to Downers Grove when she was two years old. Upon graduating from Downers Grove High School, Diane attended Western Illinois University where she double-majored in law enforcement administration and social work. After college, she worked for the Juvenile Department of Corrections until quickly moving into real estate.

“I didn’t know I would end up as a REALTOR®, but I’m glad I did,” reflects Diane. “It was a simple choice, really. I decided to take the classes to get my license and, upon completion in 1983, I was offered a job and thought I would try it.”

Thanks to attentive management and robust training on client prospecting, her first year at Realty World A-1 in Naperville was immediately successful. “I followed my coaching, put in the hours, and it worked,” she says. “I sold eight homes my second month and realized this was the profession for me. I’ve never looked back.”

Since those first days, Diane has worked for Merrill Lynch, Coldwell Banker, and RE/MAX, while also earning her managing broker license in 2004. That’s when she, and a small group of other very successful agents, decided to start their own firm. “Going out on our own was the

best decision of our lives,” says Diane. “While many said it wouldn’t work, here we are seventeen years later with over 120 agents and two offices!”

“We are a dynamic team where each of us brings our own strengths and abilities to assist our clients,” she adds. “We have had a plethora of successful relationships because of our ability to figure out who works best with each transaction and working together to meet each specific need.”

The firm’s success has not gone unnoticed. Diane has received recognition from the RE/MAX Platinum Club, RE/MAX Hall of Fame, Top Producers (consecutive years), the number one in Downers Grove for total sales, and the 5-Star Agent every year since its founding. She also puts emphasis on giving back to the local community.

“We understand helping others doesn’t just begin and end with our



“

I am proud of my ability to assist families in finding their dream homes or selling their old houses, I genuinely enjoy my job and consider many of my clients good friends...

”

clients, but there are people in need right in our backyard,” says Diane. “Our office is a huge supporter of Sharing Connections Furniture Bank, and we consistently host fundraisers with them throughout the year. I also support the National MS Society and have supported other charities throughout the years.”

When Diane is not working with her clients, family time takes priority. She loves to spend time with her husband Jonathan, their daughter, Carrie, son-in-law, Chris (a real estate photographer), and granddaughter, Savannah; as well as their son, Shawn, and three dogs Malcolm, Angel, and Zoey. Together, the Coyles are always exploring new restaurants or experiences to share and places to visit. They are also members of local book clubs and the Moose Lodge.

As Diane thinks over her nearly forty-year career, she'd say she's seen it all: the good, bad, ugly, and rewarding. But she comes back to those she's been able to positively impact—clients, friends, and teammates.

“I am proud of my ability to assist families in finding their dream homes or selling their old houses,” she says. “I genuinely enjoy my job and consider many of my clients good friends because of the process we've shared. I have also loved mentoring many successful agents over the years. The team that we have built is truly rewarding and keeps me motivated.”

“If you beat yourself up in this industry, you will never get ahead,” she reflects on her positive, people-first attitude and how it's led to her success. “And I think that's what makes me different: every day is a new experience where I try to stay optimistic in order to prosper!”



Diane and her granddaughter, Savannah.





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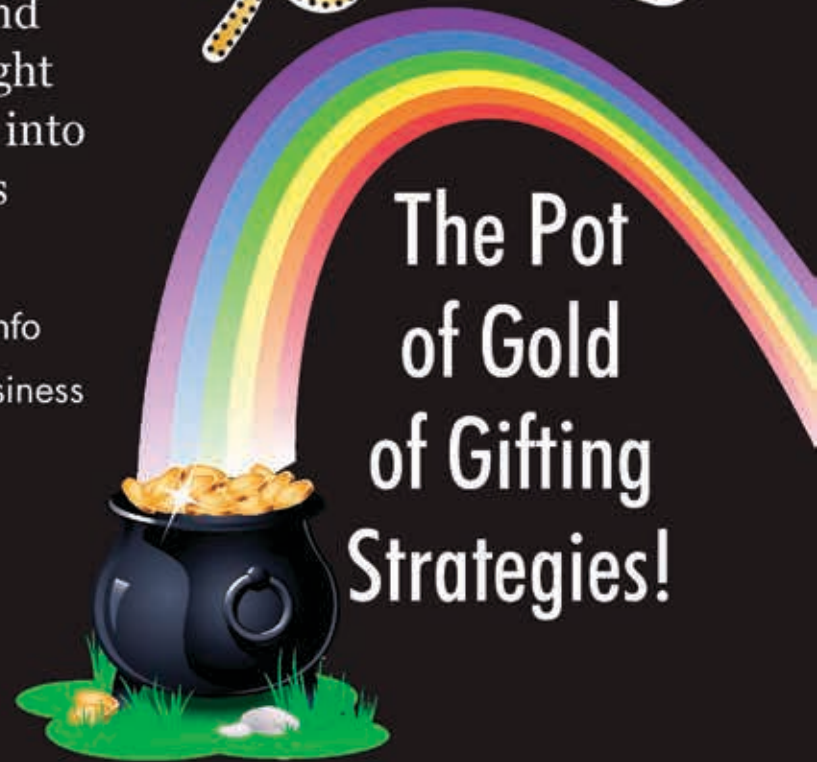
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▶▶ REALTOR® feature

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

Real Estate Is Music to His Ears

Matt Pittman



Matt with his family.

“My parents would always say, ‘No one is gonna do it for you, so you better go out there and get it,’” says REALTOR® Matt Pittman. “When I was ten years old, they told me that I’d better start saving for my own car, because I wasn’t going to be driving theirs when I turned sixteen.”

Growing up in Villa Park, Matt’s hard-working parents owned Abel Concrete and other small businesses while investing in real estate. Early on, they taught him the importance of a strong work ethic, dedication, diligence, and integrity in life and work. While attending NIU and the College of DuPage for his associate’s degree, he earned his real estate license. To gain experience, Matt’s parents allowed him to rent and manage a property they owned.

“It was another spark that got me excited about getting into real estate as a career,” says Matt. “My parents are my heroes. I owe 100 percent of my success to them.”

On a chance interaction, Matt ran into a friend from high school whose father, Randy Stob, owned a real estate office. Matt was invited to meet with Randy about joining his team.

“During that meeting, Randy said he thought I’d be good at real estate and helped train and mentor me,” says Matt. “I wouldn’t be in business if it weren’t for him and all he taught me.”

Many challenges awaited Matt during that first year as a REALTOR®. In his early twenties, he worked two other jobs, at restaurants and as a musician, while putting in long hours to learn the nuances of real estate.

“I found that, because of my age, I had to overcome the obstacle of perceived inexperience with clients,” says Matt. “I had to prove my worth to most people I encountered. My broker at the time encouraged me that if I stayed patient and diligent I would be successful.”

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Matt started at RE/MAX Achievers in 2004 before switching to Keller Williams Premiere Properties in 2018. Since then he has received praise and recognition for his success. These include the RE/MAX Executive Club, 100% Club, Platinum Club, and Hall of Fame Award. In addition, Matt gives much free time and resources to many charities in the area.

“I serve on the board of the DuPage Senior Citizens Council,” he says. “Just by donating meals and visiting area seniors makes a huge impact in the lives of people in our backyard.”

Matt also hosts an annual Feed My Starving Children event, including a group of 100 people that packed over 150,000 meals and fed over 300 kids for a year. And when his mother passed away in 2019 from ovarian cancer, he adopted her favorite charities, the American Cancer Society and St. Jude, as his own.

When Matt is not managing his business or giving back, he plays music professionally in the band, The Fold. They’ve been writing theme songs and music for Cartoon Network’s LEGO Ninjago and have over 100 million views on YouTube. He also loves snowboarding, playing sports, staying active, and joining family and friends for game nights.

As Matt looks forward to the future, he reflects on the opportunity he has to support others through the ups, downs, and distractions that might lie ahead. And the chance to apply his own unique approach, based on his comedic personality, to better connect with clients.

“That’s one thing I am proud to say. That I’ve stayed true to myself and genuine to who I am,” he says. “I’ve used music and my wacky personality to create rap videos, parody videos, and other funny online content. I think being fun breaks down a lot of awkward barriers that many REALTORS® and consumers encounter.”

“To me, the best thing about being a REALTOR® is being able to help people,” he adds. “Not just sell them a home, but genuinely be there for them as a friend and build long-term friendships. I love creating and continuously nurturing those relationships, especially through humor.”



Matt with his band, The Fold.

“To me **THE BEST THING** about being a **REALTOR®** is being able to **HELP PEOPLE... NOT** just **SELL THEM A HOME**, but **GENUINELY** be there for them as **A FRIEND** and **BUILD LONG-TERM FRIENDSHIPS.**”



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Tracie Rasmussen with BlueStone Advisors

DIY FAMILY BUSINESS

“One year, Santa brought the family a new TV, and the first thing my dad did was take it apart and put it back together,” recalls Tracie Rasmussen, co-founder of insurance and risk management firm, BlueStone Advisors. “As an engineer, he is one of the biggest DIY-ers you’ll ever meet. Growing up, I learned a lot about finding solutions to problems and fixing things myself.”

Tracie and her two sisters spent their early years living in Hoffman Estates. Her father, after serving at Dayton Air Force Base, was offered a job at Motorola in Schaumburg. In 1984, her dad was transferred to Motorola’s facility in South Florida. During her childhood, Tracie and her sisters were given their own engineering lessons.

“We were taught how to use all the tools in dad’s workshop, how to change an outlet, and how to use an Atari and the BASIC programming language to make electronic pictures appear on a TV screen,” she remembers.

After high school, Tracie took her passion for technology to the University of Florida in Gainesville where she graduated with a degree in decision and information sciences. Upon graduation, she was offered a job in Chicago with Arthur Andersen and, after a decade of living in Florida, she moved back to the north side of Chicago. Only a year and a half later, it was announced that her division was moving to Florida, and she had to decide if she’d go back with them.



“I knew that my career options would be better if I stayed in Chicago, so I found a job with Fitch Ratings and thrived there for sixteen years,” she says. “I advanced from an entry-level programmer to a senior director in the IT department.”

It was during this time also when she met her first husband and went back to school to earn an MBA in finance and economics from the University of Chicago. She also had two children: daughter, Kenna (2003), and son, Colby (2006). Tragedy struck in December 2010 when her husband died suddenly.

“I was blessed to have my whole family back in the Chicago area and received such support from them,” says Tracie. “I learned a lot about myself through the grieving and healing process; strength that I didn’t know I possessed; kindness and compassion from people whom I never expected it from; and firsthand knowledge about judging people before knowing what they’ve been through.”



Tracie with Andy Royce, President and Co-founder of BlueStone and her husband.



Tracie with her sisters and mother.



Tracie with her family.

A year later, one of her girlfriends introduced her to Andy. He had a son, Hayden, who was a year older than Colby and had a successful career as a commercial insurance broker. A year later, they were married and considered a future joint business venture.

“After many late-night talks about future possibilities, we decided that there was an opportunity for a boutique insurance brokerage firm,” Tracie says. “Our goal was to be successful and make a difference in the lives of people while doing so.”

With Andy’s vast insurance knowledge and love of sales combined with Tracie’s expertise in finance and technology, they started BlueStone Advisors in September 2012. While Andy went about gaining a base of clients, Tracie kept her full-time job while also setting up a financial, technological, and process-based foundation for the firm to be built upon. In 2019, Tracie finally left her IT job and joined BlueStone full-time.

“We are proud to serve our clients with a level of service, trust, and professionalism that is rarely found in the anonymity of the larger insurance brokerages,” she explains. “Getting to know our clients, understanding their business and personal lives, and providing them with the precise protection needed is what brings us the most satisfaction.”

“
We are proud to serve our clients with a level of service, trust, and professionalism that is rarely found in the anonymity of the larger insurance brokerages.”





From left to right: Rowanne Roman (VP, Commercial Lines), Andy Royce (President and Co-founder), Tracie Rasmussen (CEO and Co-founder), and Chuck Andersen (VP, Employee Benefits).

“Our goal was to be successful and make a difference in the lives of people while doing so.”

When not managing their business, Andy, Tracie, and their kids love to travel, ski, eat sushi, and spend time with extended family. And you can usually find Tracie out running on the streets of Glen Ellyn or the Prairie Path: rain, snow, or shine.

Giving back to those in need is also an area of personal passion. At the beginning of quarantine in March 2020, the family started an organization called COVID-19 Wristband, promoting safe social distancing with color-coded wristbands. Proceeds from wristband sales are used to support local small businesses,

nonprofits, and first responders. Andy’s grandparents, Don and Joann Tolmie, started The Faraja Primary School for Children with Physical Disabilities. They were inspired after visiting Tanzania, a country where the disabled are deemed not worthy of education.

As Tracie looks forward to the future, she reflects on the positives that have come from the challenges of 2020. “This time has given us more moments to think about where we want to be, not just this year but over the next decade,” she says. “Over the next five years, BlueStone’s goal is to

grow our reach while preserving our culture of service to our clients at a level that exceeds their expectations.”

To reach Tracie and find out more about BlueStone Advisors, you can email her at trasmussen@bluestoneadvisors.com or call 630.756.5061.



Tracie and her family at The Narrows in Zion National Park in 2019.

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