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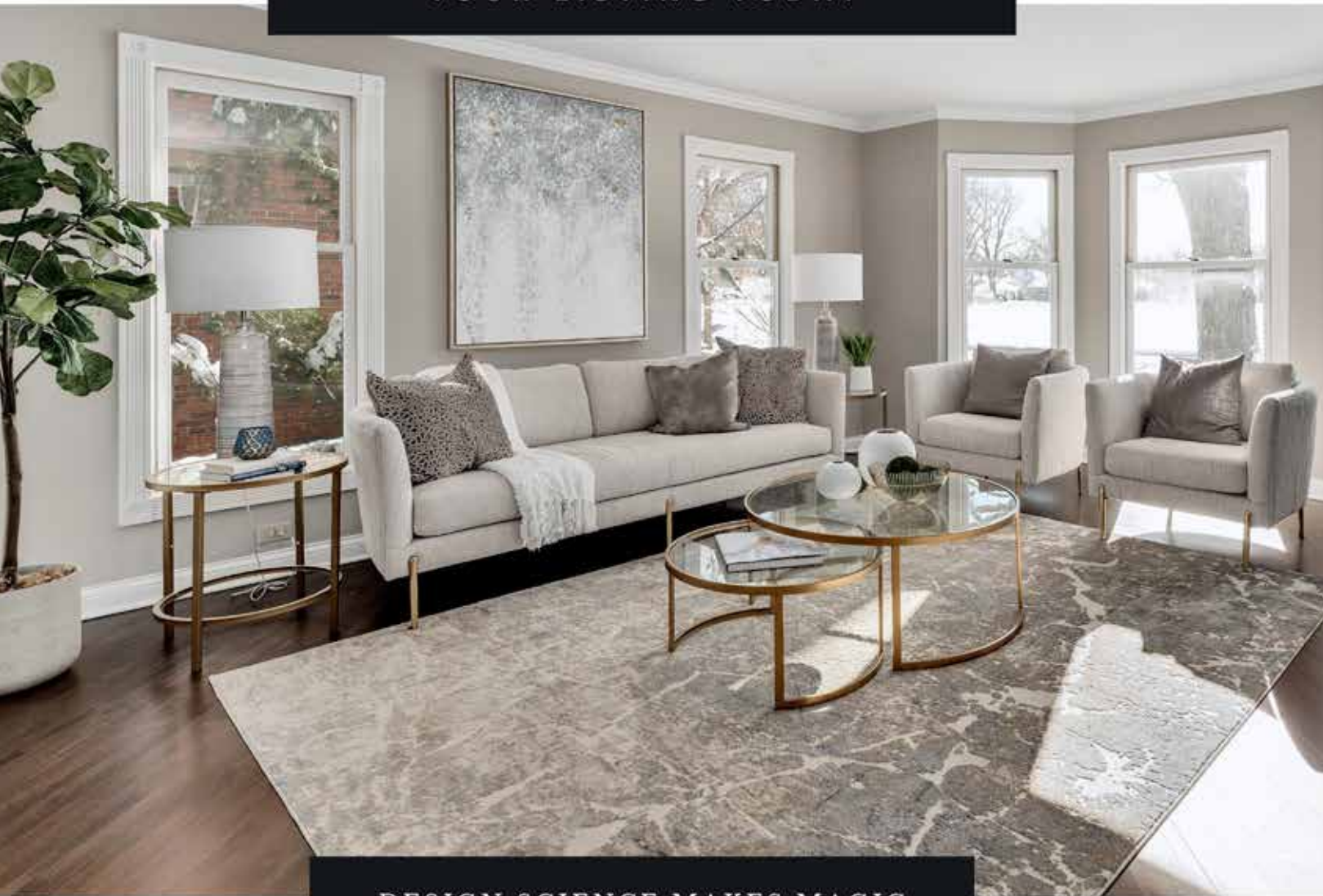
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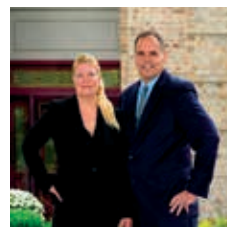
If you are interested in contributing or nominating REALTORS® for certain stories, please email us at andy.burton@realproducersmag.com

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PUBLISHER'S note

Family trips are not called vacations for a reason. Depending on the number of children, one could make the argument that it takes more effort to leave town for multiple days than to just stay at home. We have a friend who says family trips are synonymous with “parenting in a different location.”

My natural tendency on weekends or days off is to relax and do absolutely nothing productive. My wife, on the other hand, is a planner and loves to create adventure for our family. I am grateful that she proactively rallies the family and overly prepares for these adventures so I can just show up.

We recently went out of town for spring break, and I had countless moments when I was thankful that she was extremely prepared. This caused me to reflect on the amount of energy and thought I put into preparing for our trips—little to none. There are so many moving parts to running a family with small children, and it never stops. There is no break in the action whatsoever. Not only did this create an overwhelming feeling of gratitude toward my wife and the kind of mother she is, but it also made me appreciate my own mom. Memories from my childhood flooded my mind from when we would take road trips from southern California to Seattle to visit my grandma and all the work she did to get us there.

In this issue of *DuPage Real Producers*, we honor REALTORS® who are part of a mother-daughter/son team. We hope this issue reminds you to celebrate the motherly figures in your life who have impacted who you are today!

Fighting the good fight,



Andy Burton
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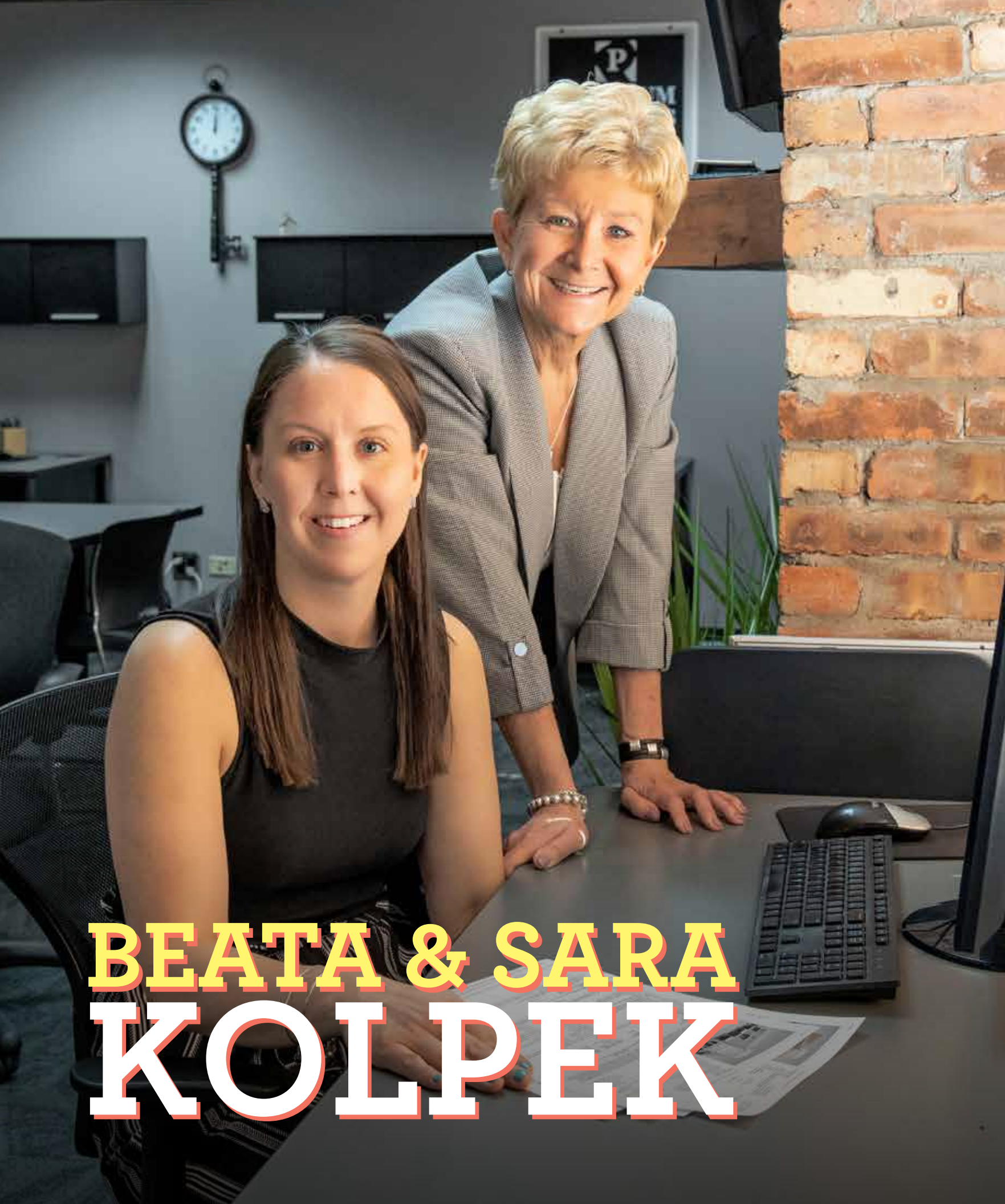
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BEATA & SARA KOLPEK

▶ celebrating mothers

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

THE FUTURE PASSING OF THE TORCH

“Since a young age, I can always remember my mom being very passionate about real estate,” says Sara Kolpek of her mom, partner, and inspiration, Beata. “It has always been in her blood and she has fun doing the work!”

Beata’s parents brought her to the US from communist Poland in 1963. She watched her parents work hard and save their earnings, and in only four years, they became homeowners on the southwest side of Chicago.

“Growing up as an immigrant child, I had to assist my parents with many daily tasks, because for many years they spoke only Polish,” says Beata.

Following their hard-working example, Beata earned degrees in both political science and communication from Loyola University. At age twenty-three, she bought her first home. After working a few years in the insurance industry, she was promoted to the senior bodily injury representative position in the auto division at State Farm. That meant she would investigate, handle, and settle injury claims resulting from accidents.

“Because State Farm would not allow working from home or job-sharing, or consider doing strictly outside fieldwork, I left,” says Beata. “And for three years I was strictly an at-home mom, during which time our family grew to five. Something had to change for personal and financial growth. A neighbor friend got her real estate license, and she, together with my husband, convinced me to give it a try since I was always so interested in housing.”

With a five-year-old and two three-year-olds in tow, Beata set off to pursue her new career. Since that time, Beata has discovered a passion for spreading a “warm home” feeling to others. “My true joy comes from finding the right home that will make my clients feel comfortable and happy,” she says.



As Beata continued her career in real estate, her oldest daughter, Sara, took an interest. Sara spent many years teaching second grade, but she was eventually drawn to the success and freedom that she saw her mother had. In October 2017, Sara joined Beata at Platinum Partners REALTORS® in Downers Grove. Sara soon saw that her skills in teaching and counseling could be a valuable asset with clients. Plus, she had a great teacher of her own to lean on.

“Seeing my mom succeed and knowing that she could teach me the business attracted me to the industry,” says Sara. “Our family always knew that one of the daughters would take over her book of business one day.” ...

...

“Sara brings so much to the process, especially in the areas of modern technology and social media,” says Beata. “She also has an excellent face-to-face interaction with clients.”

Together, the two have over thirty years of real estate experience and a combined volume of over \$193 million. They are also both members of the National Association of REALTORS®. While with a Hinsdale ERA brokerage, Beata received multiple awards and recognition for sales volume and customer service. In addition, Beata has obtained her CNC (Certified Negotiation Specialist), ABR (Accredited Buyer Representative), SFR (Short Sale and Foreclosure Resource), and CSC (Certified Staging Consultant) certifications, while Sara has obtained the RENE (Real Estate Negotiation Expert) and CSC certifications.



As Beata and Sara reflect on what it's like to work together as a mother/daughter duo, they have some advice for others who are thinking about doing the same.

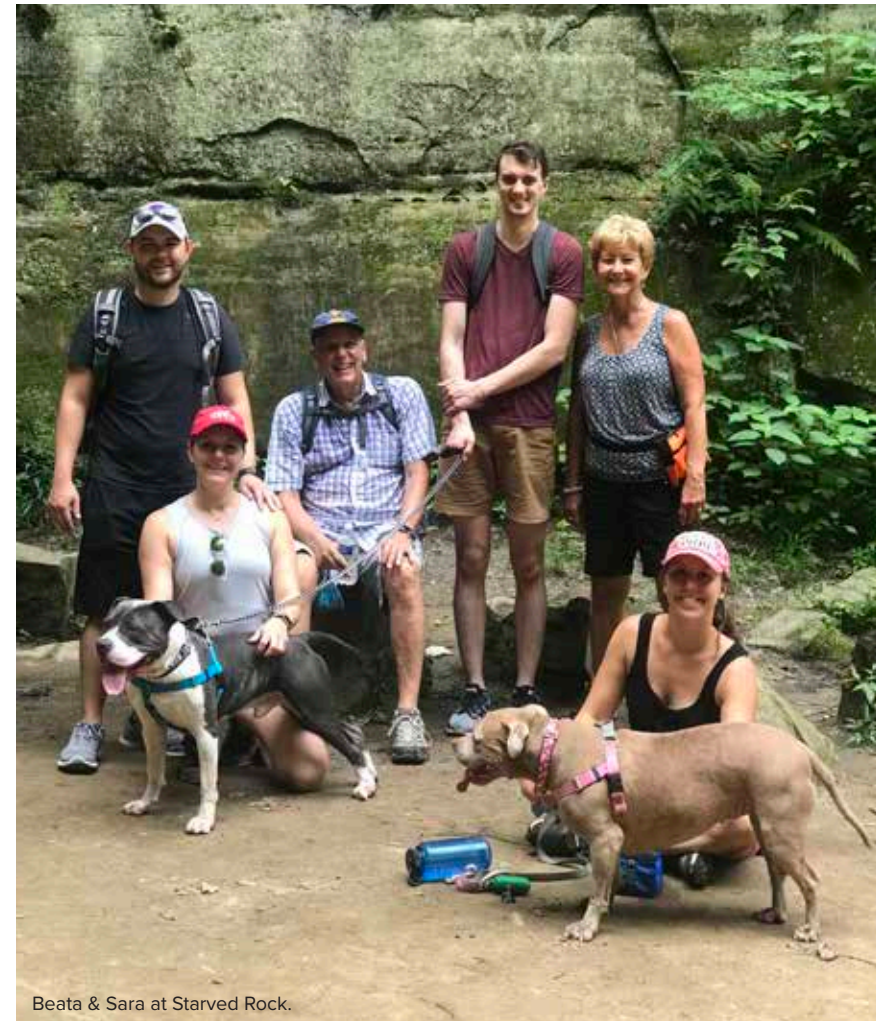
“There is a lot a mother can learn from her daughter on helping the business go farther because of her unique skills,” says Beata. “It is important for each person to have separate tasks that play to their strengths.”

“Ever since I joined my mother in business, we have become much closer,” notes Sara. “Working together and brainstorming is very important. It's also good to have time apart. That has contributed to our success as well.”

“Our relationship has gotten much closer since working together,” echoes Beata. “I fully expected great things from her. The joy for me is seeing that she has become so smart about the business/industry and analytical, and I love to watch her grow in her profession. Sara will definitely take over and grow this book of business!”



Jackie (another one of Beata's daughters) with her fiancé, Colby, and their dog, Stella.



When not managing their business, the family enjoys traveling, being outdoors, and volunteering in the community. Beata and her husband, Jack, are avid walkers, bike riders, and hikers. Sara enjoys hiking, yoga, biking, and spending time with rescue dogs. When traveling abroad or across the country, there are two other daughters who join the fun: Jackie, a landscape architect, and Carmen, who works in the foodservice industry.

Through her church, Beata is also a member of the St. Vincent De Paul Society, an international charity group that assists qualifying local residents in need of financial assistance with rent, food, and utilities. She is also one of the ASPCA volunteer responders who are deployed to assist with the daily care of dogs required to be held as evidence in criminal cases. Sara and Beata have been fostering pit bulls through a local organization, Chi-Town Pitties, for several years. Sara volunteers at the kennel at the West Suburban Humane Society in Downers Grove too. Sara and Beata also accept and make donations on behalf of their clients to registered animal rescues of their choice.

Beata & Sara at Starved Rock.

“SEEING MY MOM SUCCEED AND KNOWING THAT SHE COULD TEACH ME THE BUSINESS ATTRACTED ME TO THE INDUSTRY.” - SARA



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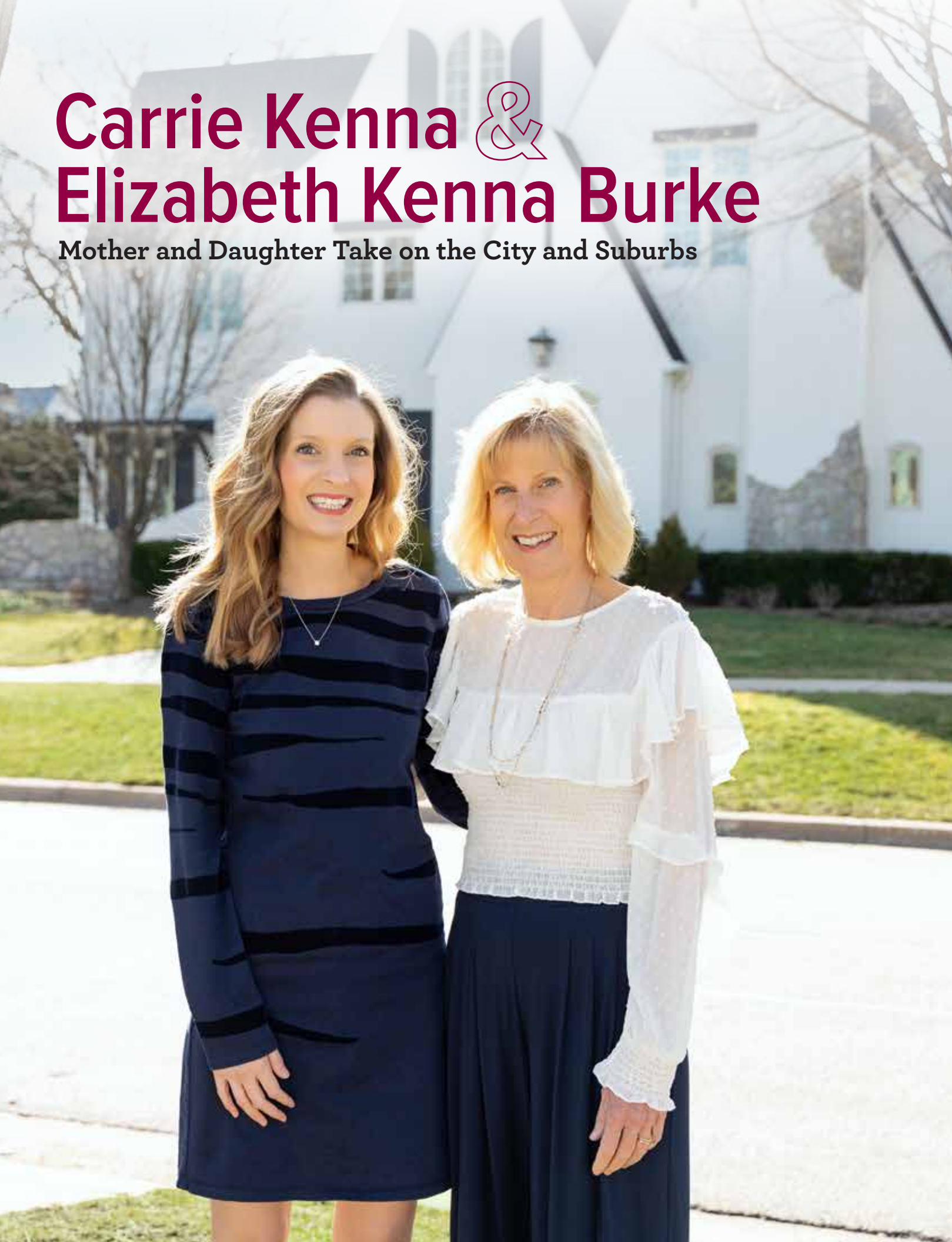
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Carrie Kenna & Elizabeth Kenna Burke

Mother and Daughter Take on the City and Suburbs



celebrating mothers

By Lauren Young

Photos by Katherin Frankovic



For Carrie Kenna, of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, being a mom is the most amazing gift, and being able to help a child develop into their unique self is the most rewarding aspect of parenthood.

“When I considered working with my mother, it was an easy decision,” says Elizabeth Kenna Burke. “My mom is the most hardworking person I know. More notable, she always puts others first. She works in real estate truly just because she wants to help people.”

Carrie initially entered into the workforce with a degree in accounting, supporting small businesses as well as her husband’s general contracting firm. She switched to real estate over thirty years ago and has seen it as an opportunity to help buyers find the perfect home for their unique needs. She lives by the idea that “it all works out in the end”—an assurance she gives her buyers throughout the sales process.

Elizabeth has been practicing real estate for over six years and has added complementary skills to the partnership. She started her career as a Chicago teacher, but chose to enter into real estate not only for the flexibility and freedom it gives her to set her own work lifestyle, but also to match clients with the home that suits their next life phase.



In those emotional moments of life transition, she sees herself as someone who can be a trustworthy guide. ●●●

...

"I love working with Elizabeth, because we fit each other so well," says Carrie. "She has helped me with new technology, and I have been able to help her with the contracts side of the business."

"Together, we have a good coverage area too: she covers the city while I'm in the suburbs," Carrie adds. "While we do love to collaborate and support each other on real estate dealings, we each have our own clients."

The mother-daughter duo has received notice and recognition. They've received several Chairman Circle Platinum Awards and are in the top 2 percent of the Berkshire Hathaway Network. Each year, they close between \$22 and \$28 million dollars in sales volume.

When the two are not managing their real estate businesses, they enjoy traveling, being outdoors, and making the most of the recent increase in family time.

"I have two children, Theodore (three years old) and Rosemary (two years old), who have been staying home with me this past year," says Elizabeth. "We started a children's educational business during the pandemic and enjoy making little kits and activities together for it. My husband loves to travel, and we're all looking forward to getting back to that again."

"I've really enjoyed the extra time with my grandkids and going on adventures [with them] to the zoo or pool," says Carrie. "My goal is to help those I love know they have a safe place to turn to, and to make my home an always-open, judgment-free zone. That also extends to my clients."

Since joining forces, Carrie and Elizabeth have built upon their mutual admiration. They want others to know what it can look like when family members work together.

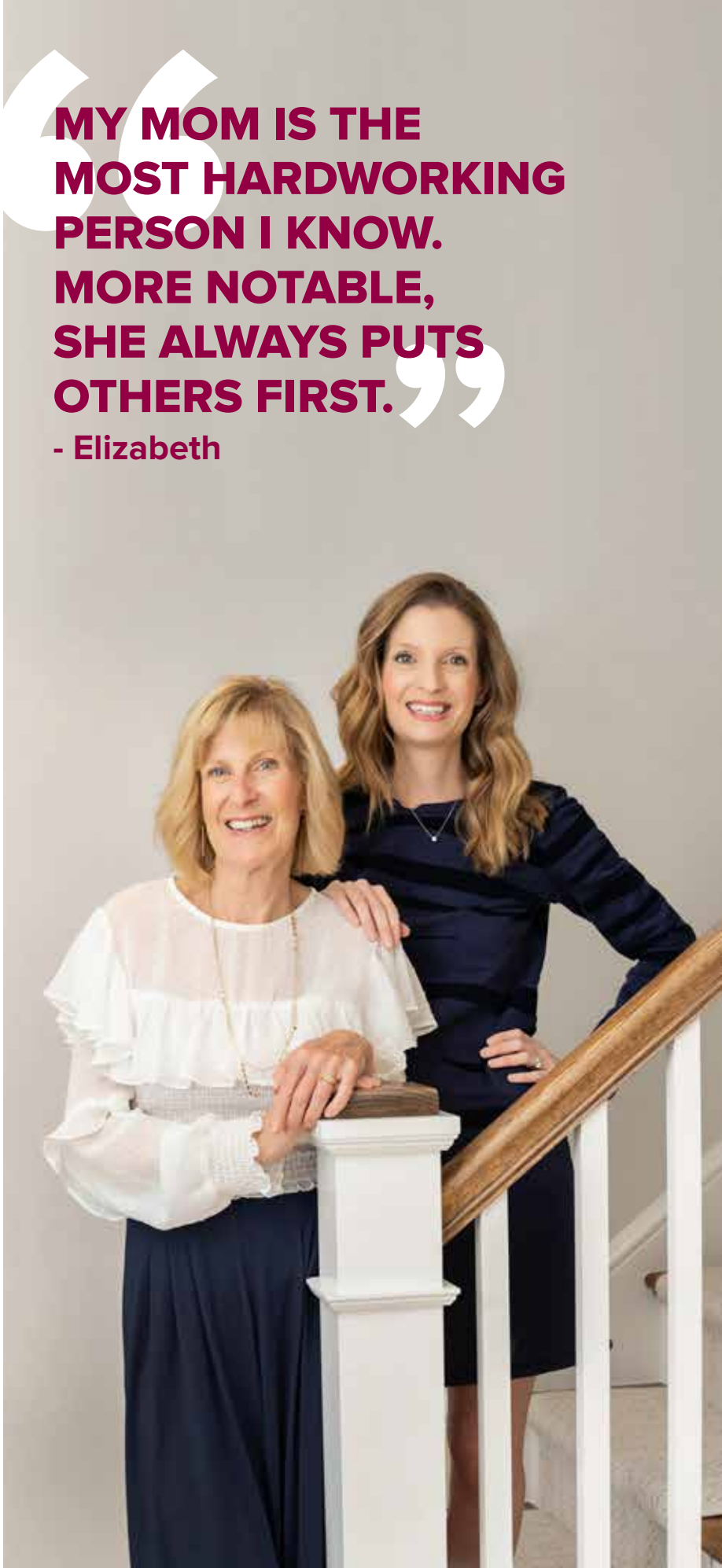
"Elizabeth is, first, an exceptional mother," praises Carrie. "She possesses tremendous creative talent while being meticulous about the details. She cares deeply about her family and friends, and I love being able to share my real estate endeavors with her."

"My mother is the best teacher anyone could ask for," says Elizabeth. "No one supports [someone starting] a new career better than she does. I cherish being able to work with someone with such amazing values who truly cares for the people she serves."

"I have been able to watch and learn from my mom, and it has pushed me to grow my own business even further," says Elizabeth.

“MY MOM IS THE MOST HARDWORKING PERSON I KNOW. MORE NOTABLE, SHE ALWAYS PUTS OTHERS FIRST.”

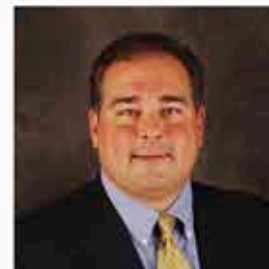
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Virtual JAM SESSIONS



DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS.
Women's History Month
Jam Session #1 **f LIVE**
 An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Alice Chin, Dawn McKenna, Eva Burns, Gail Niermeyer, Kim Dalaskey, Kelly Bennett, Jina Boerman, Carol Fisher
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virtual events

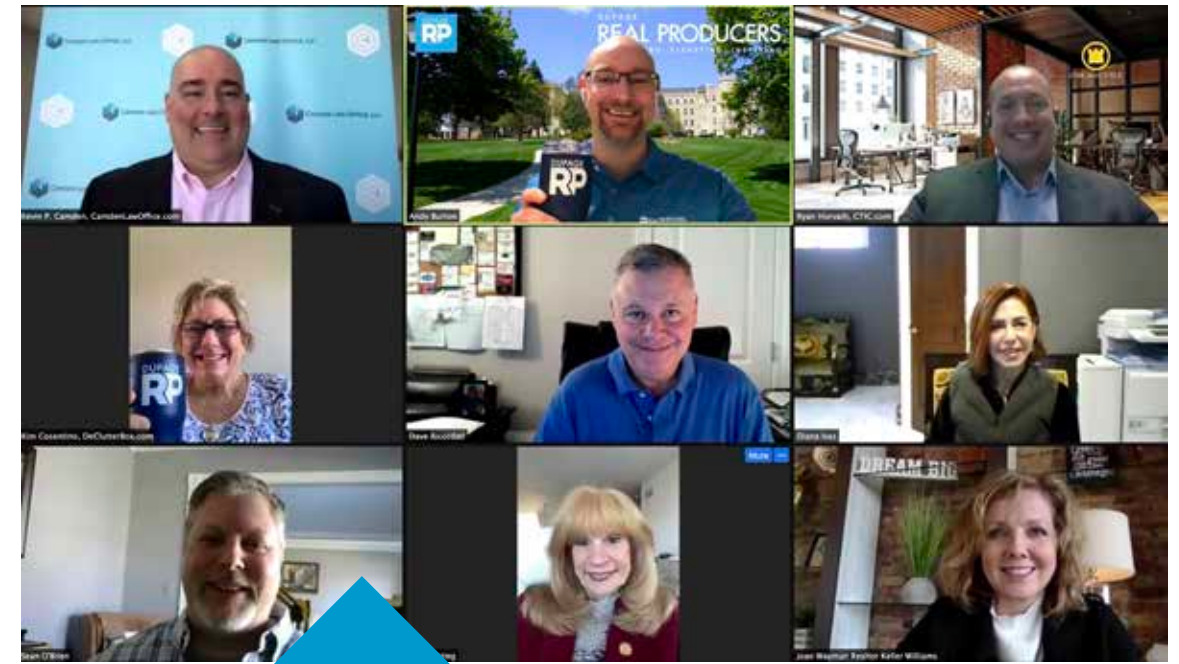
Top REALTORS® and Preferred Partners Engaging Virtually

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 during a time when we are unable to host in-person events. 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 REAL PRODUCERS.
Women's History Month
Jam Session #2 **f LIVE**
 An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Dave Riccardi, Diana Ives, Joan Wrayman, Sean O'Brien, Lisa Keating, Kevin Genden, Kim Cosentino, Ryan Heath
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DUPAGE REAL PRODUCERS.
Women's History Month
Jam Session #3 **f LIVE**
 An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Beata Kolpek, Sara Kolpek, Elizabeth Kenna Burke, Sheenu Baker, Samantha Bauman, Tracie Baumason, Liane Lockett, Margaret Gehr
 *HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON

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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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DIANA HARDEK & JACKIE ANGIELLO

Loving the Sport of It

Throughout her life, Diana Hardek has tried just about every sport imaginable. She played college volleyball and, following graduation, got her first job at Naperville Courts as the program director and club pro. After working there for three years, she moved with her husband, Barry, to New Hampshire and joined the pro racquetball tour until a shoulder injury forced her to call it quits.

“With the new time on my hands, I read and learned as much as I could about real estate investing,” says Diana. “By the time I was twenty-seven years old, I owned four buildings with a total of twenty-seven units. I ended up getting my real estate license while I was in the midst of running my properties.”

Diana’s daughter, Jackie, shared similar interests in sports growing up and eventually followed her mother into real estate too. Jackie partnered her time playing soccer at Miami University with a degree in education. She went on to teach seventh-grade language arts in a New York City suburb for three years before moving back to Wheaton. Upon her return in 2012, she decided to join her mother at Realty Executives Premiere as a REALTOR®.

“While I enjoyed many aspects of teaching, I began to feel that it was not 100 percent the right fit for me. I decided to give a shot at



working with my mother,” says Jackie. “I knew she would help me get started. Once I committed to real estate full-time, I never looked back.”

Like their experiences on sports teams, during their time together, Diana and Jackie have played many positions. On any given day, they might take turns as marketing specialists, counselors, decorators, negotiators, data analysts, or professional organizers. Jackie has found her niche in keeping up with technology, helping with online and traditional marketing, as well as business systems and processes.



“Working with Jackie has been more of a mentorship,” says Diana. “We are great friends and have a deep respect for each other. Since I have more experience, I’ve been able to advise Jackie on different scenarios of transactions. We help each other and can accomplish so much more together than as individuals.”

The duo even stages their own listings and own an extensive inventory of furniture and accessories. Their collection includes items for every room: throw pillows and bedding, mirrors and wall art, accent chairs and rugs. Whether it’s staging or selling, they find extra enjoyment in their work because they’re doing it together. ...

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The successful partnership has received rave recognition, including Wheaton's Top 40 under 40, the Chicago 5-Star REALTOR® Award, and the Mark Fortson Award. Their combined career volume as REALTORS® has surpassed \$150 million, with a total volume of \$18 million in 2020 alone.

"These days, the two of us find it very challenging not to talk about real estate all the time," says Jackie. "We don't want to drive our family nuts! It's important to set boundaries for your business so that you schedule time off to maintain a healthy work-life balance."

When not selling real estate, their families enjoy traveling, going to new restaurants, and finding new sports to try. Golf is a favorite for Diana. You'll find her regularly participating in the nine-hole league at Arrowhead Golf Club. She also joins her husband on frequent visits to Florida, where their son, Eric, lives with his wife, Tiffany.

Some of Jackie's most memorable trips with her husband, Donny, have been to Costa Rica, Hawaii, Italy, and Peru. With their three children—a three-year-old daughter and two-year-old twins—they enjoy walking through local forest preserves, swimming at the Wheaton Sport Center, visiting the Danada Equestrian Center, and relaxing at the family lake house in Michigan.

"I love what I get to do each day and that my mother and I get to help each other succeed," says Jackie. "She has a heart of gold and genuinely cares about everyone in her life: her clients, her friends, and her family."

"It has been fun and rewarding to work with Jackie every day," says Diana. "Our skill sets complement each other so well. If anyone has a chance to work with their son or daughter, I highly recommend it. It's just the best."



Diana and Jackie in 1989. Diana was the number one agent out of three local Century 21 offices in New Hampshire where she and her husband, Barry, lived for nine years. Real estate has been in Jackie's blood since day one!



"I love what I get to do each day and that my mother and I get to help each other succeed."
- Jackie



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KIM & JAKE WIRTZ

▶ celebrating mothers

By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

HITTING HOME RUNS

“My mom, Kim, is the hardest working person I have ever met,” says Jake Wirtz, Kim’s son and real estate partner at Century 21 in Lockport. “As I have gotten my feet wet in this business, I’ve realized how much time she put into her career, especially while raising three kids on her own.”



As a single mother, Kim needed a career with flexibility and independence. She left her first job as a real estate paralegal to become a REALTOR®. Jake grew up watching his mother work tirelessly to provide for the family, and it inspired him to follow her example and build a business of his own.

“Early in my undergrad years at Illinois State University, I went through the steps of starting my own construction company,” says Jake. “Circumstances changed, so I adjusted the business route I wanted to take. I knew I loved working with people and saw in real estate a place where I could have success.”

In 2019, Jake started to pursue his journey as a REALTOR® and was a licensed agent by the time he was a senior in college. The decision to work with his mother evolved naturally. Both share the value of helping their clients find homes that perfectly meet their unique needs.

“At the beginning of our working together, I wanted to see Jake do well at his passion,” says Kim. “I have an immense amount of trust in his ability and decision-making. He is a great partner to have in this industry, and we have definitely become closer in the process.”

“From the start, my mom has set the benchmark for me for how hard I need to work in order to meet my goals,” says Jake. “I am a people person, and that is what I love most about my job. Beyond my natural skills, I have learned from her what it takes in order to serve my clients well.”

The team’s achievements have been noticed by their Century 21 peers: Jake has earned the Master’s Emerald and Quality Service Awards. And over her thirty-year career, Kim has been inducted into the Dick Loughlin International Hall of Fame, has been the top-ranking agent in Illinois more than once, is a member of the Centurion Honor Society, was recognized by Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS® in the Top 1 percent in Sales and Transactions and the Quality Service Awards, and was named a Grand Centurion Agent. In 2020, the team’s total volume was over \$68 million with 266 units sold, which earned Kim the prestigious ranking of #4 Century 21 agent in the US by number of units sold. ●●●



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Aside from all the awards, the duo has put an emphasis on giving back to their community any way they can. "My mom loves supporting charities that benefit those with special needs," says Jake. "She has one of the biggest hearts of anybody I know."

When not working together, Kim and Jake enjoy spending leisure time on the family riverboat, dining and traveling together, and attending theater. The family extends their penchant for competition to sporting events and game nights with Jake's sisters, Jordan and Jessica.

“From the start, my mom has set the benchmark for me for how hard I need to work in order to meet my goals.” - Jake

"Mom surprised me in 2016 and took me to the World Series when the Cubs won," says Jake. "She also likes going to Bears games with me, but, of course, only when it is still warm. You will never see her at Soldier Field in 'Bear weather.' My sisters and I also have fun playing card games when we are all together."



Jake's ISU graduation.

If you ask Kim what she holds most valuable, she will point to the pride she has in her children.

"If there is one thing I hope my family remembers me for, it's for how much fun we have together,"

says Kim. "And how much I love and want them to succeed in life."

"Even with her busy schedule, she was always there for all of us growing up," says Jake. "I am forever grateful for her. Not only is she my role model, but I'm proud to call her 'Mom.' She is the reason I am who I am today."



MIKE RUSZKOWSKI

▶ partner spotlight
By Lauren Young
Photos by Katherin Frankovic

HOMETEAM INSPECTION SERVICE



Inspections That Turn a House into a Home

“I remember watching my grandfather, Stanley, install a shower at my mom’s house,” says Mike Ruszkowski, of HomeTeam Inspection Service. “As he worked, he explained to me how [all] the plumbing worked together and where the hookups were.”

Throughout his childhood, Mike would shadow his grandfather, picking up lessons on how to do plumbing and electrical work and other DIY projects.

“He has always been someone I’ve looked up to for guidance and wisdom—in life, in business, and in fixing things,” he says.

It was these early tutorials that piqued Mike’s interest in home maintenance and renovation and led him to pick up various jobs in the home construction industry. Over his career, Mike has worked for companies in home remodeling, flooring installation, and flooring distribution. He even gained experience in warehouse management and as an IT manager. As he grew his range of skills, as well as the confidence to handle any home improvement or maintenance job that came his way, he saw an opportunity to venture out on his own.

“My former neighbor was a home inspector. I saw what he was doing and said to myself, ‘I can do that,’” Mike explains. “It was a good fit immediately. I launched HomeTeam Inspection Service and have been doing inspections for ten years.”





Mike and his family on a road trip through the California desert.



Mike fishing off the coast of California near the Channel Islands.

•••

Mike knows that people are depending on his work to protect their home investment—that serves as his main motivation and the reason behind his commitment to providing a high level of service. “I want people to know we are here to make their lives easier,” he says. “The most fulfilling part of my job is helping buyers get comfortable [with] making such a large purchase.”

Since starting in 2011, Mike’s team has expanded their reach throughout the DuPage area, even receiving a Breakout Award for their growth. Mike brings multiple experts to each inspection, which results in faster and more thorough examinations that include radon testing. They also use the latest technology to produce more comprehensive and detailed reports for their clients.

When not busy with inspections, Mike enjoys traveling, bike rides, and family time outdoors with his wife, Lisa; their son, Kyle (fourteen years old); and their daughter, Kira (twelve years old). Hawaii has been their ideal vacation locale ever since Lisa and he were married there. They celebrate their twentieth wedding anniversary this month.

Mike is also a music junkie and listens to ‘80s and ‘90s rock and roll throughout the day. His favorite bands include Metallica, Van Halen, and Aerosmith. His children have grown a fondness for his music after hearing “Enter Sandman” (Metallica) all their lives.

As Mike looks forward to this year, he is excited to see where the new technology trends will take the inspection industry, especially since it opens up new opportunities to share his team’s expertise.

“There is a lot happening in the tech space, and we’re starting to see more

connected homes and smart homes,” he says. “There is new technology for HVAC, smart thermostats, and smart lighting.”

“Homebuyers don’t necessarily know what to look for when it comes to smart system issues,” he explains. “These range from smart HVAC to thermostats and appliances. That’s why it’s important to make sure you are partnering with a home inspection company like ours that understands them.”

To learn more about HomeTeam Inspection Service’s range of services, you can call 630-200-3952 or visit their website www.HomeTeam.com/DuPage.

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