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## ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS



### ►► publisher's note

As we've mentioned in previous publisher's notes, creating an environment where relationships can flourish is one of our hopes for our realtors and preferred partners. Every month we send our beautiful magazine to the top 500 realtors on the North Shore. In it, we feature their stories and celebrate their successes. One key ingredient I've found is that the most successful have built their business on enduring relationships.

The picture I've posted in my note this month is of my grandparents, Art and Donna. Can you see any of my genes in them? Nevertheless, they are celebrating 70 years of marriage this month. I'm blown away! I've been married 25 years. I can't imagine 70 years, but I look forward to it. At 91 and 92 years old, they have learned what it means to have an enduring relationship together. How did they do it? Better yet, how does an agent endure in relationships with both other agents and vendors alike?

Enduring relationships have several consistencies:

**Forgiveness** - Long-lasting relationships endure with the amount of forgiveness granted.

**Trust** - Trust only goes as far as the integrity of one's word. Let our yes be yes and our no be no!

**Respect** - Everyone has a different view point. We show greater respect when we understand before being understood.

**Honesty** - Enduring relationship will last long into eternity and making the quick buck dishonestly simply isn't worth it.

Many more attributes could be given, but allow me to ask you if that's the kind of realtor that sets you apart? I would agree that many of the agents I've

had the privilege of meeting exemplify these characteristics and many more. Here's to many more years of enduring relationships to come!



**Jason Acres**

Owner/Publisher

North Shore Real Producers

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# Andrew Bowyer

## MDesign



### ▶▶ partner spotlight

Article written by Lindsey Wells

## Sell Your Clients' Homes In Style

"There's no place like home." Dorothy said it best in *The Wizard of Oz*. Home is our anchor. It's our happy place, the one place where we can retreat after a long day. Homes are Andy Bowyer's specialty. His company, Staging MDesign, provides editing and staging services for real estate agents, developers, and builders.

Andy and his team of professionals know how challenging it can be for potential buyers to visualize the opportunities a space can provide, especially when it's empty. At MDesign, they create spaces reminiscent of the buyer's home and lifestyle—spaces in which the buyer can genuinely see themselves living and creating lasting memories.

In 2008, Andy started a design/build firm, Middlefork, LLC ([www.middleforkluxury.com](http://www.middleforkluxury.com)), which initially built luxury spec homes in Lincoln Park and Lakeview. It now focuses exclusively on custom home construction and renovation. When his first house was completed, Andy wanted to stage the home before presenting it to the market. "I wanted people to walk in and either say, 'This is how we live,' or, 'This is how I WANT to live,'" he said. Andy curated a collection of furniture that allowed him to stage two houses at the same time. Eventually, however, the furniture became repetitious in photographs, and the small collection was no longer benefiting

the business. That's when his wife, Kate Denny Bowyer, stepped in.

Kate's vision was to create a staging company that allowed her the flexibility to continue being a full-time mother to hers and Andy's four young children. She created MDesign and hired other young mothers who could build their schedules around the school day. Before they knew it, Kate had built a large following and inventory that has propelled MDesign into one of the top staging companies in the Chicago market.

What sets MDesign apart in its staging is product layering and the quality of furniture used. MDesign's inventory is full of custom pieces, as well as pieces collected from estate sales and auctions that have previously been used in other beautiful homes. Accessories include high and low pieces, including those that have been collected on trips around the globe along with pieces collected from local shops. Beds are layered with sheets, coverlets, comforters, and throws, while bed pillows are backdrops for luxurious accent pillows perfect for resting against while reading a good book. Millwork is filled with books, photos, and collectibles, all brought together to illustrate a well-led life. "Together, the product tells a story of a 'family' that lives in the home, whether it is a young family with a nursery and toys or an empty-nester with rooms set aside for guests or grandchildren," Andy said. "We listen to the REALTORS® as to the demographics





they are pursuing, pay attention to the architecture of the space, and stage accordingly.”

Tragedy struck the Bowyer family in early 2018 when Kate was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer. She died nine weeks later. “As traumatic as that continues to be for my family, continuing to keep MDesign alive—*her vision alive*—helps a little bit,” Andy said, adding that he is passionate about continuing his wife’s legacy. “I enjoy speaking with REALTORS® who worked with her or knew her and hearing their stories about working with her. I look forward to the time when my children can work in the warehouse or help with stagings and be a part of the life she imagined. Further, the market is still there and very receptive of our services; MDesign is still going strong. Therefore, I took over the mantle of running it with a lot of help from the other MDesign teammates.”

While MDesign may not be the cheapest staging service in town, Andy believes it is the most cost-effective. “If you give us a try, I believe that you will quickly appreciate the value of MDesign,” he said.

Over the past two years, Andy and his four children, who range in age from 10 to 15 years old, have done their best to accept their new life without their mother, their sun, around which they all orbited. While they have not fully recovered, the Bowyer family grows a little more each day. Together, they enjoy beach vacations, snow skiing, and a variety of sports. They also love playing with and walking their two Bichon Frises, who become slightly better trained every day. In his own free time, Andy loves to read, garden, run, and play tennis.



“We keep learning and growing as a family,” Andy said. “Everyone should do that – you never know it all. And if you don’t keep evolving, you will become very bored, and, possibly, boring!”

For more information, visit [www.mdesign.house](http://www.mdesign.house) or call 312-560-3969. And don’t forget to mention this article in order to receive 15% off your next staging agreement!



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Bordeaux Studio

# Annette Patko

▶ partner spotlight  
Article written by **Laura Zickert**

## Picture Perfect Passion

Finding your passion and turning it into a career is a beautiful process. Annette Patko is a photographer in the North Shore creating memorable and beautiful images for businesses, families, and more. She says, “When you love what you do it really is not work. Making people feel good about being in photos is one of the best feelings and a big reward.”

Annette is the owner of The Bordeaux Studio, a full-service studio that provides lifestyle, business, portraits, and family photos. Additionally, the Bordeaux Studio has associates who provide product and boudoir photos. Their commercial studio space accommodates groups and is a space that captures beautiful images.

Growing up in Germany, Annette enjoyed seeing her dad have a big passion for photography. She came to the United States and when it came to pursuing a career, Annette chose to study photography at Columbia College. “I started out with a big passion for food photography but then the passion for photographing people took over. To this day, I love a combination of both,” she says.

Annette is the president of the Chicago Photography Society. She is also a member and on the board of the Many Photographic Association. “We are an association of photographers who



When you love what you do it really is not work. Making people feel good about being in photos is one of the best feelings and a big reward.



...  
 love to share and support each other. I love connecting photographers and different shoots," said Annette. Annette is also very involved with her local Chamber of Commerce and volunteers on many committees associated with the Chamber. She is proud to be on the Evanston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Member.

For Annette, photography is more than just a career, but it is also a passion. She says, "I have had an education in phototherapy and the experience has made me a well-rounded photographer and artist." She continues to grow and utilize her expertise to help others learn how to constantly improve their craft and provide their clients beautiful images. She also has taken this to heart and stays up to date with new technology and photography courses within her industry for herself.

When it comes to helping clients with business photos, Anette says, "I love to provide images for my clients that they can use to advance/show off their business. I like to help my clients create the edge above the sea of selfies out there. Creating a high-end headshot or business photo should reflect the real them and capture their personality and style. I have loved working with the different REALTORS® and creating portraits that reflect their individual style."

She takes many of the photos for REALTORS® featured in the North Shore Producers magazine and has helped capture many stories through her images. Her client care and ability to connect with her clients has created a safe and comfortable environment for people to be themselves.



“

I like to help my clients create the edge above the sea of selfies out there. Creating a high-end headshot or business photo should reflect the real them and capture their personality and style.



Family is very important to Annette! She has a son who is almost 16. He is very active, and she enjoys cheering him on during his basketball and baseball season. She says, "We have a close bond and I love to watch him play sports. We enjoy being outdoors and going to sporting events together." Both Annette and her son have a tradition of traveling to different sports arenas together. They also enjoy being by the water and the beach. Living in Evanston has been great for their family as they get to be close to a Lake and have great scenery while they walk their golden-doodle.

When Annette is not working, she enjoys cooking for friends, entertaining, and listening to some of her favorite country music artists. She says, "I also have a big passion for wine and discovered a brand called Scout & Cellar that has no added sugar or chemicals in them. They have been a game changer and I love sharing them with others!"

Annette Patko is an example of someone who is using her talents and passions to help others capture memories, stand out in their business, and more. She is kind, thoughtful, and a joy to be with! Book a session with Annette and you can see for yourself how she has a picture-perfect passion to help you.



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# This Shift Just Got Real

▶▶ thoughts from a top REALTOR®

Written by Top REALTOR® Cheryl O'Rourke



The pandemic has created a major shift in our real estate market. Not just the way we sell but *how* we do our jobs and *what* we sell.

Buyers are now realizing that their house is not only just their home. It is their office, children's school, gym, and so much more. As a result, the needs of buyers have shifted quickly and dramatically. Many of these changes such as working remotely, are predicted to stay in some capacity even after the pandemic is behind us. Agents who can stop, pivot, adjust, adapt, modify, and retune are winning listings and buyers. Our business continues to change and those who can change with the times are the big winners.

Young families from the city have accelerated their life plans and are searching aggressively on the north shore for homes with more space and a yard. With the ability to work remotely, buyers have much more freedom to open their search span. The "close commute to work" has moved down a couple notches on the buyer's "wish list" and has been replaced with a "home office, room for remote learning and a large yard." Remember the days when buyers would say, "That living room is just wasted space," or, "We would never use that separate formal dining room." Now those rooms can seal a deal because they can easily be converted into a home office or a remote learning space.

This surge of buyer activity has created a shortage of inventory. Many homes are going under contract before they hit the market, and several homes that hit

the market are selling with multiple offers. Most of us are inundated with calls, emails and text messages from agents looking for inventory that has not hit the market. It usually goes something like, "I've got a well-qualified buyer looking up to \$950,000 do you have anything coming on?" "Are you holding any listings?" "I've got buyers looking from \$400K-\$2M, do you have ANYTHING?" The shortage is real and has caused panicked buyers to be extremely aggressive when writing an offer.

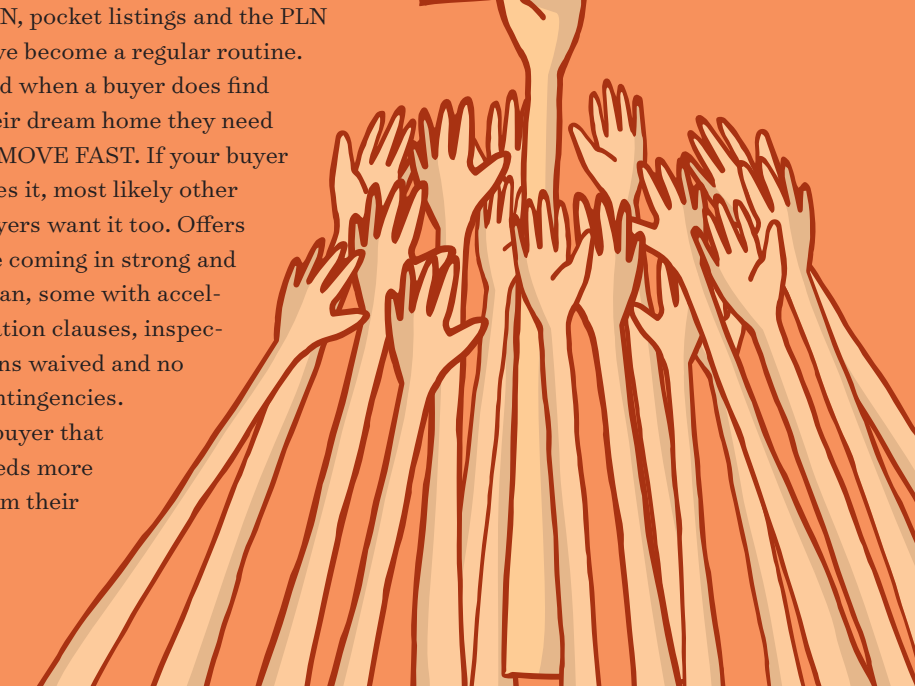
There is no room in the current landscape for a passive buyers' agent. The days of automatic emails to buyers when a new listing appears within their criteria are long gone, and so is the house. Finding homes for buyers is much more complicated today. Searching and posting on real estate sites, checking in with homeowners that have been considering selling, connecting with agents, searching private listings, TAN, pocket listings and the PLN have become a regular routine. And when a buyer does find their dream home they need to MOVE FAST. If your buyer likes it, most likely other buyers want it too. Offers are coming in strong and clean, some with acceleration clauses, inspections waived and no contingencies. A buyer that needs more from their

home than ever, also needs more from their agent than ever.

Agents have mastered navigating through this pandemic while keeping themselves and their clients safe. Although the market is challenging there is nothing more rewarding and satisfying than telling your buyer "Your offer was accepted!"

*By the way...if you have anything coming on in Glenview between \$1,000,000-\$1,250,000 give me a call.*

**Cheryl O'Rourke**  
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Elise Rinaldi  
@properties

top producer

Article written by Laura Zickert  
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# Balance Makes Perfect

You may have heard the phrase, “practice makes perfect,” but what about balance? For Elise Rinaldi, finding balance and positive energy has been transformational for herself and her career. Balance in relationships, schedules, career, and more have all played a role in making Elise one of the most successful REALTORS® in the North Shore!



Elise was born in New York City and grew up in Westchester County, NY. She attended the State University of New York at Oneonta and graduated in 1985 with a degree in Speech Communications. Out of college, Elise first worked in the tenant services department of a commercial real estate development company. After transitioning to corporate relocation, she decided it was time for a shift when her family moved

to Chicago in 2003. She knew residential real estate would be a natural fit and received her real estate license in 2005. After 5 years at Coldwell Banker, she was one of the first brokers to join the new @properties Winnetka office in 2010. Sixteen years of experience and hundreds of transactions totaling over \$200Million set the tone for personal and career success.



Her marriage to her husband, Patrick McNally has truly been a calming force in her life. “He’s a sounding board for me and my business as he too worked in an industry interfacing with clients and their assets,” said Elise. “Top agents go hard at this business, sometimes for weeks or months without a break. Patrick and I take frequent short getaways for just a few days to reset our souls.”

When Elise is not working, she’s cooking. “Being 100% Italian, that is probably more of a trait than a hobby,” she says. “My time in the kitchen is very therapeutic and allows me to disconnect from the intensity of business. It’s how I nurture family and friends.” Additionally, she is a certified etiquette consultant. She says, “My etiquette training was by Liv Tyler’s grandmother, who founded the Washington School of Protocol. Some of my clients included children of notable political figures.”





single day with thoughts of gratitude and positive intentions for both my life and someone else in my world who needs it.” She emphasizes, “I find it much more calming and productive to come from a place of abundance rather than scarcity.”

In a world with much negativity and in a role where you can experience rejection, she says, “I learned a competitive business can also be kind and it defined the company with which I was aligned.”



Elise is particularly passionate about having balance in her life. She says, “The pandemic has created much anxiety and stress in everyone’s life. Staying healthy both physically and mentally benefits everyone...especially clients. It provides me with patience, clarity and vision for me and my business. Balance is key!” As she also works to attract positive energy, she has found this comes from choosing to pursue it.

Although having several mentors throughout her career, Elise credits @properties co-founder Thad Wong as the person she continues to admire. “His vision has always been groundbreaking, and his example is always to do it with genuine kindness and authenticity”

Like every industry, real estate has its ups and downs. Elise shares that “overcoming the challenges of tough negotiations, difficult clients or even a slump requires positivity, discipline and resilience”. Since participating in a sales training program several years ago in which much of the focus was on mindset, Elise says she “starts every

“ I find it much more calming and productive to come from a place of abundance rather than scarcity. ”



Her positivity has transformed the lives of those around her, influenced the way she does business and views success. She says, “Top Producers are not only defined by revenue or volume. You are a top producer when you collaborate with others and contribute to the overall success of the industry.” By pursuing a life of balance and pursuing her passions, Elise is known on the North Shore as a leader who possesses market knowledge and positivity.





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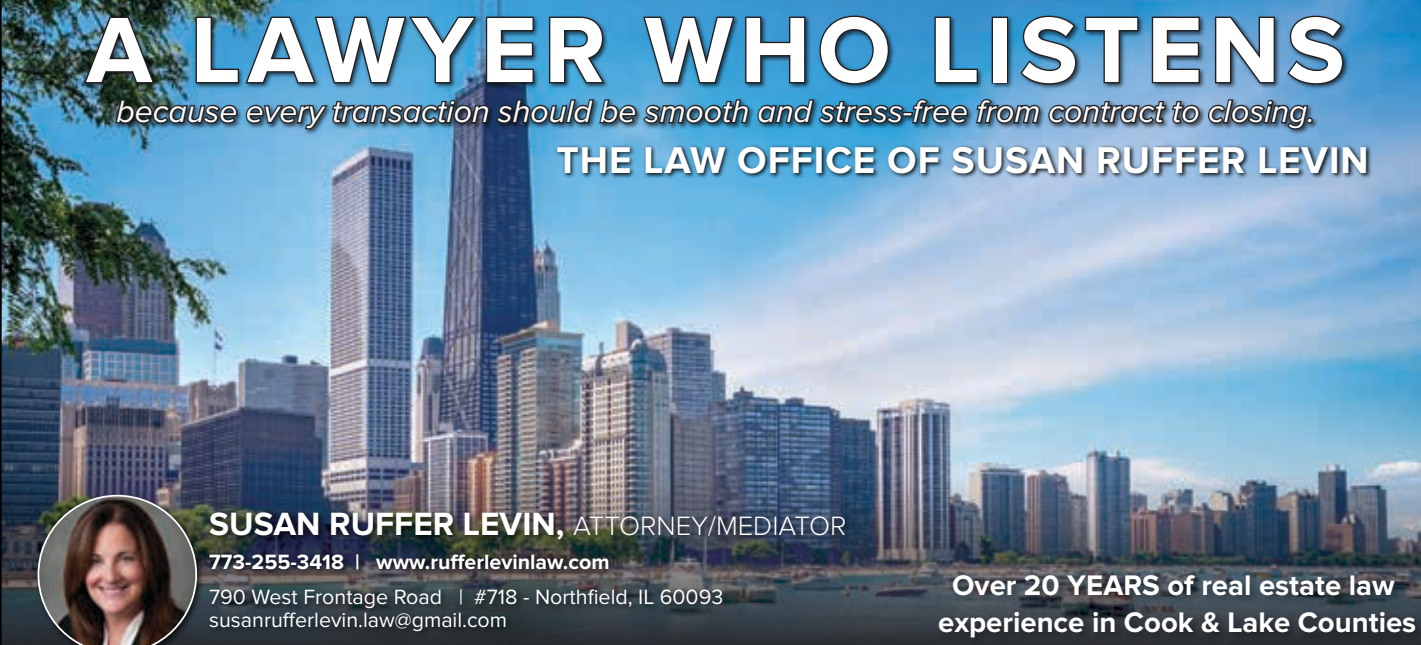
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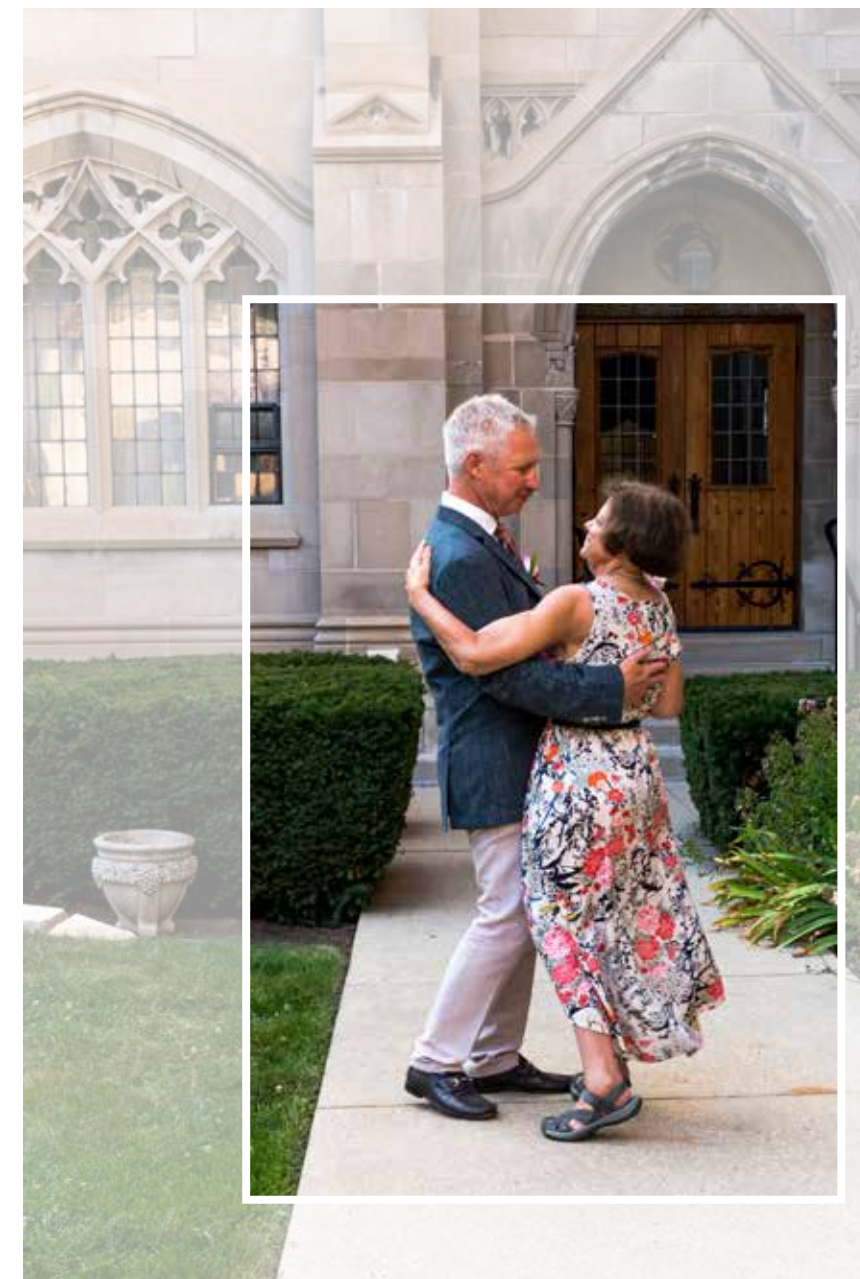
TOP REALTOR **MARTIN A. UTHE**

# PAVING A PATH TO SUCCESS IN REAL ESTATE

**Positivity, patience, and persistence. Some say those are the three P's to success. In theory, they are all such simple concepts, but achieving them is sometimes easier said than done. No one knows that better than Realtor Martin A. Uthe who persevered through some major personal hurdles and has made quite a name for himself in the local real estate market.**

Born in Jamestown, New York, Martin and his family moved to Singer Island, Florida in 1972 where he attended Palm Beach Academy followed by Northwestern University and earned a B.S. in Speech, majoring in Theatre. After graduation, he worked at the NU library, while stage managing and directing for area theatres. He has been a resident of Evanston ever since. He met his wife, Karen, while stage managing, and they raised their daughter, Kate, who is now 29.

As a child growing up in an Italian household (Norwegian on his father's side), a great love for cooking was instilled in young Martin. "I would watch my mom and grandma cook, learning all the basics of Italian cuisine," he said. "Even today, I will do something and be reminded that I learned that from my grandma." Martin's love of cooking led him to Kendall College Culinary School, from which he graduated in 1989. Upon graduation, Martin helped open Va Pensiero in Evanston. As the restaurant's Private Dining Manager, he booked, planned, staffed, and oversaw all private events. Unbeknownst to him at the time, this juggling act would greatly benefit him in his future real estate career. As any good agent knows, being able to listen and understand clients'



...

needs along with wearing different hats and keeping plates spinning, all done without a sweat, are part and parcel of the job.

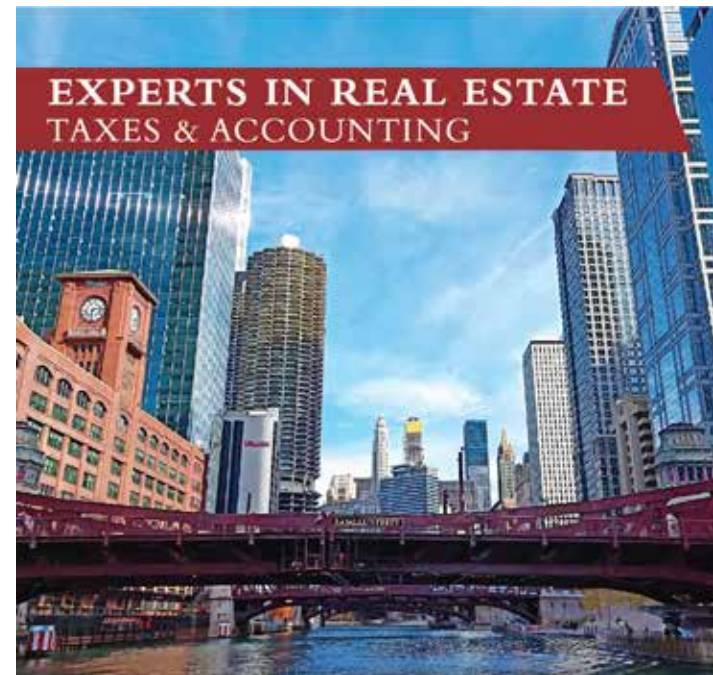
Martin also helped open Betise, a French bistro at Plaza de Lago in Wilmette, where he eventually became General Manager. As much as he loved running a restaurant, the hours finally got to him. "I rarely saw my family and wanted to use all my customer service skills," Martin said. Real estate broker Alynn Rawling introduced Martin to real estate in 1998, thus beginning his journey in the industry. Now a real estate professional at @properties, Martin is in his 24th year in real estate.

At the risk of sounding corny, Martin said that the most rewarding aspect of his career is the relationships that he has made over the years. "I find it so rewarding to have so many friends who have been clients. I recently had plans to have coffee with a client/friend, and right before I was to meet him, he called and asked if I wanted to go bike riding instead--I still brought the coffee--so that's what we did on his electric bikes. It was a blast," he said. "It's also the lunches and the coffees, and the texts and calls that I receive on birthdays and holidays."

Looking to the future, Martin plans to continue real estate but wants to place more focus on spending time with his family. His mother will turn 100 on May 19th, and the family is in the process of planning an event; one that, unfortunately, may be limited to Zoom. Once the pandemic is a thing of the past, Martin and his wife plan on visiting their daughter and her boyfriend in Boston.

When Martin and Karen can enjoy some time together, they love playing board games, visiting the Chicago Botanic Garden, cooking, and traveling. "We take an annual trip to Hayward, Wisconsin," Martin said. "We rent a cabin on the lake and have the luxury of spending two weeks without an itinerary. Our daughter joins us as well. We are hoping to visit Chile in 2022 to visit Kate's Chilean family (she spent a semester abroad and they visited us Christmas of 2019)."

Needless to say, Martin has landscaped a future of which he can be proud. For him, success is being thankful for everything that has been given to him, everything that he has worked for. The numbers are just icing on the cake.



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family has their own story, and the purchase or sale of a home is often the beginning of a new chapter. Megan Leadbetter takes her role in those stories seriously. As a REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Realty, Megan is her clients' biggest cheerleader. When she started in real estate, Megan's tireless work ethic, coupled with her caring heart, set her apart in an industry where it's easy to blend in.

Born and raised on the North Shore of Chicago, Megan attended college at Xavier University, where she majored in Communications and minored in Psychology. After graduating, she made her way to Washington, D.C. There, Megan began working in IT on Capitol Hill, where she created

websites for senators and members of Congress. Megan's time there took place in an interesting period in United States history during Bill Clinton's impeachment trial. One of her most memorable moments on Capitol Hill was when she posted Ken Starr's investigation report online while surrounded by armed guards.

Eventually, Megan returned home to Illinois and was ready for a career change. The real estate industry presented itself to her as a breath of fresh air. While real estate has its own unique set of challenges, Megan finds personal fulfillment in helping families achieve homeownership. And, she never grows tired of seeing the excitement on her clients' faces when they've finally found the home of their dreams. "Because the interest rates are so low, it provides more opportunities for families," Megan said. "It gets me excited to listen to my clients dream about how they'll make their new home their own."

When her clients are on a mission to find something specific, it is not uncommon to find Megan scouring the internet at all hours of the night, researching homes and their histories to match the client with



the right home or property. "I'm more interested in finding the right home for the right people than finding more homes for more people," Megan said. "I want them to feel like it's the best place for them."

Megan's own family is and will always be at the center of everything she does. She and her husband, Scott, have been married for 22 years and have five kids, Jack, Charlie, Lucas, Spencer, and Addison, whose ages range from 21 to 14. They also share their home with a Saint Bernard puppy. While the kids are all involved in different sporting and extracurricular activities, the Leadbetter family does share one common love: The lake. "In the summertime, we'll get on a boat and cruise around Lake Michigan, or we'll go paddle boarding or throw the football around on the beach," Megan said, adding that she and Scott also enjoy playing tennis, bike riding, and running. Something that many people may not know about Megan is that she is a drummer.

Megan and her family are avid supporters of the Great Lakes Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Great Lakes. "That is our largest natural resource, and Lake Michigan is right here in our backyard," Megan said. "We love the water, we love the beach, and we hang out on the lake all the time, so keeping the Great Lakes great is one of our passions." Megan also proudly supports Coldwell Banker Cares, whose focus is on building stronger, more empowered communities.

When asked how she defines the word success in her life, Megan's answer was simple: Success is achieved only when she can live the life she loves, with the ones she loves. For Megan, success is not measured by the number of houses she sells; instead, it's measured by her family's happiness. "For me, my family is everything," she added. "Home is where your story begins. My husband and my children are my everything; they are my story."

“

FOR ME, MY FAMILY IS EVERYTHING. HOME IS WHERE YOUR STORY BEGINS. MY HUSBAND AND MY CHILDREN ARE MY EVERYTHING; THEY ARE MY STORY.

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# SOHAIL

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Article written by Laura Zickert



## FINDING THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSET

Important personal assets people often think of are their house, car, cash, and investments. For Sohail Salahuddin, he has spent his life finding the most important asset isn't external, but instead it's your mindset. His journey of finding his passion, career, and self has led him to be a successful and confident real estate agent impacting the North Shore in many aspiring ways.

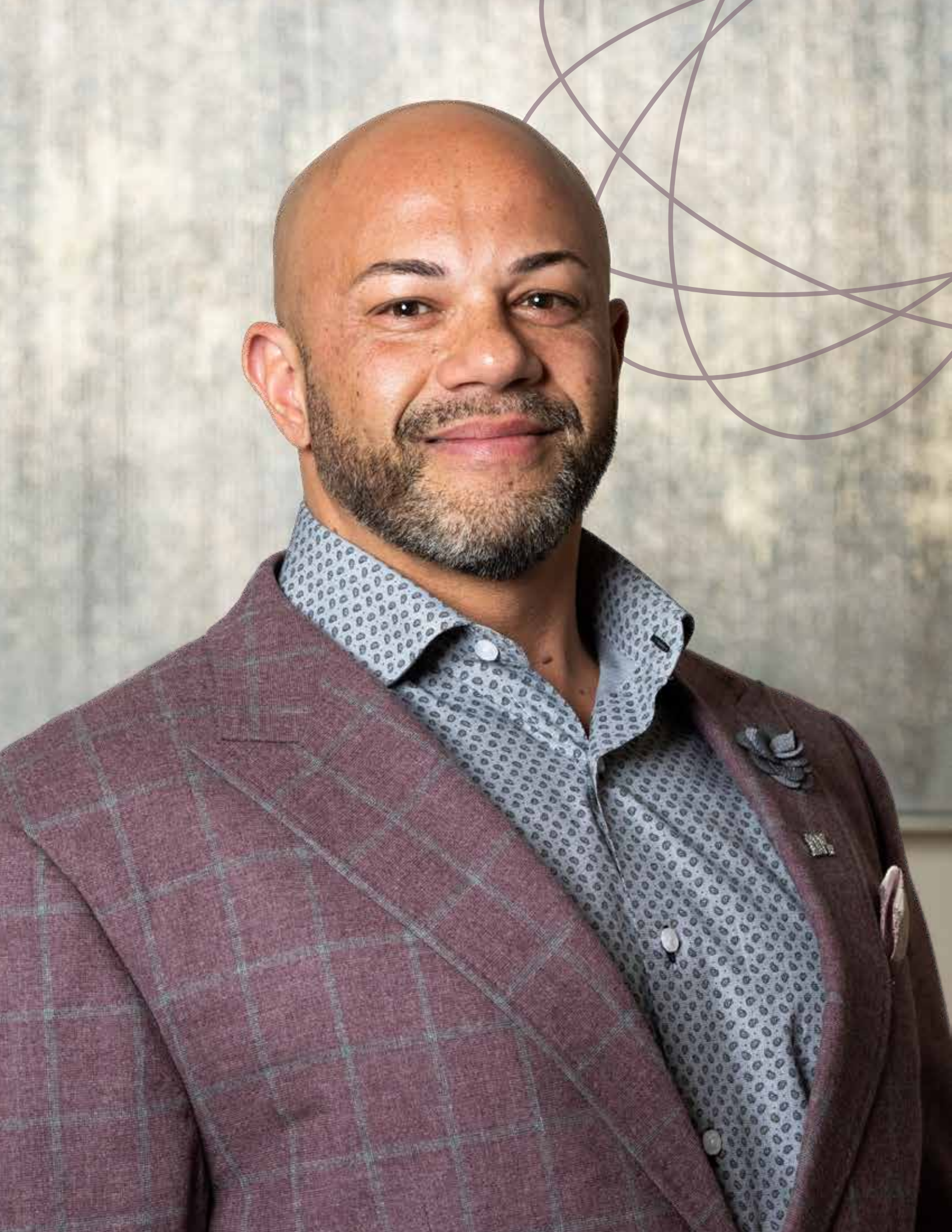
Born in Skokie, Sohail grew up in Park Ridge. He attended both Loyola and DeVry before graduating with a degree in Network Engineering in 1999. Over time, he has run a few small businesses ranging from a production company to personal training. He was inspired by many people in his life to transition to the real estate industry on the mortgage side. In 2005, he received his real estate license and started a new chapter in his career. One year in, Sohail started working on his own mortgage company. He was there for two years before selling his half of the to go open up a real estate office. He said, "It was a good ride, and I learned a lot about business, business partners, growing a company, etc." After a few other transitions, he was finally led to @properties. "It is a great firm with great leadership. I don't know if I would ever want to go anywhere else," said Sohail.

With 16 years of experience, Sohail has excelled and received many recognitions. He attributes much of his success to the many mentors who have taught him about marriage, life, business, sales, and spirit. Sohail continues to find opportunities to grow and be the best version of himself. He says, "I look up to people who have done something smart, different or courageous. Courage right now is at the top of my list to grow within." As he has overcome a lot, he often reflects on how he has been in some of the worst places and worked hard to come back and be in the best places. He has found "there are very few things that we can't do with the right mindset, but with the wrong mindset we can only do very few things."

Even though he has found much success, Sohail says, "I will be 44 this year, and I am just starting to

There are very few things that we can't do with the right mindset, but with the wrong mindset we can only do very few things.

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figure out business and life with a very long way to go.” Making strides toward growth comes from being disciplined in daily life. He says, “the discipline to pursue personal growth is where the magic is.”

Sohail’s best friend, life partner, business partner, and trusted source is his amazing wife, Christina. Together, they have three daughters, Briana (17), Amara (11) and Ahriellah (9). In addition, his mother, Sara, also lives with their family and has been such a blessing. Sundays are a favorite day in their home as it is spent all together and enjoying one another’s company. “We try to go places on Sundays whether it’s



boating on Lake Geneva in summer to skiing in winter, etc. With the current environment, due to the pandemic, we have been watching a lot of family movies,” said Sohail.

Sohail is into fitness and what the human body and mind can do in relation to fitness and growth. “When I was young, I was very obese. My first year in high school I was introduced to a gym, which led me to dramatically changing my body and life, competing in a few bodybuilding competitions prior to my 20s. When I saw the progress I made, I was hooked,” he said. “The discipline I learned, from such a competitive and highly mentally tough sport, I use every day in my business life.”

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•••

Sohail is recognized as someone who sets the example for how to be an effective communicator. He also excels at listening carefully to conversations and contributing a logical perspective. Sohail says, "The most important asset you have is your mindset. The ability to keep going, stay focused and have tunnel vision on your goals." The North Shore applauds and congratulates him for all of his efforts, success, and leadership!



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