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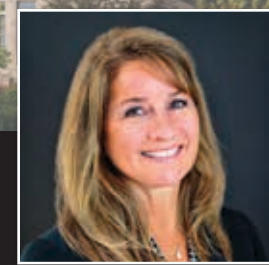
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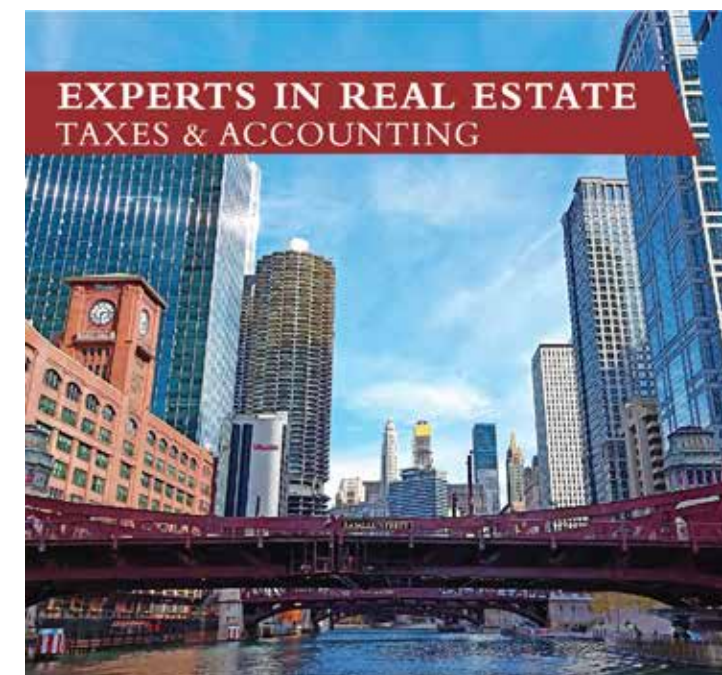
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DOING OUR PART



► publisher's note

I've been thinking a lot about the world we live in today. It seems like we're in a state of flux. I'm curious how one maintains any semblance of consistency in such a time of fluidity. I'm convinced there must be an individual focus to do one's part in maintaining consistency personally. Allow me to explain with a simple illustration.

Most of us have experienced the wonderful thrills of riding a roller coaster at one of our many theme parks across the country. Locally, our family has ridden the most amazing coasters at Six Flags in Gurnee. At my age, they're simply not as fun as they were when I was a child. That's beside the point. I digress. Recently, my kids convinced me to go on the ride, Goliath, with them. Given my affinity for David in the great Bible story, I agreed and thought, "How bad could this be?"

The climb was the most terrifying 60 seconds in my life! Virtually, straight up and as we reached the top, we quickly dropped immediately down without much of a decline. I mean, straight down!! Needless to say, I've never gone on a large roller coaster since. Now, back to doing our part and the connection my illustration has with consistency in a chaotic world.

Even though the roller coaster "seems" to be out of control, I'm able to stay consistent in my seat, belt fastened, and looking straight ahead. All these things help me to remain focused on what's ahead. I feel like that's the world we live in and perhaps it will remain like this for the entirety of my life and yours, but focus on the things I can remain consistent in. How can I stay focused on my work, my family, my relationships, and so on? This is a great question to answer and will help me stay in my seat and buckled for what lies ahead.

Let's do our part and focus on remaining consistent in a world that offers us many ups and downs.



Jason Acres

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Top Realtor **Beth Alberts**
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A Realtor With Passion And A Plan

► featured agent

Article written by **Laura Zickert**

Many realtors utilize their market knowledge to set them apart in the industry. For Beth Alberts, that, in combination with her passion and ability to have an incredible plan, has made her one of the most successful realtors in the North Shore. Her team is incredibly talented in their ability to give their clients the most superior service because they have an organized process for getting things done. Their team seeks to provide much more than just a high volume of transactions. Beth says, “We genuinely care about hard work, doing things the right way and the way that’s most beneficial to our clients. We are resourceful and creative problem solvers that never give up until our clients are satisfied.”

Beth Alberts was born and raised in St. Joseph, MI. She attended college at Emory University in Atlanta, GA. In 1998, she graduated with her bachelor’s degree in psychology, and after college, her first job was at a television advertising firm. “We sold advertising air-time for tv stations all over the country,” said Beth. “After two years I got a job in cable advertising sales with The Weather Channel in Atlanta, GA. I played on the company softball team with none other than Jim Cantore!” Beth was honored with an award for outstanding customer service for her role as a sales planner.

In 2002, while living in Atlanta, Beth decided to get her real estate license because several of her friends were



...

also agents. She found herself often helping with their Open Houses and occasionally working with her own friends and family as a buyer's agent. She says, "My primary career was still with The Weather Channel, but I thought real estate was fun to do on the side. I just loved looking at all the houses and imagining how I could transform them into something more beautiful and appealing to buyers. Little did I know what a disservice I was doing to my clients at the time by not appreciating the importance of touring homes and really understanding the nuances of pricing." She realized very quickly that real estate was challenging to do as a part-time job.

Beth and her husband moved to Illinois, and in 2010, she received her Illinois Real Estate License. She started her full-time career on the North Shore at Baird & Warner in Highland Park. "There is just no way for me to properly advise clients on such a huge decision without being fully invested in my career and consistently touring houses in my target markets," said Beth. "This is the most important financial decision that many of my clients will make and I owe it to them to become an expert advisor throughout the process of buying and selling homes."

Beth is very thankful for her time in 2012 with Margie Brooks. "My year with Margie was the best hands-on training I could ever ask for. She taught me the importance of really knowing my market." Because of her time with Margie, Beth has been able to create a business model that is extremely hyper-local where 80% of her business is in Highland Park. By 2013, Beth was on her own and building her business by writing real estate-related articles for local publications. The tips and tricks that she presented in her articles led to her sphere of family and friends seeing her as a knowledgeable professional and her career began to blossom.

"The referrals started to come in as the real estate market in Highland Park started to recover from the recession. By 2015, my business had tripled, and I needed help to make sure that I could still provide the five-star level of service that my clients had come to expect," said Beth. This led to her partnership with Stephanie Maletsky, and in June of 2015, the duo founded The Alberts + Maletsky Team. "Joining forces with Stephanie was the greatest decision I have ever made," said Beth.

"Six years later, we are still partnering and are now best friends." They have since added Melissa Lipschultz, who is a buyer's broker and listing assistant to their team.

Melissa expands the team's expertise into Deerfield and the Northwest Suburbs. In February of 2021, The Alberts + Maletsky Team moved to Compass as founding agents in the Highland Park office. Their team also restructured, and Beth has taken on

...



... a larger role with the business side, including branding, marketing, and client acquisition, while Stephanie continues to work with existing clients. "Since moving to Compass, every aspect of our business has become easier to manage and we are so much more efficient. We are in the best possible position to grow our business to the next level," says Beth.

With 13 years of experience, Beth brings incredible insight into every area of the business. Their team has collectively received several internal volume awards at Baird & Warner, such as Founder's Club and President's Club awards. Beth is always able to take her past experiences and learn. As she has pursued a good work-life balance, Beth has taken much time to get her priorities aligned so that both work and life are in a healthy place. She says, "As I gained more experience and confidence in my ability to be a good agent, I had an easier time recognizing the real situations that needed priority."

Beth has learned to excel in balancing both work and life and family is incredibly important to her. She

married her husband, Joe Alberts, in 2004. Joe is a commercial real estate broker specializing in Chicago office leasing. "He always gives great advice when I am stuck in a negotiation," says Beth. "His constant support is essential to my ability to give my all to my clients." Together, they have two children, Annie (15) and Alex (12). "Annie is the sweetest most empathetic kid I know. Alex is my athlete and he's a great teammate. He plays both travel hockey and travel baseball which has led to some of our family's closest friendships." says Beth. As a family, they enjoy going to sporting events and festivals, beach vacations, and BBQs. They also watch a lot of sports together and enjoy Fantasy Football. Spending time in Michigan and Atlanta with family are some of their favorite events to look forward to!

When she is not working, she says, "Thanks to Stephanie, I recently discovered Pickleball, and I am completely obsessed! During quarantine, she also showed me how to make woven beaded bracelets. We can't help but do everything together!" Recently, their family got a new

Portuguese waterdog puppy, Mickey, who is "the new love of her life." Beth also is known as someone who is very involved in her community. She is on the Board of Directors for Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) and a member of the Rotary Club of Highland Park/Highwood.



Process, organization, and passion continue to be a huge part of Beth and her team's success. Beth says, "In this market, I am most passionate about guiding my clients through the process of buying a home that has multiple offers. I have come up with a dozen different strategies to help my clients get the house they want and I am happy with the results." Beth is also passionate about being a part of Compass and is very inspired by Robert Reffkin, the Compass CEO. Reffkin founded Compass with a set of entrepreneurship principles that Beth finds inspiring: dream big; learn from reality; obsess about opportunity; be solutions-driven; and bounce back with passion. Beth has adopted these ideas and is happier than she has ever been in her career. "I wake up every morning excited to use the tools at Compass to reach more people that I can help find their place in the world."





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Brandon Pratt

Sunrun Solar

partner spotlight
Article written by Laura Zickert



Going Green

Making decisions to recycle, choosing paper over plastic, and reducing the number of straws are great ways to go green and help the environment. As families evaluate additional ways to go green and conserve energy for their homes, many are learning about the benefits of solar energy. Brandon

Pratt is an Energy Consultant for Sunrun Solar, one of the largest solar energy companies in the nation. “We consult and install green energy panels for interested families and commercial businesses,” said Brandon. “Not only do we have the ability to reduce energy costs and beat rising

energy prices, but also we have the ability to impact the environment for the future.”

Brandon was raised on the West Coast-Bay Area in California and Seattle Washington. Growing up he always had a passion for music and soccer. He studied music production and composition at North Idaho College and played soccer at a semi-professional level in Seattle and Chicago. “My goal was set on other achievements. My sports background led me into personal training, and as a result, developed a handful of younger athletes looking to play at a high level. My music led me to create my own music business, performing at numerous venues from the west coast to

Midwest. Music is how I met my wife and we serve as worship leaders for my church,” said Brandon. Through his many contacts and connections, a client helped Brandon learn about green energy and the impact it makes on the environment. “Becoming an energy consultant was not the original plan, but I am super blessed God led me to be a part of this industry,” said Brandon.

Brandon encompasses integrity, hard work, and consistency. He excels at being able to make the impossible possible and help people find where Solar Energy best fits within their lifestyle. His work ethic, determination, and ability to connect with others have set him apart in the industry.



“
I love the fact
that I get to
help families
and businesses
see what works
best for them
while getting to
know them and
their story.”

...
“I’m definitely a people person. I love the fact that I get to help families and businesses see what works best for them while getting to know them and their story,” says Brandon.

As the green energy business continues to grow, Brandon has been able to support not only families but also realtors. He can support and give a wealth of knowledge to his clients to help them design educated decisions that fit their needs and home. He has found that there is so much importance in the

relationships formed within his business. “Besides helping families see a reduced cost in their electricity and utility bill, I get the opportunity to do one-on-one interaction and really fine-tune the needs of each client,” said Brandon. “This position has also allowed me to be able to travel across the US, meet and greet referrals, and really challenge me and learn so much about this industry. Each contact and home is unique in its own way. It’s such a blessing to be able to get to know the people I have.”



Brandon loves others well and ultimately loves his family well. Brandon and his wife met in 2009 at an American Idol audition in Denver, CO. They were long-distance for a few years before getting married and eventually arriving to live in the Chicago area in 2013. Together, they have a beautiful 16-month-old daughter. As a family, they enjoy doing outdoor activities, walking, swimming, biking, hiking, and playing soccer. They spend much time also playing instruments and creating lots of fun music, songs, and memories together. They truly are a talented and inspiring family. When Brandon is not working, he enjoys spending time with family, reading, playing soccer, and his guitar. Movie night with his wife is always a favorite time of his.

Brandon cares unconditionally for others and is extremely genuine. His work ethic and passion for green energy are inspiring and transforming the lives of many families in the Chicagoland area and the U.S. He is an incredible resource for businesses, homeowners, and realtors as they evaluate how green energy can make a lasting impact on their future!

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Carol Prieto

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Written by Lindsey Wells

They say if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. The same rings true for seasoned REALTOR® Carol Prieto, who first got her feet wet in real estate in 1992. Carol always had an interest in real estate; her father dabbled in it, buying and selling various homes in Florida, where the family spent winters. However, it wasn't until going through her own home-buying process that Carol decided to try her hand at real estate sales, where she flourished. Carol channeled her father's entrepreneurial spirit and her mother's creativity and persistence and set off on a journey to success.

Born and raised in Chicago, Carol married her husband, Rick, and stayed home to raise their children before finishing college. She graduated from the University of Illinois Chicago with a Bachelor of Arts in History in 1975. After that, Carol went to work in retail, where she held management positions up until her husband was offered a job in Minneapolis. Upon returning to Illinois, their real estate agent, Judy McEvoy, took Carol around house-hunting. This grew Carol's interest in real estate. "In thinking of going back to work, I decided that I would try real estate rather than go back into retail since I loved selling, loved homes and the history of homes, and working with people," Carol said. "My mother raised me to be a social worker, which is probably why I do well with people."

Carol was Rookie of the Year her first year in real estate. Two years later,



she took a leave of absence to move to Shanghai, China, for two years for Rick's job. "That was a fabulous experience," Carol said. "I learned a lot about China, and we traveled to quite a few places in China and surrounding countries while there." When Carol and Rick returned home in 1996, Carol dove headfirst into real estate and was quickly doing \$7 million a year in sales.

In 2000, Carol became the selling managing broker for the Evanston office of Prairie Shore Properties, which merged with Jameson Sotheby's in 2011. Carol stayed on and continued selling and managing, two offices at one point, before Rick passed away seven-and-a-half years ago. She took a brief break from managing before accepting an assistant managing broker position, which she held until a year ago.

Carol is looking at the future differently from when she was younger. The hardest thing she has ever had to overcome was the death of her husband, who died of lung cancer. "Even though he was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer seven years before he died, he never gave up," Carol said. In the years leading up to his death,

Rick's positivity was a beacon of light for those around him. "He is my hero for being so courageous in the face of such a horrible situation, but also my hardest battle to overcome, and I am still working on it. I was so glad that I was working and managing at the time of his death. I am grateful that I had my job."

These days, Carol is sticking strictly to sales at Jameson Sotheby's. "People think that Sotheby's is only for luxury homes; Sotheby's is luxury, but luxury is a combination of service, quality, handle-with-care, and attention to detail, and all of it is important," Carol said. "Your home is where you live. That is your luxury, your castle, and I want to help people find their castle."

Carol is an avid supporter of the Artist Book House, a fledgling organization dedicated to the literary, book, and paper arts and crafts. "It has undertaken the goal of restoring the Harley Clarke mansion in Evanston to save the mansion but also to provide a way for the public to meet and learn about the book and paper arts through lectures, classes, tours, etc.," Carol said. "To make it habitable and safe for people to come through, there

...

is a huge fundraising goal to make this happen. Audrey Niffenegger and the Artist Book House group have spearheaded this drive." Visit www.artists-bookhouse.org for more information.

Carol has two children. Eric (married to Kim), and Michelle (married to Ty). She also has four grandchildren, Sofie, Charlie, Bayden, and Elliot. Since the family is spread across the country, they love getting together as often as possible. "We were just all together in Florida for a week. It was fabulous," Carol said. "We visited old haunts from Bradenton and Sarasota to Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel, and Captiva. So good to be together after this crazy pandemic time. We all like to do a variety of things together from traveling, to time on the beach, to playing games, cards, concerts, museums, eating, you name it."



Success is defined as the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. For Carol, success is raising a family with good values, doing her job the best that she can, helping the people she works with, and reaching out to others who need help. She added, "Success to me is not defined by how much money I make, but how much care I take in what I do and ensuring that people know that I care about them."



Success to me is not defined by how much money I make, but how much care I take in what I do and ensuring that people know that I care about them.



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The ABL Group hosted an amazing event in September and we're excited to show you some of the pictures and quotes from our time together. Be on the lookout for the article next month! Who doesn't like to see themselves in lights? Thanks again to The ABL Group for a wonderful event and all our referred partner sponsors. We're already planning our Winter VIP Event and can't wait!



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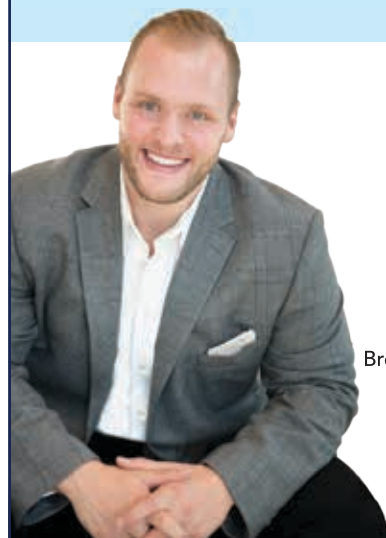
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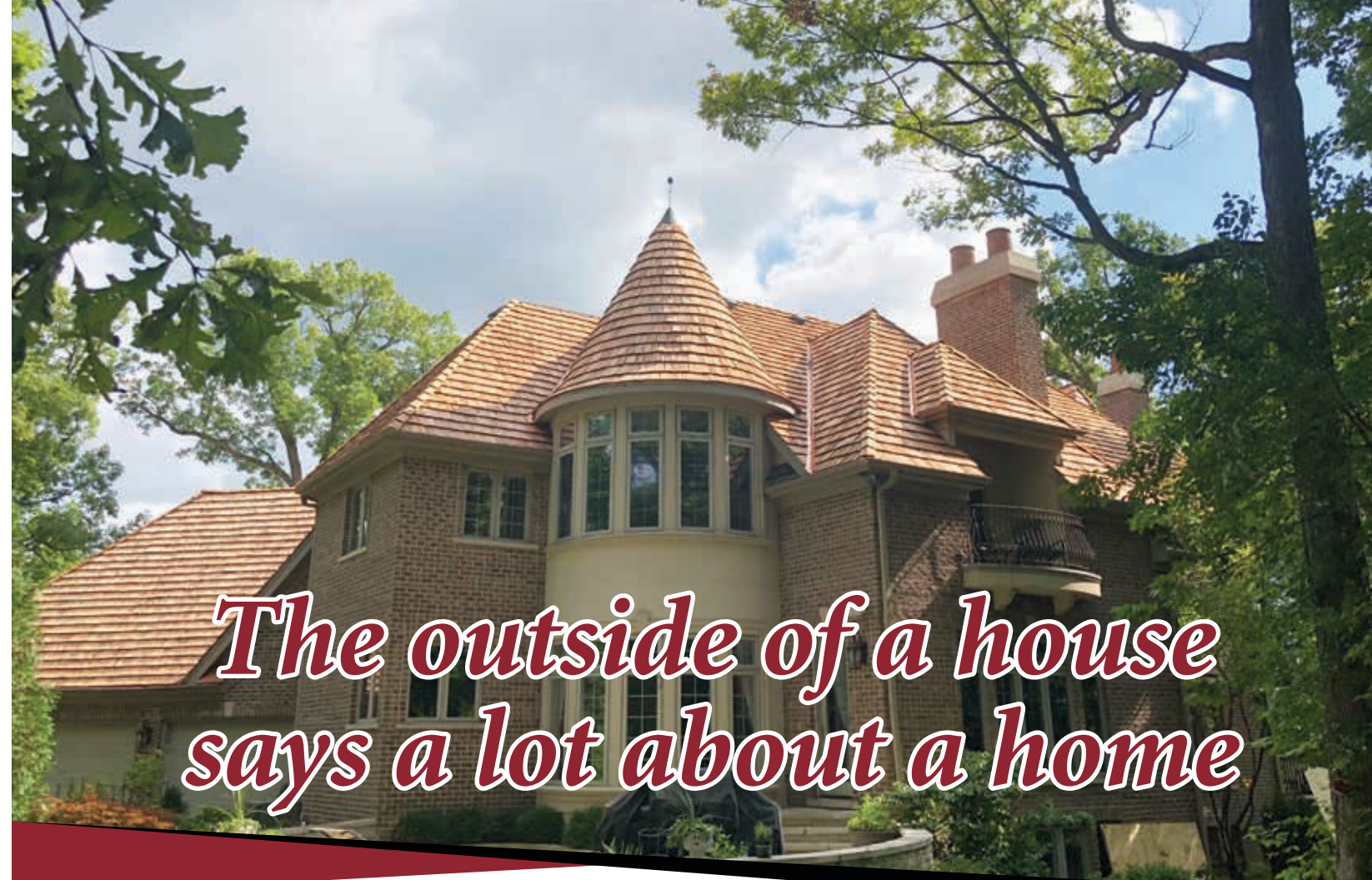
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Jeannie Kurtzhalts

Compass

Producing A Beautiful Career

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Article written by **Laura Zickert**

Photography by **Annette Patko** // Bordeaux Studio

Think back to a childhood memory that you always cherish. Was it family dinners with a loved one? Was it when you received a special gift? Was it going to a sporting event where you caught the ball in the stands? Jeannie Kurtzhalts is a realtor in the North Shore whose memories have helped shape who she is as a person and her career. From her childhood till now, Jeannie has been demonstrating love for detail, love for homes, and love for others.

Jeannie often fondly thinks back to her time spent at her grandparents' 100-year-old home in Evanston. The intricate architecture and historic detailing were attractive to Jeannie. She says, "Somehow I always ended up playing in the boxes of

memorabilia in the attic. I was fascinated with the house and loved how the smell of Sunday dinner would waft up to the third floor." Living in Glenview, she always had a love for the area but also looked to the future as having much in store.

After high school, Jeannie moved to Texas and attended TCU where she majored in communications. Arriving two days before classes started, she was too late to get involved in a sorority her first year. Therefore, she got a job at a local television station that offered a year-round opportunity. "It turned into my first career," said Jeannie. "I started in Fort Worth/Dallas doing live producing and newscasting. It was an adventure to

be flying in the helicopter that was covering stories and interviews." After seven years, Jeannie moved to New York to work for CNBC, and later "Today in New York," a morning program. During that time, she reconnected with someone from high school, decided it was time to focus more on family, and moved back to Chicago to work on The Oprah Winfrey Show. With changes in family and life, after five years, she transitioned to 9-5 television and became a consultant.

"I started looking for something else. After helping produce a show for home and garden television (HGTV), my attraction to real estate was rekindled. When I started looking for a home for



myself, I wasn't looking for treasure, but instead looking at the architecture. I would often think of my grandparents' home," said Jeannie. With the calling in front of her, Jeannie transitioned to real estate and received her license in 2003.

She began her real estate career working for Prudential Preferred at the Winnetka office and began focusing on the lake tier and surrounding communities. She said, "It was a perfect fit because my roots were partially in Evanston and Glenview." Jeannie immediately was interested in learning multiple suburbs, taxes, values, and more. "I wanted to offer buyers what the value truly was and help them compare and contrast. I wanted to be an expert in multiple areas," she said. Jeannie took that expertise to @properties and spent 9 years as a top producer there before aligning herself last month with a new company, Compass. "I needed a fresh start and love how Compass has come in and shaken up the industry with an all-encompassing technology

...

“
I wanted to offer buyers what the value truly was and help them compare and contrast. I wanted to be an expert in multiple areas.
”



Inu). Jeannie says, "I love taking them to the dog beach, walks, and just being out and about."

Jeannie is passionate about everything she does and loves to work out. Currently, she is enjoying kickboxing and loves trying new skills. During the fall, it is a guarantee that you can find Jeannie watching football and enjoying the Bears. "Given how many places I have lived in, I have several teams, even the Cowboys. I am a football fan, so I will watch any good game no matter the team but the Bears are always my number 1."

From her television and producing career, Jeannie learned that "you have to be able to deliver what you promise." She says, "Real estate has more connections than people often think. One career transitioned to the other seamlessly." As Jeannie continues to produce a beautiful career for herself, she sets the example of what it's like to live up to expectations, be honest, hardworking, and dedicated to her clients. For the North Shore, "all you need is Jeannie!"

•••

platform and incredible programs that help my clients get ready for market!"

Jeannie is goal-oriented and has found "helping people with their goals is the best accomplishment." While helping her clients, Jeannie focuses on also relieving the buyer and seller of the stress that comes with transition. She says, "I love being able to use what I have learned to help people make the best of what could be a stressful time." Stress is often just relieved by knowing Jeannie is always available. She is 24/7 and looks for every opportunity to step up and be there for her clients.

In addition to being there for her clients, Jeannie is also very devoted to family. She has two children: Jake who currently lives in Austin, TX, and Mia who is attending the University of San Diego. Her home is full of lots of love as well from her two dogs: Willow (3-year-old husky) and Saki (Shiba





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Article written by Lindsey Wells

DRIVEN BY LOVE, FAMILY, AND UNWAVERING FAITH

After sitting down for a conversation with Joy Axelson, one thing will become abundantly clear: she is a woman who loves Jesus, her family, and her real estate career. You would have to use a wide lens to capture Joy's many facets. Her outgoing personality shines like a diamond, and her integrity and tenacity have made her a force to be reckoned with in the local real estate market. So many lives have been touched by Joy's passion for educating and philanthropy. And, even through life's trials and tribulations, her zest for life is contagious.

Joy grew up in West Chicago, IL, where she attended high school before heading off to college. She spent the next several years focused on her education, receiving a B.A. and M.A. in French and an Illinois teaching license to teach middle school and high school French. Joy fully immersed herself in the French language and culture

during her junior year of college when she lived in France and studied at l'Université de Strasbourg.

During Joy's senior year of college at InterVarsity, University of Illinois, she met her now-husband and fellow REALTOR®, Knute Axelson. They married in 1996. Joy and Knute recently returned to Hawaii to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

Joy taught French and Spanish for seven years after college at Christian Heritage Academy, Elgin Academy, and North Shore Country Day School until her son was born in 2003. She got her real estate license during her first pregnancy to help her husband out with their newly founded company, Axelson Realty LLC. After that, Joy sold real estate and worked part-time as a French linguist for the Chicago FBI for eight years. During that time, in 2008, the couple's

•••



daughter was born. Axelson Realty steadily grew over the following years, and eventually, in 2015, when the brokerage had nine agents, Joy took over as managing broker.

It's unclear who said it, but "Once a teacher, always a teacher" rings especially true for Joy Axelson. At the time of this writing in early August, she was excited to train several new agents for Axelson Realty, one of which is her 18-year-old son. Another is her longtime friend, Cheryl Williams, whom she has known since elementary school. "I'm very pleased she found her way back to Illinois and onto our team," Joy said.

Although she has been incredibly blessed with a loving family and wonderful friends, Joy has experienced her fair share of difficult times, like being personally affected by the real estate crash in 2008 and losing her father in 2012. In 2016-17 Joy endured a series of medical emergencies after falling down a flight of stairs and having emergency surgery to repair a ruptured patellar tendon.

Then, in September 2017, Joy learned that she had basal cell carcinoma on her face. "This kind of skin cancer is not usually very serious, but it was in the middle of my right cheek. Once they got all the cancer out, I had a large hole the size of a quarter on my cheek," Joy said. "Thankfully, I was acquainted with a fine cosmetic surgeon named Michael Howard who basically gave me a partial facelift, so now you can't really tell that I had 40 stitches on my face, and there's no scar on my cheek. It was very disturbing, to say the least, although it made for a good Halloween costume with no make-up required."

The hope that served as an anchor for Joy's soul during those difficult times was knowing that God is in control and that He has a plan for us. "Trials test our character, but hopefully, they refine us and increase our compassion for others," she said.

In her 18 years as a realtor, Joy has enjoyed being on the committee at NSBAR, the Ethics Citation committee, and the Global Council. In 2020, she was awarded by NSBAR an award for the top 5 percent of sales. "I was very surprised," she said, "since I don't have a team or even an assistant. I was grateful that I was able to pivot during COVID and do more deals than I have ever done in one year." Many local brokers have been valued mentors for her, including Tom Stengren, Ian Robinson, and Kati Spaniak.

In addition to helping real estate clients, Joy recently began working (very part-time) for the Evangelical Free Church of America, using her translation skills to support a child sponsorship program in 11 countries.

Joy and Knute's two children, Soren and Linnea, are now 18 and 13 with big plans for their futures. When Joy isn't vegging out in front of some cheesy reality show or playing board games with her family, she (theoretically) enjoys traveling internationally, scrapbooking, birdwatching, and snorkeling—which she rarely gets to do in Illinois.

Through it all, Joy's faith has never wavered. When reflecting on her life, Joy is reminded of a particular verse in the Bible that has served as her North Star. Matthew 22:37-39: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind... Love your neighbor as yourself."



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Natasha O'Connor, @properties

OUR WORK IS IMPORTANT

▶ thoughts of a managing broker

Written by Managing Broker **Natasha O'Connor**

Some years ago, a firm owner that I worked with said to me, “what we do is important work.” He was referring to the work of brokers guiding their clients through their respective transactions, and he was (is) absolutely right. And, it is important to work whether we are in a stable market, a recession, or a pandemic. As with any career, we can tend to power through the tasks at hand and focus on the end goal. I don’t mean that in a negative way – rather, there is a great deal to handle, the transaction timeframe is usually short and many of our brokers are guiding multiple clients through the process at the same time. There are a ton of balls in the air at all times. What I wish to focus on here, though, is coming back to the basic fact that this really is important work.

We have all seen the rankings that show that selling and/or buying a home is in the top three most stressful changes in a person’s life. Sprinkle in some causal factors like a career change, lifestyle shift, children coming and going, need for Zoom rooms or a pool...I could go on...and you elevate the level of potential stress.

Over the past year and a half, I have seen some of the most remarkable work on behalf of the brokers in our communities. The word that comes to mind is steadfast. These brokers paused for about a second when the pandemic became a true reality and then figured out how to forge onward to support their clients. They did so then, as well as now, as the environment around us is constantly – sometimes unexpectedly – changing.

Speaking of you, the brokers, I am reminded of the phrase “put your own oxygen mask on first.” If we are in this business, there is little doubt that our tendencies are to put others first before ourselves. I am no different and I understand the struggle to find balance. However, we are at our best in supporting others when we are at our best ourselves.

So, I ask you, are you taking care of yourself in whatever form that is? Do you remind yourself about what is truly important to you each day? Did you discover something about your future goals or develop a good habit during the pandemic that can become part of your “new normal”?

A conversation I have been having lately is around remembering the positives that came from the last year and making sure we keep those

habits or goals as we move forward. In some cases, it is about how we have adapted as brokers and have tightened up our practices. In other cases, it’s about personal connections or resuming fulfilling hobbies. I have heard from so many that felt the last year, as incredibly difficult as it was, did shed some light on what is truly meaningful in life. I personally decided that one of my purposes in the lives of my boys and their friends was to teach them to cook. Cooking, for me, is therapeutic and a skill I realized I can share. My heart was so full seeing them prepare a meal and then sit around a table enjoying each other’s company! These are things that I promise myself I will retain when we are beyond this unusual time.

Although the real estate business never slowed down, I came to the realization that this desire to return to the important stuff while continuing to do our work wasn’t an issue of hours in the day. It was about a startling shift that forced us all to reset.

We have had the good fortune to be able to work over the past year and a half. Not everyone can say the same. That said, this time has been especially exhausting on many levels. I encourage you to take a moment to recognize what you have accomplished, remember all of the people you have helped personally and professionally, and find some ways to put yourself first once in a while. You deserve it.

What we do is important work. Do not forget the importance of what you do each day as well as the impact you are having on the lives of others. It is significant.

Natasha O'Connor
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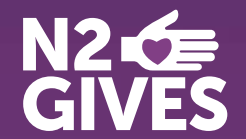
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Article written by **Laura Zickert**

TOP REALTOR®

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SERVICE, SERVICE, & MORE SERVICE

Many know that customer service can make or break an experience. Service is known as “the act of helping,” and when you naturally have a heart to help others, incredible customer service flows out. For Susan Roche, an extraordinarily successful realtor in the North Shore, quality customer service has been the foundation for her business and as a result has become the foundation to her success. Those who meet Susan and work with her, know that she leaves a legacy of someone who is providing the very best service that she can for her clients...always!

Susan was born in Chicago and grew up in Evanston. She attended Miami University (Ohio) and graduated with a degree in journalism in 1976. After college, she worked as a copywriter for Sears catalog. She moved up the ranks as a national marketing manager and buyer. “Then I went across the aisle and became the national account sales manager for Springs Window Fashions, calling mainly on the Sears buyer, and a few other manufacturers, including Target,” said Susan.

“Transitioning to real estate just made sense,” She says, “I’ve always enjoyed homes and real estate. Admittedly, I was one of those sneaky people who

visited Sunday open houses and tried to get away without signing in, or I signed a fake name!” Susan spent many hours with custom decorators and designers. By learning about interior design during her years, she felt even more prepared. As Sears was going through their own transitions, she found her role changing also. “With our sons in middle school, and my husband also working crazy hours and traveling, I decided that maybe it was time to switch careers. Transferring to real estate was just a natural transition for me since I’ve been involved in sales and marketing my entire adult life! I sure do love it,” said Susan.

In 1997, she received her real estate license and began working for Cyrus Realtors, which was a small company located in Evanston. After being there for 6 weeks, Cyrus was purchased by Coldwell Banker. “I’ve been an independent agent ever since I began,” said Susan. This year she celebrated her 24th anniversary in real estate. The North Shore applauds her for being an agent who reflects the highest level of care for all her clients. To honor her dedication, she has been designated a Five Star Professional for the past 10 years. It’s awarded only to 1% of agents in the Chicagoland area, for their extraordinary customer service.





“

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TELL ME THEIR
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HOME, AND I
GO FIND THAT
PROPERTY
FOR THEM!

...

“I just “absolutely love meeting people and developing relationships. Playing matchmaker, being a teacher and detective, and doing the research to find the ‘perfect’ home for my clients is so incredibly gratifying,” says Susan. “Of course, we are also psychologists and therapists at times,” she chuckles. “My buyers tell me their parameters, exactly what they want in their new home, and I go find that property for them!” For sellers, Susan is an expert at ensuring the process and transition is as smooth and seamless as possible for them. “I am totally dedicated to all of my clients, and very ‘hands-on,’ giving them the individual, undivided attention they deserve (which is probably why I’ve never had an assistant or created a team!). Admittedly, I suppose it’s due to the old ‘nobody can do it as well as I can do!’”

In addition to being there for her family and clients, Susan is also there for her community. She is on the Board of The North End Mothers Club,



a philanthropic group in Evanston dedicated to supporting youth-oriented organizations and providing scholarships to high school students. “We are the ones who actually founded the Fourth of July parade and began the Evanston PTAs way back in the 1920s,” said Susan. Additionally, Susan

is also the publicity chair for ESCCA (Evanston School Children’s Clothing Association), which annually provides clothing to approximately 700 K through 8 students in District 65.

Susan is married to her husband, Michael, who she met during her time



...



at Sears, and they celebrated their 40 anniversary in February. "He was an executive for Sears (his last job was director of marketing for their home services division) for 27 years. Then he took early retirement, got his master's degree in education, and taught seventh-grade language arts for 12 years!" said Susan. "I'm just so proud of him, as he helped so many students succeed and also provided such a great service to our community." Michael and Susan have two amazing sons, Christopher (36) and Kevin (34). "We also have a wonderful daughter-in-law, Kate and Christopher's girlfriend, Nicole," she adds. They also have two grand-pups, Tucker and Cleo.

When it comes to hobbies and interests, Susan says, "I am pretty much an obsessed exercise nut! I love to walk many miles every day, and enjoy kayaking, golf, tennis, pickleball, skiing, and swimming." She is lately trying to grow her library and read more books. To help her in this endeavor, she has joined a book club and is excited to be finding genres she enjoys.

As a part of extraordinary customer service, Susan has found it starts with communication. "If you want to be a top producer, you absolutely have to keep in touch with your previous clients," said Susan. Her expertise has been able to encourage and support many new agents. Her wisdom and market knowledge contribute to her growing success and the beautiful imprint she is making on the lives of all her clients. Susan is professional, efficient, and has the highest level of integrity. She is energetic and patient, which has helped in her efforts to provide top customer service. Thank you, Susan, for being an inspiring example of someone who goes above and beyond to provide service, service, and more service!



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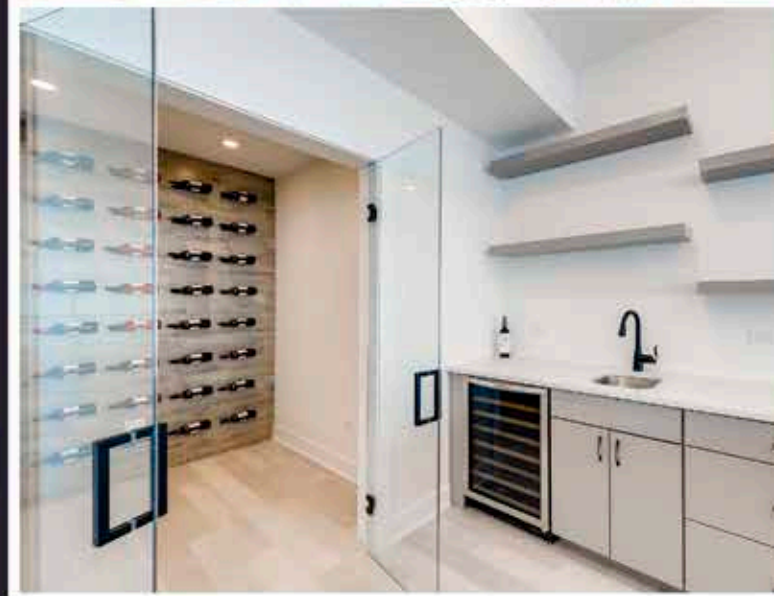
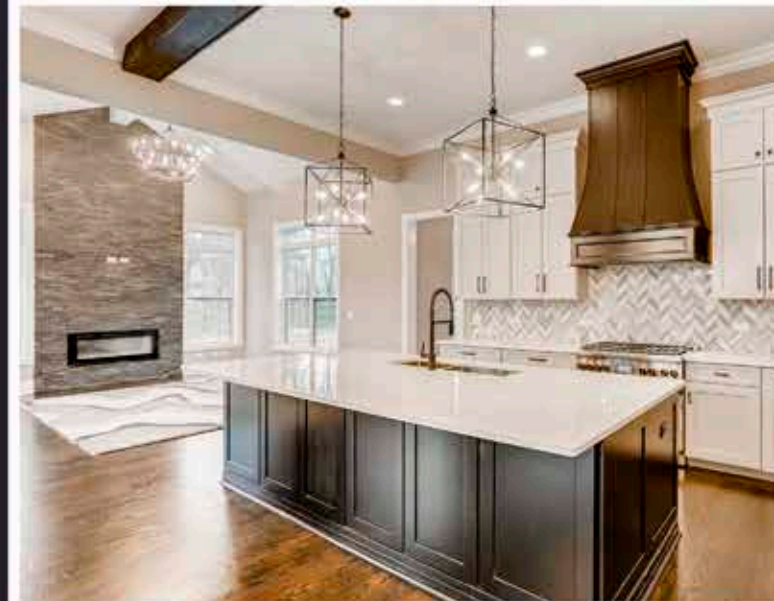
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