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**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:**

BERNIE'S BOOK BANK

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**16**  
Making a Difference: Bernie's Book Bank  
By Sarna Goldenberg



**20**  
Agent Feature: Chris Hochstedt



**26**  
Partner Spotlight: Kevin Boggs



**32**  
Cover Story: J Maggio



**40**  
Agent Feature: Joanna Matthies



**44**  
On the Rise: Fran Glatfelter

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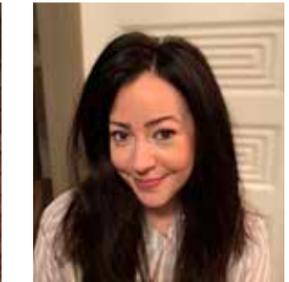
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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Normalcy is in the air. And of course, what I mean by “normalcy” is how we operated as a society prior to the existence of COVID-19 and all its variants. My wife and I went out to dinner recently and after we were seated she leaned over to me and said, “It’s so weird to see the waiter’s face.” About a week later I walked into an appointment and the first words out of the person’s mouth who greeted me were, “It’s odd to feel confident walking into a building without wearing a mask, isn’t it?” Apparently, this person could read my face really well because I was still looking around trying to observe the protocol when I entered the building. A great reminder that I shouldn’t play professional poker for a living.

We’ve been waiting two full years for this. How most people feel about the mask mandate being lifted is evidence that we are all designed to live in community. My encouragement is to not so quickly forget how far we’ve come over the past twenty-four months. Some of us experienced severe tragedies while others of us have more quality relationships because people’s true colors have surfaced for the positive during this era. I’m honored to be in a position to help facilitate the latter. I hope to see everyone at our spring event!



Andy Burton  
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# Virtual JAM SESSIONS



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**Jam Session #9** **f LIVE**  
An organic conversation about DuPage real estate



DuPage Real Producers invites you to tune in via Facebook Live  
\*The feed will stream live from Andy Burton's Facebook page (technology permitting).  
**Tuesday August 3rd 9:15 am CST**  
\*HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON  
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## events

*Top REALTORS® and Preferred Partners Engaging Virtually*

As an organization, we are fully aware of the need to creatively connect, inspire, elevate, and add value to both our REALTORS® and Preferred Partners. As a response, we have continued 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 been hosting sessions on Facebook Live!

A huge thank you to all our amazing REALTORS® and Preferred Partners for your willingness to join together as a community and maintain our human connection!



DUPAGE  
**RP REAL PRODUCERS.**

**Jam Session #10** **f LIVE**  
An organic conversation about DuPage real estate



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**Tuesday September 28th 9:15AM CST**  
\*HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON

DUPAGE  
**RP REAL PRODUCERS.**

**Jam Session #11** **f LIVE**  
An organic conversation about DuPage real estate

Lisa Kosovic   Michael LaFato   Mala Gandhi   Natalie Weber

Daniel J Rock   John Porebeck   Stuart Polizzi

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\*The feed will stream live from Andy Burton's Facebook page (technology permitting).  
**Tuesday November 16th 9:15 AM CST**  
\*HOSTED BY ANDY BURTON



We have received great feedback about these events, so we are continuing to schedule them. Want to join one? Let us know by emailing us at [andy.burton@realproducersmag.com](mailto:andy.burton@realproducersmag.com).

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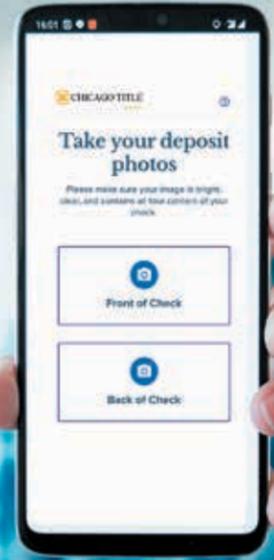
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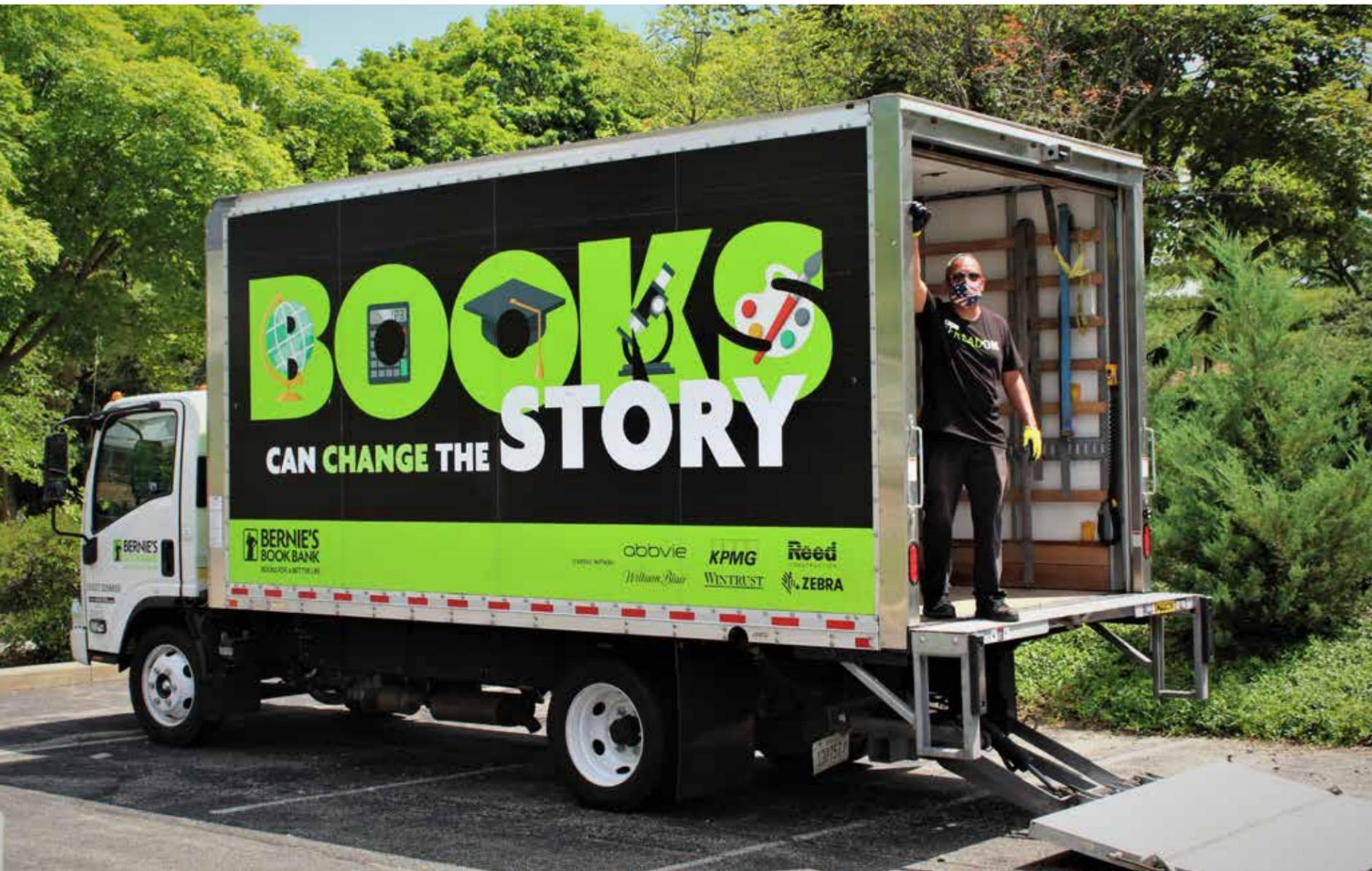


▶ making a  
difference  
By Sarna Goldenberg



At Bernie's Book Bank, we provide children with free, quality books through our 900 distribution partners, which include Title I schools and "under six" programs, such as WIC offices, located in underserved communities. Every child (birth to sixth grade) at partner schools and programs receives a bag of eight books once per year. The books are theirs to keep and help build their personal library.

The children we serve have been disproportionately impacted by the ongoing pandemic and events of the past two years. They have also faced, and continue to face, additional obstacles and unique challenges with the need to adjust to remote learning. Additionally, they've experienced heightened racial tension and social unrest.



Reading is one of the, if not the, most important skills a child needs to develop, yet many children don't have access to age-appropriate reading material at home. In fact, two out of three underserved children lack books.<sup>1</sup>

In 2009, Brian Floriani decided he was going to do his part to combat the literacy crisis. In honor of his father, Dr. Bernard P. Floriani, Brian founded Bernie's Book Bank. His goal was to make books accessible to as many children as possible. Now serving children in six counties—Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will—Bernie's Book Bank empowers nearly 300,000 Chicagoland children to read their way to a better life through book ownership. Since its founding in 2009, Bernie's Book Bank has distributed 20.6 million free, quality books.

The need for books is urgent in underserved communities. Sixty-one percent of low-income families have no children's books at home. This prevents young students from starting school "reading ready." Of equal concern, children who cannot read proficiently by the third grade are four times likelier to drop out of school. Early access to books is critical for lifetime success.<sup>2</sup>

We're proud and honored that Bernie's Book Bank has been able to provide comfort, hope, and opportunities to escape these difficult times to the children we serve and their families.

Bernie's Book Bank has remained open throughout the pandemic. Our small, but mighty thirty-member team sourced, processed, and distributed 2.2 million books in 2020, and 1.6 million books in 2021. In late 2021, Bernie's Book Bank celebrated its 20 millionth book distributed. Our goal is to distribute 2.4 million books in 2022.

How you can help Bernie's Book Bank reach its 2022 goal?

Invest in the children Bernie's Book Bank serves. Empower them to read their way to a better life. A financial investment is as easy as \$8.00: \$8.00 provides eight quality books.

Other ways you can get involved:

- Attend a 2022 fundraiser:
  - Bernie's Book Bank will host its annual Birdies & Books Charity Golf Classic on August 29, 2022, at Shoreacres in Lake Bluff, IL.
  - Once again, Bernie's Book Bank will team up with ESPN Chicago's David Kaplan to Walk As One Chicago in September 2022.
  - The fourth annual Patrick Mannelly Award benefiting Bernie's Book Bank will take place on December 10, 2022.
- Donate your new and gently used children's books:
  - You can drop off new and gently used children's books at Bernie's Book Bank's Lake Bluff processing center located at 917 North Shore Dr., Lake Bluff, IL 60044. We're open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. Please use the side door.
  - You can also donate your books at one of Bernie's Book Bank's 120+ book drop locations (500 books or less, please) across Chicagoland. Visit [www.berniesbookbank.org](http://www.berniesbookbank.org) to find a location near you.



...

### 3. Volunteer:

- Sign up online to sort, sticker, and pack quality books during one of our eighteen weekly volunteer sessions.
- Email us at [volunteer@bernies-bookbank.org](mailto:volunteer@bernies-bookbank.org) or call 847-780-READ [7323] to find out about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

<sup>1,2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study. Washington, D.C.: 1996

### About the Author:

Sarna Goldenberg is the Director of Marketing at Bernie's Book Bank. She has been providing books for a better life since 2016. Passionate about literacy and empowering young readers, Sarna manages integrated marketing communications and IT for the organization. Before Bernie's Book Bank, Sarna spent 20+ years in agency and product marketing roles locally and globally. A Chicago native, she loves spending time with family (which now includes a pandemic puppy), reading, and cheering on both the Hawks and Wolves.



To learn more about Bernie's Book Bank, visit [www.berniesbookbank.org](http://www.berniesbookbank.org), call us at 847-780-READ (7323), or connect with us on social media: [@berniesbookbank](https://www.instagram.com/berniesbookbank).

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# CHRIS HOCHSTEDT

WORKING TO RAISE THE BAR IN ALL ASPECTS OF REAL ESTATE



After their college years, Chris and his wife, Caroline, started to invest in real estate while working as bartenders. “For a few years, I traveled across the U.S. and Korea, opening stores and training staff for Steak and Ale, the then international owners of Bennigan’s,” explains Chris. Along the way, Chris met some REALTORS® who were also flipping homes and needed additional funds. Chris partnered with his brother to lend money to these investors. The interest paid on these loans helped Chris grow his real estate portfolio.

Chris has always focused on having multiple streams of income. He has built and flipped properties while maintaining his own rental portfolio. As a REALTOR®, Chris believes that being a well-rounded real estate professional includes more than just listing homes and working with buyers.

In 2003, Chris earned his real estate license and joined a Hinsdale brokerage where he met his now business partner, Tom Sailer. Four years later, the two opened EXIT Real Estate Partners in Downers Grove with office manager, Kelly Deschamp.

“It was September 2007 when we opened our doors,” says Chris. “We didn’t expect a recession and down market so soon after, but our determination and drive to succeed carried us through the rough early years.”

## agent feature

By Lauren Young  
Photos by KDE Photography

“Our family motto is ‘And then some’: ‘Do what the average person does, and then some,’” says Chris Hochstedt of EXIT Real Estate Partners in Downers Grove. “Our CEO at EXIT Realty, Tami Bonnell, lives by: ‘There’s no traffic along the extra mile.’ We believe these two sayings represent the perfect service mindset for an effective REALTOR®.”

Aside from his immediate family and company leaders, Chris has had many positive influences on his real estate journey. His grandma, Anna, collected and sold metal during the Great Depression so she could afford to buy two homes with cash. She

passed down her investment tips to Chris and his father. Chris and his brothers assisted their dad with flipping properties starting at a young age.

In addition, the mother of Chris’s childhood best friend was a top-producing REALTOR® who regularly earned over \$250,000 per year in commission. She was the first REALTOR® Chris worked with when he started flipping properties himself. After that first property, he realized he could earn additional money on the investment if he became a licensed REALTOR®.



...

Nearly a decade later, they purchased, renovated, and opened an updated office on Main Street in the heart of downtown Downers Grove. "It was our dramatic plan for the future to bring our agents the best training and technology tools to help them succeed. The process took about four years," says Chris. "We were required to dig out the basement and add all new plumbing, electric, and fire safety systems to get the vintage building up to code. All the additional space allows us to provide an in-office title company, a training classroom for our REALTORS®, and an open concept work environment," says Chris. He's also proud that EXIT Real Estate Partners offers pre-licensing classes at their facility.

The team also serves together in their local community. They have focused on their B2B relationships by getting involved with their local Chamber of Commerce. "We serve on boards and volunteer to assist the [member] organizations with meeting their goals," says Chris. Other organizations they support include Feed My Starving Children, Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, and the Darien Lions Club where Chris is a member. The office also donates a portion of every commission to charity. Each year, the corporate team at EXIT Real Estate Partners fundraises for child cancer awareness at an event called the Great Cycle Challenge. In past years, they have raised over \$20,000 and plan to beat that amount this year.

When Chris is not managing his business, he enjoys spending time with his eighteen-year-old daughter, Grace. They enjoy biking, fishing, skiing, swimming, and playing frisbee golf together. Their family dog, Louie, a twelve-year-old Boston terrier, recently lost his eyes due to injuries. The family had to find new ways to communicate with him, and that experience brought them all closer.

Chris is driven to impact and improve the lives of others. He says, "My approach to business and life is to use my energy and abilities to assist and encourage everyone that they have the power and ability to achieve anything they set their mind to."



The upgraded office space reflects the remarkable growth the team has experienced. "We focus more on the individual, [we want each agent] to have balance in all aspects of their life. We do this by coaching, training, and mentoring based on past experiences." The team now includes about fifty real estate brokers with various backgrounds. Between them, they speak a range of languages that includes Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Polish.

**DO WHAT THE AVERAGE PERSON DOES, AND THEN SOME."**

"I'm very passionate about mentoring our brokers and helping them achieve their personal goals," says Chris. "One of the most rewarding outcomes of mentoring is seeing them succeed and celebrating along with them."



Chris with his wife, Caroline, at Starved Rock State Park.



Chris with his wife, Caroline, daughter, Grace, and their dog, Louie.



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# Kevin Boggs

WITH GOOSEHEAD INSURANCE

## ▶ partner spotlight

By Lauren Young  
Photos by KDE Photography

## INSURING SUCCESS WITH CLIENT EDUCATION

**“The idea that ‘the more action you take, the more reaction you’re going to get’ came to me early on. I realized that the harder I worked and the more I gave, the more successful I would be able to be,” says Kevin Boggs, owner of the Goosehead Insurance office in Bloomingdale. “That sort of ‘theory of relativity’ idea is how I approach life and business.”**

Growing up in Park Ridge, Kevin credits his years playing football at Maine South High School with

teaching him that self-discipline is a key to success. After high school, Kevin worked for a brief time in construction, but he couldn’t see a clear career path for himself. Noting his frustration, one of Kevin’s friends encouraged him to talk to a guy he knew in the insurance industry.

That guy turned out to be the owner of one of the area’s largest Geico offices in Schaumburg, and he became Kevin’s mentor. Kevin also received help from family: his grandmother, who retired as the vice president of lending at LaSalle Bank, introduced him to key connections and gave him insights that would help him jumpstart his career.

And jumpstart it did. “I became the top salesperson almost overnight, and was managing the office by the time I was twenty-one years old.” During this time, Kevin also decided to attend night school to earn his degree in organizational management from Concordia University.

“Working at that agency was an awesome experience,” states Kevin. “I’m so thankful I came out of that office with a great mentor. I gained a ton of sales knowledge, insurance knowledge, important contacts, and professional growth.”

After nine years at Geico, Kevin felt it was time to run his own agency. He applied many times to open his own Geico office, but was, confusingly and surprisingly, repeatedly denied despite his success and sales record.

“When it feels like the world is crashing in on you, it turns out to be the best thing for your growth,” he adds. “It certainly was for me.”

Confident that the right fit would help him excel in his chosen field, Kevin began to look elsewhere and started interviewing at insurance agencies in the area—from small, independent offices to branches of some of the largest companies. That’s when Kevin discovered Goosehead Insurance.



Kevin with his family.

...

“I found this terrific company. It was publicly traded and a really good fit for me,” he says. “I would not be the agent I am today without them.”

Kevin opened his office in 2017 and staying true to his belief on how to become successful—that the more you put forth, the more will come back to you—he hit the ground running. He met with attorneys, REALTORS®, brokers, inspectors, and everyone else he could in real estate. He would visit the same offices many times until he earned their trust. Kevin won not only their trust, but also their referrals.

Beyond being publicly traded, what attracted Kevin to Goosehead Insurance is that the company differentiates itself by focusing on educating customers about insurance. Many people are underinsured because of a lack of knowledge, and Kevin aims to solve that one client at a time.

“Our industry is full of agents that don’t provide the right type of coverage for clients. Our focus is to do it right,” states Kevin. “We are a personal lines insurance agency that focuses on bringing help to our partners within the industry and working with clients by educating them on insurance,” adds Kevin. “We work directly with lenders and REALTORS® to help them build their business,



Kevin with Julita Drozd (Agency Manager).

help close files, help their clients, and help make them look great to their clients. We are also able to provide the power of choice to our clients because we work with over thirty-five A-rated carriers.”

When not working hard to serve his clients, Kevin is working hard to serve those in need and give back through his business. Feed My Starving Children is a favorite cause, and he often partners with local REALTORS® on charitable events.

He also loves and values spending his downtime with his wife, Patti, and their two young sons, Kaiden (five) and Liam (three). “We love hosting family get-togethers three times a month, at least. I also make it my goal to sneak away with my wife for regular ‘us time.’”

Kevin also finds working out and taking aimless drives great ways to relax. “Sometimes I don’t even

## “WHEN IT FEELS LIKE THE WORLD IS CRASHING IN ON YOU, IT TURNS OUT TO BE THE BEST THING FOR YOUR GROWTH...IT CERTAINLY WAS FOR ME.”

know where I am headed,” says Kevin. “I’ll hop in my car, turn on the music, and just drive. I feel like everything I do every day requires such focused consideration of so many details, so it’s important for me to just get lost and unwind a little.”

As Kevin looks forward, his ultimate goal is to become the number one Goosehead Insurance agency in the Midwest. “When I say I want to be the number one Goosehead, it means I want to be the number one rock star in insurance,” says Kevin. “Last year we were [ranked] number two in all of Illinois and number four in the region. It’s going to be a long road to do that, but with a focus on team development and a clear vision, we can do it.”

Kevin’s ambition is driven by what makes his work so fulfilling to him: “We get to help protect people’s assets and do it in a way that is educational. Helping people is what makes the world go round.”



To reach Kevin and learn more about the services his office provides their clients, email him at [Boggsteam@goosehead.com](mailto:Boggsteam@goosehead.com) or call 630-365-7248.



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► cover story

By Lauren Young  
Photos by KDE Photography

# J Maggio

Former Trader Swaps Commodities for Properties

*“There are no-get-rich-quick schemes in real estate brokering,” says former futures trader turned REALTOR®, J Maggio of @properties in Hinsdale. “Take a steady approach and stick to it through slow times and as you’re getting started, you’ll build a large, consistent pipeline over time.”*

His measured analytical approach to real estate can be traced back to his father’s influence. J’s dad was an IBM “lifer.” The two spent many weekends talking about business and sales ideas.

“I’ve always wanted to sell like him,” says J. “He used common sense, always preached the golden rule, and listened closely to others. He never seemed

stressed out or angry, and he maintained a sense of calm. I inherited those traits from him.”

Growing up in Burr Ridge, J attended Benet Academy then pursued a finance degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He spent several years as a commodities trader at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and

...

Board of Trade and eventually for a firm in Glenview before the market crash in 2009.

“It was then that I realized that I needed a career change or else I’d be stuck,” he says. “I got a job selling trading software, but that lasted about nine months before real estate found me.”



...

During those months, the selling REALTOR® that helped him purchase his first condo in 2004, approached him with an exciting opportunity: to become partners and take over his book of business. (The agent was moving to the East Coast.) J immediately started the process to earn his real estate license.

“I had just gotten married, and we were expecting our first child. My wife thought I was crazy!” says J. “Up until then, I knew that I had an entrepreneurial spirit. The move to real estate allowed me to sell myself and my honesty, and to use those traits to earn the trust of clients and grow what I hoped would be a successful business.”

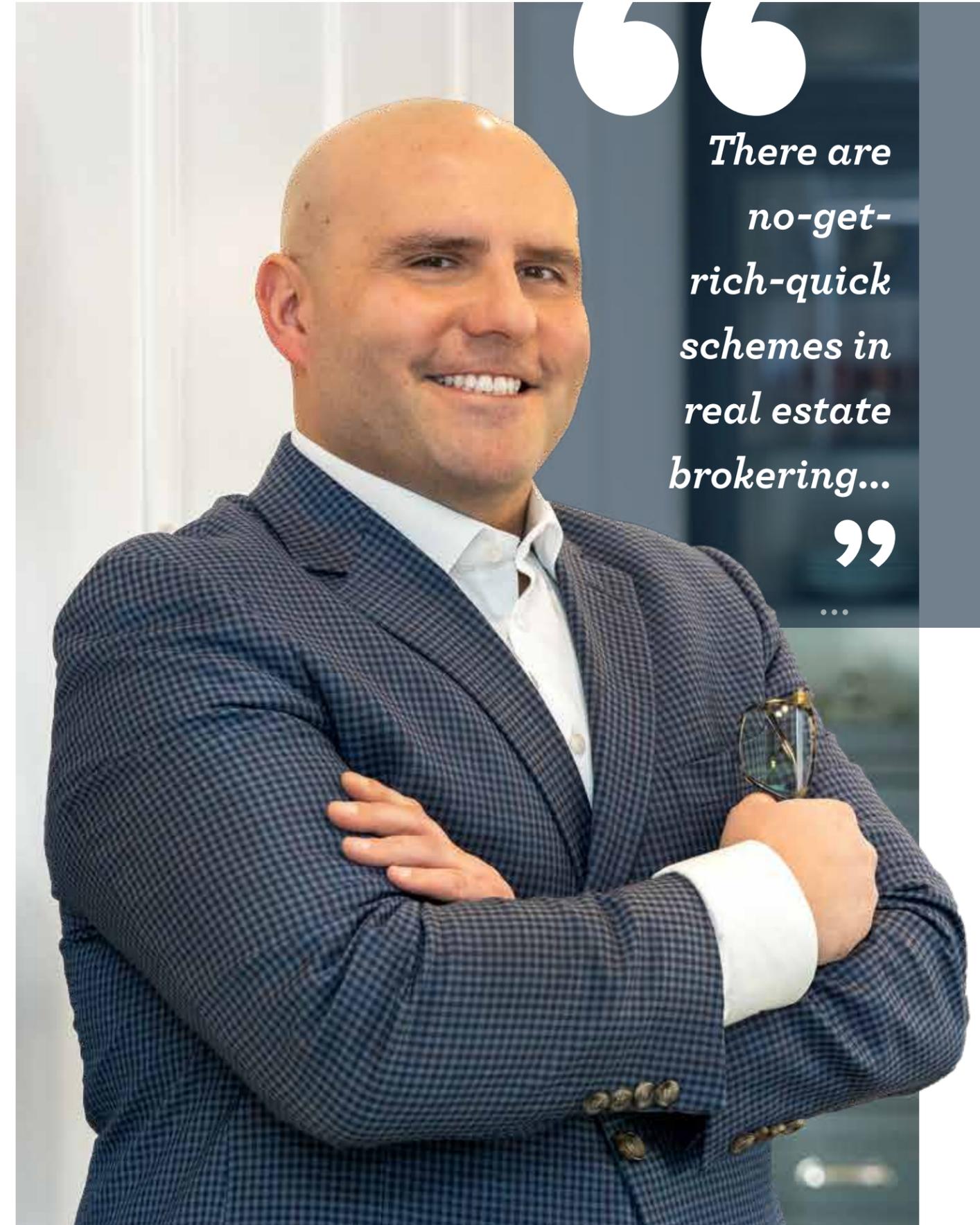
Over a decade of steady growth later, J has a career sales volume of over \$300 million—over \$32 million just last year. He’s received many awards through @properties and the Chicago Association of REALTORS® over the years. Currently, he’s focused on and excited about growing his social media presence. “I want more potential consumers to get a sense of how I am in business and my personality,” he states.

J has long prioritized supporting a variety of community organizations such as One Tail at a Time and Charles Tillman Cornerstone Foundation. Recently, he’s also been supporting his children’s schools and activities, which include Monroe Elementary School and Hinsdale Little League.



J with his family.

Photo Credit: Green Eye's Imaging



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*There are  
no-get-  
rich-quick  
schemes in  
real estate  
brokering...*  
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J and his wife, Kristin, and their four kids—Madeline (eleven), Jasper (eight), Duke (six), and Rocco (six)—and their two dogs, Oreo Nipsey Hustle and Marty McFly reside in Hinsdale. “The kids are currently in three different schools and involved in all sorts of activities, so there’s a lot of zone defense going on right now,” says J.

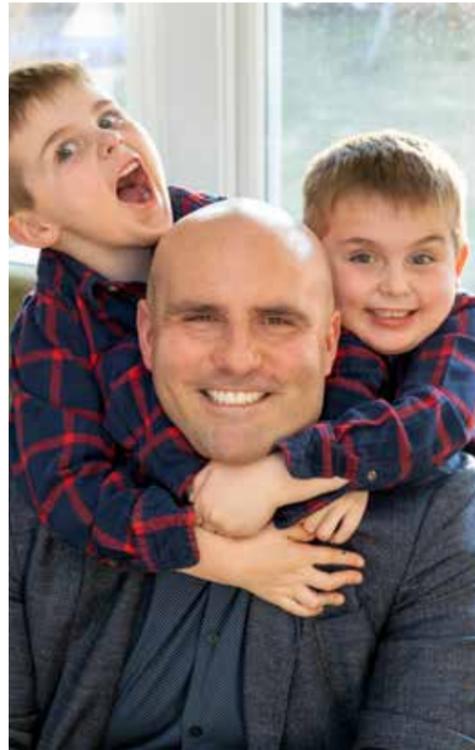
“We love cooking and having friends over,” adds J. “On the weekends, I like to get up early with the twins (Duke and Rocco), and we go out and get coffee and donuts.”

J is an avid golfer and also enjoys paddle tennis, cooking, grilling, and entertaining in his downtime. Discovering new restaurants, testing new recipes, and trying new wines are also favorite pastimes.

“Working hard to build a business that supports my life: that’s how I measure success,” says J. “My wife and I both work hard to provide for our family. Being successful in this business gives me a ton of flexibility and freedom that I wouldn’t get sitting behind a desk nine-to-five.”

Because of his own life experience with real estate, J can uniquely empathize with his clients: he’s built, renovated, and moved over ten times in the past twenty years.

“I know the pitfalls that buyers and sellers can fall into,” says J. “I like to be fully involved in the entire transaction from beginning to end. My brutally honest approach may initially catch some off-guard, but clients quickly learn I have their best interests at heart.”



J golfing with his brother, James Maggio. Photo credit: Brian Lipchik



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# J MATTHIES

JOANNA



▶▶ agent feature  
By Lauren Young  
Photos by AbiV Photography

## No Place like Your Dream Home

More than two decades ago, Joanna Matthies joined her husband, Dave, in his Downers Grove-based, custom home-building business, Matthies Builders, Inc. The company builds high-end, single-family homes in Downers Grove, Hinsdale, and surrounding communities. After working for over twenty years in this real estate niche, Joanna began to entertain the idea of coupling her experience in home design and construction with assisting clients as a real estate agent.

Joanna, who obtained her license three years ago and is with @properties in Downers Grove, says, “I’ve had an interest in real estate and design since I was young. I wish I got my REALTOR® license several years ago. I regret waiting so long. Many of our past construction clients would ask us for REALTOR® recommendations when they wanted to sell the home we built for them. I realized, ‘Who could sell the house better than one of the people who designed and built it?’”

“Becoming a REALTOR® was a natural extension of my passion to help my clients find their dream home. My well-honed design and construction background and strong knowledge of the market benefit my clients as I am able to provide vision, resources, and financial advice to almost any design changes they may want to implement.”

Joanna and David have deep ties to Downers Grove. David is a fourth-generation Downers Grove native. His grandfather, Grant Dicke, was Downers Grove’s fire chief for forty years. Joanna grew up in Woodridge and attended Downers Grove North High School before graduating from Illinois State University. After marrying in 2001, the couple moved into the Pierce Downer neighborhood, where David has lived his whole life.

The couple has built more than just homes in Downers Grove. With their range of past clients, community partners, and local connections, they’ve also developed a network of strong relationships. The Matthies’ community ties have proven invaluable to them in times of personal challenge. In 2009, their youngest son, Augie, was born with a rare congenital heart defect.

“Having a sick child changes your perspective on life and what is really important,” states Joanna. “He has had three open-heart surgeries and

multiple cardiac catheterization procedures in his life. Continuing our business during this trying time was a challenge, but the support of our family, friends, and community helped us get through that period.”

Throughout those many surgeries and hospital visits, the family would stay at the Ronald McDonald House in Oak Lawn. Today, they gratefully give back through fundraising events for the Ronald McDonald House and Advocate Children’s Hospital Pediatric cardiac ICU. ...



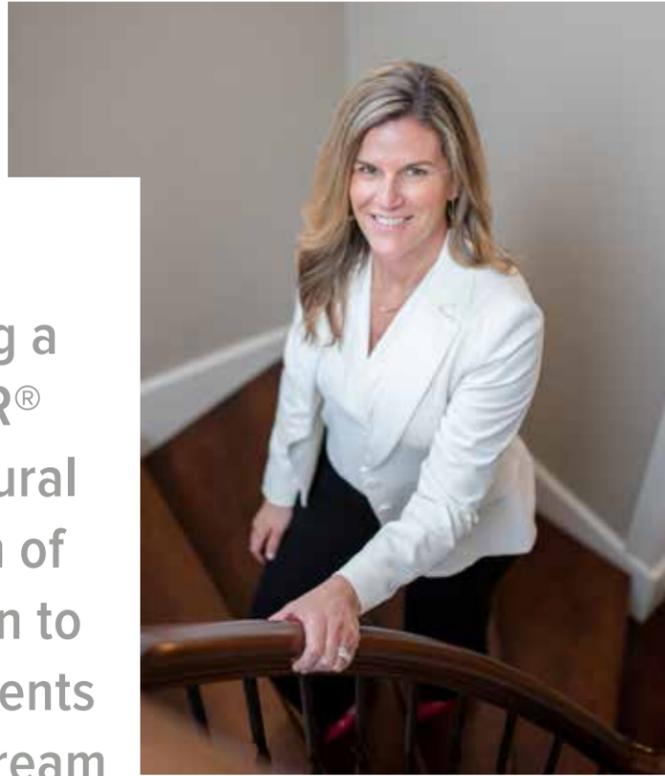
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“We started an event in 2009 called Augie’s Drive for Supplies that we host annually at our home,” Joanna says. “We collect supplies needed for the Ronald McDonald House as well as cash donations. Our boys love planning and hosting this event, which we’ve used to raise over \$75,000 in supplies and donations.”

Joanna and David spend much of their downtime with Augie (now thirteen), and his brothers, Robert (eighteen) and PJ (fifteen). They stay active skiing and participating in various other sports. Each summer they treasure quality family time at their place in St. Joseph, Michigan, boating and hanging out at the beach. The family also frequently travels with their longtime neighborhood friends.

As her background as a home builder may bespeak, Joanna finds continual motivation in new projects and challenges. Her hope this year is to expand her influence beyond Downers Grove, while preserving her valued network. “I plan on obtaining my real estate license in Michigan so I can expand my business into Southwest Michigan. We know the area well and hope to retire there at some point. In the meantime, I’ll continue to create and cultivate long-term professional and personal relationships. The majority of my business comes from referrals and repeat clients, and I consider that to be the ultimate honor.”

“  
Becoming a  
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was a natural  
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help my clients  
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”



Joanna with her family at a fundraiser called Augie’s Drive for Supplies.



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# Fran Glatfelter

► on the rise  
By Lauren Young  
Photos by AbiV Photography

## Proud Chicagoan Owns Her Journey from Retail Manager to REALTOR®

“There is just something about Chicago and the surrounding areas that will always feel like home to me,” says Fran Glatfelter, REALTOR® for @properties in Downers Grove. “I used to wonder if I’d missed an opportunity by staying so close to home, but now I think dropping my anchor here was a pretty good choice.”

Fran and her younger brother grew up in the Chicago suburbs of Hinsdale, Barrington, and Grayslake. After high school, she applied to colleges in Massachusetts, Florida, New York, and Texas. But, fearful of leaving home, she chose Northern Illinois University’s business school, which happens to have one of the best programs in the country.

“It’s funny to me now that I was afraid to be far from home,” Fran says. “I’ve always been independent and a lover of travel and adventure.”



At NIU, Fran became the president of her dorm floor and joined the NIU Forensics student organization as a member of the debate team. She was the first freshman ever elected to NIU Forensics’s board. “I learned a lot from those experiences, and I’ve carried [that know-how] forward with me into my real estate career—from collecting, interpreting, and presenting data; to effective negotiation; to adjusting communication styles to your audience,” she says.

Originally, Fran planned to study accounting and go to law school, but midway through college, she realized it was a desire for a life she “should” want, not the one she actually wanted. “I still wasn’t sure what it was that I did want to do, but I knew it wasn’t that,” she explains.

After realizing she didn’t want to sit at a desk all day and switching majors to fashion merchandising, Fran graduated in spring of 2008, just before the financial crisis. Upon graduation, she launched her career in store management at Kohl’s department stores.

At the age of thirty, feeling burned out after many years in retail, Fran decided a switch was needed. She’d begun to feel like she was missing out on life—working long hours on nights, holidays, and weekends in a physically demanding job. Plus, the writing on the wall was clear: the growth of e-commerce had taken a toll on brick-and-mortar stores and the future was uncertain. She considered going back to school for an MBA, but nothing about that path excited her.

“I had a friend who’d worked for more than two decades selling new-construction homes,” says Fran. “He would repeatedly tell me how great I would be as a REALTOR®.”

“There was some fear there to take a leap and leave the stability and salary I had grown to rely on,” she says. “But I’m forever grateful for his encouragement and push.”

With a lifelong love of home architecture and design and a desire for more flexibility and control over life, Fran dove passionately into her new profession. One of her first clients was her parents. She listed her childhood home. The early years are challenging for many agents, but Fran had a particular challenge to overcome. ●●●



...

“When I first started as an agent I looked younger than I was, which is usually not a thing to complain about,” she says. “But it was often challenging to get people to take me seriously. One client teased me that if I wanted to succeed in real estate I ought to consider drawing wrinkles on my face!”

Seven years later, Fran has overcome her early fear and obstacles by seeking to exceed the expectations of clients. She consistently stays in contact with past customers, and much of her business comes from referrals. She now has a career volume of over twenty-six million dollars. She brought in over five million dollars last year alone.

“The most rewarding part of my business is being able to take one of the most stressful times in life

“  
I love the  
business that I’ve  
built because I built  
it organically, with  
authenticity  
and care.”



[for my clients] and turn it into a positive experience,” says Fran. “I don’t think about my paychecks now because I know that if I do what’s best for my clients, the success will come.”

Fran also makes it her goal to build up her community. She donates a portion of her commissions to @gives back, which supports a different housing-related charity each year. She recently started working with DSCC Meals on Wheels, and participates in a charitable women’s social networking group in Downers Grove.

In her downtime, you can find Fran staying active outdoors, exercising, and cooking. She also enjoys exploring local restaurants, bars, and live music with friends.

“It’s been a challenging past couple of years for the explorer side of me,” reflects Fran. “So I’m looking forward to the rest of this year with great optimism.”

More than anything, Fran appreciates the relationship building that comes from working one-to-one with her clients. She sees it as the essential factor in growing her business in the future.

“I plan to grow my business organically through the connections that I have and the new connections I will make,” says Fran. “Clients become cheerleaders for my business and often real friendships form. I don’t ever want to lose that.”

“One of the many beautiful things about this industry is that you get to truly own your journey,” she adds. “It took me a while to truly understand and embrace that, but I love the business that I’ve built because I built it organically, with authenticity and care.”

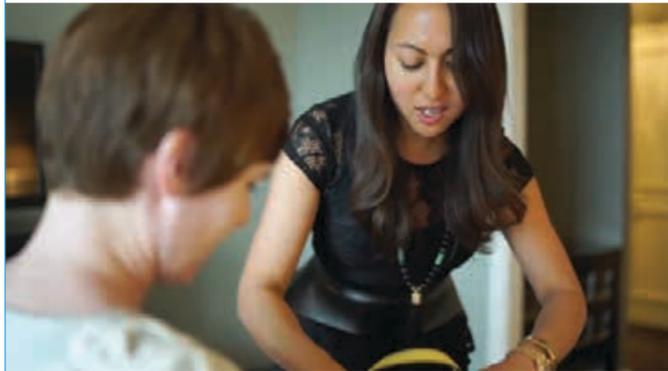
If history is anything to go by, Fran’s authenticity and care, and her relational and analytical skillsets will see her win clients and grow her business in the years to come.

Fran at one of her favorite spots in Downers Grove, The Foxtail.



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**Q: How does tristinstyling obtain the latest exclusive luxury items first every time?**

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**A:** Clients love us for our ability to create new outfits by using pieces from their current wardrobe, combined with high end investment pieces, or fabulous inexpensive pieces to make a great outfit. While some stylists might find it challenging to work within a budget, I find it to be a lot of fun. I love to show clients how to find amazing pieces at unbelievable price points!

**Q: Why do people need tristinstyling when so many retailers offer styling services for free?**

**A:** While styling services in retail stores are nice to have access to, customers are limited to shopping only in that one store. Clients who want to create a cohesive wardrobe that is unique to their personal style choose to hire us for personal shopping audits because they benefit from learning how to expand their own wardrobe by shopping all the current trends available from all retailers.

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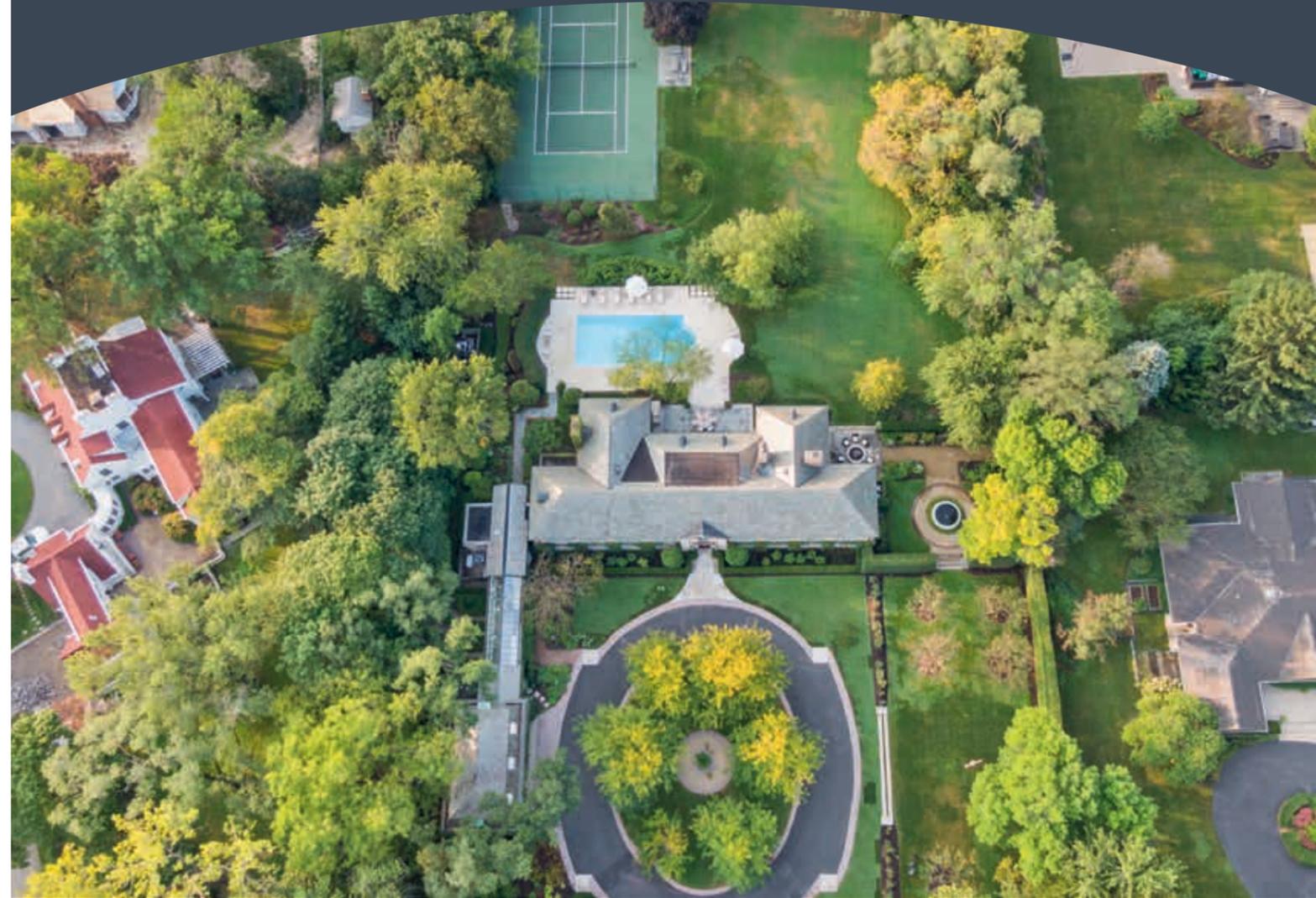
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