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Partner Spotlight:
Nick DeGiulio
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Making a Difference:
Bernie's Book Bank

Lauren Mitrick Wood
& Charlie Wood

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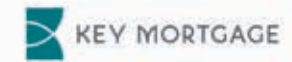
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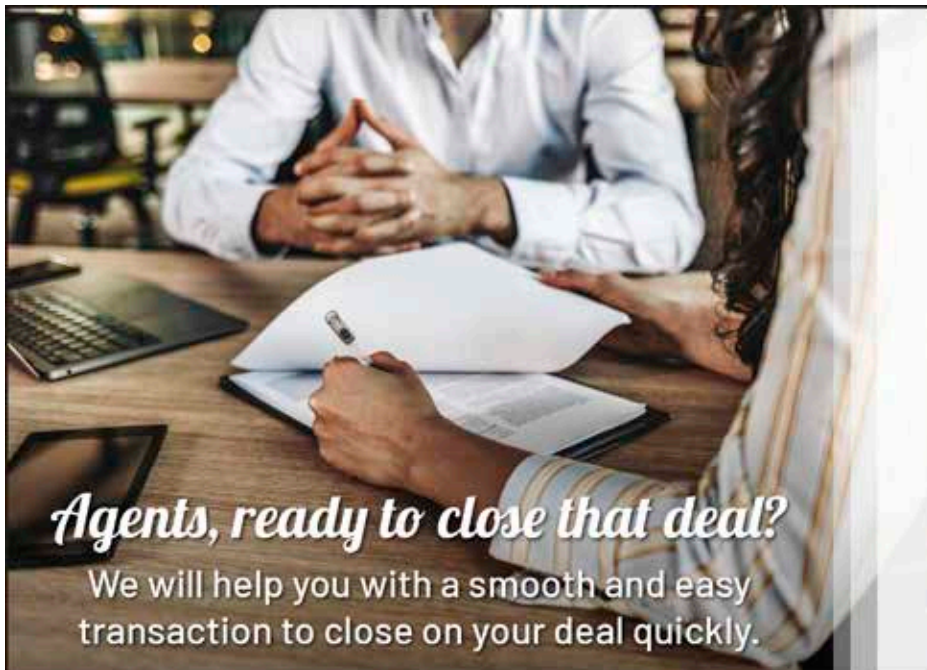
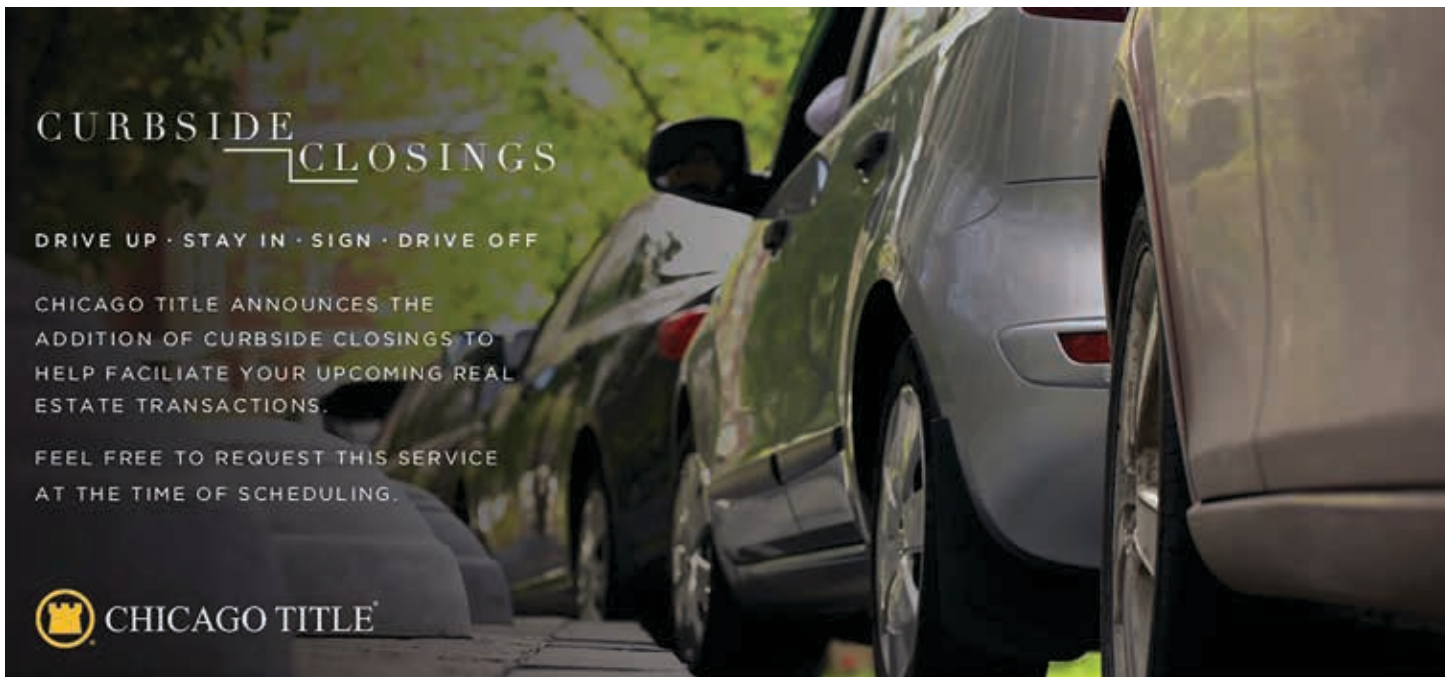
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Publisher's Note

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 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 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

Publisher, *North Shore Real Producers*
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▶▶ agent feature

By Laura Zickert
Photos by Joe Castello

Amanda

Majerowski

Striving for Excellence

“I am passionate about being a trusted person that my clients can count on. I want them to know that they can depend on me for everything, including finding the right home and staging and selling their home, as well as referring and talking with inspectors, contractors, attorneys, and lenders, and organizing and coordinating these things for them—taking the load off. I pride myself in always being available and becoming their constant person that provides comfort throughout the entire process.”

Amanda Majerowski is a REALTOR® who sees that her many life experiences have shaped her into the person she is today. Her determination and tenacity have contributed to her success. She learned that there are many benefits to never settling for just “good.” Amanda is striving for

...



both personally and professionally. My mom raised us to be kind, honest, caring, to look for the good in everyone, to help people, and to not look down on anyone. She inspired us and encouraged us to appreciate the simple things in life, too.”

“I was always interested in real estate because I love architecture, design, and helping people,” says Amanda. She took a real estate course when she was eighteen but never completed the exam. “My life went in another direction,” she explains. She graduated from DePaul University with a BA in organizational behavior, then worked in product management at industrial supply company W. W. Grainger for fifteen years. Amanda also worked in advertising for a while, helping to support classified ads, as an EMT for the Lake Villa Rescue Squad and as an ER technician at Kenosha Medical Center.

Then in 2014, within the span of one week, two people, one being a REALTOR® herself, approached Amanda and specifically asked if she was a REALTOR®. When she replied that she was not but had once taken a class, both individuals said they believed she should investigate the career and that she would be a good fit. Amanda was struck by these conversations. “I thought, ‘How strange and what a sign,’” she remembers. “I realized this was a God moment and sign that I needed to pursue real estate.” With two young boys at home, Amanda saw how being a REALTOR®



excellence in every area of her life. She listens to her heart and is passionate about helping others see the benefit of, she notes, “Never doubting yourself or feeling like you have to fit into the mold of what society tells you that you need to be.”

Amanda was born in Chicago and raised in Oak Park. “I think I get my work ethic from my father,” Amanda says. “He started a painting company and was the hardest working person I have ever known—he never called in sick or took a day off work.” She continues, “Both of my parents played such a huge role in my life and in who I am today,



“
I’ve had to reinvent
myself throughout my
life due to life changes
and circumstances that
required me to do so...”



busy with my two sons who play a variety of sports, including travel baseball, football, and basketball,” states Amanda. Jack is fourteen, and Landin is twelve. “They are both high honor roll students, and I am so proud of them. Most importantly, though, they are just really good human beings.” As a family, they enjoy watching movies, being silly and playing with their cat and two dogs, playing music, cheering on the Chicago Bears, and playing board games, but they love traveling. “We have snorkeled along the Great Barrier Reef, swam with dolphins, climbed the Mayan ruins, seen icebergs, and been pulled on a sled by pups at a musher’s camp in Alaska,” she shares.

would give her the flexibility she was craving in her schedule.

Amanda followed that sign. She obtained her license in 2014 and has never looked back. “I felt then and now that if I am going to spend time away from my family, it has to be for something important, and real estate is,” states Amanda. “When I am selling homes, I am providing a service.”

paid off. “The best compliments from my clients have been that I make them feel like I always have time for them—like they are my only clients, even though they know that isn’t true,” says Amanda. “I always remember they picked me because they trust me, that this is one of the most important things they will ever do in their life, and how special is it that they want me to be a part of it.”

Amanda has overcome a lot in life, but she believes it has all helped her get to where she is today. She says, “I’ve had to reinvent myself throughout my life due to life changes and circumstances that required me to do so—from divorce to moving to new jobs to new career paths to going to school full-time for my bachelor’s degree while working full-time.” Through it all, her patience and determination and her time management skills have strengthened. When she first started, she persistently utilized the skills she had cultivated in her previous jobs to prove that she was valuable and worth trusting.

In her spare time, she enjoys decorating her new home, kayaking, hiking, and going on bike rides. “I stay very

Amanda has supported St. Jude’s for over twenty years but, in general, finds she prefers supporting more individuals than charities. Still, her focus is clear: “I am passionate about helping families in need,” she says.

Amanda is thankful for how many of the connections and work relationships she has made through real estate have turned into lasting friendships. “I don’t feel like what I do is a job. I love what I do, and I can’t imagine doing anything else.”



Amanda’s older son, Jack.

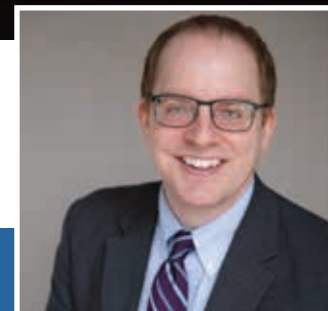


Amanda’s younger son, Landin.



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By Sarna Goldenberg

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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.²

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.¹

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

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.

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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?



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Other ways you can get involved:

1. 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.

2. 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 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@berniesbookbank.org or call 847-780-READ [7323] to find out about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

^{1,2} 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, call us at 847-780-READ (7323), or connect with us on social media: @berniesbookbank.

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Nick DeGiulio

with Junk Remedy

Clearing Out Junk to Positively Impact the Community

If you're sick of junk, Nick DeGiulio is your remedy. That is, Junk Remedy, Nick's company, is your remedy. Nick is ever at the helm and ready to take your call. Junk Remedy is a full-service junk and trash removal company that comes to your home or business, removes anything that's not environmentally hazardous, and cleans up the mess afterward. They'll take anything from furniture and appliances

to yard and construction debris. Whether it's a single item or multiple truckloads of junk, Junk Remedy has you covered. Best of all, roughly 60 percent of what they collect is then recycled or donated to local charities like WINGS, Helping our Heroes, and House of Hope.

When Nick was just fourteen years old, his father passed away, and he

had to help his mom clear out their home to put it up for sale. Little did he know that what started as a summer job would become a lifelong career.

"I ended up working for a junk removal company that summer. I graduated from Barrington High School when I was sixteen and went on to the University of Montana to study business and marketing,

but decided that college wasn't the right path for me," explains Nick. "Then I moved to Denver and started working for another junk removal company and was able to help grow that business based on my previous experience. I stayed there for about seven years. One summer, I was invited to five weddings in Chicago, so I moved home for the season, and that's when I met my wife and

decided to start Junk Remedy in the Chicagoland area."

Nick loves the junk removal business because he gets to see the look of relief on every client's face when he shows up to help them. He's not just removing their junk; he's also removing their stress. Whether it's decluttering a house that's about to go on the market or picking up junk





Photo credit: Lauren Fallon with Honeybrown Photography

“One of the advantages of working with our local, family-owned company is that we do a lot of good for our customers’ community.”



...

someone left after the final walk-through, he’s able to alleviate some stress during what can be the most stressful time for his customers.

Because Junk Remedy is locally owned and operated, the connections Nick has made in the community have also led to some really positive relationships.

“One of the advantages of working with our local, family-owned company is that we do a lot of good for our customers’ community,” explains Nick. “We like to recycle and donate to local charities. That not only benefits our community, but it has benefitted me over the years as well. The relationships I’ve formed with local charities have had a big impact on me, and I’ve become involved with some of these groups, including

serving as the vice president of Lake County Responds For Veterans, a nonprofit that helps veterans in need in Lake County.”

Nick emphasizes that Junk Remedy is not like the cable guy: the team at Junk Remedy understands that your time is valuable. So if your appointment is at 9:00 a.m., that’s when the crew will show up. When you call to set up your appointment, Nick is the one you’ll speak to, and because he and his crew are local, they can “sometimes be at your home faster than you can order a pizza, depending on location,” says Nick.

“There are a lot of junk removal services out there that give the industry a bad rap,” says Nick. “But I pride myself on hiring reliable and trustworthy professionals. Our uniformed crews

are polite, professional, and committed to providing top-notch service.”

Nick is likely able to keep such valuable crew members on staff because he treats them like family. His employees know they can talk to him about anything and that he’d do anything he can for them. To Nick, success is being able to provide for his family, and that includes his work family. It’s also “being happy with what you do and how you do it. If people can look at me and say ‘He’s doing a good job and does good work’; that, to me, is success,” states Nick.

Speaking of family, Nick comes from a big Italian one, and when he’s not working, he’s spending time with them. Nick’s been married for ten years, and he has three children with his wife, Lauren. Lauren, a former

concert promoter, is currently a stay-at-home mom to Sylvie (eight), Rae (six), and Johnny (three). Nick loves bringing his kids to the warehouse and showing them what he does for a living.

Together, the family enjoys Friday family movie nights, playing in the yard, or fishing in the pond behind their house. Nick loves spending time outdoors, particularly fishing (everything from pan fishing locally to fishing for alligator gar in Texas). He is looking forward to when his



The Junk Remedy crew!

kids get a little older and are ready for road trips and camping. But for now, he’s focused on watching them play sports and guiding them to be “good little people.”

“I always try to be positive. It’s one of the reasons I love to collect people’s unwanted items and help donate them to charity. I’ve always found that positive thinking attracts positive results. So that’s what I strive to do each day: to be a positive force in the community.”

To reach Nick and learn more about how Junk Remedy—“If you’re sick of junk, we are the Remedy!”—can help you, call 877-722-JUNK (5865) or visit their website: www.JunkRemedy.com.

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Lauren Mitrick Wood & Charlie Wood



Returning Home to Help Others Find Theirs

cover story

By **Jennifer Mitchell**
Photos by **Annette Patko**
with Bordeaux Studio

Lauren Mitrick Wood and Charlie Wood—the team leads at Olive Well at Compass, located in Bucktown—recently moved into their newly renovated Highland Park home, and they couldn’t be more delighted to be back in North Shore—both are originally from Lake Forest. They are also excited to develop further and expand their already successful business—which they rebranded in 2019 to Olive Well with the tagline “Where all live well.”

Their success and strong client base and connections in both the city and North Shore have given them a remarkable ability to serve those clients who are transitioning from the city to the North Shore or vice versa. Lauren and Charlie especially enjoy working with these clients and look forward to continuing to bridge the gap between both markets.

As a third-generation REALTOR®, Lauren knows what it takes to run a successful real estate business. Her great-grandparents immigrated here and helped build Chicago, pouring concrete and building homes, and they rented out rooms to other immigrants. Lauren claims they were the “original Airbnb.” Their entrepreneurial spirit was passed on to Lauren’s parents, Frank and Cheryl Mitrick, who ran their own real estate business where Lauren often helped out as a child and young adult.

“I used to help my parents around the office when I was younger. I



loved copying papers and answering phones,” says Lauren. “But it wasn’t until I was in college that I took a more serious interest in the field. I started to figure out ‘the game’ and would show rental properties on my summers off. I really enjoyed the people aspect of it and fell in love with matching up clients with their dream home.”

Charlie wasn’t exposed to real estate until a little later in life. He attended Carleton College in Northfield, MN, and his experience



“

To have someone trust you with one of their biggest life decisions is so rewarding. I could not think of a better career. – Lauren

”

Right now, Lauren and Charlie are passionate about continuing to grow their team and their brand strategically. They’ve invested in their website and in creating a yearly magazine, a blog, illustrated maps, and curated newsletters. They are excited to see how else they can put their brand out there, especially with their recent move to the North Shore.

“We’ve been growing our team and mentoring the brokers we’re bringing on, which has been so rewarding,” says Lauren. “I’ve loved helping them build their confidence and figure out how to become more entrepreneurial. The process has unlocked a new passion in me. At some point down the line, I would love to launch a training course to help other brokers accelerate their business.”

Lauren and Charlie are excited that their move to the North Shore will allow them to be even closer

to family. Both sets of parents live nearby, and Lauren’s parents are still part of the team.

This power couple loves to get outside and get in their daily dose of exercise, even when they’re on vacation.

“When we travel, it almost always involves some activity like hiking, biking, or scuba diving,” says Charlie. “We find exercise to be a stress reliever and mood booster. After all, ‘movement is medicine.’ Beyond that, we love to cook; cuddle with our dog, Cooper, while reading a good book; and attend concerts at Ravinia, which is now close to our home.”

The Woods are focused on building their business and ensuring they’re available when clients need them. “Our business has grown organically



there had a profound influence on him. He appreciated that his views were challenged, and he was exposed to more people of different ethnicities and income levels, all within the college’s rigorous academic environment. He felt his eyes were opened.

After college, he threw himself into fundraising work for environmental activism organizations. He moved to China for one year to teach English before working as a professional model both domestically and internationally.

“My time teaching in China really brought me outside of my comfort zone, and it was an impactful experience,” claims Charlie. “The work was difficult as I had, all told, about 1,500 students, but it was also very rewarding. It allowed me to travel all over the country and be completely immersed in a wildly different place than the United States.”

In 2011, Charlie met Lauren, and after six months, he moved to Chicago to be with her. Watching Lauren run her business was inspiring to Charlie, and he began to take an interest in the day-to-day aspects of her work.

Lauren’s business was growing, and she, fortuitously, needed a second set of hands. Charlie began helping Lauren with rentals, then sales, and is now an integral part of the team at Olive Well.

“I didn’t expect to stick with real estate for this long, but it really takes hold of you,” says Charlie. “My personality and skill set was a perfect match for the business, and I’ve been able to grow my book of business year after year.”

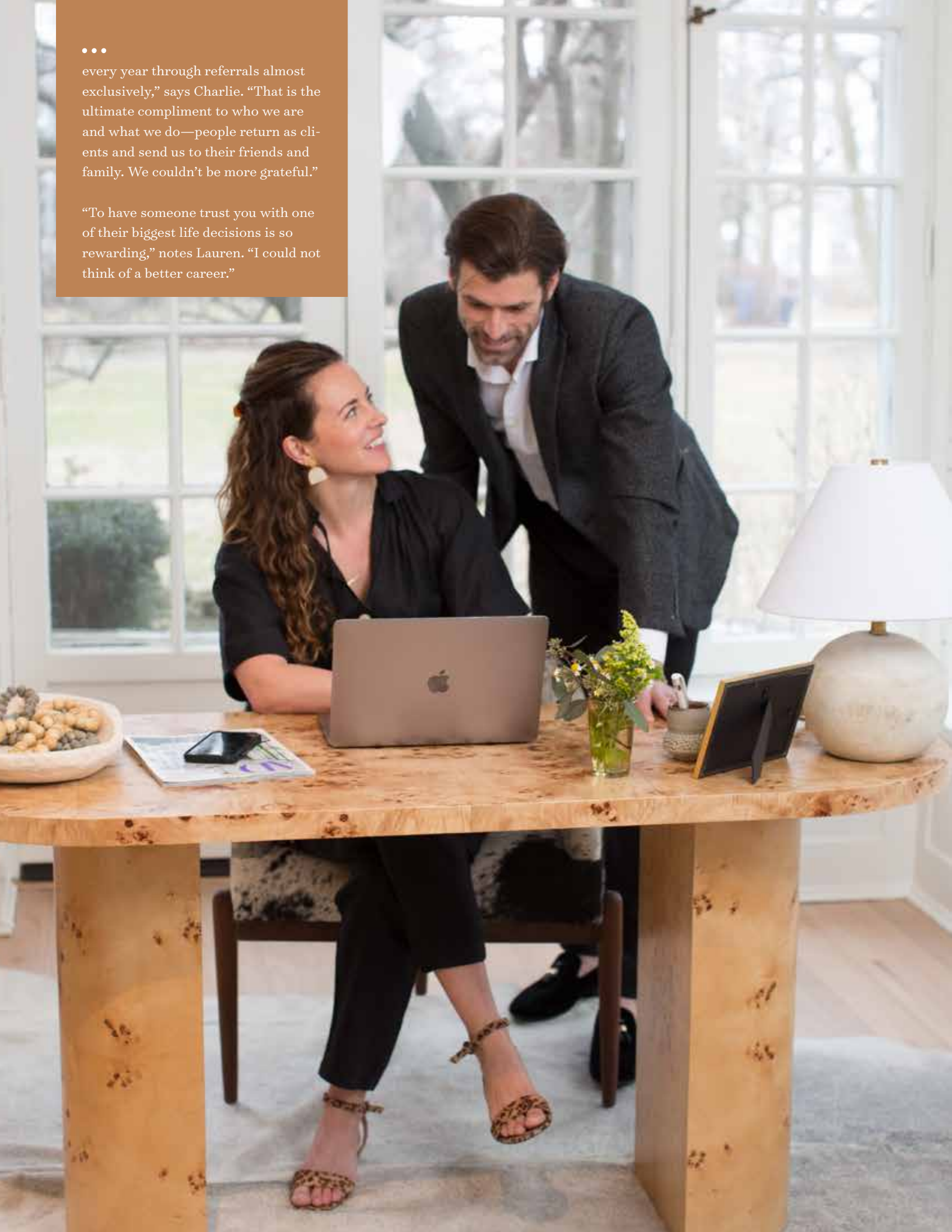


Lauren and Charlie’s dog, Cooper.

•••

every year through referrals almost exclusively,” says Charlie. “That is the ultimate compliment to who we are and what we do—people return as clients and send us to their friends and family. We couldn’t be more grateful.”

“To have someone trust you with one of their biggest life decisions is so rewarding,” notes Lauren. “I could not think of a better career.”



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Whether it's homes, cars, or bubble gum, Gary Grossman has the people skills needed to close the sale. And that's due, in part, to the fact that he moved a few times while growing up: he learned how to start over in a new place, fit in, and make new friends. "It made me a people person," says Gary. Born in California, Gary moved to Connecticut in junior high and then to Chicago in high school. His first foray into sales was in the seventh grade when he returned from a family trip to Los Angeles with four cases of Bubble Yum bubble gum, which was not yet available on the East Coast. He sold all four cases in two days. "I saw a need in the market and filled it," Gary says with a smile.

After graduating from the University of Southern California, he and a friend decided to go into business together and opened a car stereo performance shop, which they ran for ten years.

"I've always had a passion for cars and an entrepreneurial mindset, so it was a venture I was really excited about," claims Gary. "We were eventually able to sell the shop for a nice profit, and then we pivoted and opened an independent, high-end automotive dealership in the western suburbs of Chicago. We owned and operated that for twenty-three years before deciding to sell."

But Gary always had an interest in real estate too. He bought and renovated a house for himself and even flipped a few houses. During what would be his last years in the auto industry, he knew he was ready to do something new, something where he could make a bigger positive impact on other people's lives. That's when several people recommended that he try real estate.

"I'd always looked up to the REALTORS® I worked with and had great respect for the profession.



...



2021. I'm always looking for creative solutions to my clients' problems."

Not only did Gary focus on building relationships with other REALTORS®, but he also built a strong network of tradespeople that can help his clients prepare their house for sale or get their house move-in ready.

"I take a lot of time to listen to what the client wants and guide them away from things that might not ultimately be a good fit," he says. "For me, it's not about closing the deal. It's about finding someone the right home."

Gary believes that his passion for helping people deepened when his son suffered a serious medical condition as a child.

"It really taught me to be more compassionate and made me aware of the fact that not everyone is going through the same thing in life. Some people truly need more help and guidance than others, and that's something I can provide," he says.

"It's easy to work [our] long and hard hours when you get a thank you and a smile from your client," he continues. "It's so rewarding to know that they appreciate what I do for them."

When he's not guiding his clients, Gary loves boating and going to the gym. He also just loves dogs and is active in Coldwell Banker's charitable fund, which includes the Home for Dogs program. Although he doesn't collect as many cars as he used to, he still loves them.

But when it comes to business, he's moved out of the garage and into the home, helping his clients find the perfect place to create memories. Gary says, "There is no better feeling than when you can tell your clients, "Yes, you can start packing! You have a deal!"

Anytime I spoke with a REALTOR®, I found them very interesting, and I was always fascinated to learn more about their work and what was happening in the market, so I decided to give it a go and got my license."

He went into the business in 2019 as rather a lone wolf and began by helping his sister-in-law flip her home. He then started working with renters who wanted to become first-time buyers and tapped into his circle of friends and family to spread the word. "I went from being 'the car guy' to 'the house guy,'" he says.

Over the next year or so, Gary became a certified luxury home marketing specialist; achieved Coldwell Banker President Club status (top 2 percent of Coldwell Banker agents in the Midwest); and in 2021, was listed

in the top 1 percent in transaction and sales volume by MRED.

Fast forward to 2022, Gary was able to start the Gary Grossman Group a little over six months ago with seven agents who, between them, cover the entire Chicagoland area. Though he now has a team, Gary still does all the negotiating and offers concierge services to his clients.

"In my first few years in the industry, I focused on networking and building relationships with agents and brokerages, and that work has really paid off," says Gary. "Also, I like to think outside the box when it comes to finding houses that aren't yet on the market, and my connections with other REALTORS® have really helped me in that regard. I think that's what allowed me to have a really successful



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For me, it's not about closing the deal. **It's about finding someone the right home.** – Gary

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