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

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Meet the Burton family!

North Shore **REAL PRODUCERS!**

▶ publisher's note

Photos by **Heather Allison Love Photography**

Greetings, North Shore Real Producers! Most of you have heard the news Jason Acres has transferred North Shore Real Producers ownership to me. My wife, Emily, and I are excited for the new opportunity to run the platform here in the North Shore. This decision was methodical and prayerful, and we do not take this venture lightly. I've had the pleasure of meeting with a handful of you over the last couple of months, and I look forward to connecting with many more of you throughout 2022.

In the spirit of being real, my first instinct was to resist growth when presented with the idea of expanding our Real Producers' reach to the North Shore. My initial thought was, "My plate is already so full. How can we possibly take on more work?" We had a steady workflow running the Chicago and DuPage Real Producers platforms, and my wife and I were *finally* in a solid groove juggling four children—coordinating school drop off and pick up, delegating small tasks to our kids, grocery shopping, preparing meals, and debriefing from the day almost every evening. I felt we were at a point where we finally arrived and hit a positive, consistent stride.



Then I was reminded of the quote by Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Unless we progress, we regress." This statement rings true in the professional world and in almost every facet of life. If we don't make a conscious effort to better ourselves, we will degrade by default. After some prayer, counsel, and chewing on the words of Eisenhower, the choice was clear. We steadily grew in Chicago and DuPage during the COVID era, proving we possess the infrastructure and systems to do this sufficiently. We are thrilled about the opportunity and can't wait to start cultivating more connections in 2022!

I have been married to my wife, Emily, our director of partner success and editorial content, for sixteen years and have four children: Aubrey (twelve), Anya (nine), Ellis (four), and Aslani (two). I launched *Chicago Real Producers* in 2017, the first Real Producers platform in Illinois. Our lives are insanely chaotic at times (as you can see in the photo), but we embrace every minute of it.



Andy Burton
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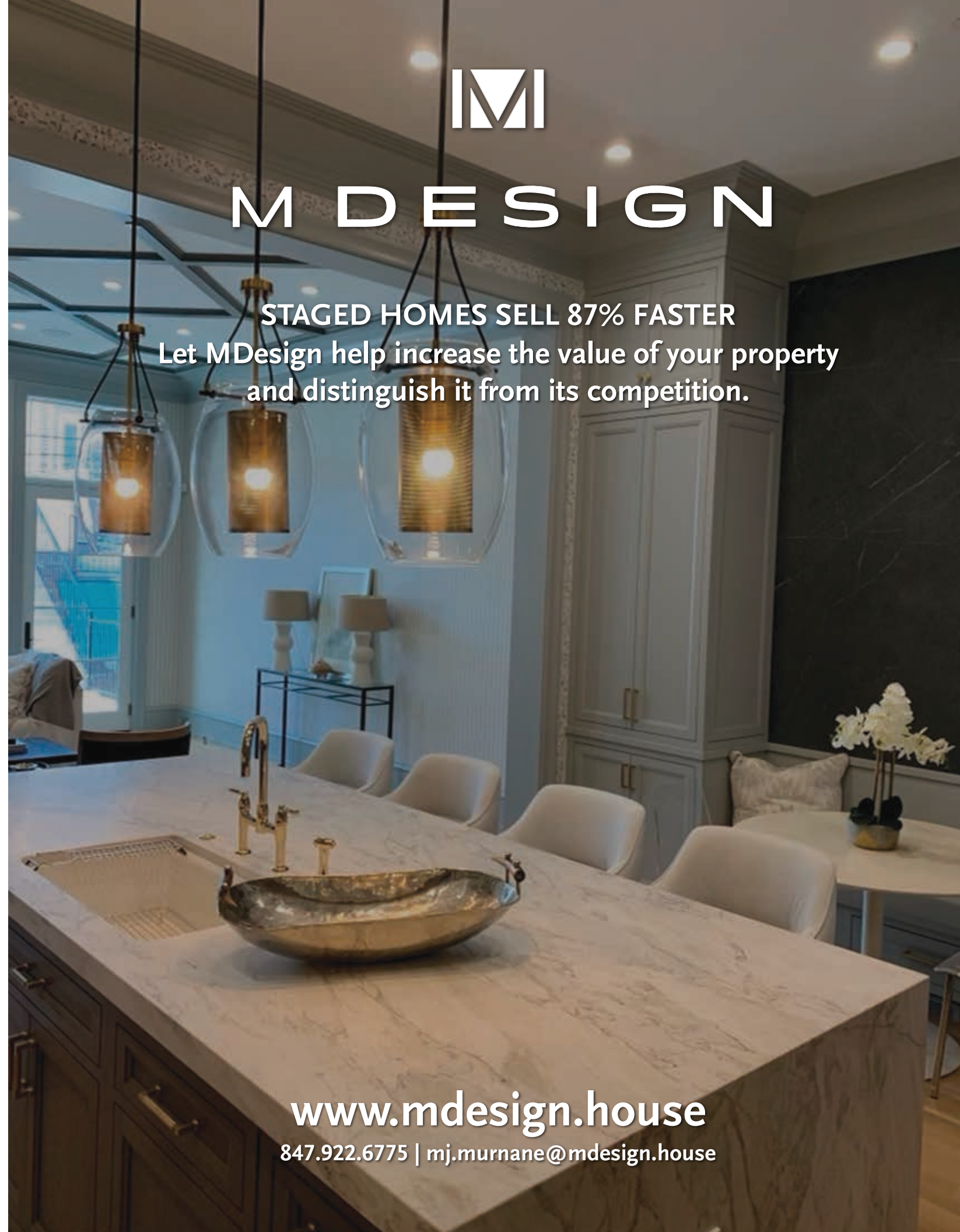



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Dale LUBOTSKY

▶▶ legacy of legends

By Laura Zickert

Education & Entrepreneurship

To leave a legacy of extraordinary customer service is also to leave a legacy of loyalty. Dale Lubotsky, a successful real estate agent in the North Shore, has demonstrated this loyalty to her family, community, and clients. Her entrepreneurial spirit, combined with her passion for the real estate industry, has accelerated her throughout her career.

Born in Chicago and raised in Skokie, IL, Dale has always had a heart for the North Shore. She attended Washington University in St. Louis, where she met her husband, an architect, and graduated with a degree in education. She taught school for five years and has a passion for helping the next generation succeed. “We have lived in Evanston now for almost fifty years,” said Dale. She had transitioned to being home with her children while they were young. One afternoon she was at the YMCA talking with Donna Zupancic when she shared, “I want a career that I can connect to.” Donna encouraged her to check out real estate. “It sparked my interest. Donna was doing corporate relocation and allowed me to follow along.”

Dale found a passion for real estate and received her license in 1980. “I started giving a lot of area tours and introducing people to different neighborhoods until I received my license,” she explains. She started at a small real estate office, but the small company closed when interest rates went up to 19 percent, and she moved to Baird and Warner. After three years, she was ready to start a new chapter of her career. So in 1983, she began with Mitchell Brothers Realty in Evanston, where she stayed until 1992. Dale became director of training and education for new agents.

“In 1992, four other women, plus myself, wanted to make an impact in the real estate community,” said Dale. “We opened up our own company called Prairie Shore Properties. It was radical at the time because most real estate firms were run and owned by men. Our concept was to be completely different from everybody else.” They hired the best of the best agents who needed to be in the business for a minimum of three years and with a true entrepreneurial spirit. In 2011, they were acquired by

...





Photo Credit: Melissa Song



Jameson Sotheby's. "It has been an incredible journey. I am still at it! I have fun doing real estate and love what I do," said Dale.

What I have loved about real estate is meeting the people I work with. My business is repeat clients, and I love that...

Dale's daughter, Dana Bokor, is also in real estate and has had her real estate license for seventeen years. She now works with Dale. Dana lives in Evanston with her husband and three girls. Dale's son, Darren, lives with his two children and wife in Andersonville. Home is a special place for Dale and her family. "My husband, Bob, designed and built the home we live in," she says. Family dinners in their home is a special time. In addition, Dale and her family love to travel. "We took a trip of a lifetime to Japan a few years ago. Some of our other favorite places have been Spain, Italy, and Portugal," she describes. Her time at home is spent gardening, walking, and reading. "We are lucky we live by the lake. I try to walk down



Dale's daughter, Dana, with her husband and three children.

to the lakefront as many days as I can," she says. She also enjoys visits to the Chicago Botanic Garden. Once a week, you can find Dale getting together with her best friend. "We have cocktails, dinner, and talk about life. We've been friends for forty-three years, and I am incredibly thankful for that relationship," she boasts.

Dale is an incredibly talented, kind, and thoughtful person. Her passion for always walking through life with

excellence has translated into how she conducts business. Her ability to educate new agents and her clients bring her to be a trusted source in the North Shore real estate community. "What I have loved about real estate is meeting the people I work with. My business is repeat clients, and I love that," said Dale. The North Shore is inspired by Dale's influence and ability to continue moving the needle for so many people looking to take the next step in their real estate journeys.



Dale and her husband, Bob, in Majorca, Spain.



A photo of a traditional Japanese wedding that Dale took on her trip to Japan.



Dale's son, Darren, with his family and Bob at a NU football game.

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Lynsey Wolfe

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By **Laura Zickert**
Photos by **Annette Patko**

Lynsey Wolfe is a successful REALTOR® who has inspired the North Shore with her ability to reach both success and her goals quickly. She is indeed on the rise and has become a star to all who work with her. “Being successful in real estate takes a lot of work, but it’s so rewarding,” says Lynsey. “How you reach your goals is just as important as what your goals are.”

Lynsey is known for consistently taking strides and moving forward. Her experience moving and exposure to a variety of homes started at a young age. Born in St. Louis, MO, Lynsey and her family moved to Colorado when she was three. Her family moved to Wisconsin when she was five, followed by Ohio when she was seven. “We finally settled in Lindenhurst, IL. And no, my dad was not in the military,” she laughed. “I think growing up in South Dakota gave him and my mom a bit of wanderlust.”

Lynsey attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and graduated in 2005 with a degree in political science and a minor in sociology. She started her career as a product support specialist and worked her way up to senior product manager for Medline Industries, Inc. until she decided to start a family in 2011. “As my youngest son was approaching



school age, my husband and I decided we wanted to get into real estate investing,” said Lynsey. “We decided the best way to do that was to really understand the market in our area and for me to get my license.” Although she did not intend to begin helping buyers and sellers, she says, “I started working with clients and fell in love with them. I loved helping them start the next chapter of their

lives. After I got that first transaction under my belt, it just never stopped!”

Lynsey started at Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Chicago-Libertyville in 2019 as an independent agent. “It really does feel like our entire office is one big team!” she exclaims. Lynsey sincerely looks up to the well-known Anne Hardy. “She took me under her wing and has been an amazing

...

mentor and friend since I started with BHHS," she explains. Lynsey also attributes much of her knowledge about Libertyville to her colleague, Julie Towne. "Julie has always been there for me to bounce ideas off of and gives great advice," she says. Lynsey has found that reaching your goals often takes teamwork.

Working with Lynsey means you have a confidant, friend, and reliable market knowledge source long term. "I love talking to my buyers after they've been in their homes for a few months, and they invite me over to show me how they've made it their own. I also love hearing about all of the friends they have made and neighborhood connections!" she says. Lynsey is incredibly humbled by the fantastic support she has received every step of the way. "I have the most insanely supportive friends and family. It is not lost on me how extremely blessed I am, and I make sure to practice gratitude every day," said Lynsey.

Her support starts right in her own home. Lynsey and her husband, Josh, have been together since they met in 2001 on the first day of college. They celebrated their fifteenth anniversary this year and are extremely happy together. She says, "He's my North Star!" Together, they have three sons, Jack (ten), Sean (eight), and Daniel (six). One of their favorite family activities is attending live

...

“

I have the most insanely supportive friends and family. It is not lost on me how extremely blessed I am, and I make sure to practice gratitude every day.”





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sporting events. “We’re definitely an active, sports-loving family!”

Lynsey is really into fitness herself, and you can find her, most mornings, at her local gym or running in her neighborhood. She says, “Working out is my stress relief, and I try to never miss a workout!” In addition, many know her to be the woman who can never miss a day without watching Seinfeld. She says, “I can’t even count how many times I’ve watched every episode. I love to throw out a good Kramer or Jerry quote. It’s so relatable! Even thirty years later!” She also loves to read and tries to rotate between fiction, non-fiction, and business books. “I am currently reading *The 12 Week Year* by Brian Moran and Michael Lenington and just finished *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett,” said Lynsey.

Lynsey is passionate about being the best resource for her clients and ultimately helping others move toward their goals. Whether it’s homeownership or becoming a landlord, Lynsey is there to walk beside her clients every step of the way. “I don’t just want to help my buyers find a home, but a lifestyle!” she exclaims. And, she has done just that.

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YOUR CHICAGOLAND CLIENT RETENTION SYSTEM

▶▶ agent feature

By Laura Zickert
Photos by Travis Heberling

Maria Etling



A Love for Learning

Maria Etling is a successful and hard-working REALTOR® in the North Shore who has found the beauty that comes from taking the time to lean in and learn about all life has to offer. “Although I was born in South Bend, IN, my parents were Hungarian immigrants that came to the US the year I was born,” shared Maria. “I grew up with non-English speaking parents who had a very strong European work ethic which they instilled in me as well.” The example that Maria’s parents set for her holds principles she carries with her even today. “My first language was Hungarian; I learned English in school. My dad became a custom home builder a few years after they arrived in the US, and together with my mother established a successful business. My sister and I assisted my parents with their business: writing contracts, helping with open houses for their new construction homes, and translating. All of this was a valuable foundation of work experience early in my life,” she remembers.



Maria with her husband of 38 years

Maria attended Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame, IN, and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business administration, with a marketing major and a minor in finance. She continued her education at Loyola University Chicago, where she received her MBA with a marketing concentration in 1982. She began her career working for Moore Business Forms as a sales rep and then as the product planning and market development manager until 1991. “I was a full-time mom from 1991-2003 and became very involved in my community, planning various social events for the women’s club throughout the year. Ultimately, I wished to get back into furthering my career. I had a desire for a flexible schedule and to be self-directed and self-employed. I had a history of homes as my dad was a home builder and I was always involved in the family business,” explains Maria. In 2003 she received her real estate license and launched her career. She started at Prudential Great American Homes, which merged with Prudential



“*Making decisions on the spot every single day is energizing. My goal is for clients to love being in their home.*”



Maria and her family

Starck, ultimately making a change by moving to Prudential Rubloff which merged and became Berkshire Hathaway KoenigRubloff, which became Berkshire Hathaway Chicago.

“I am passionate about continuing to grow my business and using the best tools available for my clients,” said Maria. “I’m always searching to enhance my marketing plan and service offerings.” She has also earned staging and luxury home marketing accreditations. Again, Maria never stops learning and growing within her role. From first-time homebuyers to multi-million dollar luxury clients, Maria has found it extremely rewarding to help people find their new homes and sell their existing homes to move on to meet their goals. “I cannot imagine life without this career. It is extremely fulfilling and satisfying as there is nothing like helping people make life choices that will impact their lives and that of their families,” she describes.

Family is very important to Maria. She has been married for thirty-eight years to her husband. “We met on the day of college graduation. He is a graduate of the University of

Notre Dame with an engineering degree. He continued his education at Loyola, where he received his MBA in marketing. After a successful career in telecommunications marketing, he now has his real estate license, and is involved in my real estate business as well,” she explains. Maria has two adult married daughters with families. Watching their family grow with grandchildren now is such a joy in her life.

When she is not working, Maria enjoys tennis and golf. Additionally, she and her husband enjoy dining out and traveling. “I am a homebody at heart and want others to love where they live as well. It is the basis of life’s comforts and satisfaction,” said Maria. She also enjoys volunteering and

•••

coordinating efforts to help charities. Maria supports Sunshine Kids and the Kindness Foundation through BHHS Chicago. "A portion of every commission goes to Sunshine Kids, Toys for Tots, Foodbank, Feed My Starving Children and others," explains Maria.



Maria winning an award

Maria is an award-winning REALTOR® in the North Shore, achieving top 2 percent with Berkshire Hathaway HS nationwide. Additionally, her awards include Crain's Chicago Business 2021 Notable Real Estate Broker, and eleven consistent years of the Five Star Professional Award (2011-2021). She says, "The recognition has been wonderful. However, I know I have made a difference in their lives and done the best thing possible for my clients." Maria sees that day in and day out, and every week looks different. "Making decisions on the spot every single day is energizing. My goal is for clients to love being in their home."

Maria is passionate about all that she does. She sets an incredible example in the North Shore of someone who is proactive and consistently insightful. Her extensive market knowledge stems from her passion for continuing to learn about real estate to better serve her clients. Her customer care is above excellence.



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Mike Foley & Jim Berardi

with DiVinci Painters



Painting a Picture of Service

▶ partner spotlight

By **Laura Zickert**
Photos by **Heather Allison**
Love Photography

A company culture founded on family-like relationships and excellence, DiVinci Painters, located on Chicago's North Shore, is known for its incredible talent and customer service. Owners Mike Foley and Jim Berardi say, "Let us paint you a masterpiece." Indeed, DiVinci Painters is doing just that. In 2021, DiVinci Painters will have completed 2300 jobs of all types and sizes, with 150 painters, and thirty-three staff members.

Their upscale clientele consists of homeowners, builders, designers, property managers, and architects throughout Chicagoland. "One of our skills is matching the right talent to the client's vision. Not every project is the same. We have clients moving out of a property that want it painted quickly and those that have moved into an estate and want historical restoration. It's our job to select the right team for the client's unique situation and adjust the price and experience accordingly. We are flexible and can accommodate all individual requests," said Mike.



Childhood friends, Mike and Jim went to the same Catholic grade school and high school. After they graduated from different colleges, they reunited and were looking for their direction. “A neighbor of Jim’s asked us to paint his house, and he was willing to teach us about painting. He got us started. My mom worked at the local church and introduced us to parishioners who also wanted painting work. Those early years were lean and tough but we persevered,” said Mike. This experience was just the beginning of their love for entrepreneurship and freedom.

They hired an old-world Italian craftsman who taught them about fine finishes. From there, the business grew organically. “We became known for taking care of people and building lasting relationships.” Almost forty years later, DiVinci Painters is still hyper-focused on providing clients with a luxury experience. “We are passionate about continuing to grow the business. We are mentoring and teaching the next generation how to take care of clients. The painting is only one aspect of it, and we are just focused on the experience,” said Mike.



Kate is the first female project manager in the history of the business.

Mike believes what DiVinci Painters is accomplishing is not just a level of superb craftsmanship, but it’s an opportunity to serve. The term “humble servitude” is well-known among the DiVinci Painters company culture. “This means we are there for our clients, we are taking care of their property, and we are there to serve. We want to stay humble. We treat our amazing team the same way we treat our clients, we are so proud of what we have created together, and we help them any way we can. We are like a family,” explains Mike.

Family is a vital part of Mike’s life. He lives in Libertyville and has four kids, three of which are in the business. Jim lives in Highland Park, has four kids as well, and is also very passionate about family. Both Mike and Jim are very active in their churches. “Our working relationship is incredible, commitment, loyalty, compromise, respect—we are equal in everything we do. We both have unique skill sets. Jim is great with the numbers and vision, while I like the details and creative side. We complement each other well with our strengths and weaknesses,” describes Mike.



This means we are there for our clients, we are taking care of their property, and we are there to serve...”

- Mike





Jim with his daughter Nicole (human resources intern) and Mike with his daughter Kate (project manager).

DiVinci Painters is passionate about giving back. They donate \$75-100K a year for community efforts, including Rotary of Highland Park, Love Moves Mountains in Colorado, Lake Forest Open Lands, and Special Spaces, which transforms rooms for children with cancer. The intentional work that Mike and Jim are doing now is impacting people around them and demonstrating service to the next generation.

When he's not hard at work, you can find Mike spending time with family, exploring music, and enjoying the North Shore. "I love a good cocktail and a good meal! A few of my favorite spots are the English pub at the Deer Path Inn in Lake Forest and I love the vibe at Miramar Bistro in Highwood. They both deliver an amazing experience," explains Mike. Jim is an excellent golfer and coached football for over fifteen years in Highland Park. Mike and Jim are invested in all that they do. "We push to make things

happen and share that with others. We love the North Shore. The residents have taught us so much—there are so many successful people doing great things and we feed off that. We are fiercely loyal to our community," says Mike.

The same entrepreneurial spirit they carry is passed down to every team member. "At DiVinci, we encourage our people to stretch their limits. We want everyone on a high growth trajectory. We have learned over the past forty years that this culture is possible, and we want everyone trying to reach their maximum human potential," says Mike. Working with DiVinci Painters means you are working with excellence, and the reputation they carry across the North Shore and beyond is one worth commending.

As many people are saying goodbye to their old homes and transitioning to new ones, DiVinci Painters specializes



Mike with his wife

in coming alongside their clients to make the process smooth and their vision a reality. DiVinci Painters is ready to paint your next masterpiece.

To reach Mike or Jim and to learn more about the services their team at DiVinci Painters provide, visit their website divincipainters.com or call 847-266-1295.

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RICK RICHKER



The Ultimate
Exchange



▶▶ cover story

By **Laura Zickert**
Photos by **Annette Patko**

When looking at life, you can make exchanges for selfish gain or help others. For Rick Richker, every decision made is meant to help others take strides forward. His ability to help people advance within their real estate journey has inspired the North Shore real estate community. He encourages his colleagues and clients with his market knowledge and unique perspective on the current real estate market.

Rick was born in Chicago and grew up in Deerfield, IL. He attended college at the University of Iowa and graduated in 1994 with a degree in journalism. “I started working at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in 1994 and was a trader there until 2009,” said Rick. “I had always had a passion for real estate. I owned a multi-family investment property and got my real estate license in 1998. I would help friends and family buy and sell property while trading at the Mercantile Exchange.” In 2009, he decided to make real estate his full-time career and joined Jameson, later transitioning to Exit Realty. “I focused my attention on short sales. I personally handled over 200 short sales from 2009 to 2013, and I was able to help those individuals and





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families sell their properties and avoid foreclosure,” explains Rick. “In 2013, I felt the shift coming in the economy, so I transitioned from short sales to traditional real estate.” Rick joined @properties in Winnetka to best serve his clients and has been at the Glencoe office ever since.

Rick has developed an unyielding passion for real estate with twenty-three years of experience, twelve of those being full-time. He is passionate about continuing to serve his clients and grow his business. “I pride myself on being able to find my clients off-market deals while inventory is at record lows. It also thrills me to be able to let my sellers know how much equity they have recovered in the last two years in their homes and assist them

in moving on to the next chapter in their lives,” says Rick. Helping clients find the home of their dreams or sell and move to the next chapter of their lives is the highlight of the process for Rick. “For me, it is all about building long-term relationships and trust,” he describes.

Rick has been married since 1997 to his wife, Melissa. Together, they have two sons (Aidan and Luke), and their family dog, Bruno, joins them. “We love spending time with our boys and

FOR ME, IT IS ALL ABOUT BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST.”

our friends. We are extremely proud to say our son Aidan is a freshman at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, and Luke is a junior at New Trier Township High School and plays on the New Trier baseball team,” boasts Rick. As a family, they enjoy

...





traveling to new places. Outside of the business, Rick enjoys golfing, playing paddle, going to sporting events, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.

Rick is also very involved in his community. "This is my sixth year on the board of Family Service of Glencoe (FSG). This is an amazing organization that provides social services to those that live and work in

Glencoe on a sliding scale," said Rick. "I started a golf outing four years ago to help raise money for FSG, and I look forward to chairing that event for years to come. I am also a member of the New Trier Booster Club board." He believes that success is being able to do something you love and being able to help others. He lives this out with excellence and is a fantastic example of someone who is stepping up with others in mind. "I truly value

all my relationships, and every time I get a referral, it means the world to me," explains Rick.

Rick has done an incredible job of exchanging his knowledge to help others succeed. His work ethic and passion for the real estate industry have set him apart in the North Shore. From start to finish, Rick Richker is taking strides daily to help others reach their goals and experience their dreams.

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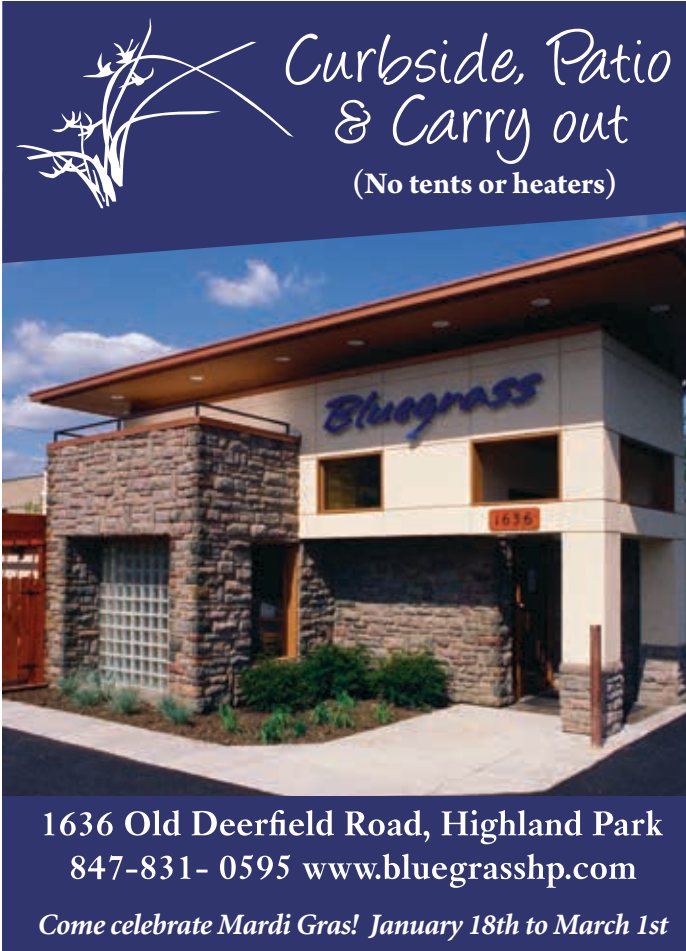



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ALEX FILIN

SVP OF MORTGAGE LENDING



Hi, I'm Alex Filin. I've been calling the North Shore area home since moving to Skokie in 1992. I emigrated from Russia (what is now Riga, Latvia). After living in the city for almost 13 years, my wife and I decided to plant our roots in Glenview to meet new people and make our family part of the great North Shore community.

When you work with me, I'm more than just your lender - I truly value the connections and relationships I make with locals and real estate agents like you.

Whether your clients are first-time homebuyers, existing homeowners needing to refinance, buying a second home, or looking for an investment property to purchase - my team and I can help! Reach out to me today.

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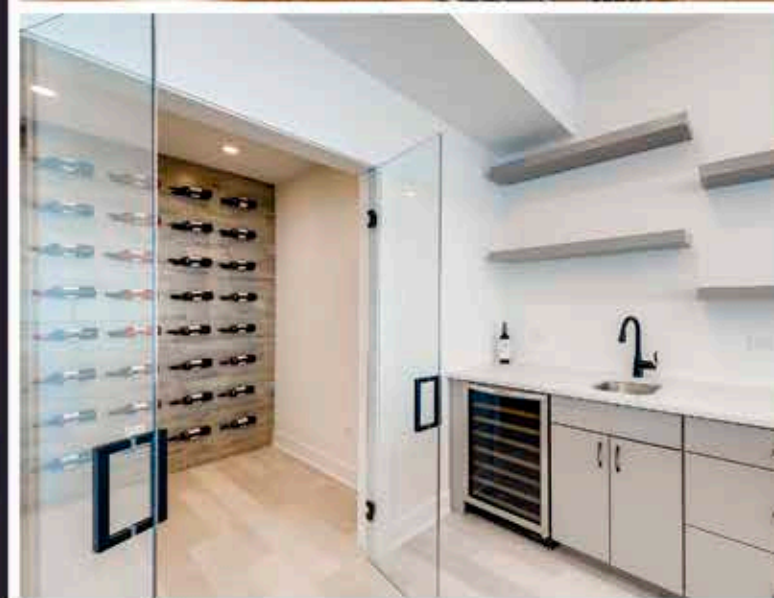
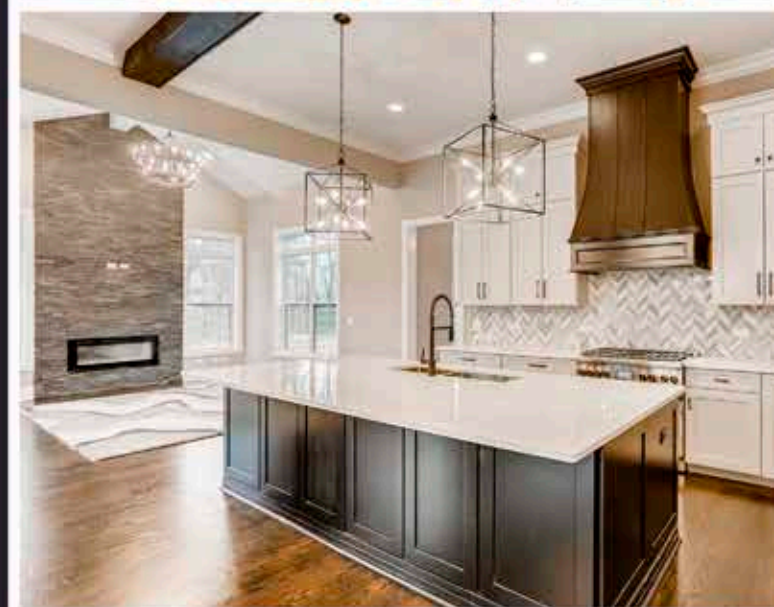
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