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 If you are interested in contributing or nominating REALTORS® for certain stories, please email us at andrew.schindler@n2co.com.

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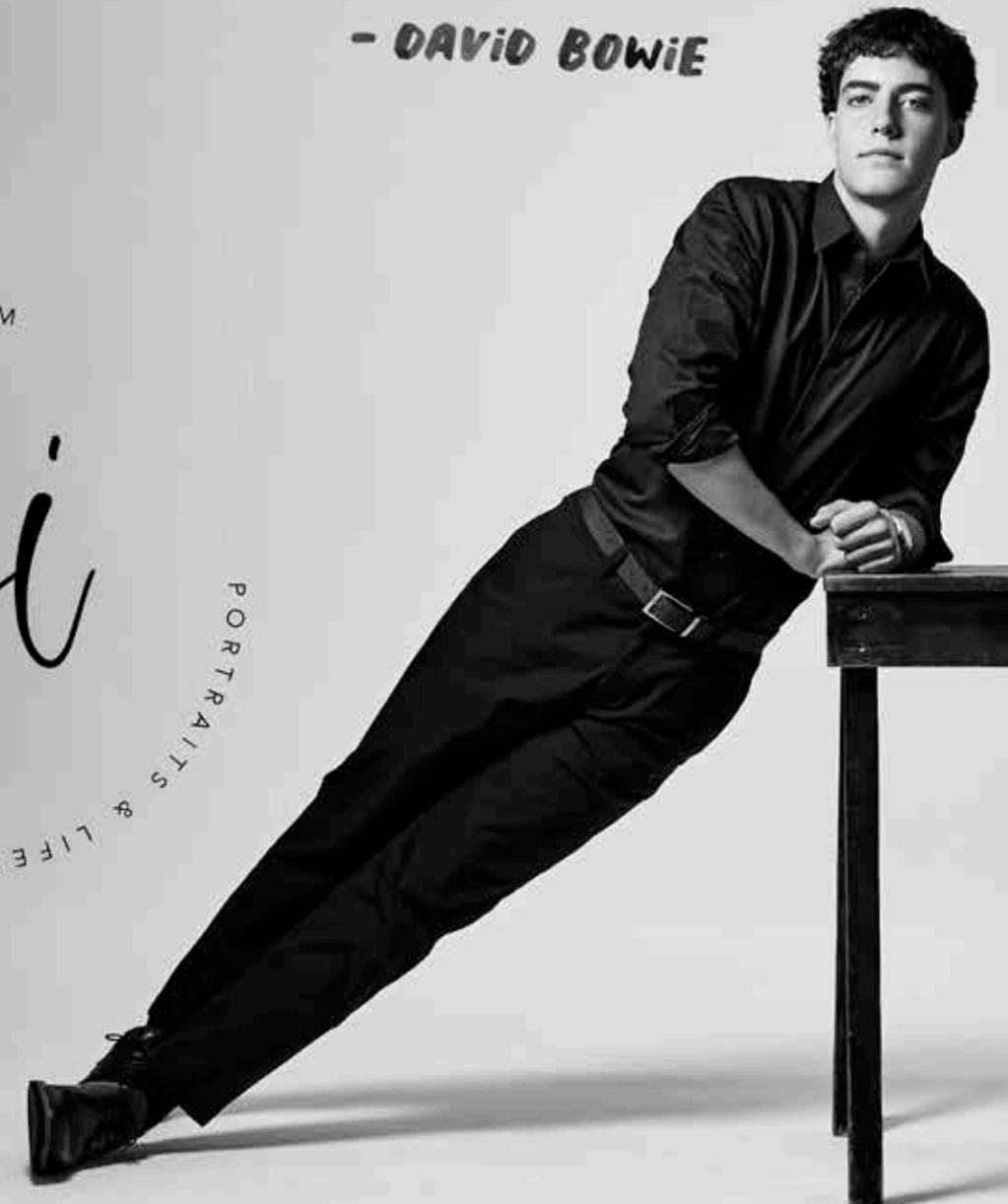
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▶▶ top producer

By Jess Wellar
Photos By Stacy Ideus



SHANNA

RELENTLESS

SPIRIT



“I may get knocked down, but I get back up,” begins Shanna Gibson. “Nothing will ever stop me from achieving my goals.”

A Realtor whose career has been defined by perseverance and the joy of helping others, Shanna continues to thrive at BancWise Realty as she wraps up her sixth year in the business.

BIG DECISIONS

A Lincoln native, Shanna tried her hand at several odd jobs after high school before eventually deciding to pursue a career in law enforcement. She worked her way up from officer to Intelligence Officer within the Nebraska Department of Corrections over the course of a decade.

“Unfortunately, incarcerated individuals sometimes continue to commit crimes once behind bars and it was my job to investigate those crimes and hand them off to appropriate authorities for prosecution,” she explains. “I was also their litigation rep, public information officer, and accreditation manager for the Nebraska State Penitentiary.”

While working full-time at the State Pen and being a single mom to three children, Shanna made the decision to pursue a degree at night, receiving her Bachelor of Arts with a dual major in Criminal Justice and Human Relations with an emphasis in psychology from Doane University, graduating cum laude. However, some health

issues led to her decision to step away from her corrections career in 2017.

“I took several months to decide what I wanted to do moving forward,” she explains. “I just knew I wanted to pursue a career that would be flexible so I could spend more time with my family, that would allow me to work hard and get compensated for it, and would be an opportunity to meet lots of people and do something meaningful in their lives.”

Ultimately, her love for houses and helping people led her to obtain her real estate license in late 2018.

DIVING IN

When Shanna decided to go into real estate, she went

all in with no safety net, relying on her devout faith that God will provide for her business. She joined BancWise and immediately felt at home.

“I was paired with a terrific mentor, Sara Sanford, for ten months. She helped me problem-solve and understand the paperwork and processes,” Shanna notes. “And BancWise made me feel like I belonged right from the beginning, we really are like a family.”

In her first year, Shanna’s motivation paid off as she earned the Newcomer of the Year award at her brokerage. In 2023, Shanna achieved an impressive volume of \$7.7 million across 30 transactions, and is



the process and with the results, I am happy.”

She notes she will do whatever it takes to help her clients, often going above and beyond to get the deal done.

“I have paid for things, moved people, done handy projects, and full house cleanings,” Shanna affirms. “Whatever I have to do in order to keep that transaction together.”

This same ‘roll up your sleeves’ mentality is also reflected in Shanna’s valuable advice to new agents entering the field: “Be patient and realistic. It takes time and effort to build a business. Work hard, don’t give up, and treat others better than you want to be treated, and you will succeed.”

TOP PRIORITIES

When Shanna isn’t busy putting deals together, she treasures time with her loved ones. She has three children: Chloe (23), Andrew (21), and Cameron (14), along with a 4-year-old grandson, River.

“We love spending time together and traveling,” she shares.

Their road trips often take them to Colorado and Texas, where they enjoy the beaches and mountains. At home, family movie nights, games, and sharing laughter over funny videos keep them close-knit and entertained.

Shanna’s household also contains two four-legged best friends, a cat named Charlie and a 7-year-old yellow Lab, Abby.

“Charlie thinks he is a dog and responds to ‘going outside’, ‘treats’ and playing fetch. He is very talkative and follows me around constantly,” she laughs. Abby, trained as a therapy dog, is a sweet and gentle creature and helps provide comfort to Shanna’s son, who was diagnosed with autism.

Balancing her career with her top priorities, faith and family, is paramount to Shanna. She homeschools her youngest son and devotes two to three hours per day to his lessons. In addition to spending time with her family, Shanna is actively involved in her community. She has worked with CASA and Domestipups, and attends Indian Hills Community Church.

On the horizon, Shanna is excited about the future of her business. She enjoys having a career that her kids are proud of and now that she’s found her niche, she’s not going anywhere.

“I have future dreams of purchasing more rental properties and an income property on the Gulf Coast of Texas,” she states. “I plan to continue selling real estate for the rest of my life. I knew going into real estate that I did not have a Plan B. This was it!”

“
WORK HARD, DON’T GIVE UP,
AND TREAT OTHERS BETTER
THAN YOU WANT TO BE TREATED,
AND YOU WILL SUCCEED.”



currently on track to more than double those totals, hoping to reach \$15 million this year.

“I do a lot of new construction homes,” she explains. “The majority of my business has come from that. Last year was slower with rates and inflation but it’s picking up again. I also operate solely by referral and have a lot of repeat clients.”

However, Shanna’s focus is not solely on financial gain; instead, she strives for a fulfilling career that brings joy to her clients and pride

to her family. She defines success as “achieving, surpassing, and actively pursuing my personal life aspirations.” while giving all of the praise to God for opening doors to help her find her way.

A GENUINE HEART

Naturally compassionate, Shanna has built up her business with a sincere focus on serving over selling.

“I have always approached real estate with a quality over quantity mindset,” she emphasizes. “When my clients are happy about

Stacy

HARTGERINK

cover rewind - december 2020

“Working in real estate is a real joy for me, meeting interesting people who all have a story you can learn from. It’s fun to hear people’s stories,” Stacy emphasizes. “Sometimes they’re sad stories and they are moving for reasons that aren’t always fun, but just getting to know people, and help them along the way is the most interesting aspect of my job.”

People who work with Stacy also get to know “Stacy’s people” — a high-caliber collection of industry partners, including a carpenter, electrician, plumber and many more ... people who then become Stacy’s clients’ people. Plus, Stacy loves staging and decorating her listings — a free service she adds for her clients that gives them an extra edge in the marketplace.

Those who get to know Stacy and the way she serves others come away with a lot of fond memories of her, as well. “I just always work hard and put forth my best efforts, just like the Bible says, ‘Work heartily as unto the Lord,’” she says with a smile.



“
I just always work hard and put forth my best efforts, just like the Bible says, ‘Work heartily as unto the Lord.’

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►► on the rise

By Jess Wellar
Photos By Stacy Ideus

JOSLYN BRINKMAN

"In my life, I may have taken many different turns, but I am so happy to have landed in real estate," begins Joslyn Brinkman, an exceptional Realtor who embraced her true calling after navigating a series of setbacks.

With a passion for helping others and a knack for building relationships, Joslyn has transformed her challenges into stepping stones of opportunity.

FINDING HER WAY

A proud Lincoln native, Joslyn initially pursued a teaching degree on a track scholarship at Doane College, driven by her love of running and a desire to help others. However, while

still in school, a serious car accident left her with a traumatic brain injury and a long road to recovery.

"I didn't really know what I wanted to do, so I just picked teaching back then," Joslyn admits.

"But after the accident, my life com-

pletely changed. I had to relearn motor skills, and it took me over a year and a half of outpatient therapy to even function again."

Running track was out of the question and going back for her teaching degree proved too difficult. But Joslyn managed to get through a year of dental school and served as a dental assistant for the next eight years. She floated along but couldn't shake the feeling of unfulfillment.

"I felt lost and prayed constantly that God would open some sort of new door for me that I would absolutely love," she shares.

Watching her successful Realtor husband, Cody Brinkman, in action assisting others while having fun

finally inspired her to give real estate a shot. Determined and encouraged by her husband, Joslyn obtained her real estate license in March of 2022, ready to help others achieve their dreams of homeownership, too.

FULL THROTTLE

Joslyn didn't waste any time learning the ropes. Working alongside her husband, who has been in the industry now for eight years, Joslyn began to learn the processes while asking plenty of questions.

"Cody was my mentor from day one," she acknowledges.

"Within the past year, I have grasped my own rhythm to the

business. But in this industry, you're always going to have questions and I'm lucky to have him by my side."

Last year, Joslyn and Cody closed \$7.5 million in transactions. As 2024 wraps, they're on track to exceed those totals with ambitions to hit \$8-9 million. But for Joslyn, success is defined by something much less fleeting than sales figures.

"I define success in two ways: knowing God, and being happy," she shares. "If my work is making me happy, and I am representing God in my work, that is success."

SERVING WITH HEART

With so many exceptional Realtors out there, what

*BOUNCING BACK
WITH GRACE*





sets Joslyn apart? She notes it's a heartfelt passion for helping her clients and a caring, genuine approach to building relationships that will last long after the deal is done.

"A transaction is a transaction," she emphasizes, "but building a lasting relationship and making a good impression on your clients takes a lot of work ... Effort, compassion, and understanding is everything!"

Joslyn also thrives on helping her clients navigate one of life's most significant transitions while she notes getting to meet new people is her "absolute favorite thing."

Her sense of fun shines through in every transaction, as she strives to make the often-daunting process more enjoyable and memorable.



Brylee, Joslyn & Cody

"Helping people through the buying and selling rollercoaster is exciting, thrilling, and at times very stressful," she admits. "I like to be that backbone for my clients to get them through the process the absolute best that I can... Seeing my clients happy is the biggest goal."

For Joslyn, faith continues to play an integral role in her career as well as daily life.

"After my accident, I didn't know which direction God wanted me to go," she reflects. "I fully believe He brought me through all of those obstacles, and His plan was to have me end up here."

ON THE HOMEFRONT

While Joslyn and Cody work side by side at the office, the couple prioritize their marriage first and foremost and have plenty to keep them busy when they arrive home. Now proud parents, the Brinkmans welcomed their first child, Brylee Grace, just three months ago.

"Our baby sleeps great, usually for nine hours — we could not be more thankful," she acknowledges.

Joslyn and Cody aim to avoid daycare for now, cherishing every precious moment with their new daughter.

"Working and parenting has its challenges, but the thing I love about real estate is that you can incorporate your life

into the role and work around it," she points out.

Joslyn and Cody enjoy spending time together as a family, often opting for outings with friends or cozy nights in. Their dog, Tater Tot, a mini Labradoodle, adds to the fun with his playful, loving energy.

In addition to family time, faith is top priority for both Brinkmans.

"We attend Christ Place Church and love it dearly," Joslyn emphasizes.

Looking to her future, Joslyn is eager to grow both her family and her real estate career in various ways. With plans to venture into rentals and short-term properties, she is excited about the unending possibilities.

"I would love to start doing some photography on the side, too," she concludes with a smile, "Maybe I'll work that into real estate somehow."



“AFTER MY ACCIDENT, I DIDN'T KNOW WHICH DIRECTION GOD WANTED ME TO GO. I FULLY BELIEVE HE BROUGHT ME THROUGH ALL OF THOSE OBSTACLES, AND HIS PLAN WAS TO HAVE ME END UP HERE.”

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2024: YEAR IN REVIEW

With 2024 wrapping up, it's as good a time as any to look at who we are and what we've accomplished together...

ASSOCIATION STATS

- 104 years (founded in 1920)
- 1,310 members
- 1,131 REALTORS
- 179 Affiliates

One of our goals as an Association is to help those in need in our community. Several of our committees are in place for that main purpose. Let's take a look at what our committees have been doing in the Lincoln community and who we've been partnering with to get it accomplished.

WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

- **\$29,000+** raised for local non-profit organizations
- **22,000 PAIRS OF SOCKS** collected for the Peoples City Mission
- **1,000+ MEALS DELIVERED** for Meals on Wheels

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Peoples City Mission
- The Salvation Army
- NeighborWorks Lincoln
- Habitat for Humanity Lincoln
- Home Buyer's Assistance Foundation
- NIFA
- HBAL
- Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach
- Food Bank of Lincoln
- Bridges to Hope

REALTORS IN THE COMMUNITY

- Huskers Helping the Homeless for Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach
- Sock Drive for the Peoples City Mission
- Bell Ringing for The Salvation Army

- Stuff the Bus for The Friendship Home
- Meals on Wheels for Tabitha Health
- "Welcome Home" Tool Kits at Habitat for Humanity Home Dedications
- Star City Pride Parade
- Habitat for Humanity Community Builders Breakfast
- Civil Rights Conference (Lincoln Commission on Human Rights)

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

- Golf Tournament for Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln and NeighborWorks Lincoln
- Bowling Tournament for HBAF (Home Buyer's Assistance Foundation)
- "Where to Wednesdays" for the Food Bank of Lincoln
- Pumpkin Contest for the Food Bank of Lincoln
- Gathering Donations for We Can Do This - Lincoln
- Silent Auction & Lip Sync Battle for Hope Village (a Bridges to Hope project)

Our members are always looking to better themselves personally and professionally. As an Association we try to give our members opportunities to learn, grow and most importantly, have fun! Here are a few of the member-focused events our Association and committees have been working on over the past year.

MEMBER-FOCUSED EVENTS

- Quarterly Eats & Education Seminars
- REALTOR® CE Day (Fair Housing & Code of Ethics courses)
- Quarterly Networking "Coffee & Conversation" Events
- REALTOR® Member Appreciation Night at Roca Berry Farm

- RAL Member Holiday Party
- Fair Housing Panel
- Committee Collaboration Events
- YPN hosted Virtual Q&A Session for New Members
- MRCIE Training for Commercial Agents

With a new leadership team ready to take the reins and Committee Chairs poised to lead dedicated members into another successful year, 2025 is looking pretty good. Thank you to our amazing outgoing group of leaders and please help us welcome our incoming leadership team!

2024 OUTGOING LEADERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- April Buffum, Nebraska Realty
- Connie Burleigh, CJ Burleigh Real Estate
- Heather Ferguson, HOME Real Estate
- Eric Lemke, NEST Real Estate
- Heather Ford, The 1867 Collective
- Kali Klassen, Summit Real Estate
- Jamie Meyer, NAI FMA Realty
- Stephanie Tietjen, Nebraska Realty

2025 INCOMING LEADERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Board of Directors

- Matt Kirkland, Giving Realty, RAL President
- Lynn Fisher, Great Place Properties, Vice President
- Tyler Reynolds, Woods Bros Realty, Treasurer
- Lea Ann Stephenson, HOME Real Estate, Secretary
- Eric Ebeler, NP Dodge Real Estate
- Stacy Fernandez, Coldwell Banker NHS RE
- TJ Gibbons, Nebraska Realty

- John Grady, RE/MAX Concepts
- Taiheem Pleasant, Woods Bros Realty
- Russ Meyer, Nebraska Realty
- Rachel Rentschler, The 1867 Collective
- Tessa Warner, RE/MAX Concepts

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- Amy Gewecke, HOME Real Estate
- TJ Gibbons, Nebraska Realty
- James Herrold, NP Dodge Real Estate
- Valerie Hervert, NP Dodge Real Estate
- Ageda Montes de Oca, Woods Bros Realty
- Rhonda Rogers, HOME Real Estate

Committee Chairs

- TJ Gibbons, Nebraska Realty
- Tyler Loontjer, Coldwell Banker NHS RE
- Ageda Montes de Oca, Woods Bros Realty
- Molly Parde, NP Dodge Real Estate
- Ashlee Schmehl, Nebraska Realty
- Andy Widman, NAI FMA Realty
- Kim Zwiener, KZ Realty

The Association is always trying to provide more value to its members each year, so we want to know...what are our members saying about their experiences as part of this Association?



QUOTES FROM SOME OF OUR MEMBERS:

"I have always enjoyed being able to work with all members, both Realtors and affiliates, in all aspects of the Association."

"I feel that RAL does a lot for the community and Realtors. I like being involved and RAL offers a great opportunity to help others."

"There's nothing more important than building relationships in our community that create a respect for one another so we can learn to relate and communicate on a much stronger level."

"Being involved in your industry is the best way to continue to grow as a professional and as a newer agent, it was a great way to make new friends."

"When I started, I thought the committee meetings sounded interesting...once I attended one, I was hooked!"

"I have found the information to be invaluable and appreciate the wealth of support and knowledge I gain..."

"I truly feel like we're making headway in Lincoln and creating some great events for our Realtors®, affiliates, and consumers."

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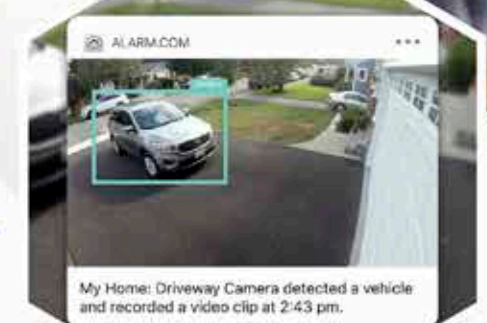
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CONSIDER THESE YEAR-END FINANCIAL MOVES

As we enter the holiday season, your life may well become busier. Still, you might want to take the time to consider some financial moves before we turn the calendar to 2025.

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

- **Review your investment portfolio.** As you look at your portfolio, ask these questions: *Has its performance met my expectations this year? Does it still reflect my goals, risk tolerance and time horizon? Do I need to rebalance?* You might find that working with a financial professional can help you answer these and other questions you may have about your investments.
- **Add to your 401(k) and HSA.** If you can afford it, and your employer allows it, consider putting more money into your 401(k) before the year ends — including “catch-up” contributions if you’re 50 or older. You might also want to add to your health savings account (HSA) by the tax-filing deadline in April.
- **Use your FSA dollars.** Unlike an HSA, a flexible spending account (FSA) works on a “use-it-or-lose-it” basis, meaning you lose any unspent funds at the end of the year. So, if you still have funds left in your account, try to use them up in 2024. (Employers may grant a 2½ month extension, so check with your human resources area to see if this is the case where you work.)
- **Contribute to a 529 plan.** If you haven’t opened a 529 education savings plan for your children, think about doing so this year. With a 529 plan, your earnings can grow tax deferred, and your withdrawals are federally tax free when used for qualified education expenses — tuition, fees, books and so on. And if you invest in your own state’s 529 plan, you might be able to deduct your contributions from your state income tax or receive a state tax credit.
- **Build your emergency fund.** It’s generally a good idea to keep up to six months’ worth of living expenses in an emergency fund, with the money held in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your retirement funds to pay for short-term needs, such as a major car or home repair.

- **Review your estate plans.** If you’ve experienced any changes in your family situation this year, such as marriage, remarriage or the birth of a child, you may want to update your estate-planning documents to reflect your new situation. It’s also important to look at the beneficiary designations on your investment accounts, retirement plans, IRAs and insurance policies, as these designations can sometimes even supersede the instructions you’ve left in your will. And if you haven’t started estate planning, there’s no time like the present.
- **Take your RMDs.** If you’re 73 or older, you will likely need to take withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — from some of your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA. If you don’t take these withdrawals each year, you could be subject to penalties.

These aren’t the only moves you can make, but they may prove helpful not only for 2024 but in the years to come.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

READY TO GET A HEAD START ON YOUR 2024 TAXES? CONTACT US TODAY!

Jenny, Laura, & Becca




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▶ inspiring agent

By Jess Wellar
Photos By Jill Robinson

HEIDI BRANDT

WINNING THE UPHILL BATTLE

In the five years since Heidi Brandt transitioned from a successful career in high-end spa management to real estate, she's been more than just a consistent top producer at HOME Real Estate — she's become a champion affecting real change in Lincoln.

Heidi's approach to both real estate and life has always been guided by a burning desire to help others while making a meaningful impact. And for Heidi, that includes recently launching the Healing Heights Foundation to open up crucial conversations on the still-somewhat taboo topic of mental health.

"Being a Realtor has allowed me to build strong relationships, and that's been a huge support in creating this nonprofit to fight the stigma," she explains. "I've also been humbled by the outpouring of encouragement and assistance from our real estate community."

DISCOVERING A NEED

Originally from Friend, Nebraska, Heidi's first career took her to the East Coast, where she worked in high-end spa management for fifteen years, holding positions at Canyon Ranch, Cranwell, and Montage. But despite her accomplishments, the demanding 80-hour weeks eventually took their toll.

"I moved back to Nebraska to be closer to family and because I was burnt out with hospitality," Heidi shares frankly.

Upon returning to her home state, Heidi sought a new direction that would let her continue helping people, but with a more flexible schedule. That desire led her to real estate as another avenue for providing assistance.

Since making the transition in 2019, Heidi has thrived while acknowledging her real estate career has provided her with the perfect platform to follow her heart's larger mission: She was finally able to answer the calling



to address a more personal and pressing need — mental health awareness.

"It's been in my heart to start a nonprofit having gone through that and come out the other side," she shares. "I'm so grateful that real estate has given me this opportunity."

PERFECT METAPHOR

Through her strong real estate ties, Heidi founded her nonprofit, Healing Heights Foundation, which officially launched in January 2024. The nonprofit aims to open up conversations surrounding mental health and provide crucial resources and support to those in need.

Heidi's inspiration for starting HHF came from a deeply personal place.

"I had an eating disorder that started when I was 12 and went untreated until I was in my early 30s," she recounts. "Finding the right kind of therapist to help me when I was in Massachusetts saved my life."

To kick off her nonprofit, Heidi created the event Hell on the Hill, held this past September. The event was originally scheduled to take place at Pioneers



Park in Lincoln, involving a physically demanding challenge of 50 laps on a steep hill, symbolizing the struggles many face with mental health. Due to inclement weather, the event was quickly moved to nearby Canoyer Garden Center.

"We did 10 miles and the challenge and message were still the same," Heidi points out. "Canoyer was so generous to allow us to hold the event there at the last-minute, and while we will plan 2025 for Pioneers Park again, we now know we have a backup plan!"

She also notes the inaugural Hell on the Hill event was a success despite the weather hiccups. The Lincoln Fire Department showed up to support the event by running the first lap alongside participants.

"They are usually the first responders to mental health emergency situations, so that made it really special," she adds. "We had almost 100 participants in the first race, including 18 University of Nebraska athletes who also came to join us."

"The race may not be for everyone physically, but you can sponsor someone else and show up to cheer."

BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF HOPE AND SUPPORT

Heidi's efforts to create a safe space and community for those dealing with mental health struggles stem from her belief in the power of connection and community to overcome adversity.

For her, the foundation's purpose is to provide a resource center and support network for those

facing mental health issues, while also spreading the message that it's okay to lean on others during difficult times.

"We're opening the door to that conversation," she elaborates. "The idea is that people can ask someone to take a lap for them or run with them to get through this race, but they're not allowed to quit."

ON THE HOMEFRONT
Outside of work and her

nonprofit, Heidi embraces an active life. She loves the outdoors, from paddleboarding and golfing to traveling and spending time with her rescue mutt, Zeke.

"Zeke is a big goofball who loves attention and playtime," she shares with a laugh.

Looking ahead, Heidi's vision for the Healing Heights Foundation goes beyond the local level. Once Lincoln's annual event is well-established, Heidi hopes to

expand Hell on the Hill to other college towns.

"We aim to continue to grow the foundation and help as many individuals as possible," she concludes. "Together, we can make it to the other side."

To learn more about Hell on the Hill's annual event or to donate to the Healing Heights Foundation, visit: www.healingheightsfoundation.com



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