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*Tammy Jo*  
**Budzynski**

*Event  
Recap  
Inside*

**AGENT SPOTLIGHT:** Chris Hughes

**AGENT SPOTLIGHT:** Dan Steffee

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**06**  
Preferred Partners



**10**  
Event Announcement: May Mingle



**12**  
Top Producer: Tammy Jo Budzynski



**18**  
Agent Spotlight: Chris Hughes



**22**  
Agent Spotlight: Dan Steffee



**26**  
Event Recap: Thank You For Attending!

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▶ event announcement

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# Tammy Jo Budzynski

## A Compassionate Approach to Real Estate

Tammy Jo Budzynski had already laid the foundation for becoming a real estate agent long before she obtained her salesperson license. She grew up in a family of entrepreneurs, and through her grandfather and father — who were both builders — she was introduced to the world of real estate. “You could say that ‘homes’ were in our blood,” Tammy Jo said.

While Tammy Jo was in college and still living with her parents, she began to take on her own renovation projects around the house. A few of her projects entailed learning how to use a circular saw to make an artificial fireplace, hanging drapes from the ceiling to create a makeshift wall, and even installing trim molding to a table. “My parents weren’t worried about me partying; they were worried about what I was going to make or build when they got home,” Tammy Jo said, smiling. Through her renovations, she began to understand how to solve a house’s flaws, and she loved explaining to others how to truly tap into a house’s potential.

When Tammy Jo graduated from Aquinas College in 2001 with a degree in business administration, she was unsure about her next steps in life. It didn’t take long for her to realize that she could combine her passion for people and her affinity for homes

to become her own boss as a real estate agent. She then attended a week-long class, took her license test, and anxiously waited for her results to arrive by mail. “It took weeks, and when it finally came in, I put it on my wall — unopened,” she recalled. “It sat there for a few days before my friend pushed me to get it opened.” Tammy Jo didn’t have anything to worry about, though, because she had passed.

Twenty-three years later, Tammy Jo has found great success in helping people achieve their real estate dreams. She is currently the broker of TJ Homes with Keller Williams - Grand Rapids North, where she and her team closed over \$32 million in sales in 2023. Tammy Jo was also featured on the cover of Top Agent Magazine twice — once in 2017 and another in 2021.



▶▶ top producer

By Amanda Matkowski  
Photos by Jacob Harr with  
harr Creative LLC

“

LIFE ISN'T ABOUT REAL ESTATE.

LIFE IS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE. ”

Despite her personal successes, Tammy Jo is more focused nowadays on growing her team of like-minded people. TJ Homes is comprised of three other licensed agents and two support staff, and everyone is devoted to providing the best possible experience for a customer. “It isn’t about a sale: It is about the family we serve,” Tammy Jo explained. “We give straight talk with no fluff, and we are respected for that. That is what has earned our customers’ trust year after year.”

According to Tammy Jo, one of the benefits of being an agent is the ability to have a flexible schedule. “I can choose when I work, when I take vacations, and when I attend my kids’ school functions,” she said. “I don’t have to ‘wait’ for permission to be granted from someone in a company.”

When it comes to her team, Tammy Jo incorporates the same family-first philosophy and work-life balance. “Love being on the phone or showing houses but don’t like negotiating? We can help,” she explained. “By growing in the areas you love and handing off what you don’t



love, you can find balance in your life between work and family.”

For Tammy Jo, her family consists of her husband, Max, and their two daughters — Addison, 10, and Natalie, 7. They enjoy going to the beach together, taking walks and bike rides, and having game nights. “The girls like watching Mom lose at the memory games,” Tammy Jo said, laughing. The family also loves caring for their aquariums, with Addison and Natalie even having tanks in their bedrooms.

Other than spending time with her family, Tammy Jo likes to read, garden and paint. “People who know me know that I don’t sit still,” she said. Tae Kwon Do is also a large part of Tammy Jo’s life and

has been since she was a teenager. She is currently a third-degree black belt and is hoping to test for her fourth-degree belt in 2024. She even met her husband — who is a third-degree black belt as well — through Tae Kwon Do. “Our grand master always told me that I had to find a ‘good TKD man.’ I just never thought that it was actually in the cards,” Tammy Jo said.

Besides Tae Kwon Do, Tammy Jo and her husband spend their free time restoring a historic house on Plainfield Avenue in Grand Rapids called The Vander Jagt. The couple bought the mansion three years ago, and the 6,000-square-foot house sits on 1.7 acres. “I was the listing agent, and the home was on the market for two and a half weeks before

we purchased it,” Tammy Jo shared. They upload behind-the-scenes footage of the house on Facebook @thevanderjagt and on TikTok @SavingtheVanderJagt.

Tammy Jo is grateful that her career has allowed her to blend many of her passions into something that can make a positive impact on someone else’s life. For new agents in the industry, she recommends that they figure out what motivates them and find ways to incorporate that into their businesses. Most of all, she encourages agents to show compassion toward clients and genuinely take time to help them. “Life isn’t about real estate,” Tammy Jo stated. “Life is about taking care of people.”



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▶▶ agent spotlight

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## A JOURNEY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

**Chris Hughes is not an average real estate agent. With 20 years of experience and a total volume of over \$9 million in sales last year, he has garnered several prestigious awards, including the Coldwell Banker Chairman's Club, Leader of the Year and Top Producer as well as had multiple appearances in the top 300 in Grand Rapids. However, Chris' accomplishments extend far beyond the real estate world.**

Before embarking on his real estate career, Chris worked as a financial advisor. His journey into the real estate industry was not planned but rather a serendipitous turn of events. "It was through a conversation with my father-in-law — who does condominium development — where he asked me to help be a marketing arm," Chris explained. "I said 'yes' and fell in love with helping people and selling real estate. Over the years, I have adopted 'servant leadership' into my mentoring of agents and collegiate team."

Chris' life has been shaped by various influences — from his nomadic childhood, which took him from Virginia to Africa and finally to the Detroit suburbs, to the mentors who have guided him along the way. He credits his father, his father-in-law Jer DeKok, Dr. Ed Dobson, and Dr. Marvin Zuidema as key figures who have influenced his life and career choices.

After graduating with a Bachelor in Arts in Communications from Calvin University, Chris found that his path was defined by his faith, marriage and two sons as well as being a cancer survivor. These life events have not only molded him into the person he is today but also fueled his dedication to helping others.

In his current role at Coldwell Banker - Schmidt, REALTORS®, Chris is passionate about helping people and mentoring agents through servant leadership. While he doesn't work in a team environment, he has a strong support system led by

# CHRIS

# HUGHES



Shari Bethel, his administrative support coordinator (ASC), whom he regards as the best in the business.

For Chris, the most fulfilling aspects of his profession are witnessing the smiles of satisfaction on his clients' faces during the closing process and observing the happiness of his office agents as they achieve success in this remarkable industry.

Like most other agents, Chris has had to learn to adapt to the ever-changing industry. He has weathered market fluctuations from no inventory to excess inventory and shifting interest rates. However, he has always guided his clients through these challenges, ensuring that they make sound decisions in any market climate. Chris firmly believes that being a blessing to his clients is the key to overcoming hurdles.

Chris plans to remain in the real estate market for the long term, because it brings out the best in him. His favorite part of being an agent is when he gets to serve others — whether they are buyers, sellers, or the agents in his office. Sharing his knowledge and experience is not just a job: It's a calling.

When asked to define success, Chris' answer is profoundly altruistic: "Success is defined differently by everyone. Success to me means that I have done and am doing my best to support,



help and mentor all of those around me.”

Outside of his professional life, Chris has a family that includes his wife, Heather, and their sons — Kenzie and Caleb — along with their beloved dog, Murphy James. He also coaches collegiate soccer, which is a passion Chris has pursued for nearly 30 years.

For up-and-coming real estate agents, Chris offers sage advice, rooted in his experience as a servant leader. He emphasizes the importance of being a person others can turn to for help without fear of ridicule or belittlement.

Ultimately, Chris wants to be remembered as a great husband and father who is always there to support his family in their endeavors. In the world of business and collegiate coaching, he aspires to be known as someone who chose to make those around him better through servant leadership.

Chris feels very fortunate that he can juggle full-time real estate, office management and collegiate coaching. He acknowledges the blessings in his life and expresses gratitude to his wife for her trust, friendship and unwavering support. Chris believes that great things have been achieved and will continue to be accomplished, as long as he remains committed to his mission of being a benefit to others through servant leadership.



“  
SUCCESS TO ME MEANS THAT I  
HAVE DONE AND AM DOING  
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# DAN STEFFEE

▶ agent spotlight

Photos by Jacob Harr with harr Creative LLC



**FROM HOME  
RENOVATIONS  
TO REAL ESTATE  
REVELATIONS**



Photo submitted by Dan Steffee

It takes a unique blend of passion and integrity, and an unwavering commitment, to help others achieve their dreams. Dan Steffee with Green Crown Real Estate is a shining example of such a professional. From humble beginnings to a flourishing real estate career, Dan currently has 14 years of experience and a career volume of approximately \$75 million, and is known for his dedication and his innate ability to connect with people.

Before diving into real estate, Dan explored various odd jobs related to property management and home renovations. He also spent four years working on the maintenance of Aquinas College’s campus, gaining invaluable experience along the way. However, it was a chance connection with Katie Karczewski — the family’s real estate agent and the mother of a close friend — that sparked Dan’s interest in real estate. Katie’s small job offers introduced him to the vast potential of the field.

Dan was fortunate to work for 10 years alongside some of the best in the business at Blu House Properties, including Ryan Ogle, Jason Carpenter and Rachael Veldkamp. He even shared an office with Duke Gray, whom Dan affectionately refers to as his “life coach.” The lessons Dan learned from his family, managers at Aquinas College, and the memory of his late brother, Jacob — who embodied kindness and generosity — have defined his path. Jacob’s passing in 2016 left a mark on Dan, motivating him to prioritize being there for his family and friends.

In recent times, Dan’s passion lies in the growth of Green Crown Real Estate. He is eager to introduce new agents to the brokerage’s unique business model and the opportunities it presents. He believes that the real estate industry has something special to offer, and he wants to share it with as many people as possible, helping them achieve their goals.

While Dan doesn’t have a traditional team, he emphasizes the importance of supporting one another in his brokerage. His most fulfilling moments come from helping others reach their goals, particularly first-time homebuyers. Dan firmly believes in Zig Ziglar’s words, “You can have everything you want in life if you help enough people get what they want.” Despite the hard work involved, Dan knows the significance of assisting people achieve their dreams of homeownership.

As an agent, one of Dan’s biggest challenges is maintaining consistency in an increasingly distracting world. To overcome this challenge, he employs strategies such as time-blocking and delegation, and a strict adherence to a schedule.

For Dan, real estate has opened doors that he could have never imagined. His dream is to someday live and work on the lakeshore, becoming the go-to lakeshore agent. It’s a vision he passionately pursues, knowing the breathtaking beauty of the lakeshore and everything Michigan has to offer. His favorite aspect of being an agent is meeting new people, understanding their needs, and making their real estate dreams come true. According to Dan, providing people with a brighter future — all while making sure they invest in themselves and trust him to get the job done — is incredibly rewarding. He believes that success is being passionate about what you do and feeling fulfilled by making a positive impact on those around you.

At the core of Dan’s life is family. His fiancée, Sunny, and their daughter, Alba, are his world. Together, they enjoy hiking, camping, taking walks with their dog, Bella, going to the movies, playing arcade and board games, and dining out. As for Dan, his hobbies include visiting the family cabin in the U.P., golfing, and exploring the outdoors.

Dan is committed to giving back to his community and is passionate about supporting underprivileged families, veterans, children and children’s literacy.

“ YOU CAN HAVE EVERYTHING YOU WANT IN LIFE IF YOU HELP ENOUGH PEOPLE GET WHAT THEY WANT. ”



Dan advises new agents to surround themselves with mentors who genuinely want to see them succeed. The keys to success are to learn from those who excel in the field and to constantly improve. Dan's strengths lie in caring for his clients' best interests, providing essential information, and working tirelessly to ensure a win-win for all parties involved.

Dan's legacy is one of treating people well, excelling in his profession, and being a supportive family member, friend and co-worker. He hopes to be remembered as "one of the good ones" who went out of his way to help those in need. Dan wants people to see his success as a model that can be duplicated through hard work and the right attitude.

Dan expresses his gratitude to those who believed in him when he didn't believe in himself, and he is especially appreciative of his family. According to Dan, people are the sum of those whom they surround themselves with, and he counts himself fortunate to be surrounded by some of the best. His journey in real estate is not just about transactions and numbers: It's about making a positive impact on people's lives and striving to always do the right thing for his clients.

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▶ event recap

# THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING OUR MARCH MIXER!

Our March Mixer kicked off at Founders Brewing Company in downtown Grand Rapids, where top real estate agents and our Preferred Partners joined together to have some fun mixing and mingling in the beautiful Centennial Room of Founders Brewing Company. Attendees enjoyed having food and drinks as well as making connections with colleagues across the real estate industry. Thank you to our partners, without whom these events and this publication would not be possible!

“I loved what you had for food and the venue! It was so fun to have the outdoors open,” Joni McArthur from eXp Realty shared. “I always

so appreciate getting together with my fellow agents. We don’t get this opportunity very often, so when we do, I enjoy it!”

“[I enjoy] the opportunity to socialize with our peers, support partners, and sponsors. The venue was excellent! Very well-planned and executed,” said David Van Dam from Five Star Real Estate.

Special thanks to our Host — Founders Brewing Company — for hosting this event and to our Beverage Sponsor — Summit Point Roofing — for providing our guests with their first round of drinks! We’d also like to thank our Support Sponsors — BioSafe Environment and Agent Concierge

Services — for helping to make this event possible! Thank you to Jacob Harr with harr Creative LLC and to Brian McDonald with Brian McDonald Photography for capturing photos and video.

We want to thank Emmy Jandernoa and Lauren Marcinek for checking in guests as well as assisting with event set-up.

**If you haven’t yet, please fill out our post-event survey at [rpeventsurvey.com](http://rpeventsurvey.com)**

We are so grateful to all of you who joined us, and we look forward to making more memories with you at our next event!



BRIAN MCDONALD  
PHOTOGRAPHY





Interested in sponsoring a future event? Reach out to [kevin.jurvis@n2co.com](mailto:kevin.jurvis@n2co.com)

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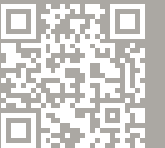
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Here's what the top 300 agents in GRAND RAPIDS sold

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