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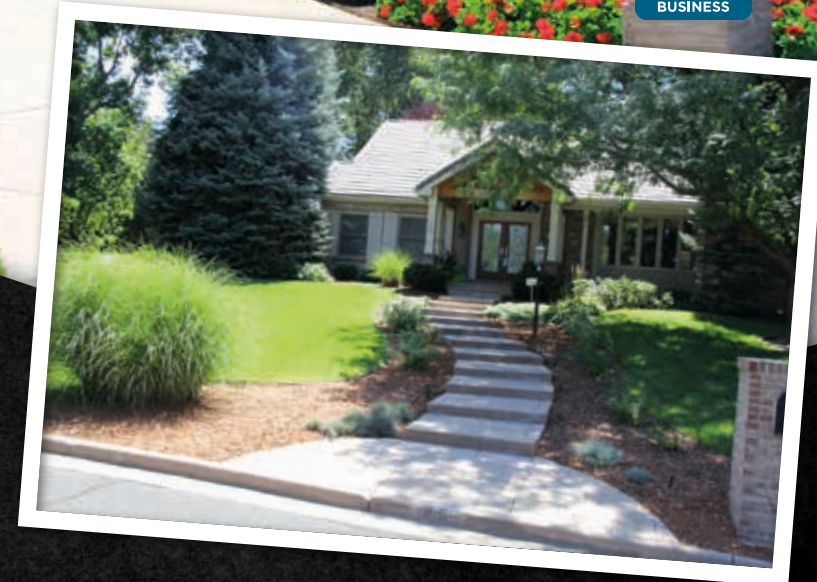
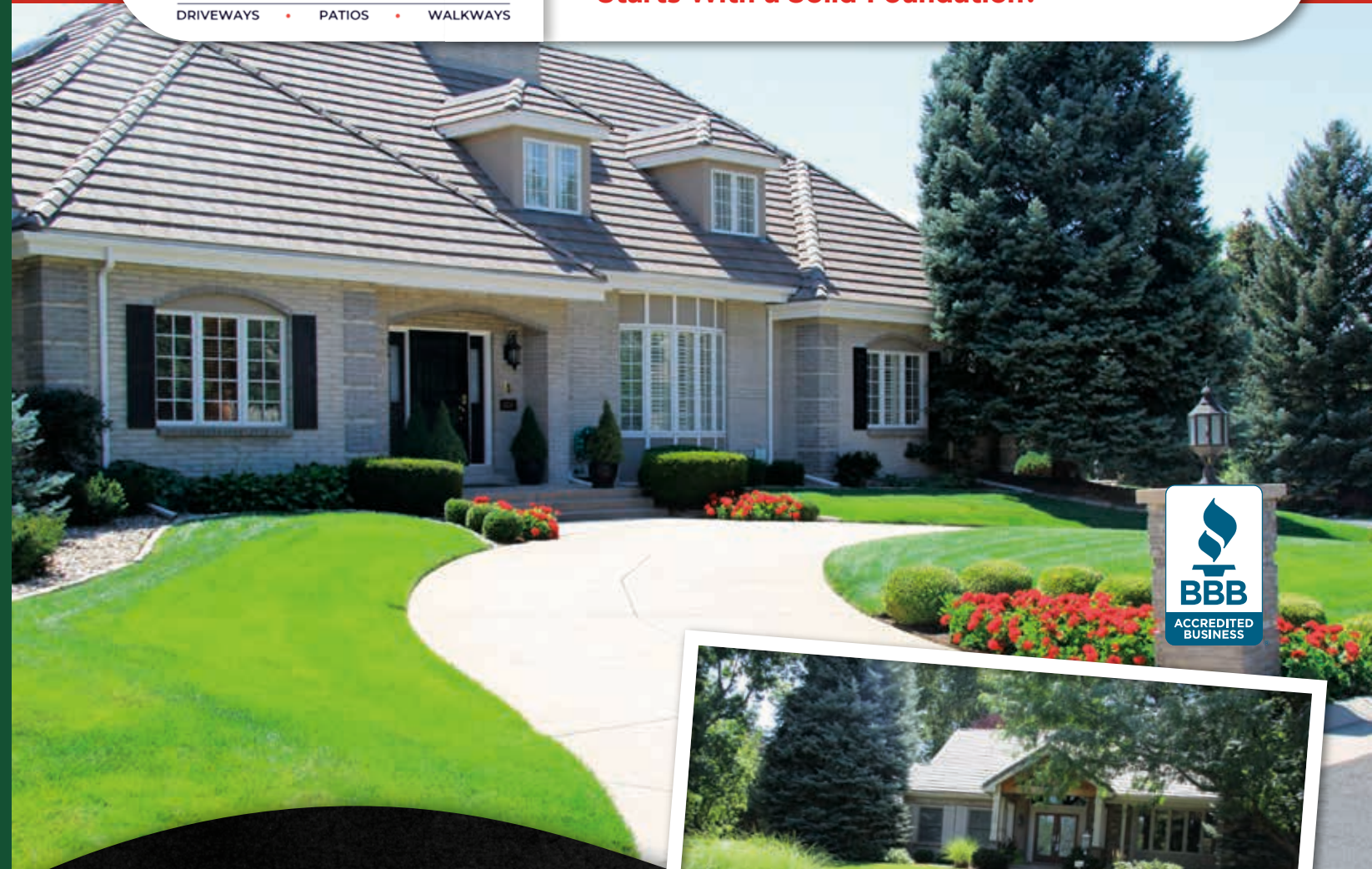
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COVER
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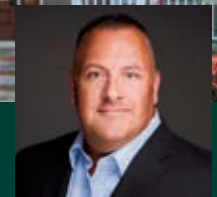
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FAQ

ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE



BY STACEY PENROD, OWNER/PUBLISHER



If you just made the 2025 Top-Producing Agents in Greater Omaha and are new to our publication, you may be wondering what it's all about. "FAQs About This Magazine" answers the most commonly asked questions around the country regarding the Real Producers platform. My door is always open to discuss anything regarding this community — this publication is 100 percent designed to be your voice and to connect, elevate the industry, and inspire!

Q: WHO RECEIVES THIS MAGAZINE?

A: The top 10 percent of agents in Omaha. We pulled the MLS numbers (by volume) from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, in Greater Omaha and, based on the year's sales performance, our new 2025 distribution list was born. This magazine is free exclusively to the top agents in the area each year. This year, the minimum production level for our group was \$7 million, based on data reported to MLS.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BEING FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: It's really simple — every feature you see has been chosen based on production numbers and/or nomination. You can nominate other REALTORS®, affiliates, brokers, owners, or even yourself! Office leaders can also nominate Realtors. We will consider anyone brought to our attention. Because we don't know everyone's story, we need your help to learn about them.

A nomination currently looks like this: You email us at stacey.penrod@n2co.com with the subject line, "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)," and explain why you are nominating them to be featured. It could be they have an amazing story that needs to be told — perhaps they overcame extreme obstacles, they are an exceptional leader, have the best customer service, or they give back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with

us to ensure it's a good fit. If it all works out, we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and for our photographer to schedule a photo shoot.

Q: WHAT DOES IT COST A REALTOR®/TEAM TO BE FEATURED?

A: Zero, zilch, zippo, nada, nil. It costs nothing, my friends, so nominate away! We are not a pay-to-play model. We share real stories of Real Producers.

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS?

A: Anyone listed as a "Preferred Partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our quarterly events, and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval," in a sense. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best Realtors in the area but the best affiliates, as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A PREFERRED PARTNER?

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WELCOME, NEW 2025 TOP AGENTS!

First and foremost, welcome to all of Greater Omaha's 2025 top agents! Whether you've been part of our *Omaha Real Producers* community from the beginning or are joining us for the first time after achieving a remarkable 2024, we're thrilled to have you here. Your hard work and dedication have earned you a spot among the best of the best — congratulations!

Thanks to our incredible Real Producers and Preferred Partners, this community continues to grow and thrive. We're proud of this publication and even more excited about the new agents who will now receive it and gain access to our exclusive events throughout the year.

In this issue, we're delighted to feature our cover story on Mark Gorup of Better Homes and Gardens The Good Life Group. You'll also find inspiring spotlights on Jennifer Waxberg and Top Priority Real Estate Group, Rising Star Alex Speer, and Preferred Partner Francisco Serrano with Charter West Bank. Plus, don't miss our uplifting



"Giving Back" story on Greg Kraemer and Sleeping in Heavenly Peace, and a special highlight on our very own Nikki Headen ringing the opening bell at Nasdaq!

To all of our 2025 Real Producers — both new and returning — congratulations again! We look forward to bringing you valuable content and memorable networking events throughout the year. Keep an eye out for your exclusive invitations!

If you have ideas for feature stories, event locations, or

anything else related to our community, I'd love to hear from you.

Finally, a heartfelt thank-you to our Preferred Partners—the dedicated industry affiliates who make this magazine and our events possible. Your expertise and support help strengthen this incredible community, and we truly appreciate you!

Warm regards,

Stacey Penrod
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ELECTRICAL CODES SPARK DEBATE

Written by
Melissa McElroy

Electrical Code Ordinances don't typically generate electrifying debates, unless the proposed ordinance would unnecessarily drive up the cost of a new home. Local home builders estimated the proposal would cost \$1,300. This extra cost sparked pushback from leaders in the real estate community who are concerned with the housing affordability crisis.

According to a study conducted by UNO and commissioned by the Welcome Home Coalition, government regulations now make up roughly one-third of new housing costs. Every time the cost of a new home construction increases, more individuals are priced out of the market.

The Omaha City Council initially passed the electrical code ordinance, which included updated national and state codes, in November by a 4-3 vote; Mayor Stothert later vetoed it.

Stothert stated in a letter sent to the City Council that the state found a reasonable balance of safety and affordability for electrical work in a single-family home. She advocated for the city to adopt ordinances comparable to the state's, adding that unnecessary, mandatory regulations would add unjustified costs that wouldn't make homes safer. She believes that preventing unnecessary regulatory costs keeps housing affordable and creates a more enticing environment for builders and developers to build in Omaha. The Council tried to override the Mayor's veto but fell short with only three votes from Council members Danny Begley, Pete Festersen, and Ron Hug.

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® has supported the Welcome Home Coalition since its inception. OABR representative Joe Gehrki said that one of the main objectives of the nonprofit coalition is to help voice concerns about how unnecessary regulation substantially increases housing costs. The Welcome Home Coalition consists of individuals, businesses, and organizations that advocate proactively to make meaningful changes to public policy to spur housing affordability in Nebraska. One key component of that objective is educating policymakers and local citizens about how seemingly small costs add up.

Gehrki said, "Any time you hear an elected official say, 'It'll only cost an additional \$1,000,' the hair on the back of your neck should stand up." He explained that every time an additional governmental cost is tacked onto a new home, the increasingly elusive American dream of homeownership becomes even more elusive. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, for every \$1,000 price increase of a home in the Omaha metro, 435 households are priced out of the market.

Gehrki has also worked on behalf of the National Association of REALTORS® as a Federal Political Coordinator with former Congressman Lee Terry, former Senator Ben Sasse, and current Senator Pete Ricketts. He is a firm believer in sharing the real estate industry's viewpoints with the elected officials who determine policies and voice any concerns about any legislation that could be detrimental to the housing market.

OABR Governmental Affairs Director and Welcome Home Coalition advocate Perre Neilan spoke out against this ordinance before the city council and will continue to speak out against unnecessary regulations that needlessly spike housing costs, in part of an ongoing battle to keep housing more affordable.



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2024 By the Numbers

HERE'S WHAT OMAHA'S TOP AGENTS SOLD...

\$3.7 Billion
Sales Volume

\$12.3 Million
Average Sales Volume Per Agent

4,860
LISTING SIDE TRANSACTIONS

9,305
Total Transactions

31
Average Transactions Per Agent

4,445
BUYING SIDE TRANSACTIONS

Information is based on residential sales in 2024 in Greater Omaha by the top 10% of agents by sales volume.

MARK GORUP

ALWAYS DRUMMING UP BUSINESS

BY JESS WELLAR

Mark Gorup has always been his own boss. From starting his own landscaping business in high school to owning a personal training and nutrition store, he's built a life fueled by his entrepreneurial spirit.

Today, Mark is thriving as one of Omaha's top REALTORS® at Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, leveraging his people skills and business expertise to excel in an industry where making connections is essential.

"I love building relationships," Mark begins. "This industry is about trust, and I pride myself on making my clients feel comfortable and informed. My goal is to earn that trust quickly, whether it's during a first phone call or while walking through a home together."

Entrepreneurial Spirit

After realizing he was the workhorse of his cousin's lawn business, Mark went out on his own during his senior year of high school and eventually purchased his cousin's enterprise, growing the business steadily through college before selling it. He then transitioned into personal training, which led to opening his own retail nutrition store, a local franchise he operated for five years.

"I've been fortunate that I've never had a corporate-type job," Mark reflects. "I've always found a way to work for myself and build something of my own."

By 2015, as the world of retail nutrition shifted with the rise of Amazon, Mark decided it was time for a big change. With his long-standing interest in real estate, a timely conversation with one of his customers, Dustin Hill — a



Photo by Natalie Jensen

Photo by
Natalie
Jensen

“I WANT MY CLIENTS TO LIKE WHAT THEY’RE BUYING AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE PROCESS. I EXPLAIN THINGS IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE TO THEM SO THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE AND CONFIDENT IN THEIR DECISIONS.”



Photo by Natalie Jensen



Mark and Julie Gorup with their children, Maddox, Maisy, and Markus (Photo by Natalie Jensen)

fellow Realtor and local police officer — convinced Mark to take the leap after they weighed the pros and cons together.

The first six months weren’t easy — Mark only sold one house — but he soon found his stride after joining a team and racked up 18 closings in short order. By 2022, he transitioned to working as a solo agent. Now, with nearly a decade in the business, he’s built a thriving real estate career, selling nearly \$15 million last year alone while being honored as a consistent Platinum Award winner at BHGRE.

Building Trust

Mark attributes much of his success to his ability to quickly gain trust and make people feel at ease. “I’m not a pushy type of person,” he notes. “I want my clients to like what they’re buying and feel good about the process. I explain things in a way that makes sense to them so they feel comfortable and confident in their decisions.”

He’s also known for his strong communication skills and knack for nurturing relationships. “I’m not flashy or salesy. I’m just myself, and I think that’s why clients trust me,” Mark shares. “I’ve always been able to connect

with people naturally, and that’s been a huge part of my success.”

Mark’s faith also plays a vital role in his life and business.

“My beliefs allow me to put my head on my pillow with a clear conscience every night,” he explains. “Faith guides me to do the right thing, which is so important in this industry where reputation is everything — not just with clients but with other agents too. It feels good to know other agents want to work with me because of my integrity.”

Given his expertise, Mark’s best advice for up-and-coming agents is something he wishes he had done himself when he first started out: “Put systems in place from the beginning. I wish I had better systems back then and feel I could be a lot further ahead if I did,” he admits.

“I do mentorship in the brokerage now, and I stress all the time to new agents, you have to have a follow-up system in place that is automated so you can be set up to hit the ground running when business picks up.”

Family First

From running businesses to coaching his kids’ games, Mark Gorup exemplifies

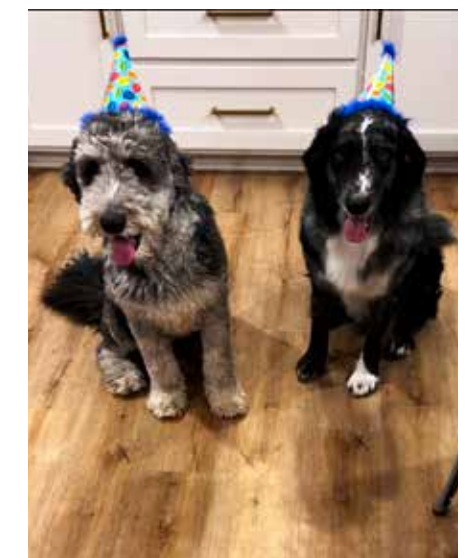
what it means to work hard, stay true to your values, and keep family at the heart of it all. Married to his high school sweetheart, Julie, since 2008, the two are proud parents to Markus (15), Maddox (12), and Maisy (11).

Mark is actively involved in his children’s sports, coaching Maddox’s basketball team since kindergarten and spending weekends at baseball tournaments, softball games, and practices. “My kids’ sports are such a big part of our lives,” Mark shares. “We travel together as a family to watch them compete, and it’s been an amazing way to create memories and stay close.”

Mark also finds joy in the simpler moments, like nightly walks with Julie and their two Aussiedoodles, Mookie and Jett. “We’re a tight-knit family,” he smiles. “We love traveling to places like Mexico and Arizona, but it’s the day-to-day moments that matter most.”

Mark credits much of his ability to juggle work and family life to his supportive brokerage. “I have an amazing broker who never fails to talk me off the ledge when I’m hard on myself. He reminds me I have a good work–life balance and that it’s important to me to be present for my family while still giving 100 percent to my clients.”

As Mark looks ahead, his focus remains on maintaining that essential balance



The Gorup family’s Aussiedoodles, Mookie and Jett.

while continuing to grow his business and grow his rental property portfolio to create financial freedom for his loved ones.

“I’m not a huge goal-setter with production, but I aim to sell 40 to 50 homes a year without getting complacent,” he concludes. “At the end of the day, though, I just want my wife and kids to be proud of me. That’s how I define success.”

FUN FACT

Mark is the published author of two children’s books on health and nutrition; he wrote both books after the birth of his first child.



Top producer Mark Gorup is a REALTOR® with Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate. (Photo by Natalie Jensen)



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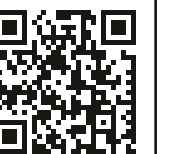
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Family Priorities at Their Finest

BY JESS WELLAR
PHOTO BY NATALIE JENSEN



TOP PRIORITY REAL ESTATE GROUP

“Real estate has always been about helping people achieve their dreams,” shares Jennifer Waxberg, team lead of Top Priority Real Estate Group at Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate | The Good Life Group in Omaha.

The Waxbergs — Jennifer, her husband, Josh, and their son, Ben — are quickly gathering steam in both the Omaha and Lincoln markets by ensuring their clients remain top priority. Their tight-knit group, whose makeup shifted dramatically last year, is embracing the new look, with each member bringing their unique talents to the closing table.

Big Changes

Jennifer started Top Priority Real Estate Group in 2016, initially working with a small group of talented agents. The team changed significantly in 2024, when her son Ben joined after completing his real estate license and graduating from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln with a

Bachelor of Arts degree with emphasis in jazz performance and a minor in sound technology.

“I’m so excited to have my family working together,” Jennifer shares with a smile. Now, their team is aiming to surpass \$20 million in sales this year while strengthening their reputation as top producers at their brokerage.

Perfect Blend of Talents

The Waxbergs’ collective skills set them apart as a full-service powerhouse in the Omaha market. Jennifer leads the charge as the team’s boots-on-the-ground agent, handling most of the day-to-day interactions with clients. Her husband, Josh, who earned his real estate license in 2018 and contractor’s license shortly thereafter, brings decades of hands-on expertise to the table to assist with everything from showing homes to inspection repairs and prepping homes for the market.

“Josh is the ultimate jack of all trades,” Jennifer beams. “He even manages our personal rental properties and Airbnb listing.”

As the youngest member of the team, Ben has quickly found his niche. Based in Lincoln, he specializes in helping relocation clients and first-time homebuyers — all while nurturing his love for music.

“Ben has been playing trumpet and drums for years and even used to perform at our client appreciation events,” Jennifer shares. “Now, he’s hosting those same events as part of our team, so we had to hire a different band last year.”

Working as a family has its perks, but Jennifer admits that keeping business and personal life separate can be a challenge as they frequently talk shop at home while “being mindful of not



Newly licensed as a REALTOR®, Ben Waxberg is following in the footsteps of his mother, Jennifer Waxberg. (Photo by Natalie Jensen)

“WE WANT OUR CLIENTS TO FEEL VALUED, SUPPORTED, AND CONFIDENT IN EVERY DECISION THEY MAKE.”



Jennifer Waxberg founded Top Priority Real Estate Group in 2016. (Photo by Natalie Jensen)

letting it take over.” However, their close bond as a family enhances the team’s collaborative approach while creating a welcoming culture that prioritizes clients’ needs above all else.

“We truly see our clients as ‘Top Priority’ — we put them first, every single time,” Jennifer emphasizes. “With our combined expertise in real estate, investing, property management, and renovations, we’re able to offer a level of service that goes far beyond just buying or selling a home.”

Their values extend to the relationships they build with clients, many of whom stay connected with the Waxbergs for years. “It’s about creating connections that last a lifetime,” Jennifer emphasizes. “We want our clients to feel valued, supported, and confident in every decision they make.”

Family Legacy in the Making

Jennifer’s path to real estate was fueled by a powerful desire for flexibility, independence, and the ability to shape her own future. After years of working as a live-in nanny and then in the restaurant industry and a stint in property management, she obtained her



Jennifer’s team earned the prestigious Platinum Award at their brokerage in 2021.



Ben Waxberg was licensed in 2024 and joined his mother’s team at Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate. (Photo by Natalie Jensen)

license in 2014 and never looked back — a step she describes as life-changing.

Her drive was not only personal but deeply inspired by mentors like Fred Tichauer, who instilled in her the value of investing in yourself, achieving financial freedom, and building generational wealth. Jennifer has since become a role model for her son.

“Watching Ben grow as a second-generation REALTOR® is an exciting chapter,” Jennifer says proudly. “We’re working together to build on our legacy and pave the way for financial freedom, not just for our family but for every client we work with.”

Homecoming

Although the Waxbergs met in Arizona, Jennifer was born and raised in Omaha. She returned home in 2011 to support her mom, who was diagnosed with cancer, and decided to stay after her family settled in and loved the area.



A dedicated musician, Ben has played the trumpet for years and previously performed at the team’s client appreciation events.



Josh and Jennifer Waxberg met in Arizona before making their way back to Jennifer's hometown of Omaha.

“Ben was in fourth grade when we moved to Omaha,” Jennifer recalls. “He had only known life in the desert up until then, so the transition was a refreshing change for all of us. Experiencing his first snowy winter, complete with sledding adventures and making new friends, was such a joy for him.”

Off the clock, the Waxbergs enjoy spending time outdoors, boating, and traveling to music festivals, as well as continuing to build their own investment portfolio. Their 14-year-old Lab, Bella, and rescue pup, Tiny, often join them on their boating adventures.

Josh, a culinary school graduate and glass-blowing enthusiast, keeps everyone well-fed at home with his delicious creations — a skill that adds an extra layer of hospitality to the team's client events.

Looking Ahead

For the Waxbergs, 2025 is all about embracing their time together and continuing to deliver top-notch service with the family values of integrity and collaboration. Jen is also excited to continue helping families achieve financial freedom through real estate by investing and creating generational wealth, something she personally lives and breathes with her husband.

“The positive impact we create in the lives of others is what drives us,” she concludes. “Whether it's guiding first-time buyers or helping homeowners discover ways to use their equity, the reward is in seeing their goals come to life.”



Top Priority Real Estate Group now includes Jennifer and Josh's son, Ben.

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BY JESS WELLAR
PHOTOS BY KALEB DUNCAN



At 13 years old, Francisco Serrano found himself navigating challenges far beyond his maturity level — translating his parents’ divorce proceedings and choosing where he, his sister, and his brother would live.

Raised in Omaha during a time when Spanish-speaking professionals were harder to come by, Francisco’s upbringing was far from easy. By 15, he was couch-surfing with friends until he could legally rent an apartment at 18. Yet, even in those difficult times, Francisco discovered a deep inner strength and, consequently, his motivation to help others in similar situations.

“At 16, I read an Anthony Robbins book that changed my life. I realized everything that happened in my past doesn’t matter; I have to focus on the present moment,” Francisco recalls.

That pivotal mindset shift, combined with his own path to homeownership at age 20, laid the foundation for his fruitful career. With over 23 years of experience in the mortgage industry, today Francisco serves as a senior mortgage loan advisor with Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, where his passion for empowering others continues to motivate him.

“This career found me because of where I come from, but it’s also something bigger. The look of relief I see on a child’s face because they hear me speaking in their language while I’m translating what’s going on without relying on them — that’s really what drives me,” he emphasizes.

A Career Built on Solutions

After graduating from high school, Francisco began selling Spanish radio ads, a job that would eventually open the door of opportunity into the mortgage industry.

“My number one client was a small mortgage lender couple. When their contract came up for renewal, they offered me a place to join them,” Francisco acknowledges gratefully. “I fell in love with the business. Thank goodness I took that step!”

Since 2001, Francisco has worked tirelessly to help families navigate the home loan financing process. His approach is simple yet highly effective: “I am a solution-oriented person. There is always a way,” he affirms. His focus on finding creative solutions, no matter the challenge, has earned him the trust of countless clients and business partner referrals over the years.

Now at Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation — one of the nation’s leading retail lenders with over 6,000 employees and 500-plus branches — Francisco is equipped with a wealth of resources to better serve his clients.

“Fairway has so many more products to offer people than most lenders,” he shares. “Whenever you think you don’t have a loan option for a client, double-check with us first.”

The decision to join Fairway recently was solidified by the company’s culture of efficiency and personal connection.

“Even though it’s a big company, it feels like a small company at its core. When I finished my interview, for example, I received a phone call from the owner of Fairway within a few hours of chatting with my current boss. That kind of speed and care just blew me away,” he adds.

The Difference

In an industry that can be impersonal, Francisco stands out for his emphasis on integrity, communication, and accessibility. He notes his dedication stems from a profound understanding of the high stakes involved.

“I’m a loan officer that will text or email at all hours of the night to make sure a deal gets put together. I know it’s a matter of being available because I have to be,” he states. “To be the best at what you do, you have to give everything you have.”

As a first-time homebuyer specialist, Francisco’s personal story fuels his passion for helping others achieve what once





seemed impossible. “As a teenager who was homeless, that drive to get out of that situation has molded the person I am today,” he points out.

He’s also quick to emphasize the importance of doing things the right way: “I feel very strongly that the reason I’ve had a career as long as I have is if you do things the right way, people will keep referring you to others for having a solution-based mindset.”

For Francisco, the most fulfilling part of his work is witnessing the joy of homeownership. “The look on someone’s face when we close on their home — it is a magical feeling,” he smiles. But his impact doesn’t stop there. Francisco is deeply committed to giving back to his community, with a special focus on empowering the next generation.

“While Fairway is big on giving back, the Boys Club of Omaha is especially near and dear to me,” he shares. Recognizing the lack of young professionals entering the mortgage industry, Francisco also takes every opportunity to speak with high school students to encourage them to consider the field.

“If you have an entrepreneurial spirit, you can have a phenomenal career in this industry,” he offers.

Off the Clock

When he’s not helping clients, Francisco cherishes time with his wife, Kate, and their blended family of eight children, two grandchildren, and their dog.

Now with Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, Francisco Serrano brings over 23 years of experience in the mortgage industry.



“We’re a busy bunch,” he laughs. “The oldest six kids are out of the house now, although our 14-year-old and 8-year-old keep us running with sports activities and long weekend trips. But I love family time at home — I’m a homebody at heart.”

As Francisco embraces the next chapter of his career with Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, his vision remains firm: to serve his clients and community to the best of his ability while being there for his top priority — family.

“I am fortunate enough to be in the kind of business that has a tangible benefit. The feeling of someone who has worked hard to get where they are and seeing the fruits of their labor pay off is inspiring to me,” he concludes.

For personalized mortgage solutions and trusted advice, reach out to Francisco Serrano at 402-208-0248 or visit www.fairway.com/branch/omaha-ne-11422-68154-805.







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ALEX SPEER

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BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY NATALIE JENSEN



One of the most powerful qualities a person can have is a relentless drive — not just for personal success, but a willingness to create success for others along the way. That spirit defines Alex Speer, whose dedication and energy continue to inspire those around him. As a REALTOR® with Meraki Real Estate Group, Alex is truly invested in creating wins for his clients.

Alex's journey into the world of real estate began long before he officially became a Realtor. It started in high school when he first fell in love with the idea of real estate investing. That initial passion for real estate would guide him on a unique path, one that blended his entrepreneurial spirit with a deep desire to help others.

From Trades to Real Estate

At just 19 years old, Alex got his real estate license, but he wasn't jumping into the industry full-time just yet. He started his career working in the trades, pursuing a path toward becoming an electrician's apprentice. Though real estate had always been in the back of his mind, Alex kept one foot in the trades, working as a server to support himself while working toward his ultimate goal of becoming a full-time real estate professional. For three years, he balanced serving with studying for his real estate license, an experience that taught him the value of hard work and persistence.

It wasn't until 2023 that Alex decided to pursue real estate more seriously. He sold nine homes from August to December 2023, and by 2024, he had closed 20 homes with over \$5 million in sales volume. "I realized it was time to fully commit," Alex recalls. "Once I got that momentum, I just had to keep going. Real estate isn't a career where you can stand still — you have to push yourself to grow every day."

Pushing Through Fear and Finding Success

One of the biggest challenges Alex faced early on was overcoming his own fears. "I was terrified of rejection, and I didn't

know how to present myself," he admits. "But I decided to push through it. I was hitting my fears head-on." Social media became one of his most powerful tools for overcoming this fear. Alex leaned into posting often, sharing his journey and real estate tips with his followers. He also prayed about what steps to take next, asking for guidance on how to move forward in the industry.

"I realized I didn't need to be salesy or pushy," Alex explains. "I just needed to be genuine. I focused on building relationships and connecting people

with the resources they needed." His approach of being a resource, rather than simply making a sale, resonated with his clients. He was willing to go the extra mile, even showing clients 15 homes if necessary, simply to help them find the right fit. "It's not about pushing someone into a home," he says. "It's about helping them find the right place for their lives."

Building Meaningful Connections

For Alex, the best part of real estate is the connections he makes with people. "That's what I love most about this job:





“
Every day, I try to meet more people, build my sphere of influence, and just be a helpful resource.

His drive to succeed in real estate stems from a deep-rooted need to make a difference. “There’s nothing better than being able to help someone,” Alex reflects. “When I hand over the keys to a family’s new home and I see the joy on their faces, that’s the real reward.”

Life Outside of Real Estate

When Alex isn’t working on real estate deals, he enjoys spending time with his fiancée, Marah, and their two dogs, Hughie and Mona. The couple is set to marry in July, and Alex couldn’t be more excited about this next chapter in his life. Their relationship began years ago when Marah’s mother, who was Alex’s nurse practitioner, invited him to a Crohn’s disease camp. Alex, who also lives with Crohn’s, took her advice to

Rising Star Alex Speer is a REALTOR® with Meraki Real Estate Group.

building relationships,” he says. “Every day, I try to meet more people, build my sphere of influence, and just be a helpful resource. I’m not just selling homes; I’m connecting with people on a deeper level.” This connection-driven approach has helped Alex build a loyal clientele, many of whom return to him for their next real estate needs.

“I really believe in the power of relationships,” he adds. “It’s not about making a sale; it’s about helping someone, whether it’s giving them

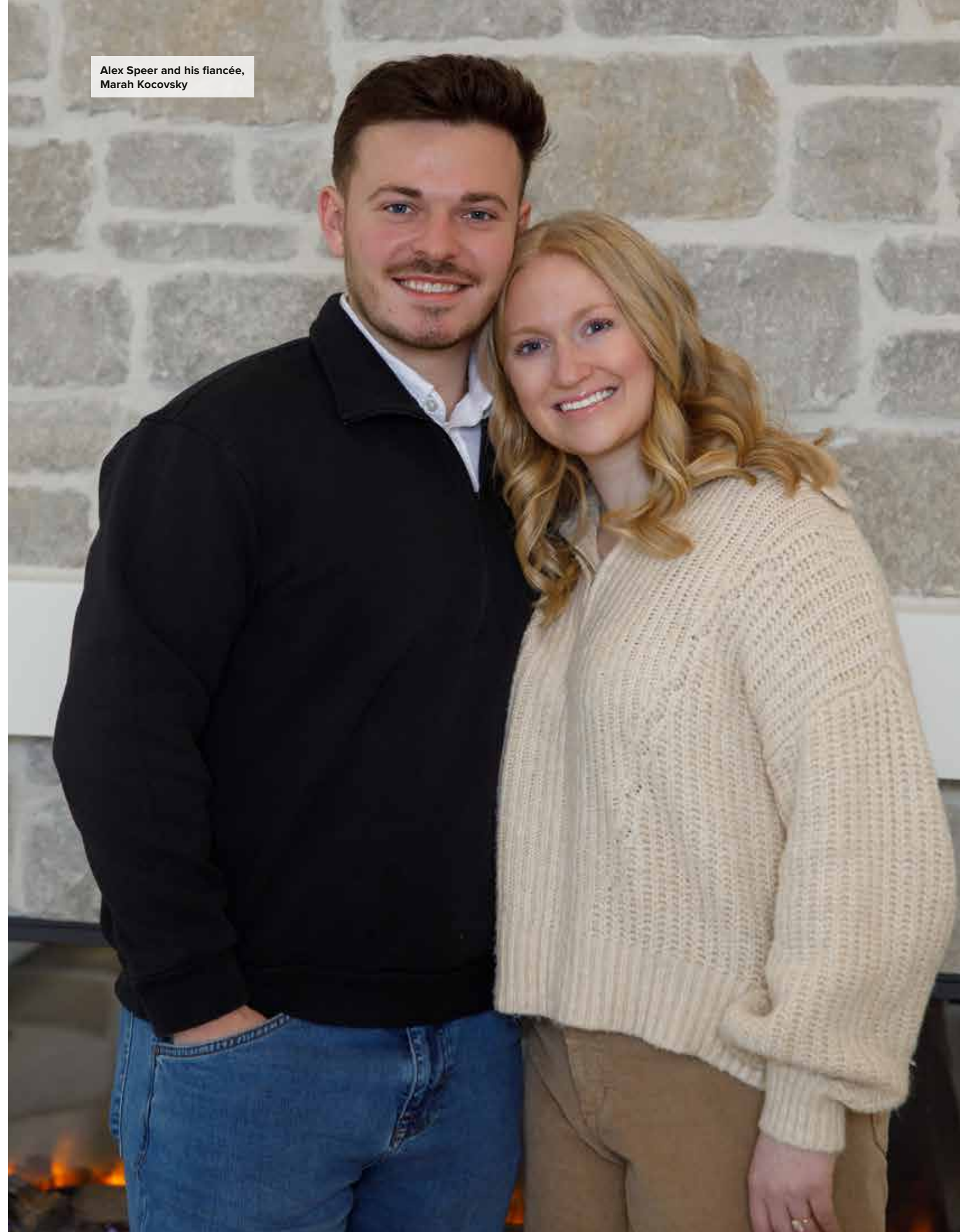
advice, answering questions, or just being there when they need help.”

An Entrepreneur at Heart

Alex’s entrepreneurial spirit runs deep. Growing up, he always had an interest in business and building things from the ground up. Real estate, for him, felt like the perfect opportunity to combine his passion for entrepreneurship with his desire to help others. “I’ve always been someone who wants to create value,” Alex says. “Whether it’s through real estate or something else, I want to bring something meaningful to the table.”



Alex Speer and his fiancée, Marah Kocovsky





Alex Speer and his fiancée Marah are set to marry in July 2025.

heart, and the two grew close over their shared experiences.

Marah's mother, who had jokingly told Alex to stay away from her daughter, now laughs about the irony. "We've been inseparable ever since," Alex says with a smile.

In addition to supporting one another in their personal lives, Alex and Marah are also active supporters of the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation. "The foundation has been amazing in providing support to those with Crohn's disease," Alex says. "It's helped both Marah and me tremendously, and we love giving back to the community."

Alex also enjoys working out, reading motivational and self-help books, and going on walks with Marah. They are both avid movie lovers and enjoy relaxing together in their downtime.

Advice for Aspiring REALTORS®
For anyone starting in real estate, Alex offers this advice: "Don't get distracted by all the shiny options. Hone in on one thing, perfect it, and stay focused." Alex emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong connections with clients and reaching out regularly to stay top-of-mind. "It's all about building long-term relationships," he explains. "The sales will follow if you focus on helping people."

A Bright Future Ahead

Alex's passion for real estate and his commitment to serving his community have made him a standout agent in Omaha. He has deep roots in the area, having lived in the city since he was in fourth grade, and he's excited to continue building his career in a place he loves. "I know this community so well, and I love being able to serve the people here," he says.

As Alex looks ahead, he's focused on continuing to grow his business, build meaningful relationships, and help as many people as possible find the perfect home — doing it all with a deep investment in creating wins for others along the way.



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SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE

Omaha Chapter Brings Comfort to Children

BY DAVE DANIELSON

In Omaha, an ongoing mission is aimed at giving every child a safe, comfortable place to sleep. Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP), a nationwide nonprofit organization, is making a tangible difference in the lives of local families, providing brand-new beds to children who otherwise would sleep on the floor. At the heart of this effort is a dedicated group of volunteers in Omaha who work tirelessly to make sure no child in the community is without a bed.

A National Mission, a Local Chapter
Sleep in Heavenly Peace began in 2012 in Idaho, founded by Luke Mickelson. The mission was simple: “No kid sleeps on the floor in our town.” This resonated with people across the country, and soon, chapters began springing up in communities everywhere. The Omaha chapter was founded in 2018 by a group of friends from church, and since then, it has grown into a powerful force in the community.

Greg Kraemer, a local REALTOR® with NP Dodge, has been an instrumental figure in helping organize efforts within



The Omaha chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace has a core team of 20 to 25 members and enlists the help of thousands of volunteers.



Greg Kraemer, a REALTOR® with NP Dodge, is actively involved with the Omaha chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace.

Omaha, but he’s quick to point out that the story isn’t about him — it’s about the impact the organization is making for local children. “It’s a group effort, and we’re just doing our part,” Greg says. “When you see a child’s face light up with joy and relief when they receive a bed, that’s what keeps us going.”

The Omaha chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace serves a vast area, covering 49 zip codes and a population of 750,000 people. When the chapter started, it was estimated that approximately 14,000 children were in need of a bed in the community. Though the organization has made great strides since then, the need continues to grow. “As the population increases, so does the demand for beds,” Greg explains. “Right now, we have 285 kids on the waiting list, and only 98 beds in stock. We’re working hard to keep up.”

Building Beds, Building Community
Sleep in Heavenly Peace isn’t just about delivering beds — it’s about community. The Omaha chapter relies on a dedicated core group of 25 individuals, and in 2024, nearly 2,000 volunteers helped them assemble and deliver beds. The organization partners with local businesses and groups, including those in the real estate and insurance industries, to host private and public build days. These build days often

attract groups of employees or volunteers from local companies, who come together to assemble as many as 150 beds in a single day.

“We’ve had a great response from the community,” Greg shares. “Our real estate community has been especially supportive, with agents like Bill Black from NP Dodge and Skylar Lybarger from Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate lending their time and efforts. We have people from all walks of life who come out to help, and we’re always looking for new volunteers to join us.”

These bed builds are an integral part of the process. Volunteers spend hours measuring, cutting, and assembling bed frames, which are then delivered to families in need. Once the beds are assembled, the team delivers them right to the homes of children in need, setting them up and making sure the family has everything they need.

“Most of the time, people are just thrilled to get the beds,” Greg says. “It’s so rewarding to be able to help, and it’s especially powerful when you see the kids’ reactions. You can tell that something as simple as a bed can make a huge difference in their lives.”

Making It Simple: A Bed for Every Child

One of the unique aspects of Sleep in Heavenly Peace is the way they

streamline the process for families. They’ve made it easy for parents and guardians to apply for a bed through their website. There’s a simple online application where families can fill out their information and answer a few qualifying questions. If beds are available, a delivery date is set, and SHP volunteers bring the bed to the family’s home.

“We keep it simple so we can help as many families as possible,” Greg says. “Word of mouth has been huge for us. Families who’ve received beds spread the word to others who are in need. And social media has really helped us get the message out to people who might not have known we exist.”

While the process is easy for families, there’s still a significant amount of work that goes into ensuring there are enough beds to go around. In addition to volunteer efforts, the chapter relies on donations of both financial support and bedding materials. Donations of new sheets, blankets, and pillows are always appreciated, as they are given to families along with the beds to ensure a complete, comfortable sleeping environment.

A Powerful Mission and Growing Needs

Though the Omaha chapter has made great strides, the need for beds continues to grow. The team is working



Greg Kraemer (left) with his wife, Crissy, and Luke Mickelson (right), founder of Sleep in Heavenly Peace.



Chapter Presidents Dustin and Kristen Fulton (left) and Roger and Jenni Riffel (right) played a key role in launching the Omaha chapter of SHP in 2018.



The Omaha chapter of SHP's inaugural bunk-bed build.



diligently to keep up with the demand, but there's always more to be done. As of now, the chapter is actively working to fill the waiting list and ensure that children across the Omaha area have the beds they deserve.

"We're always looking for more volunteers and donations," Greg says. "The more help we get, the more children we can serve. We can always

use new bedding materials, financial donations, and volunteers willing to give a few hours of their time to help assemble and deliver beds."

In 2025, the chapter hopes to continue growing its impact and reach even more families. "Every bed we give makes a difference in a child's life," Greg says. "When a child has a bed, they sleep better, they're healthier, and they can

focus better in school. It's a simple thing, but it has a huge impact."

How to Get Involved

For those looking to get involved with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, there are plenty of opportunities. Whether you're interested in donating, volunteering, or hosting a bedding drive, there's a way for everyone to make a difference. The chapter continues to seek donations of



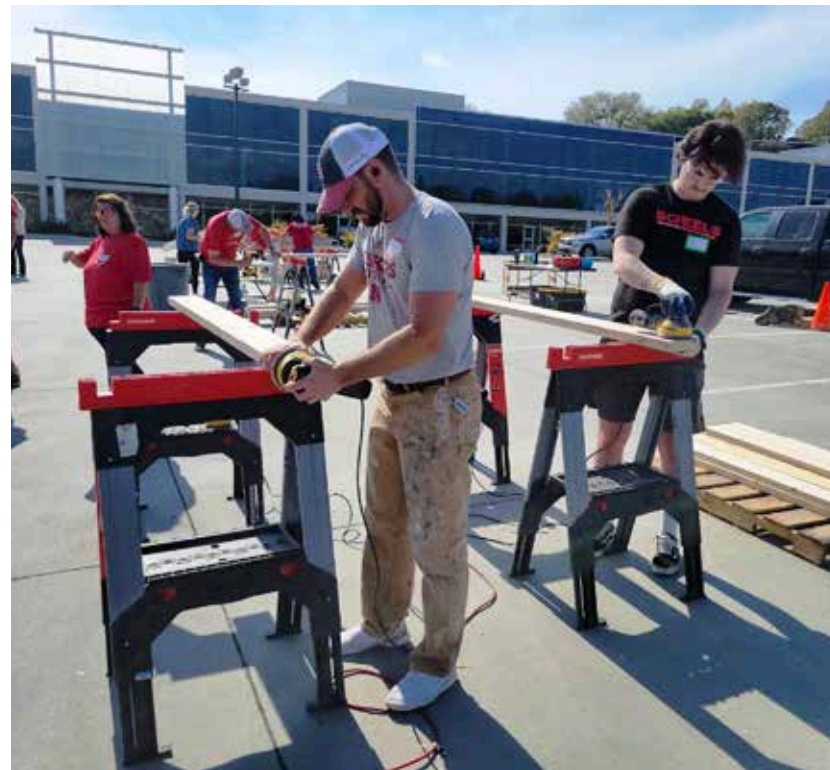
Flat Branch Home Loans made a generous donation to SHP through their charitable arm, The Giving Branch.



Greg Kraemer (left) with Bill Black (right) of NP Dodge, a dedicated supporter of SHP.



Skylar Lybarger, a REALTOR® with Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, has generously volunteered his time to SHP.



Volunteers from TitleCore National, Dodge Partners Insurance, and NP Dodge Real Estate take part in a Sleep in Heavenly Peace bed build day.



“
NO KID SLEEPS ON THE FLOOR
in our town.”

financial resources, bedding materials, and volunteers who can help assemble and deliver beds.

"It's about the community coming together to help each other out," Greg says. "And it's about ensuring that every child in Omaha has a bed of their own to sleep in."

With the continued efforts of dedicated volunteers and supporters like the real estate community, Sleep in Heavenly Peace is poised to continue making a lasting impact in Omaha — one bed at a time.

For more information on how to donate or get involved with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, visit SHPBeds.org/chapter/ne-omaha.



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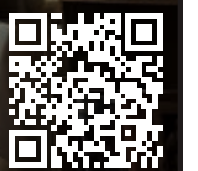
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Nikki Headen (center) rings the opening bell at Nasdaq on January 21, 2024, flanked by Glenn Sanford, Chairman and CEO of eXp World Holdings, and Leo Pareja, CEO of eXp Realty.

NIKKI HEADEN

Ringling the Opening Bell at Nasdaq

BY DAVE DANIELSON • PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF NASDAQ, INC.

For many people, the idea of being invited to the prestigious Nasdaq Stock Exchange in New York City would be a dream come true. For Nikki Headen, a top-producing REALTOR® with eXp Realty, that dream became a reality when she was given the incredible opportunity to ring the opening bell at Nasdaq in Times Square on January 21, 2024.

This momentous occasion was not just about the opportunity to be in one of the world’s most iconic locations — it was the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and a relentless drive to succeed. It also symbolized Nikki’s rise in the competitive world of real estate and her position as one of eXp Realty’s top

agents out of 88,000 agents worldwide within the company. She also ranks among the top five agents in the local area based on solo production.

A Journey to the Top

Nikki’s path to real estate wasn’t a straightforward one. Prior to becoming a Realtor, she worked as a marketing associate at Sysco Foods. While she enjoyed her work, her clients and people she met along the way, something was missing.

“Someone mentioned real estate to me, and my husband had already talked with me about it for years,” she recalls. Despite the nudge from her husband, Nikki hesitated at first. She was scared to

make the leap. But eventually, she took the plunge and decided to take the real estate exam in August 2019.

“I finally decided to take the test, and it was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” Nikki says. She quickly found her passion for real estate and realized that it wasn’t just a job — it was a calling. “I love taking care of people and helping clients meet their needs,” she explains. “It doesn’t feel like work. I love it.”

A Rising Star with eXp Realty

Nikki joined eXp Realty in August of 2020 as a solo agent. Over the years, she has consistently seen her business grow and her volume increase. In 2024, her hard work and dedication paid



The top 20 agents with eXp Realty worldwide, along with senior executives and staff, gathered in Times Square for the Nasdaq event on January 21, 2024.

off when she was ranked in the top 10 of eXp Realty’s agents based on total transactions, a major achievement for someone who started in the industry just a few years ago.

It was this outstanding performance that earned Nikki a coveted spot in a group of eXp’s top 20 agents who were invited to Nasdaq. Being part of this exclusive group meant more than just professional recognition — it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of a historic moment in the financial world.

Ringling the Opening Bell at NASDAQ

When Nikki and the other top agents arrived at the Nasdaq in Times Square, the excitement was palpable. “It was such a surreal experience,” she says. “Most of the people there were team leads, and I was just a solo agent from Nebraska. Doing over 100 deals and getting the chance to be part of something so big felt incredible and I am forever thankful.”

As part of the experience, the group participated in a photo session, mingled with agents from other parts of the country, and, of course, had the honor of ringing the opening bell. “We were there for the 8:30 a.m. bell and we clapped for two and a half minutes straight because we were on live TV at that time,” she recalls with a smile. “It was such a special moment, and the energy was amazing.”

The Secret to Her Success

Ringling the opening bell at Nasdaq was a monumental moment in Nikki Headen’s career that served as a reflection of her success — a success she attributes to hard work, focus, and a deep commitment to her clients. “I put my head down, stay focused, and don’t compare myself to others in the market,” she shares. “I work nonstop, and I make sure to take care of people always. The majority of my business comes from past client referrals, and I’ve been able to build my career on those strong relationships.”

For Nikki, success is not just about closing deals — it’s about building trust with clients and providing them with a personalized, caring experience. “When you take care of people and make their



needs a priority, the business follows,” she says.

Family and Support: The Foundation of Her Journey

Behind every successful person is a strong support system, and for Nikki, that support comes from her family. Her husband, Adrian, has been by her side every step of the way, both personally and professionally. “Adrian is my backbone,” Nikki says. “He even came with me to New York for the Nasdaq event, and he’s always there to support me.”

In addition to Adrian, Nikki and her husband are proud parents to two children, Amira and Rylan. “My son is very involved in sports, and we love supporting him in his activities, as well as my daughters and doing family things,” Nikki shares. Balancing family life with a thriving real estate career is no easy feat, but Nikki manages it by being fully present wherever she is — whether with her family or clients.

The Sky’s the Limit

Looking back at her journey, Nikki is overwhelmed with gratitude for all she’s accomplished and the opportunities she’s had.

“I want people to know that the sky’s the limit,” she says. “When you put your mind to something and stay focused, anything is possible!”

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