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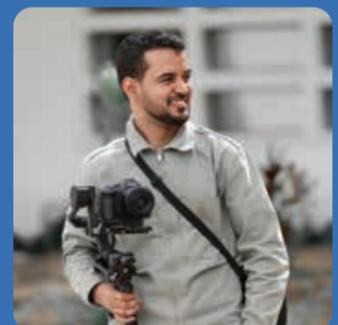


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**Chadwick Jurgens** **22** TOP PRODUCER

# Contents

## PROFILES



**14** Chris Bruce



**18** Jess Walter

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 Preferred Partners
- 10 Meet the Team
- 12 Event Announcement: Breakfast of Champions
- 14 Rising Star: Chris Bruce
- 18 Celebrating Leaders: Jess Walter
- 22 Top Producer: Chadwick Jurgens
- 28 Event Recap: Toast to the Top

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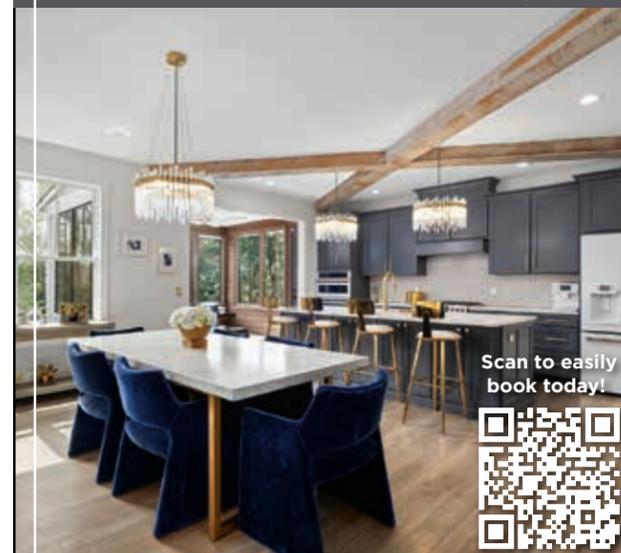
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# CHRIS BRUCE

## BIG FAITH, BIG VISION & BOLD MOVES

Just before the world began to change in 2020, Chris Bruce had returned to Michigan from Los Angeles, California, where he had been working in the TV, film and modeling industry. “After returning home from the modeling/acting industry in Los Angeles, COVID-19 hit, and my career shifted,” Chris said. “I turned to sales, working at Spectrum Internet, then Renewal by Andersen, and eventually, my father told me I’d be starting a career in real estate.”

Now an agent at Keller Williams Grand Rapids East, Chris is forging an impressive path in the real estate world with his entrepreneurial drive and strong sense of purpose. In the past two and a half years, he has already closed 70 transactions. “I’m the FSBO King — 90% of our business comes from FSBOs, because I understand and value their needs,” he explained. “My partners



Photo by Ariana Martinez

Ariana Martinez and Charity Christine run a listing-based business, transacting in both the residential and commercial markets. We have the ability to travel to most places in Michigan at any time. I started out with John Ardolino as my mentor — I owe a lot of my success to his great mentorship and to getting recruited to Keller Williams GR East by my childhood friend Darryl Matthews.”

Chris is passionate about creating lasting change in the industry. “I want to be remembered for FSBOs and big international business, and for changing the way we do real estate forever. I’ve got some game-changing plans in the works,” he said. His ambition is mirrored in his team’s progressive vision: They’re currently forming a five-agent group with plans to enter international markets.



Photo by Alec Arambula



“The most rewarding parts of my business are prospecting and always being able to **HELP OTHERS.**”

Photo by Ariana Martinez

Even with big goals, Chris keeps things personal. “Real estate gives me more freedom, and I can serve as many families and individuals as possible all over the state,” he said. For Chris, being a real estate agent is all about impact. “The most rewarding parts of my business are prospecting and always being able to help others,” he shared.

Challenges such as the recent NAR settlement have tested many in the industry, but Chris remains grounded. “Being patient, listening to the Lord, diversifying and expanding — that’s how I overcome challenges,” he said.

At the center of Chris’ life and work is his faith in Christ. “Success is fully completing the assignment that the Lord has presented you,” he said. His parents — both pastors — instilled in him a strong spiritual foundation and a mindset of ownership. “My mother and father have always influenced us to own our own real estate and businesses for as long as I can remember,” he added.

Outside of work, Chris finds joy in grilling, doing photography, talking to his uncle Michael Bruce, working out, and spending time with his partner. “We really love going out to eat, visiting different hotels, traveling, enjoying

all things fashion, and spending quality family time,” he shared.

For Chris, career success is about how well it harmonizes with a person’s life. “No matter what it is, there is an industry that aligns with your personality and gives you the freedom, time, and energy to expand your business and your life — it will come to you easily. Have faith,” he shared.

Fueled by a vision, Chris is on a mission to transform lives through real estate. As his influence grows both locally and globally, he’s proving that when you align your work with your calling, success follows.

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# Jess WALTER

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## Creating a Culture of Support & Success



As an agent and team leader at Best Life & Co. with eXp Realty, Jess brings her relentless work ethic to build a solid team culture. “Our team is awesome,” she said. “We tie everything we do into helping our agents live their best lives — personally and professionally. It’s a family feel, with hands-on training, proven systems and processes, mentorship, and quality leads for our agents.”

Raised in Midland, Michigan, Jess had her early life shaped by competitive sports, strong family values, and an unshakeable faith. A former D1 college basketball player, she attended Indiana University before transferring to the University of Nebraska Omaha, where she earned both her undergraduate marketing degree and her MBA by age 23.

“My family and time as a competitive athlete have played a huge role in who I am,” Jess shared. “They taught me consistency, grit, and how to show up — even when it’s hard.”

Before real estate, Jess was a senior associate marketing manager at Perrigo and a district manager at ALDI. Through those connections, Best Life & Co.’s founder, Ken Hirschmann, and president, Brandon Verlinden, recruited her to open the company’s West Michigan office and lead its Grand Rapids expansion.

**W**hen Jess Walter walked away from a successful corporate career, she was looking to make a positive impact somewhere — and found it in real estate. “I started full time in real estate in July of 2024, and in my first full calendar year, I closed 30 units for \$9.3 million,” she explained. “At the same time, I opened our Grand Rapids office and have onboarded several agents to the team, growing our office from a team of two to a team of 10.”

“I admire and respect both Ken and Brandon, personally and professionally,” Jess said. “Ken’s vision, the way he built the business, and the values we operate by are what made this opportunity feel so right.”

Although it only took Jess less than a year to quickly establish herself as a successful agent, she has also helped other agents launch their careers at lightning-



## “I love a challenge.”

EXPANDING THE #1 TEAM IN THE STATE AT OUR BROKERAGE INTO A NEW MARKET HAS BEEN SUCH A REWARDING EXPERIENCE.”

whether it's a first-time home purchase, a successful sale, or the excitement of moving into a new chapter,” she said. “Each client is unique, and the trust they place in me is never taken for granted.”

Whether it's her professional life or her personal one, Jess credits her family for being her biggest supporters. “My family is everything to me,” she shared. “My parents, Dave and D'Andra, my brother David, my sister Rebekah, and brother-in-law Evan — and of course, my niece Gracie — have been my rock. We're super close and love spending time together, and their support means the world to me.”

Outside of work, Jess unwinds by getting a workout in at 8th Day Gym or curling up with a good book and a cup of coffee. She also keeps herself grounded with her faith community at Engedi Church. “I'm driven by my faith and the belief that I'm here to serve,” she explained. “Whether that's helping someone buy a home or mentoring an agent who's new to our team, I want people to know I'm in their corner.”

For new agents in the industry, Jess recommends that they continue to bet on themselves. “Dive in! Show up daily with consistency, and surround yourself with the right team,” she said.

Jess is building something transformational for her clients, other agents, and herself. “I want to be remembered for helping others succeed, for creating a space where people felt seen and supported, and for bringing joy and purpose to everything I did,” she admitted. “That's what living your best life is all about.”

fast speed. “One of our agents closed \$5.9 million in his first nine months on the team,” Jess said. “Another closed three deals in her second month. Another had \$1.1 million pending after just 60 days. These are real results, and it all comes from the systems we teach. The fast start I've had and the success of our team is proof that, with the right systems, support, and culture, it can be a complete game changer.”

“By staying consistent, trusting our process, and showing up day after day — we've made it happen,” Jess added. “I love a challenge. Expanding the #1 team in the state at our brokerage into a new market has been such a rewarding experience.”

When it comes to her clients, Jess shows the same level of commitment as she does with her team members. “I love celebrating with my clients —



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# Chadwick Jurgens

## BUILDING A BUSINESS ON AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

*In* a profession often defined by flashy numbers, Chadwick “Chad” Jurgens stands apart because of how deeply he invests in people. “I’m definitely driven by my love of connecting with and helping new people,” he said. “My business is all relationship-based, and I have made so many great new friends over the years.”

A real estate agent at Apex Realty since 2015, Chad had a less-than-traditional start to his career. “I was a college dropout and bounced around, networking and trying to find my fit in life until I stumbled upon real estate,” he said. “No one else would hire me!”

Chad’s leap of faith has since blossomed into an award-winning career. Among his many accolades are the 2019 Rising Star from Grand Rapids Real Producers, the 2021 30 Under 30

recipient from the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), and the 2023 Young Professional of Year from the Greater Regional Alliance of REALTORS® (GRAR). He also completed the GRARLA program in 2017 and currently chairs the Grievance Committee at GRAR. Over the past decade in real estate, Chad has been involved in more than 600 transactions, totaling over \$170 million in sales volume.

Chad credits much of his success to staying true to what makes him unique. “Everyone who’s new to real estate tries to copy other agents and compare themselves,” he explained. “I found I was happier — and more successful — when I focused on the things I enjoyed and that I was good at.” He also credits his parents for their lasting influence and the invaluable guidance of his colleagues at Apex

Realty, led by his broker and mentor, Brian DeSmit.

At Apex Realty, Chad takes a hands-on approach with every client. “I personally work with all my clients and have high attention to detail for them,” he said. “Everyone deserves someone who is going to advocate hard on their behalf.”

“My goal is to not be a salesperson, but an advisor for my clients,” Chad added. “It’s the friendships gained that matter most.”

For Chad, adaptability has been another key to thriving in an ever-evolving market. “Control what you can control, and get better every day,” he said. “Every day is different and a new challenge.”

Outside of real estate, Chad enjoys spending time with his wife, Rachel, and their two daughters — Presley,



Photo by Jacob Harr with PhotoReal



“My goal is to not be a salesperson, but an advisor for my clients.”

IT'S THE FRIENDSHIPS GAINED THAT MATTER MOST.”

5, and Foster, 2. “We love traveling — especially to Florida — swimming at the pool, and going to sporting events,” he shared.

A proud graduate of Calvin Christian High School, Chad channels the same mentorship he displays in real estate to coaching the school's basketball team. “I've been fortunate to have a handful of positive influences in my life — amazing parents, friends, mentors in real estate and other industries, and tons of coaches who poured

their time and leadership into me. I feel obligated to pay it forward,” he said.

Chad hopes to be remembered as “a positive person in other people's lives — whether it's a friend, client, or other agent.” Above all, he believes doing the right thing is non-negotiable. “I try to always do the right thing and treat people fairly,” he added.

Chad encourages up-and-coming agents to “find mentors who operate their business the way

that you envision yours to look” and to “surround yourself with like-minded business partners who are positive influences.”

In a world where authenticity can be hard to find, Chad is a reminder that building a successful business starts with being real and being of service to others. “I wouldn't be where I am today without people who were willing to help me,” he said. “I feel a strong obligation to give my time, efforts, and financial help to those who need it.”

# BEYOND THE BIO PODCAST

## with Terra the Connector



Photo by Luana Nakano Photography



We're surrounded by bios, titles, headshots, and highlight reels. We know what people do, but rarely who they are. That's where **Beyond the Bio Podcast** comes in.

Hosted by **Terra Csotty, aka Terra the Connector**, this podcast was created to have real conversations with real people. The kind that don't stop at production numbers or business accolades, but dig into the stories, experiences, and moments that shaped them.

After years of building Real Producers communities across Michigan, Terra noticed something important. The strongest relationships weren't formed from resumes or awards — they came from honest conversations. From hearing someone's journey, their struggles, their growth, and realizing there's more behind the success than what shows up on paper.

Beyond the Bio was created to give those stories a place to live.

### Who's on the Podcast

Each episode features real estate professionals, business owners, entrepreneurs, creatives, and community leaders who are doing meaningful work. Some are top producers. Some are behind the scenes. All of them have stories worth sharing.

Conversations cover how guests got started, what motivates them, the challenges they've faced, and what truly sets them apart beyond their title. It's relaxed, thoughtful, and intentionally human — more like a real conversation than an interview.

### Why It Matters

This podcast isn't about selling or self-promotion: It's about connection. It's about reminding people that every brand, every business, and every success story starts with a person. Beyond the Bio creates space for authenticity, perspective, and inspiration — whether you're working in real estate, running a business, or just looking to hear stories you can relate to.

### How to Listen

Full episodes are available on **Terra the Connector's YouTube channel**, with highlights shared across social platforms. You can also listen on **Spotify and other major podcast platforms**. To explore episodes, learn more about upcoming guests, or get involved, visit [terratheconnector.com](http://terratheconnector.com).



Because who you are matters just as much as what you do — and that's what this podcast is all about.

Want to be a guest or sponsor an episode? Fill out the form on the [terratheconnector.com](http://terratheconnector.com) website.

## 2025

### BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S WHAT THE TOP AGENTS IN GRAND RAPIDS SOLD IN 2025

\$4,493,856,286

SALES VOLUME

10,873

TOTAL TRANSACTIONS

36

AVERAGE TRANSACTIONS PER AGENT

\$14,979,521

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# Toast to the Top!

Thank you so much for joining us at our Toast to the Top event in March! Our time was filled with great people and great food! We enjoyed celebrating the wins from last year together and mingling with fellow agents and our preferred partners. Be on the lookout in our next issue for some photos from the event!

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