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APRIL 2026

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NMLS# 1096215

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And then there's Jesse Riegsecker — a self-described “farm kid living the dream” — whose journey reminds us that real estate is ultimately about people, integrity, and hard work. From construction to brokerage leadership, Jesse has built Bright Star Real Estate Services with a steady, service-first mindset that mirrors the values so many of you carry into your own businesses every day. His commitment to mentorship, innovation through auctions, and treating other brokers as partners rather than competitors speaks to the collaborative spirit that makes Michiana special.

As I reflect on these stories, I'm reminded that Real Producers has never been simply about transactions or accolades. It's about people who serve with intention. People who choose discipline over shortcuts, relationships over ego, and long-term impact over quick wins. This issue celebrates builders — not only of homes and businesses, but of trust, opportunity, and community.

To our agent partners reading this: thank you. The way you show up for your clients, your peers, and this community is what makes *Michiana Real Producers* what it is. The professionals featured this month are examples of what's possible when passion meets purpose, and I hope their stories inspire you as much as they inspired our team.

As we move into spring, my hope is that you find renewed energy in your business, clarity in your goals, and encouragement in the relationships around you. Keep raising the standard. Keep investing in people. Keep doing the work that matters — even when it's not the loudest work in the room.

Here's to growth, service, and another great season ahead.

Jeff Bliler
 Publisher
Michiana Real Producers

The Power of Doing Things The Right Way

Spring has a way of reminding us that growth doesn't happen overnight. It's built quietly — one decision, one relationship, and one act of consistency at a time. As we put together this April edition of *Michiana Real Producers*, I couldn't help but notice a common thread running through each of this month's featured stories: the power of doing things the right way, even when no one is watching.

In our Partner Spotlight, Cody Edge of B&E Home Renovations shares a perspective that feels especially relevant in today's fast-moving market. Cody talks openly about structure, accountability, and service — concepts

that sound simple but are often hard to execute consistently. What stands out most is his commitment to building standards, not just projects. His story reminds us that the best partnerships in real estate are built on trust and reliability, and that the professionals we choose to surround ourselves with directly impact the experience we deliver to our clients.

Our feature on Barry Skalski takes us deeper into the heart of service. Barry's career is a reflection of what happens when leadership goes beyond production numbers. Whether advocating at the state and national level, mentoring fellow agents, or helping families in meaningful and sometimes extraordinary ways, Barry models what it means to leave the industry better than you found it. His quiet humility and willingness to give back highlight something I deeply believe about this community: success is most meaningful when it lifts others along the way.

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FEATURED AGENT

BADDY BARRY SKALSKI

Leading with Service:
The Steady Impact
of Barry Skalski



PHOTOS BY MEGAN WILLIAMSON PHOTOGRAPHY



In an industry often defined by transactions and timelines, Barry Skalski has quietly built a reputation around something deeper: service.

Long before awards, committees, and leadership roles, his path into real estate began simply—with curiosity.

“I had just sold a home as a FSBO,” he says. “I enjoyed the process and wanted to learn more about it.”

At the time, Skalski was working in the automotive service industry. It was steady work, but he felt the pull toward something different—something more personal. Real estate offered a blend of problem-solving, independence, and human connection that immediately resonated. What started as interest quickly became purpose.

Over the years, that purpose translated into a career marked not only by production, but by leadership and advocacy. His list of accomplishments reads like a highlight reel: the Indiana RPAC Trailblazer Award, Indiana RPAC Chair of the Year, SBAR Realtor of the Year, and Indiana Realtor of the Year—an honor

he remains the only agent from his board to have received. Alongside those are numerous company awards for sales performance.

Yet, ask Skalski what he’s most proud of, and he doesn’t talk numbers.

He talks about people.

One memory stands out vividly.

“A first-time buyer bought a home with cash for \$15,000,” he recalls. “He broke down crying at the closing table because he never thought he would be a homeowner.”

Moments like that are what keep him grounded.

Another experience was even more extraordinary. In collaboration with fellow agent Jennifer Lillie, Skalski helped facilitate a cross-sale that became something much bigger than business. The recipient—a family facing homelessness with disabled members—was given the home. Skalski covered the title work.



Illinois, and Wisconsin. He also leads an annual RE BarCamp, designed to elevate professionalism and education for agents across companies.

“I believe in raising the bar in our industry,” he says. “That means helping other agents improve their business too—not just my own.”

In early 2025, Skalski took another step forward by launching his own company. His vision isn’t simply expansion—it’s mentorship.

“My goal is to grow the company by helping my agents obtain their goals,” he explains. “If they succeed, we all succeed.”

Looking back, there’s only one thing he’d change.

“I would have used a CRM from the start,” he says with a laugh.



It’s a practical answer, fitting for someone known for his steady, solutions-focused mindset.

That mindset is what he finds most fulfilling about the work.

“Problem solving for people that really need and appreciate our help,” he says. “Life can be difficult, and being able to solve something that’s weighing on someone is an awesome experience.”

Outside of real estate, Skalski’s world slows down—and softens. He’s quick to light up when talking about his dogs. There’s

Sophie, a handicapped pug missing a front leg with a cloudy eye “from before she rescued me,” he jokes. Then Hope and Sailor J. Buffett, their two papillons, one also a rescue. Home life with his wife, Carrie, is filled with travel, visits to family in Arkansas, and frequent trips to Key West.

He’s also a loyal Detroit Tigers fan and an avid traveler.

Despite his long resume of leadership and public speaking, Skalski admits people often misread him at first.

“I hear all the time that I’m not approachable and have horrible RBF,” he says with a grin. “But I’m actually a really nice guy. You just have to push through it. I’d rather be in the corner petting the dog than be the life of the party.”

It’s that quiet humility that defines him. While others chase the spotlight, Skalski prefers to simply do the work.

He credits much of his growth to mentors and community. Early guidance from Steve Stose shaped his foundation, while a nationwide mastermind group and industry leaders like Jared James and Matthew Ferrara continue to sharpen his thinking.

When asked about the philosophy that guides him, he shares a few favorite lines—some from the show *Ted Lasso*:

“Life **CAN BE** difficult, and being able to solve something that’s weighing on someone is an awesome experience.”

“Doing the right thing is never the wrong thing.”

“Be curious, not judgmental.”

And one that feels especially personal: “Somebody should do something about that. Then I realized I am somebody.”

That last one might be the most fitting.

Because for Barry Skalski, real estate isn’t just about selling homes. It’s about showing up. Volunteering. Advocating. Giving. Mentoring. Solving problems others walk away from.

It’s about being somebody who does something.

And in the process, quietly making the industry—and the community—a little better than he found it.



Both brokerages waived commissions. Together, their offices raised money to help furnish the house with appliances.

“We literally gave a house away,” he says. “That’s something you don’t forget.”

Stories like these reveal what truly separates Skalski from his peers. While many agents focus inward on growth, he consistently looks outward.

His service extends far beyond his own clients and brokerage. At the local, state, and national levels, he has served on countless committees, chaired boards, and worked as an RPAC Trustee. He has helped influence housing policy, spoken before the Department of HUD and the VA, and now supports the Realtor Relief Foundation across Region 7, which includes Indiana,



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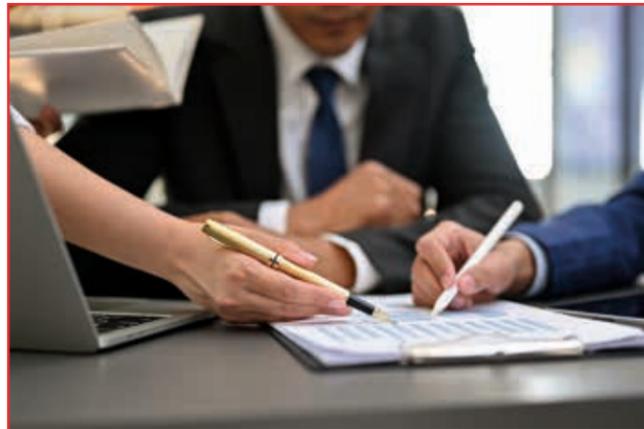
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In an industry where reputation can make or break a business, Cody Edge is focused on something he believes has been missing from much of the renovation world: structure. As the owner of B&E Home Renovations, Cody has built his company around clarity, accountability, and service — principles that have quickly positioned the Osceola-based company as a trusted partner for homeowners and real estate professionals throughout the Michiana area.

B&E Home Renovations offers a wide range of services, from kitchen and bathroom remodels to full interior renovations, home additions, garage and pole barn construction, sunrooms, siding, flooring, custom carpentry, insurance claim repairs, and even seasonal services like snow removal and Christmas light installation. With a single location and a team of eight employees, the company has grown steadily over the last two years, supported by a reputation for quality craftsmanship and an uncommon level of transparency. They also stand out for offering in-house financing options and veteran and first responder discounts — a

reflection of Cody's commitment to accessibility and service.

But Cody didn't start out planning to run a renovation company. His entry into the industry came unexpectedly through a rental property project where he hired a contractor to complete renovations. While working alongside the contractor, Cody noticed something that stuck with him. "The craftsmanship was there," he explains, "but the structure wasn't." Pricing lacked consistency, systems were unclear, and there was little long-term strategy guiding the work.

Rather than criticize, Cody leaned in. He built a relationship, learned the trade firsthand, and found himself increasingly involved in the renovation process. By the end of that project, he had helped complete two custom kitchens and two custom bathrooms — and a new vision began to emerge. "I realized the craftsmanship in this industry is strong, but the structure is often weak," he says.

That realization became the foundation for B&E Home Renovations. Cody invited that contractor to join him in

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creating a company built on accountability, clear pricing, and disciplined processes. He even let him choose the company name. "I've never cared about appearances," Cody says. "I care about results." The company's motto reflects that mindset: The only way is the right way.

From the beginning, Cody understood that contractors often face skepticism from clients. Many homeowners expect delays, vague pricing, or poor communication. B&E's mission has been to challenge those assumptions by delivering a different experience. "People are surprised when we show up on time, communicate clearly, and correct mistakes without excuses," Cody says. "That should be standard, but unfortunately it isn't always."

The company's dedication to service has translated into strong community trust. B&E boasts five-star ratings on both Google and the Better

Business Bureau, and every project comes backed by a lifetime warranty — a bold commitment that reflects confidence in their work. For Cody, though, the strongest validation comes from the relationships built along the way. He recalls a moment after undergoing surgery when past clients reached out to check on him. "That was a defining moment," he says. "It reminded me this business is about people first."

For top-producing Realtors, Cody sees the partnership as deeply collaborative. He understands that every referral reflects directly on an agent's reputation, and he approaches each project with that in mind. "Top-producing Realtors can't afford sloppy contractors," he says. "When you bring us into a transaction, we treat your reputation as seriously as our own." Deadlines, clean scopes of work, accurate pricing, and constant communication

are all part of the process. "The difference isn't talent," he adds. "It's discipline."

This disciplined approach also reflects broader changes happening in the contracting industry. Cody believes client expectations have risen significantly in recent years. Homeowners increasingly demand transparency and professionalism, and companies operating without systems are falling behind. "The industry is shifting toward structured, system-driven businesses," he says. "The demand is there, but only professional operators will continue to lead."

Beyond projects and processes, Cody speaks passionately about service — not just to clients but also to the people within his company. Rather than focusing on personal accolades, he finds pride in the growth of those around him. He shares the story of a young employee who joined the company, purchased his first home within two months, and eventually launched his own contracting business after mentorship and guidance. Another employee came to B&E facing financial hardship and, through hard work and opportunity, earned over \$41,000 within four months. "If I'm going to brag about anything," Cody says, "it's building people who can build their own futures."

That people-first mindset extends to how he runs the business financially. Cody notes that he has yet to take a personal paycheck, choosing instead to reinvest revenue back into the company and its team. "The company isn't about me," he explains. "It's about the men who work alongside me and the families that depend on them."

Outside of work, Cody's focus shifts entirely to family. He and his wife, Miriah, along with their children — Liam, Claire, Oak, and Farrah — spend their time exploring outdoors, playing games, and embracing the joyful chaos that comes with young kids. From bike rides and dance parties to nightly family dinners, these moments keep him grounded. "Business is important," he says, "but family is the foundation."

Looking ahead, Cody's vision for B&E Home Renovations goes beyond individual projects. He sees the company as part of a larger mission to elevate standards across the industry. Through mentorship, structured systems, and service-driven operations, he hopes to redefine what clients and Realtors expect from a contractor.

"We're building more than renovations," he says. "We're building standards."

And if Cody Edge's approach continues to resonate with homeowners and real estate professionals alike, those standards may very well shape the future of contracting throughout Michiana.

Realtors and homeowners who want to learn more about B&E Home Renovations or discuss an upcoming project can connect directly with the team at B&E Home Renovations by calling 574-413-8702 or visiting <https://behomerenovations.com/>. Whether it's a full renovation, pre-listing improvements, or a project that needs creative problem-solving to keep a transaction moving, Cody Edge and his team are committed to delivering service-driven results built on transparency, communication, and craftsmanship done the right way.





MEET *Annie Ragukonis*



Annie is the heart of our Mishawaka marketing team, serving Northern Indiana and Southwestern Michigan. With a strong sales background and genuine passion, she builds lasting connections. Rooted in faith and family, Annie lives in Granger with her husband and children. She finds joy coaching her daughter's basketball team, cheering on her sons, biking, and walking their beloved chihuahua, Bentley.

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JESSE THE AUCTION ADVANTAGE

RIEGSECKER

“I’m just a farm kid living the dream,” Jesse Riegsecker says with a chuckle — and that might be the most accurate introduction of all. As managing broker, auctioneer, and owner of Bright Star Real Estate Services, Jesse wears more hats than most. But at his core, he’s still grounded in the same principles he grew up with: work hard, treat people right, and don’t overcomplicate what doesn’t need to be complicated.

That ethos has quietly fueled more than 15 years in real estate, impressive volume across traditional and auction sales, and a brokerage that continues to grow without ever losing its footing.

From the Farm to the Field

Jesse grew up on a farm in LaGrange County, Indiana, where hard work wasn’t negotiable.

School wasn’t his strength, and he’s candid about that. Jesse dropped out of high school and went straight to work, determined to prove himself another way. Construction management with his brother became his first arena, beginning with

hands-on labor installing vinyl siding, pouring foundations, and eventually helping to start and managing a roofing manufacturing company for a decade.

Buying his first home at age 20, investing in properties shortly after, and understanding buildings from the ground up naturally pulled Jesse toward real estate. He earned his license while still running the manufacturing business, slowly transitioning into full-time real estate once the momentum became undeniable.

Building Bright Star

Bright Star Real Estate Services officially launched in 2018, originally as Bright Star Realty and Auctions, before a strategic rebrand in 2022. The evolution wasn’t purely cosmetic though, as the company was growing in different directions.

Today, Bright Star operates out of Middlebury, Indiana, with a second office in Elkhart opening this month. The brokerage is home to 10 agents — which Jesse notes is small by design, but steadily growing — and known for its substance, not its flash, just like its owner.

“At the end of the day, we are in a service-based industry and looking to add value to every situation and alleviate concerns of any kind,” Jesse explains.

“There’s a lot of ‘roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-to-work’





without showmanship in our office,” he adds. “And we’re open to recruiting additional agents with that same mindset.”

That culture shows up everywhere: how agents

are guided, how deals are handled, and how growth is measured. Jesse is intentionally stepping back from day-to-day production this year to focus more on management and mentorship, delegating so

agents can expand while maintaining the same standard of care.

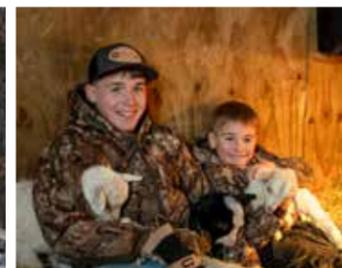
“Our number one goal is to build our business on integrity while treating others how we would like to be treated,” he states. “To me, having the opportunity to make a living being able to do something that I love along with helping people would be my definition of success.”

The Secret Sauce

While Bright Star continues to grow across traditional residential and commercial real estate, one differentiator has been there from the very beginning.

“The auction method was really the backbone of our business when we launched,” Jesse explains. “It is a great way to avoid capping your property value instead of going the traditional listing route.”

Jesse became licensed as an auctioneer in 2018 after partnering with an Amish



“ WITH THE AUCTIONS, YOU OFTEN GET BIGGER DEALS & IT OPENS MORE DOORS.”

auction company and handling the online portion of the business. What started as a collaboration quickly became the cornerstone of the brokerage’s identity.

Today, Bright Star handles auctions for everything from farmland and wooded acreage to commercial buildings, million-dollar homes, distressed assets, and personal property liquidations involving estates and equipment. Last year alone, Jesse personally closed 72 transactions to the tune of \$41+ million in sales.

“With the auctions, you often get bigger deals and it opens more doors,” Jesse points out.

The auction method also allows Bright Star to collaborate rather than compete. Jesse regularly partners with local brokers, bringing their listings to auction, paying generous referral commissions, and creating outcomes that benefit everyone involved.

“We don’t look at them as a competitor, but as a referral partner,” he emphasizes.





Jackson (13), and Elliott (7) — on their lively farm. Between cattle, goats, ponies, chickens, horses, rabbits, and a bed-and-breakfast on the adjacent property, there's rarely downtime — and Jesse prefers it that way.

Beyond the farm work, Jesse is actively involved with multiple charities, noting that Bright Star regularly donates live auction services for fundraisers and PTO events. Faith is central to his life as well; Jesse and his family have attended First Baptist of Elkhart for over a decade.

When asked about the future, Jesse doesn't talk about scaling for the sake of scaling. He brings the conversation back to consistency and service: "My hope and prayer would be just more of the same," he grins. "To be able to live my life with intention and being able to grow our business and being able to help and serve the needs of our clients to the best of my abilities."

"My motivation is to continue to strive to be a better person today than I was yesterday and to find additional ways to grow and to see our team here at Bright Star RES grow their business and relationships as well."



Ask Jesse's agents about his leadership style and the answer is consistent: always accessible and encouraging. "I have a great, solid core of agents who are appreciative of going from zero to 100 in a few years," he smiles. "I think they would say my style is fairly hands-on with an open-door policy."

Down On The Farm

When Jesse leaves his office, his home life is just as busy. He and his wife Melissa, married for nearly 21 years, are raising four children — Kailey (18), Alexis (16),



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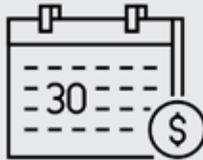
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