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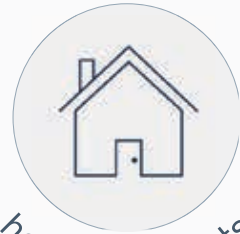


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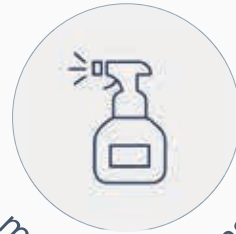
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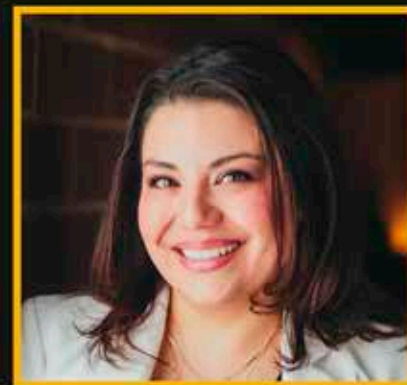
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Celebrating **TWO YEARS** of NWI Real Producers

We're taking a moment to pause and celebrate the second birthday of NWI Real Producers and reflect on how far we've come.

Since launch, we've had the privilege of sharing the stories of 62 agents across 31

brokerages, along with 29 of our trusted partners. Each issue has stayed true to our mission to create real connections, tell real stories, and highlight Real Producers. At its core, this magazine exists to connect, elevate, and inspire the people who make Northwest Indiana real estate exceptional.

We've also hosted eight events for our community, plus two exclusively for our Preferred Partners. Each one is intentionally designed, from the guest list to the venue, with a focus on meaningful connection. Our goal is to provide value always.

Every magazine we publish is a team effort. I'm incredibly proud of what has been built over the past two years. Colt and I simply could not do this without our team. Photographer Melinda Almaguer and writers Giavonni Downing and Ali Kucharzak consistently bring beauty and depth to every issue. Tyler Schilling of T-23 Productions and Delia Curtis of Delia Jean Filming capture the energy and spirit of our events so well. Kimberly Genovese and Jenny Hockett help us stay closely connected to the real estate community, and Molly Cobane plays a key role in supporting our Partners and developing strong ad content.

And of course, none of this would exist without our Preferred Partners. Their commitment to supporting Realtors and strengthening the real estate community is what makes our magazine and events possible.

Cheers to the relationships built, goals reached, momentum gained, and everything still ahead. We're excited for what the next chapter holds and grateful for the opportunity to keep bringing this industry together to connect, elevate, and inspire.

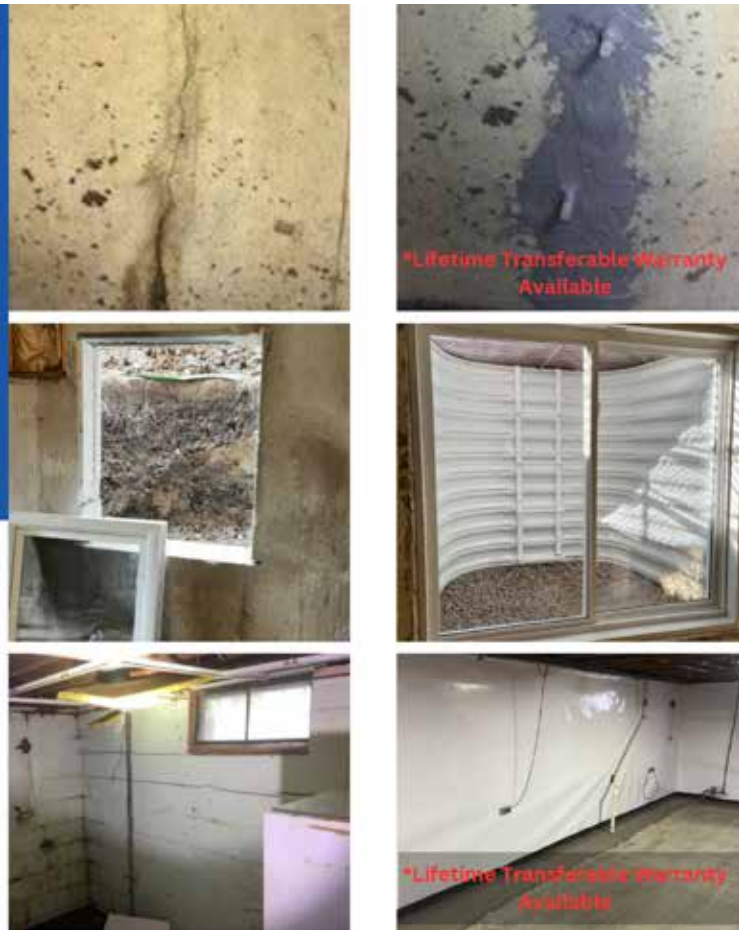
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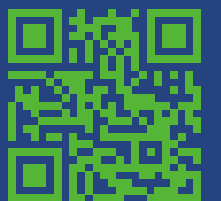
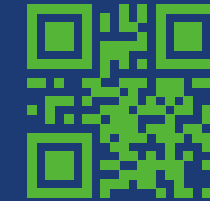
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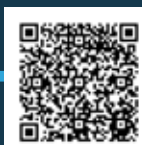
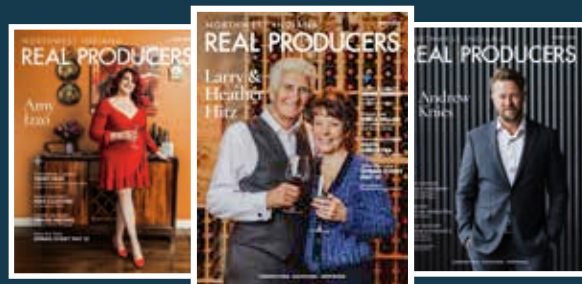
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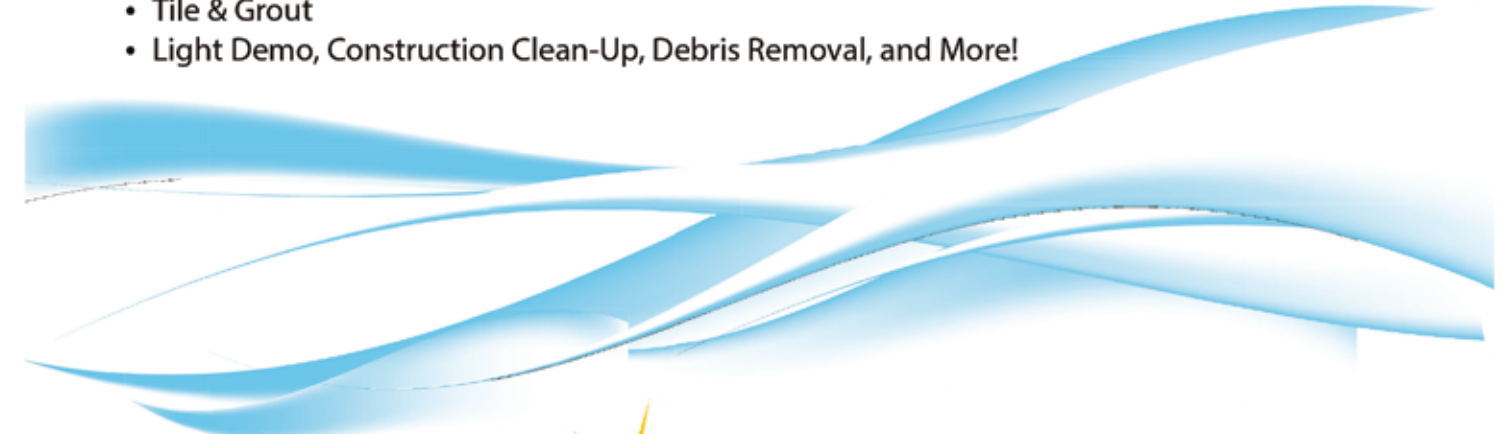
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Justin Stecz is the first to admit he's not a painter. In fact, he says it with a laugh: "I don't paint. I would never pick up a brush. And if I did, the company probably wouldn't exist for very long."

Yet under his leadership, That 1 Painter has become a standout name in residential painting across Northern Indiana. His success isn't rooted in brushstrokes. It's built on business acumen, operational discipline, and a clear understanding of what today's homeowners and real estate professionals actually need.

Before launching the business, Justin built a career in Major League Baseball operations and higher education retail, managing college bookstores. While those roles provided stability and growth, they didn't offer long-term fulfillment. Raised in a family where corporate success was the expectation, Justin always felt drawn toward entrepreneurship.

"I knew after college that I wanted to build something of my own," he says. Frequent relocations in corporate life made it



difficult to establish roots, especially once he started a family. Stepping away from that world wasn't just about a career pivot; it was about creating stability and investing in a community he could truly call home. After taking time to evaluate his

next move, an unexpected opportunity emerged.

"The idea of painting is really about bringing joy through color," Justin explains. "In my previous roles, I was creating that same feeling through

school spirit and team merchandise. There are more similarities than you'd think."

While he leaves the painting to his crews, Justin brings expertise in customer service, marketing, and



“The idea of **PAINTING** IS REALLY ABOUT BRINGING joy through **COLOR.**”

team leadership—skills that have proven essential in building a service business designed to stand out in a crowded market.

Today, That 1 Painter serves communities from South Bend to Valparaiso and continues to expand

throughout Northwest Indiana. But for Justin, the business isn't just about paint. It's about experience.

“We aim to be the best house guests our clients have ever had,” he says. “Not only do we deliver a great result, but we leave every home better than we found it.”

That mindset is driven by a constant push for improvement. Even when clients are thrilled, Justin is already evaluating how the process could be smoother, faster, or more seamless next time.

For agents, that attention to detail translates directly into smoother listings and faster timelines.

That 1 Painter has become a reliable partner for real estate professionals preparing homes for the market. With quick scheduling, fast estimates, and consistent communication, Justin's team helps eliminate one of the most common bottlenecks in getting a property ready to list.

Justin says they prioritize responsiveness so agents can keep things moving. Whether it's a quick touch-up or a larger project, they are here to support, not replace, trusted vendors. The advantage is that they always have a painter ready to go.

That flexibility allows agents to solve last-minute issues, enhance a home's presentation, and ultimately bring listings to market with confidence.

Behind the scenes, Justin is equally focused on building

a scalable business. He has taken a hands-on approach, immersing himself in every aspect of operations to ensure consistency as the company grows.

“I want to have a firm grasp on every aspect of this business,” he said. The goal is to eventually hire for more team leader positions so that Justin can focus more on growing the business here in Northwest Indiana.

Justin's personal story reflects the same intention he brings to his business. After years of moving and building a career across different industries, he and his wife Shannon chose Northern Indiana as the place to put down roots and raise their two children. That sense of stability now fuels both his family life and his long-term vision for the company.

Looking ahead, his goal is clear: to grow That 1 Painter into the leading residential painting company in the region.

“Our painters get to focus on what they do best,” he says. “We handle the systems, the communication, and the structure that allow them to succeed.”

Justin Stecz has built more than a painting company. He's created a service-driven business that helps homeowners love where they live and gives real estate professionals a trusted partner in every transaction. And while he may never pick up a paintbrush, his impact is visible in every finished project. ▾



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RE/MAX EXECUTIVES



Tracy VanderWall

**Broker/Owner
of RE/MAX
Executives**

BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA
NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY



BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP Tracy VanderWall's Legacy of Grit and Growth

In Northwest Indiana, the name VanderWall carries a history of hard work, construction, and deep-rooted commitment. But for Tracy VanderWall, Broker/Owner of RE/MAX Executives, legacy was never something to inherit quietly. It was something to build. And over the years, Tracy has done exactly that, shaping a career defined by grit, vision, leadership, and a deep investment in the communities she serves.

Tracy's success can be traced back to an unlikely place: the family gas station where she began working as a young girl. Long before she was leading an office that now manages hundreds of sales annually, she was learning what business ownership really looked like by watching her parents navigate the demands of entrepreneurship day in and day out.

She started working in the family business at just 13, and by 17, she was already making a bold move into real estate. Those early years taught her lessons that no classroom could: how to work hard, trust her instincts, and move with confidence. When she realized school was not the path she wanted to follow, she chose a career where she could make an immediate impact. That decision led her into real estate at an age when most of her peers were still trying to figure out their next step.

By 20, Tracy had already opened her own brokerage. "I was young, and I didn't have anything to lose," she says. It was the kind of fearless thinking that would define her career. She stepped into real estate, bought her own building, and began building a future on her own terms.

For Tracy, real estate was never just about selling homes. She

was drawn to the work behind them, the land, the planning, the infrastructure, the vision. Her niche in land development and new construction reflects that deeper passion. She understands what is behind the walls because she has helped create it herself, developing subdivisions from dirt fields to paved streets and overseeing projects that include more than 100 residential lots.

That passion also became a bridge back to her family. In 2004, Tracy purchased a 70-acre farm and convinced her father to leave the gas station business and partner with her. Today, he serves as her project manager, helping bring her ideas to life. "My drive definitely comes from my dad," she says. Together, they have developed three subdivisions in Jasper County, a testament not only to Tracy's vision but to the family partnership that helps carry it forward.



“
I GENUINELY
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AGENTS.

Watching them
grow their
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the most rewarding
part of what I do.”

numbers. Her business is referral-based, built through relationships with people who have watched her grow from a 17-year-old entering the industry to a respected regional leader. She is not simply chasing transactions. She is building trust that spans households, families, and generations.

That same commitment to people extends well beyond real estate. Tracy's love for her community is reflected in her philanthropy and service. Her office is a “Miracle Office” that has donated more than \$80,000 to Riley Children's Hospital. Whether she is hosting an annual First Responder Day to honor local police and fire departments or raising funds through local golf outings, Tracy is consistently investing in something larger than herself.

“I didn't follow the traditional paths. I built my own,” she says.

That may be the clearest way to understand Tracy VanderWall's story. From the gas station to brokerage ownership, from raw land to thriving subdivisions, from personal ambition to community impact, she has spent her life proving that legacy is not something you wait for. It is something you have the courage to build. ▀

One of the clearest pictures of Tracy's leadership came not in a season of growth, but in a moment of crisis. Three years ago, her office was devastated by an electrical fire. The experience was, in her words, “gut-wrenching.” But in a moment that could have fractured the business, it did the opposite: it revealed just how strong her culture really was.

“I feel like protecting my culture is key,” Tracy explains. And when the fire hit, that culture showed up in full force. Not a single person left the firm. In fact, she gained more agents afterward. Her team of 33 agents and the surrounding community rallied so effectively that a temporary

office was up and running within seven days, complete with new flooring and a functioning workspace. For Tracy, leadership is rooted in the RE/MAX motto: “In business for yourself, but not by yourself.” She sees her agents as family and spends much of her time mentoring, guiding, and protecting the environment they have built together. She is quick to emphasize that none of it would be possible without them: “my agents are truly the heart of RE/MAX,” Tracy asserts.

The numbers tell one part of Tracy's story. In 2025, she produced \$12 million in sales as a solo agent. But the deeper story is the trust behind those



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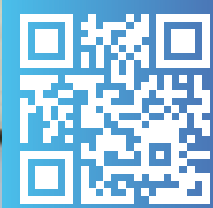
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The Momentum of MICHAEL FELDER

BUILT ON CONNECTION

BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael Felder found his way into real estate through motion. Before the contracts and closings, he was learning to read people in the fast-paced rhythm of the restaurant industry. That world became the training ground for the career he would later build in Northwest Indiana, where service, trust, and quick instincts still define the way he works.

It was while working at Lighthouse Restaurant that the next chapter began to take shape. Lighthouse was more than a job. It was where people began to recognize his potential, and where he met his wife. It was also where a repeat customer saw something in him and opened the door to real estate. Soon, Mike was doing property management

on the south side of Chicago, studying for his real estate license, and finishing his degree all at once. For someone who describes himself as a little “rowdy,” it was a fitting start, a season full of moving parts, pressure, and possibility.

That early season gave him more than an entry point; it gave him range.

Mike started learning the investment side of the business from the inside. He helped manage a large multi-unit building, worked across nearly 100 doors in Chicago, and gained firsthand experience improving assets and stabilizing operations. At the same time, he was earning his degree in tourism and hospitality management at Purdue University Northwest, where much of the curriculum focused on the business and investment side of hospitality. As Mike puts it, “I was learning investment and commercial real estate in college while I was actually doing it.” It

gave him a foundation that was both practical and strategic.

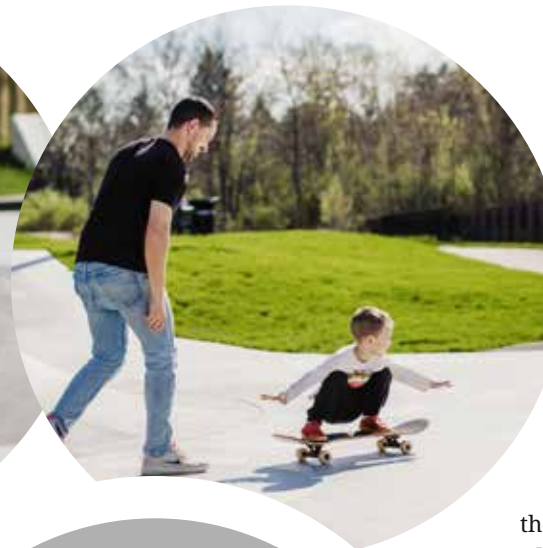
If the business side sharpened his thinking, people are what made real estate stick. Mike will tell you that getting a license and actually doing real estate are two very different things. For him, the business became clear through networking, not in a forced, transactional sense, but in the natural way he had always moved through the world. Mike grew up in Lowell with a wide circle of friends. He had already been building relationships long before he ever called it networking and that instinct became part of his staying power.

He is energized by people. He believes in the Golden Rule. “If you’re genuine and you take care of people the way you would want to be taken care of,” he says, “that translates to business.” In real estate, trust matters more than anything. His definition of success is not just

“

If you’re genuine and you take care of people the way you would want to be taken care of
THAT TRANSLATES TO BUSINESS.”





through interior design and backend support. Mike is quick to say he would not be where he is without her. And when he talks about success on a personal level, the answer is simple: “Being there for my son and my wife.” Providing for them, building a life they can share, and being present in it. That is the success that matters most.”

That sense of gratitude shapes the way he sees Northwest Indiana, too. Mike loves the growth happening across the Region. He lights up when talking about the area’s restaurants and the fresh concepts that bring more character to the community.

For Michael Felder, real estate is one way to invest in the place he calls home, a growing Northwest Indiana shaped by connection, opportunity, and community. 🍷

production. It is the moment the phone rings because someone trusts him enough to call in order to help them accomplish their real estate goals. It is the referral. It is the relationship.

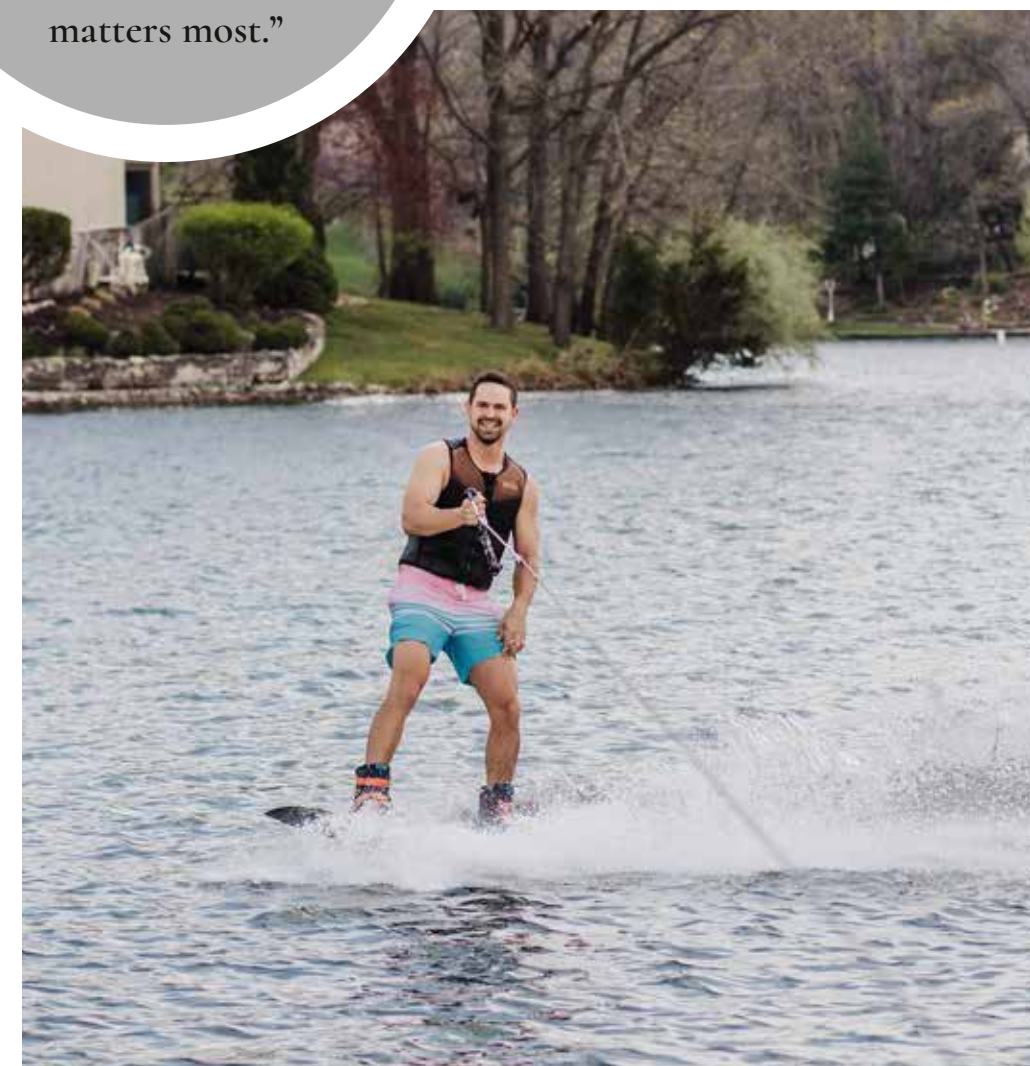
Mike’s ability to just be hyper-focused shows up in business, in competition, and in the way he approaches life. He plays soccer, skateboards, golfs, snowboards, and wakeboards. If you ask him to go skydiving, he will undoubtedly say “yes.” Team sports give him the camaraderie. Independent sports give him what he calls that “you against you” feeling. He enjoys the thrill of progression, of getting better, and pushing past your own limits.

That same appetite for challenge also carried him into entrepreneurship. In 2020, Mike began a startup venture that later closed due to market conditions. Even so, he speaks about it with pride. It was difficult, risky, and demanding, but it taught him something essential. Failure is part of building. “It’s what you do with those failures that matters,” he says.

For all of his drive, though, the center of Mike’s life is not work. It’s family.

He and his wife have been together since 2010 and married since 2018. She is not only his biggest supporter at home, helping raise their son, but also a real part of the business, contributing

“
BEING THERE FOR MY SON AND MY WIFE.
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**THE RESILIENT
BLUEPRINT**
The Life and Legacy of
Kim Odegard

BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA
NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY



KIM ODEGARD

of Odegard Real Estate Team | eXp Realty

Kim Odegard has spent 33 years proving that longevity in real estate is about more than production. With more than \$200 million in lifetime sales and a reputation as one of Northwest Indiana's most respected agents, she has built a career defined by excellence. But the real story of Kim Odegard is not just about success. It is resilience.

That resilience was shaped early in Dyer, Indiana, where Kim was raised by a hardworking single mother and learned at a young age that security had to be built. By the age of 13, she was already working her first job. She graduated from Lake Central High School a year early; all while taking honors courses, participating in choir and volleyball, and working up to 20-30 hours a week. She attended evening classes at Purdue University while working full-time in Chicago, earning her bachelor's degree in Business Management and Accounting. She held positions in accounting departments at some of Chicago's largest law firms so she could fund her tuition. Even though the road took longer than expected, Kim refused to quit.

Accounting made sense to her. She loved math, structure, and numbers. But in 1993, while finishing her degree, she stepped into real estate, thinking it would be a temporary move. She was in search of a flexible job that would let her finish up her degree before returning to corporate life. Instead, she found a career that fit both sides of who she was: analytical and people-centered. "I've always been a people person," Kim says, "but I always had a very analytical mind, and I like numbers and problem-





Kim and her Buyer Agent Candis Novosel

solving.” When she was told that many agents did not last in this business and that the average new Realtor earned very little, Kim’s response was simple: “I guess I can’t afford to be average.”

That mindset carried her through the next phase of her real estate journey. What began as a job became a career, and eventually, a business. Her background in accounting and business management shaped the way she grew. Over time, Kim stopped operating like a salesperson and started thinking like a business owner. She built systems, refined strategy, and created a business designed to last. Even

changing the branding from “The Kim Odegard Team” to the “Odegard Real Estate Team” reflected that shift. She wanted the business to be bigger than one personality.

Kim’s resilience was tested most deeply in the valleys. As the housing market reached the end of its crash, she entered a season marked by significant personal and financial strain. The aftermath created a ripple effect that touched every area of her life, even as she continued to meet the

demands of a real estate career. During this time, she was often recognized for her sales achievements and production, yet internally felt undeserving, even as everything appeared intact from the outside. For someone as driven as Kim, that disconnect cut deeply.

But that season became a turning point. Instead of letting those challenges define her, Kim rebuilt. She hired a coach, tracked her expenses, created a budget, and made intentional financial sacrifices to build long term security. Her life shifted. She regained financial stability, purchased an investment property, established a retirement account, and built a stronger foundation for the future. “My life turned around 180 degrees because I’m not a quitter,” she says. She no longer sees failure as final, but as part of growth.

That perspective now shapes the way she leads. While she remains a top producer, Kim is most passionate about mentorship. A consummate learner, she is constantly seeking growth and finds fulfillment in sharing knowledge with others. Whether coaching agents, helping rebuild a struggling business, or celebrating a team member reaching six



figures for the first time, she finds real joy in helping others succeed. She does not lead from a one-size-fits-all model. She takes time to understand people and how they think, then meets them where they are.

That same spirit shapes her team culture. For Kim, her team is family, and she is deeply proud of each of them. Phone calls often end with “love you.” She takes pride not only in what her team produces, but in who they become, celebrating their growth every step of the way. Even when agents leave for new opportunities, she continues to support them and remains proud of all they accomplish. To her, leadership is not about holding people tightly. It is about helping them grow. Knowing she may have been a small part of their growth and success is something she carries with quiet gratitude, never taking credit, but feeling deeply honored to have played even a small role in their journey.

Kim’s influence extends far beyond her office. She has served on local and state boards, committees, and MLS leadership, including as GNIAR MLS President in 2017, the same year she was honored as Realtor of the Year. For more than a decade, she has contributed to both the Professional Standards Committee and the Indiana Association of Realtors State Forms Committee, helping shape and uphold industry standards. In 2026, she was named State Chairperson of the Professional Standards Committee, reflecting her deep expertise and commitment to ethics. For Kim, leadership is not about recognition. It is about stewardship and a responsibility to improve the industry. When something in the industry needs improvement, she believes in showing up and helping make it better.

In December 2024, Kim made a strategic move to eXp Realty, which aligns with her vision to scale the Odegard Real Estate Team beyond individual production. The model supported both her entrepreneurial

“
My life turned around 180 degrees because I’m not a quitter.”



approach and team growth, creating a more streamlined, forward-thinking way to operate. Within the first year, both her personal income and team production more than doubled.

In 2025, she earned ICON Agent status within eXp Realty, which recognizes her production, contributions, and leadership, while unlocking additional financial incentives that continue to support her team’s growth and long-term success.

Relationships remain at the center of Kim’s business, with most of her work coming from repeat clients and

referrals. She’s served multiple generations within the same families, becoming a trusted advisor along the way. Her legacy is defined not just by the homes she’s sold, but by the consistency, credibility, and care that keep clients coming back.

“Success for me is when you wake up every day and feel gratitude for what you’ve been given,” Kim says.

After decades in the business, that may be the clearest measure of her legacy. Not just success, but resilience. Not just achievement, but impact. ▾

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