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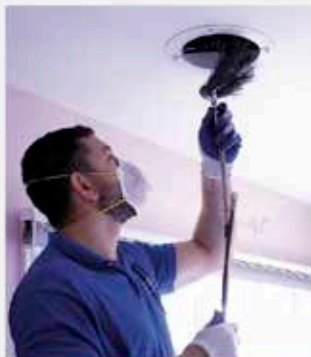
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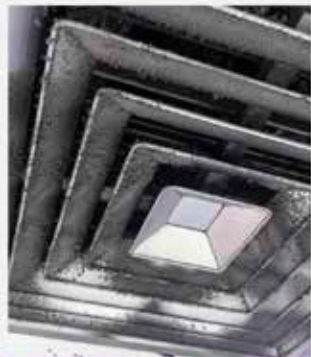


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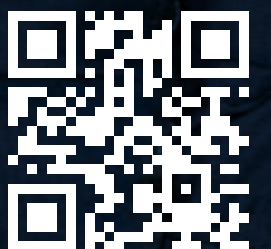
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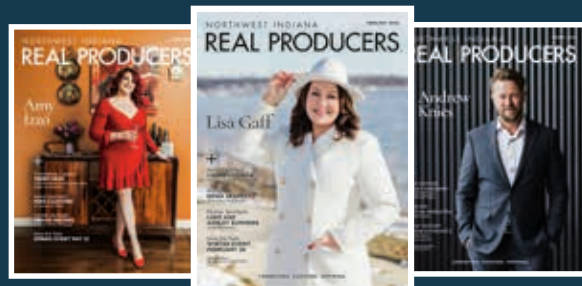
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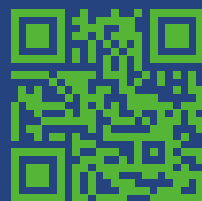
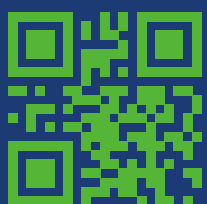
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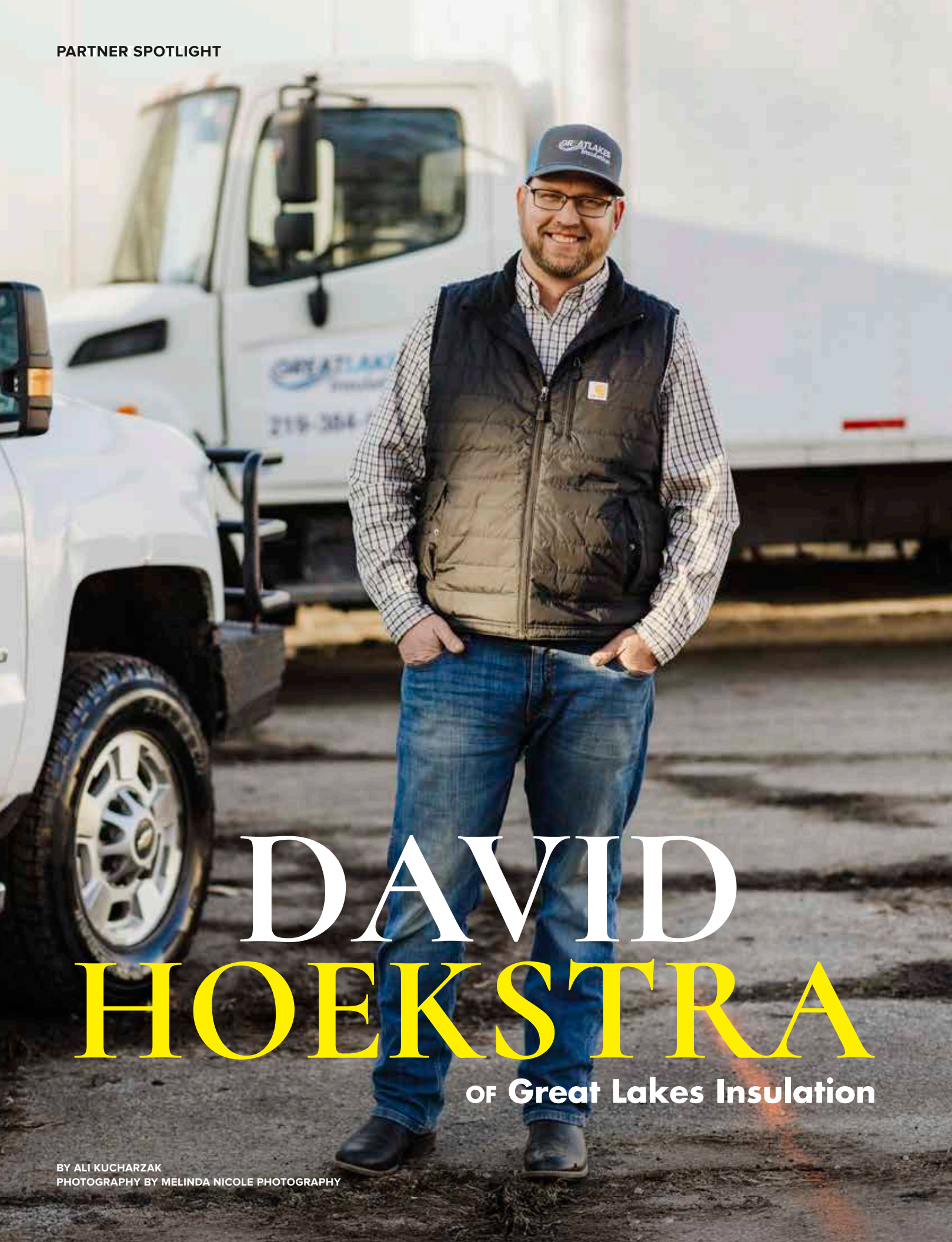


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DAVID HOEKSTRA

OF Great Lakes Insulation

BY ALI KUCHARZAK
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BUILDING MORE THAN A BUSINESS

For David Hoekstra, owner of Great Lakes Insulation, success isn't just measured in trucks on the road or revenue on a spreadsheet. It's measured in

character, in responsibility, and in the steady, intentional work of turning boys into men.

Married to his wife Christine for 14 years, David is the proud father of four sons: Jay (11), Liam (10), Bennett (7), and Charlie (2). His life revolves around faith, family, and building something that will last far beyond himself. While many entrepreneurs chase freedom or financial independence, David's motivation runs deeper: he wants to be

present for his boys and raise them to become good men.

For much of his adult life, David worked for others. He spent nine years in commercial construction, gaining valuable experience and developing a deep love for the industry. But as the years passed, he realized something was missing. There wasn't a clear long-term plan for his future or for the kind of legacy he hoped to leave his sons.

"I've always been a problem solver," David says. "When I was younger, I always thought I'd be managing something; I just never thought it would be like this. I wanted to build a better future for myself and my kids."

Four years ago, while working in construction, he recognized a growing need in the market for spray foam insulation. Energy efficiency was becoming more important, and there was room for someone willing to specialize and do it well. That spark of opportunity led to the launch of Great Lakes Insulation in April 2022.

Today, the company runs five trucks daily with a team of nine employees. What started as a leap of faith has grown into a thriving business. But for David, it's about far more than insulation.

It's about influence.

At home, David pours into his boys through everyday moments: coaching from the sidelines at basketball, soccer, and baseball games, fishing trips on quiet weekends, and camping adventures that create lasting memories. His sons are heavily involved in sports and activities, and David sees these seasons not just as hobbies but as opportunities to build grit, teamwork, and resilience.





Every other Wednesday, he serves as a counselor at his church's Cadet program, a group similar to Boy Scouts, where he mentors young boys and teaches them practical skills and life lessons. It's there, and in his own home, that his mission becomes clear.

That same mission carries over into his business.

David doesn't just want employees; He wants to recruit fresh out of high school and give more than a paycheck. He wants to give them a path. His goal is to train not only in technical skills of insulation installation but also in discipline, accountability, and leadership — the traits that help a man provide for a family and stand confidently on his own.

"This is their opportunity to make something out of themselves," David says. "Young men thrive when you give them the appropriate amount of responsibility."

He believes growth comes from responsibility. If expectations are low, people will simply meet

“
Young men
thrive when you
give them the
appropriate
amount of
responsibility.”

them. But when you challenge someone, when you trust them with real ownership, they rise.

As Great Lakes Insulation continues to grow, David is intentionally building a structured workflow environment. He plans to implement more leadership roles within the company, empowering trusted team members to oversee specific areas of operation. It's not just good business strategy. It's mentorship in action. He's creating stepping stones for young men to step into leadership, learn to manage, and develop confidence.

His hope? That one day, his own sons may choose to work alongside him. "I hope someday my boys will come to work for me," he shares. "Not because they have to, but because they want to."

In a culture where masculinity is often misunderstood or diminished, David's approach is refreshingly steady. He believes manhood is built through responsibility, service, hard work, and faithfulness whether that's in a home, a church group, or on a job site.

And while insulation may not seem glamorous, David sees opportunity where others overlook it. Traditionally, insulation hasn't been a major selling feature for homes. But with rising utility costs — especially increases in NIPSCO rates — homeowners are paying closer attention to energy efficiency.

"Well-insulated homes have much lower costs and are so efficient,"

David explains. "To blow in more insulation in an older home, you're looking at under \$2,000, but



adding to that R-value is going to really decrease those energy bills."

He sees a future where insulation becomes a priority, not an afterthought. It's another example of his forward-thinking mindset: identifying needs, solving problems, and building something sustainable.

But at the heart of it all is legacy.

Five trucks. Nine employees. A growing client base. Those are markers of success. But David Hoekstra measures success differently. It's in the young man who learns to show up on time and take pride in his work. It's in the employee who steps into leadership for the first time. It's in a son watching his father build something with integrity.

From his home to his church to his shop floor, David lives out the same belief every day: boys become men when they're given responsibility, high expectations, and someone willing to guide them. And that's exactly what he's building one job, one lesson, one young man at a time. ■

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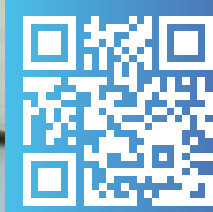


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BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
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MORE THAN A MOVE: *Erica Miller Finds Stability in Real Estate*

In Michigan City, the name Erica Miller is synonymous with movement, not just the physical act of moving houses, but the movement of a community toward stability. For Erica Miller, a multi-million dollar producer at Coldwell Banker Real Estate Group, real estate isn't a sales game; it's a ministry of service.

Erica's passion for homeownership is rooted in the visceral memory of instability. As a child, her family

moved so often she couldn't count the times on two hands. Following the loss of her father, she watched her mother, a single parent, finally achieve stability by purchasing their first home. That experience left an indelible mark. Determined to shield her own children from that same transience, Erica purchased her first home at just 19.

"I kind of reached back in my childhood and knew what instability looked like, and I didn't want my children's experience to be the same," she explains.

Erica first jumped into real estate full-time right before the 2008 recession. When the market crashed, she was forced to take a secure job to pay the bills, effectively setting her real estate dreams aside for nearly a decade. But the fire didn't stay extinguished. By 2016, Erica was a wife and a mother of seven children, working full-time while pursuing her associate's degree at PNW. With the emotional and financial support of her husband, she re-entered the field in January 2017, ready to finish what she started.

Erica's professional turning point happened in the quiet, exhausted moments of a life spent juggling two worlds. While managing the Long Beach Country Club and working in real estate, she found herself at a spiritual crossroads, praying for a sign to leave the safety of a steady paycheck.

The answer came with a twist of divine irony: two opportunities at once. One was to join a high-producing real estate team; the other was a General Manager role at a new coffee bodega with a substantial raise. She chose the "safe" path of the bodega, only to be terminated after one season. It was the "push" she needed.

"I think God just wanted to move me, because he knew I wasn't gonna move on my own," Erica reflects.



“If you are really successful in business, but your family is suffering, THAT’S NOT SUCCESS.”



“That really is the moment everything changed. I never looked back.”

Her mission is to provide a “country club level of service” to every client, whether they are buying a \$30,000 investment flip or a luxury beach home. “Everybody deserves the same experience,” she insists.

To understand Erica’s passion for equity, you have to look back at that first home. It was a modest ranch with a blue bathtub, yellow wallpaper, and maroon carpet.

“It was a true starter home, but it was clean, and it had room to grow,” she says.

She draws a sharp contrast between that dated 3-bedroom ranch and the 5-bedroom, 2.5-bath home she eventually moved her family into. The bridge between the two was equity. Erica uses her own story as a teaching tool, painting a picture for clients who can’t see past “ugly” wallpaper to the financial freedom beneath. By improving her property over two decades, she laid the foundation for purchasing not just a larger family home but also multi-unit properties that generate additional income.

If real estate is the frame of Erica’s life, family is the foundation. She and her husband have nurtured a family of entrepreneurs. The spirit was planted by Erica’s mother, who sold BBQ dinners while Erica organized the sales and delivery and watered by her husband who sold clothing and dinners with Erica.

Now, that seed has blossomed into a forest of businesses:

Husband & Brother: Ride with Care Medical Transportation and Preferred One Ambulance, Axiom Entertainment Media, Bridging the Gap Podcast

Daughters: Shea Skin Salon and Spa and Moore Sweets (baking company)

Son: Miller Solutions, a consultancy for credit repair and business funding.

For Erica, success isn’t about being a multimillion-dollar producer; it’s about balance. “If you are really successful in business, but your family is suffering, that’s not success,” she asserts. She meticulously schedules downtime to be a “Nana” to her four grandchildren and to simply “quiet the noise” with her husband.

Erica is deeply woven into Michigan City through initiatives like Vibrant Communities, Midnight Hoops, and Coldwell Banker REG Our Local Love Committee. Her spirit of service shows

up in personal ways, too. Erica is known for gifting freshly baked cakes with homemade caramel icing to clients and members of the community, a gesture so beloved that many say her “hands are blessed.” Whether celebrating a closing or comforting someone through a loss, her cakes have a way of making difficult moments a little lighter.

Her advice to those entering the industry is a testament to her own tenacity: “It is a marathon, it is not a

sprint. You have to be focused on the relationships. Don’t chase the numbers because that’s gonna follow if you focus on the relationships.”

Erica Miller’s story is one of starting and restarting, of blue tubs turning into multi-units, and of a woman who prayed for clarity and found it in the courage to be her own boss. Through it all, her “why” remains unchanged: providing the stability she craved as a child to every family she meets today. ▀



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BOLD MOVES AND THE RESILIENT SPIRIT OF JAMIE GARCIA

BY GIVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Many enter the real estate industry lured by the promise of flexible hours and “glitz and glam.” Jamie Garcia’s entry was forged in the fire of a life-altering pivot. After becoming a mother at just 16 and owning an asphalt company by 19, Jamie was forced to reinvent herself at 38, rebuilding from the ground up in the wake of a divorce.

“I hadn’t clocked in and worked for someone since I was 19 years old,” Jamie recalls. “I jumped into real estate because I knew I needed to be my own boss.”

Jamie describes herself as a “little chameleon,” a trait born from a childhood spent navigating the unpredictable environment in her home. At an early age, she vowed to turn the difficult moments into





“
 YOU NEED TO
 FIND SOMEONE
 WHO WILL
 always dance
 with you.
 ”

triumphs. Jamie learned how to survive through resilience and adaptability.

“To an average person, real estate would be a culture shock,” she explains. “But because I was used to sacrifice, I knew what it would take to be successful. You have to get up and keep going without an instant reward.”

The contrast, however, lies in the depth of the connection. While asphalt was a service-in, service-out transaction, real estate allows her to “touch people’s lives” during their most intimate financial decisions. Jamie is a self-proclaimed “oversharer,” using her own history to make her clients feel less alone during what can be an overwhelming process.

In an industry often defined by the bottom line, Jamie stands out for her radical commitment to her clients. She operates on a simple, gold-standard filter: the family test. By treating every buyer like a close relative, she removes the pressure of the sale and replaces it with pure advocacy. Whether it’s advising a client against a bad investment or sacrificing her own paycheck to seal a deal in their favor, her primary currency is trust, not commission.

While most people seek security in a divorce settlement, Jamie sought leverage. She took \$100,000, bought a fixer-upper in cash, and eliminated her biggest overhead, a mortgage. But she didn’t stop there. With the financial breathing room she created, Jamie doubled down on her future, reinvesting every saved dollar into lead generation. It was a high-stakes play that paid off exponentially, fueling a meteoric rise to 40+ home sales a year within the first 2 years of real estate.

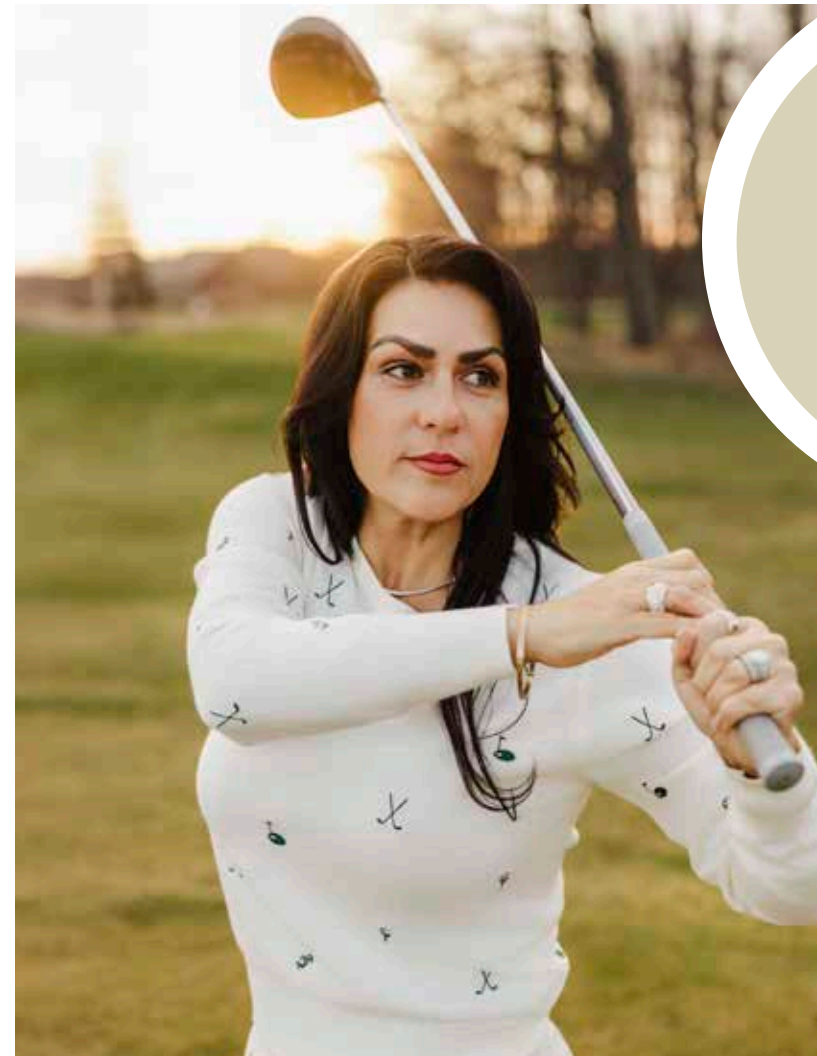
Despite the accolades and being a top producer, Jamie doesn’t focus on the numbers. To her, numbers shift the mindset toward things you can’t control. Instead, she focuses on the families she serves.

For Jamie, real estate is truly a family affair. Her commitment to client success became even more personal in 2021 when her sister Jen officially joined the team. Jamie has continued to grow her team over the years. Each new team member has continued to teach Jamie more about herself and the role of being leader.

Jamie has embraced a profound core philosophy: she prioritizes presence over possessions. She has replaced traditional Christmas gifts with family trips, ensuring her children—Jasmine, Jerzie, and Justice—build a wealth of shared experiences. These traditions became so important after the passing of the children’s father two years after the divorce.

For Jamie, life has always been “figureoutable”—an inheritance she celebrates every Wednesday during a standing golf game with her father. He taught her how to stand on her own, while gently reminding her that she shouldn’t always have to. Her father told her, “you need to find someone who will always dance with you.”

In time, that chapter of her life began to unfold as well. Five years, a thousand conversations, and one



“
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 PEOPLE’S
 lives.
 ”

perfect match. Jamie and David first crossed paths in the digital halls of Match.com back in 2019. In 2024, they began their greatest chapter yet, as husband and wife and forever dance partners.

When Jamie and David married, they didn’t just join lives; they built a new

foundation centering around all of their children. Jamie got the wonderful addition of Donovan, Alexis, and Darius to her family. This blending of hearts transformed into a growing legacy when they became grandparents, first welcoming Jonah in 2023 and Juneau in 2025.

In a world of fierce competition, Jamie chooses collaboration over rivalry. Known for her caring, approachable style, Jamie treats her colleagues more like family than agents. She leads with the philosophy that success is meant to be shared, and she is consistently the one bringing people together. Her loyalty and dedication to her relationships make her not just a leader, but the heartbeat of her community. ▀



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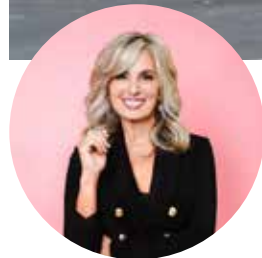


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Lisa Grady



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Agent Panel: 10:30-11:30pm
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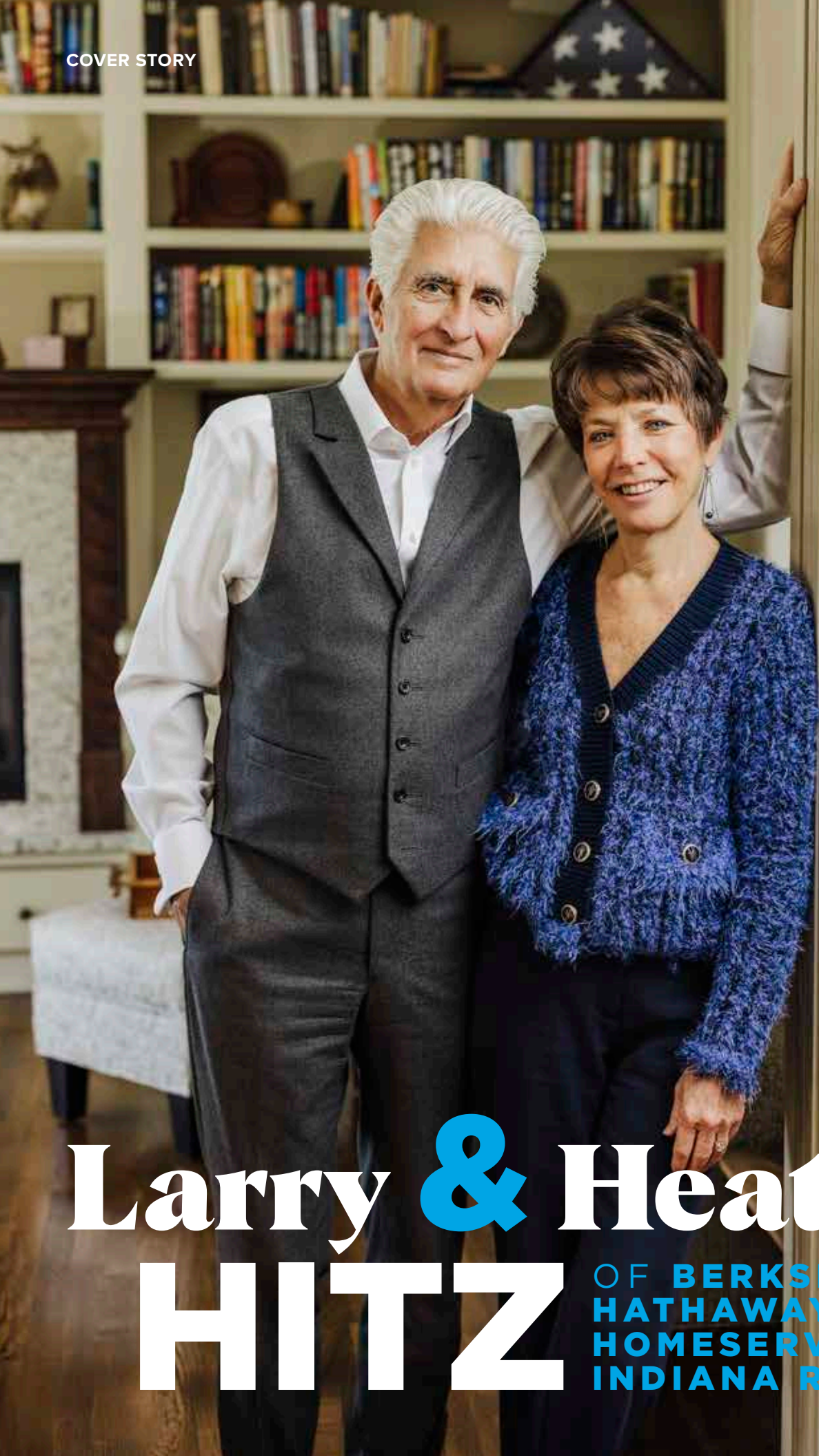


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Larry & Heather HITZ

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The Architect of Community: Larry & Heather Hitz Real Estate Legacy

BY GIVONNI DOWNING PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

The walls of Larry and Heather Hitz's home tell a story of shared legacy through every brushstroke of art.

Yet the true masterpiece exists beyond the frames. It is reflected in the sprawling neighborhoods Larry envisioned and helped bring to life—personally building some, while partnering with developers and builders to market others—communities now framed by maturing trees and the laughter of generations. From the small-town streets of Kouts to Northwest Indiana's most prestigious developments, Larry's journey has never been a sprint; it has been a meticulously paced marathon.

Larry Hitz views the business of real estate through the lens of a collegiate distance runner. Decades ago, as he laced up his shoes and strapped on his uniform for a two-mile race, he learned that victory isn't found in a single burst of speed, but in the grit to endure the valleys. "You learn a lot in sports, especially discipline," Larry reflects. "And you go through a lot of pain to win, which is like real estate."

This professional endurance began in a vastly different landscape: the beverage industry. After college, Larry spent seven years in sales for Canfield Beverages in Chicago. He was a marketing manager for Weight Watcher beverages and was part of the team that saw "Diet Fudge" soda take fire nationally after a feature in The Sun-Times. His transition into real estate was sparked by conversations in the Army Reserve, where there was a buzz about its potential. Seeking to end the grueling travel



schedule that kept him away from his young children, Larry got licensed in 1977 and never looked back.

His early years in the industry were a masterclass in grit. By 1981, amid 18% interest rates and company layoffs, Larry found himself at a crossroads. Rather than exiting, he doubled down, co-founding Executive Group in 1982 with just \$5,000 and a decision to make it work. By 1987, Larry acquired sole ownership of the agency, devoting himself to creating an environment where agents could do more

than just work; they could thrive. For decades, he steered this ship through the "roller coaster" of the local industry, surviving the dark rooms of his early career and the crushing weight of volatile markets.

Larry provided strong architectural vision, and Heather added a strategic marketing engine and the "unflappable" calm that helped scale the business. Heather entered the industry with a business degree from Valparaiso University and a concentration in marketing. Her sales skills were honed



**“God’s grace
has been the
foundation of my
success.”**

at AT&T and Mead Johnson Pharmaceuticals and her marketing skills refined at Griffin Media Design before she aligned with Larry’s firm in 2004.

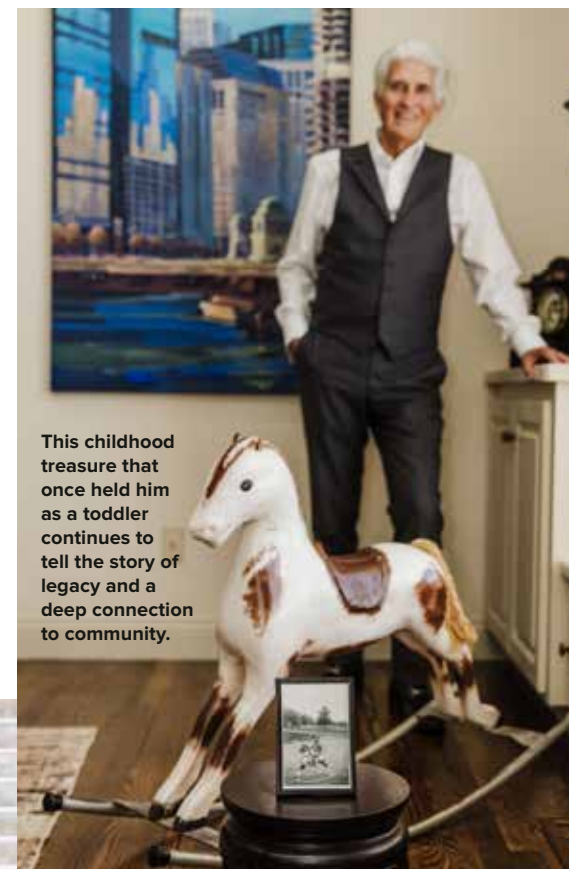
After noticing a gap in their outreach, Heather presented Larry with a 22-page PowerPoint detailing how to revolutionize their firm’s reach. Heather’s ability to seamlessly blend creative marketing with disciplined sales execution was a defining strength—one she consistently shared with and instilled in the agents she mentored in the business.

Her touch is everywhere, even in the vibrant greenery and live plants that fill their home. An avid gardener, Heather’s nurturing spirit mirrors the way she has cultivated their business. Where Larry is a self-admitted minimalist, Heather has created a “sense of home” through character and uniqueness. For Heather, success is defined as “feeling a sense of peace knowing that I’ve made a difference in others’ lives,” she shares.

Larry and Heather’s commitment to Northwest Indiana has always extended beyond the closing table. Their passion for the community led them to serve on boards for Empower Porter County, The Caring Place, Porter Hospital Foundation, the Porter County Community Foundation, and other organizations. For Larry, development was never just about revenue. It was about seeing a vision for what didn’t yet exist, like the urban living he pioneered in downtown Valparaiso when others were too afraid to bid. He remains proud of projects like Sand Creek, Walden, and Aberdeen, where he can watch generations of families enjoy the parks and pools he helped create.

Their commitment to the heart of the business was most evident when they shared what they loved about each other. Heather spoke of Larry’s kind heart and his love of God, while Larry marveled at Heather’s mind and her ability to stay unflappable through every trial. “God’s grace has been the foundation of my success,” Larry admits.

The Hitz legacy made headlines a couple of years ago with the sale of his iconic building at the roundabout at Roosevelt and Calumet. Larry stood on the top floor of his building, just as he had when he first bought it in 1989, and realized it was time to say goodbye to the space, but not the mission. Recently, he sold his 44-year-old business to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Indiana Realty, based in Indianapolis.



This childhood treasure that once held him as a toddler continues to tell the story of legacy and a deep connection to community.

“This move isn’t about becoming something different,” Larry stated. “It’s about continuing what we’ve always done, with the support of a team that shares our philosophy and culture.” The transition felt right because the new owners, including CEO Craig West, shared the same values and long-standing friendship.

Larry’s focus remains on the “4 Ps” of real estate: patience, persistence, perseverance, and prospecting. He continues to serve as a broker and, more importantly, a mentor to the next generation of leaders. This has always been and will always be what drives him. He thrives on

helping agents see and obtain their greatest potential.

His legacy is not just the land he developed and the properties he sold, but the bridge he built to connect people across the region. He has created a picture framed by greenery, love, and a strong sense of community that will endure for generations. Yet, even as his influence spans the horizon of Northwest Indiana, the core of his drive remains rooted in a Zig Ziglar quote given to him by his father, “You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”



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