

GREATER FORT WAYNE
Business Weekly

FORTY

UNDER

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2023

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NEWSPAPERS
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Carly Buchanan

Age: 36

Brooks Construction Company, Inc.

Director of Human Resources



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Homestead High School (2005); Associate of Science in Business from Indiana University Fort Wayne (2008); Bachelor of Science in Business Administration – Human Resources from Indiana Tech (2015); currently in-process Master of Business Administration MBA – Human Resources from Indiana Tech (2025 completion). I also hold advanced Human Resources Professional Certifications from SHRM (SHRM-SCP) and HRCI (aPHR).

What community organizations are you involved in?

I am President-Elect of the Northeast Indiana Human Resources Association (NIHRA.org). NIHRA is a 410+ member professional association with a 20 person Board of Directors committed to Advancing and Serving

the Human Resources Profession and Business Leaders across Northeast Indiana. NIHRA has monthly luncheons the 1st Wednesday of each month with keynote topics covering a variety of HR/Leadership/ Business topics.

I am Committee Chairman of the Workforce Recruitment committee for the Building Contractors Association of Northeast Indiana (BCAFort-Wayne.org). The BCA is a 275+ member trade association with 100 construction company members with 8 standing committees’ serving initiatives surrounding commercial construction in Northeast Indiana.

I am Committee Vice-Chairman of the Workforce Development & Scholarship committee for the Asphalt Pavement Association of Indiana (AsphaltIndiana.org). APAI is a 100 member association with 25 asphalt

See BUCHANAN, page 3

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FORT WAYNE
NEWSPAPERS
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

GREATER FORT WAYNE
Business Weekly

Congratulations!

CARLY BUCHANAN

Forty Under 40 Class of 2023

The Brooks Construction team sends heartfelt congratulations to our outstanding Human Resources Director.

We are inspired by your passion for people, growth and collaboration.

We are proud to have you on the team!



BROOKS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.

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BUCHANAN
FROM PAGE 2
producer/laydown members with 8 standing committees’ serving initiatives surrounding the production and construction of quality asphalt pavements throughout the State of Indiana.
I have been a volunteer for Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana (NorthernIndiana.JA.org) for 16+ continuous years. I have volunteered for JA programs such as: JA JobSpark, Discover Your Future Career Path, JA Economics, JA In-A-Day, and JA Achieve-A-Bowl to name a few.

What are your hobbies?
My friends would jokingly say my main hobby is “community involvement”---but in all seriousness, my main hobby is spending time with my family (husband Bart, son Jackson age 6, and daughter Daisy age 5). We enjoy spending summer time at our lake cottage and enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, bonfires, kayaking, and catching turtles. I also enjoy playing adult co-ed basketball, singing karaoke, reading, and running. I am excited (and equally nervous) to run the Fort4Fitness Half Marathon on September 30, 2023. When I have a free night out, I often watch my brother Hubie Ashcraft perform with his band “The Hubie Ashcraft Band” (I have also been known to sing a few songs, usually Miranda Lambert, with him on occasion!).

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
I am proud to call Northeast Indiana home for many reasons. I was born and raised here, graduated from Homestead High School, went to college here, worked my whole professional career to-date here, and have started my family here. Simply put---I am proud to say my past, present, and future is in Northeast Indiana and even though it is all that I’ve known, I am

perfectly content with that!
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?
What I love most about Human Resources is the blend between People and Business. I enjoy adding my “flavor” and perspective of HR and Leadership whenever and however I can to grow and support the business. I am passionate that HR is a department that can add strategic results to a business’s bottom-line. HR is not overhead. HR is not an expense. HR can strategically lead, inspire, and cultivate a winning company culture with internal programs, initiatives, policies, procedures, and best practices that makes a business MORE profitable & MORE successful. I enjoy when I can introduce ways HR can save money or better yet, make money within the business. To work in the profession I love, while getting to support a business to achieve its goals while serving as the figurative “linchpin” between employees and leadership is why I proudly say, “I LOVE HR!”

What does success mean to you?
In the words of one of my favorite authors Simon Sinek, “Achievement comes when you pursue and attain WHAT you want. Success comes when you are in clear pursuit of WHY you want it.” Over the past few years, I have been exposed to situations and instances in life that have brought me awareness to the bigger picture in life. Success to me is simply knowing, finding, and embracing the WHY behind my WHAT. If I get to do that each day authentically and purposefully, then I have achieved “success”.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
At the age of 4, I told everyone I wanted to be a “Mommy” when I grew up (I am so proud to be one

now to a 6 year old son and 5 year old daughter). In middle school I wanted to be a WNBA basketball player. In high school, I wanted to be a lawyer and practice business law. Interestingly enough, there are many facets of Human Resources/Employment where I get to use my legal/law lens to administer decisions with a fair, consistent, and legal mindset.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?
Burger King---I was age 15 and it was minimum wage to start as a “crew member”. It was there I learned how to move up the ranks and work hard to achieve goals. My 2nd month there I was named “Employee of the Month” and within 1 year (at the tender age of 16) I was promoted to “Shift Leader” and was able to trade in my maroon colored ‘crew’ polo shirt for the special blue colored ‘management’ polo shirt. A small accomplishment but a life lesson was taught. You can achieve anything you set your mind to; attitude & mindset is everything.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?
My late mother, Becky who passed in October 2021. My mom taught me many things, from an early age, but most notably she taught me empathy, compassion, and people skills. My mom kept me grounded and always reminded me to focus on what’s really important in life---What impact do you want to leave on others? What do you want people to remember about you? How do you make others feel? Do you want to fill people’s cups or empty them? By those simple mantras and by being “my mother’s daughter”, I have lived authentically by those principles, which has naturally and organically helped me succeed in my life and career.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
My biggest accomplishment in my career up to this point is championing a cohesive synergy internally around concepts of leadership and our company’s greatest assets being our People. I have been able to proudly observe managers, supervisors, leaders from all different generations and mindsets come together under concepts of leadership and people centric business decisions that are simply good for today’s business. Some of these specific accomplishments include: Leadership Training & Coaching, Employee Engagement Surveys, Performance Reviews, S.M.A.R.T Goals, HR Technology, Talent Pipelines, Hiring & Selection Process, Employee Onboarding, & Reduction in Turnover. I can proudly say as I start my 6th year at my company, Brooks Construction Company, Inc., that my biggest accomplishment is simply put---Brooks Construction trusting in me to do my job and allowing me to introduce ideas I am passionate about and “sprinkling” my modern-world HR concepts throughout this organization and the 250+ employees it impacts.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?
Learning to say No. As an emerging professional trying to “prove yourself”, many times I (and I still sometimes do) say Yes to too much. When this happens to me, I have found that my fight or flight response is to do more / work more (no matter what it takes). The above mentioned is not always the right answer and at some point could burn you out. I am learning and continuously practicing the art of saying no and how and when to use it. Knowing and setting boundaries on my time, commitments, goals, and priorities has

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INDIANATECH

RISING STARS

GO FOR IT.

Congratulations to Carly Buchanan and all of the Indiana Tech alumni who have been recognized as one of Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly’s Forty Under 40 top professionals in Northeast Indiana.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CARLY’S STORY

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Michelle Bojrab-Wray

Age: 35
Parkview Health
Lead Community Outreach Dietitian



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)
The Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FAND), 2020
Masters of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics, Fall 2012
Ball State University, Muncie, IN
Coordinated Program in Dietetics, Summer 2011
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
Bachelor of Science in Dietetics, Spring 2010
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
Minor in Childhood Development and Family Studies
Snider High School, 2006

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
The Indiana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
The Northeast Indiana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

What are your hobbies?
Some of my favorite hobbies include enjoying the outdoors with family and friends in northern Indiana, traveling, gardening, and baking.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
I was born and raised in Fort Wayne. Although I went away for college, I knew I'd always want to come back to my hometown to be close to my family and build my life within this community.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?
What I enjoy most about the role within my field is that I'm able to take evidence based best practices and share it with the community to

positively impact people's lives for the greater good of our community.

What does success mean to you?
Success for me is growing a project from concept to implementation to measurable health outcomes.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
My father was a pharmacist, and my mother had a catering company, so I combined their passions to create my own dream of becoming a Registered Dietitian.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?
My first paycheck was from Casa! While working there, I was a hostess. The job was very cross-functional at times.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?
I'm a product of my environment. I've had huge support from my parents, sisters, loving husband, and extended family. From as big as always encouraging me to pursue higher education which allowed me to turn these opportunities into realities, to helping with board of director gifts during my presidency of the Indiana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
Establishing a continuum of care for those patients that identify food insecure is the greatest success in my career to date. Two programs that highlight this success are VeggieRX and Food Assistance and Support Team (FAST). Both of which have seen great success with the support of the team at Parkview and grant funding from the state and federal level. We have made measurable positive outcomes for many people in our community.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?
My biggest mistake thus far is putting too much weight in the opinions of other people early on. However, this allowed me the opportunity for growth and development in my career.

What are your current professional goals?
My goal is to continue to develop professionally and find ways to positively impact the health of our community.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?
I'm involved in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at the local and state level which allows me to be an active learner within my profession. This keeps me on the forefront of new information and trends that are impacting the world of dietetics.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?
This is always an ongoing challenge. I'm lucky to love what I do because it doesn't seem like work. My husband and family are encouraging and considerate of my passion.

What do you do to relax?
Soaking up the sun and enjoying the lakes of northern Indiana! I find peace in good music, friends, and walks.

What book do you recommend?
I just finished the New One Minute Manager by Ken Blanchard, but my favorite style of book is cookbooks! I've got a library of them.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?
I would tell my high school self that it will all work out the way it is supposed to, and to not rush the process.

Chad Blackmon-Edmonds

Age: 37
Parkview Health
Organizational Development Specialist



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)
I attended High School at Elmhurst (when it existed) and graduated from Spring Arbor University in 2009. I received my Master's Degree from Western Governors University.

What community organizations are you involved in?
I have served on the board of directors for Blue Jacket Inc for nearly 6 years. In addition, I led the creative writing class for the Unity Performing Arts Foundation for about 8 years

until the pandemic hit. I work closely with Junior Achievement as well and speak at local schools when I can.

What are your hobbies?
I majored in English in college so I love to read and write. I also have a passion for basketball so I have coached younger kids and mentored others in that sport. I love movies and games so when I can, I squeeze those into the schedule.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
I have lived here my whole life. Most

of my family lives here and I have raised all three of my children here. I love Fort Wayne and I've loved watching the city continue to grow and thrive over time. There are so many more fun things to do than when I was a kid!

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?
Too many things to name! I love being able to help leaders connect the dots and get better. Our job is to help our leaders become the best version of themselves in order to serve our co-workers and patients with excellence. It is humbling to be entrusted with that task and relied upon to assist so many outstanding people. I have always enjoyed being a person that assists others in whatever capacity I can. This profession allows me to do that every day as well as continue to grow personally.

What does success mean to you?
When our leaders are viewed as excellent, I know we have done our job. Personally, success means being my best for my wife and children as often as possible. I strive to be a man of God and, though it is impossible, reflect the kind of love he shows to others. If I'm operating to the best of my ability, success will follow. I trust that.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
When I was a kid I wanted to be a cop because I loved cop movies! When I found out how dangerous the job actually was, I changed my mind. Basketball was my pursuit after that.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?
My first paycheck came from The Buckle at Jefferson Pointe outlet mall. I was a floor salesperson back then and I was absolutely terrible.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?
My wife and my parents have always been my biggest supporters. My mother's guidance and my fathers example of manhood and leadership are the biggest factors to my career growth. My wife challenges me in a way that only she can. Those things have shaped me the most in my career.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
This certainly ranks among the biggest! I am also proud to say that I have led several former employees and helped them attain leadership titles. Finishing my Master's degree a couple years ago was exciting as well.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?
That is hard to say. I'm not sure which one is the biggest but probably spending too much time in a career that did not suit my natural ability or interest which was sales. I learned a lot through my sales experiences though. When I look back, I don't see as many mistakes as I see missed

Beth Lock

Age: 39

Parkview Health

Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

University of Indianapolis, BA, International Relations and German

Purdue University Fort Wayne, MS,

Organizational Leadership and Supervision

What community organizations are you involved in?

In the past, I have been a part of the

Regional Mental Health Coalition and a board member for Park Center. I currently serve on the Greater Fort Wayne Advocacy Committee. I also lead and volunteer in several ministry areas at my church, Abundant Life.

What are your hobbies?

With a large family, time for hobbies is scarce. However, I do love to play the piano and I enjoying singing. Whenever I get a chance to throw a party for family or friends, I love planning something “Pinterest worthy.” I also enjoy arts, crafts, and baking with my kids, especially around the holidays.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I moved to northeast Indiana for work 16 years ago. I grew up in a small community in Ohio and then attended college in Indianapolis. Fort Wayne was a medium sized city that still had a small town feel but also the amenities of a more metro area. The size was the perfect fit. Further, I met my husband here and we love raising our family here.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I am a policy nerd. I love reading

through proposed legislative policy and finding ways to improve it on behalf of my organization and/or the community. It’s like solving a big word puzzle, but with a more meaningful impact.

What does success mean to you?

Success is not about titles or money. For me, it’s about having a reputation of integrity and authenticity, both professionally and personally. It’s about being a positive influence on individuals or situations around me for the greater good. This is when I feel the most successful.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

In elementary school, I either wanted to be an artist (you know, the ones who paint and wear a beret) or a NASA astronaut.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

I worked for a small, independent dry-cleaning company called Genie’s Cleaners.I worked at the front desk, handling incoming and outgoing dry-cleaning orders.

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Congratulations, Forty Under 40 winners!

We’re proud to have you on our team.

Three Parkview co-workers have been named Forty Under 40 winners by Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly. Every year, this recognition highlights the top professionals in our region who are working to make a difference. Thank you, Beth, Chad and Michelle, for sharing your talent and ambition with Parkview and the community.



Beth Lock
Director, Government & Legislative Affairs



Chad Blackmon-Edmonds
Organizational Development Specialist



Michelle Bojrab-Wray
Lead Community Outreach Dietitian

Kristin Ann Smith

Age: 33

3Rivers
Federal
Credit Union

SBA Lender



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**
High School – Northrop High School
Bachelors of Business Administration – Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech)
Masters of Business Administration – Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech)
Masters of Science in Management – Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech)

What community organizations are you involved in?
Kate’s Kart, Junior Achievement, Big Brothers Big Sisters, 3Rivers Community Foundation

What are your hobbies?
My hobbies include, spending time with my family and friends, checking out new local happenings and eateries, and travelling to places we have never been.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
I am in northeast Indiana because this is where my family is. My dad retired from the General Motors Plant – Fort Wayne Assembly, and my mom from a local hospital. I met my husband at Jefferson Middle School, we are rooted in Northeast Indiana and plan to stay and continue to raise our family here. We have friends who date back to age 5, and we are doing life with them with our children. Fort Wayne has just enough big city vibe, where there are new places to go and events to attend, but also I absolutely love running into former classmates at the grocery store.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?
In my profession working with



Kristin Smith
SBA Lender

3Rivers Congratulates

Kristin Smith

for being recognized as part of Business Weekly’s 2023 Forty Under 40.

Kristin knows the meaning of hard work and dedication. We are proud of her outstanding accomplishments and service to our community.

3RIVERS

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businesses, I love the stories. Our entrepreneurs in Northeast Indiana are incredible, I love learning about and better understanding their businesses, how they started and how they’re growing. I treasure the relationships that I build with our membership, and hope that I can provide what they need to get to the next level.

I enjoy that every day is different, no two businesses are the same. Each has something to contribute to our local ecosystem.

What does success mean to you?
Success means to me to be happy, showing up as my best authentic self, and hoping that will radiate to those who I surround myself with. Success is building up others, supporting and cheering them on along the way.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I always thought I would work in a medical setting. My parents were both registered nurses, so I figured that was my destiny as well. What I enjoyed most about the medical profession is that you are scientifically solving a problem with proven results. However, my medical dreams ended when I had an opportunity to study dental at Anthis Career Center and quickly learned that the medical trajectory was not for me. I am grateful for that educational opportunity while still in high school, it saved me thousands in college tuition.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?
My first paycheck came from being a team member at Dairy Queen! My friends and I all applied, and were hired, but then they split us up at various locations, which wasn’t what we hoped for. I don’t recall working there for very long before I moved onto being a hostess at the Trolley Bar, which remains one of my favorite restaurants.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?
I am humbled and blessed to have many managers, mentors, colleagues, and community leaders that have allowed me the opportunity to walk along side them, challenging and encouraging me along the way. I hope that I can portray the same leadership and grace that was given to me in my career journey.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
In my career thus far, my accomplishments are working with businesses and watching them thrive from grow from an idea to year-over-year growth. Their successes of building their own businesses and providing a legacy for their families is something I am really proud to be a part of. I also am extremely proud of the leading the team in our Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan efforts during the COVID pandemic in April 2020. This time was filled with so much uncertainty, and 3Rivers was the first to begin funding to members. Having this funding provided relief to our business owners so that they could continue to pay their employees during shutdown.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?
My greatest mistake thus far is thinking I can do it all myself, not asking for counsel, or thinking can achieve the best results independently. I learned that, with anything, personally or professionally, it’s better with a strong team surrounding you, providing valued and considered input. “Team of Rivals” by Doris Kearns Goodwin illustrates bringing together opposing views can provide the greatest achievement.

What are your current professional goals?
My current professional goals are to strive for more leadership opportunities – providing a greater impact to those who I serve alongside of. My biggest strength in completing this goal has been surrounding myself with others that have been so kind as to build me up, offer advice, and provide access to trainings and articles that aid in achieving my goal.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?
To stay current and relevant in my profession, I frame myself with leaders that can provide me with valuable insight on market data and information. I also look towards a variety of podcasts, publications, and trainings to learn new things, test and improve my skill set, and offer growth opportunities to expand my knowledge of banking and business trends.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?
I would love to say that I perfectly balance it all, but I don’t. Open communication with my family and colleagues is key, along with scheduling time for each of these parts of my life to thrive. My husband is also one of my biggest cheerleaders and teammates. Having his support allows me to say “yes” to opportunities and to have an impact. It’s a constant juggling act, but I wouldn’t have it any other way.

What do you do to relax?
Relaxing, to me, is not having a plan (which isn’t very often). I love to spend the day at the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo with my daughters, Hope and Hazel, feeding the giraffes or marveling at the lions. Taking a walk on the Pufferbelly Trail, swinging at the Parkview Park. In the summer time, we pack a picnic and relax by our neighborhood pool, it’s simple and perfect.

What book do you recommend?
“Becoming Bulletproof” by Evy Poupouras, “Didn’t See that Coming” by Rachel Hollis, and “Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead” by Sheryl Sandberg. The general theme for these books are emotional intelligence and setting boundaries. All of these women have earned their successes in their careers, and maintain their platform by stepping outside of society’s norm for women.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?
Treat others with kindness, always. Listen to others, you don’t know everything; value and develop relationships with anyone you choose to. Give yourself some grace, you will figure out who you are. High school was a challenge for me to figure out who I was and wanted to be, friends had more influence on me than they should have. I needed have more confidence to not always go with the crowd.

Amanda K. Garner, CPA

Age: 39

Baden Gage
& Schroeder,
LLC
Director



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bachelor of Arts in Financial Accounting and Master of Accountancy from Manchester College

What community organizations are you involved in?

I was on the board of Kate’s Kart, Inc. from 2010 to 2022. During that time, I also served as the Vice President and Treasurer. I continue to serve on the finance committee. I wanted to get involved after my son received books from Kate’s Kart during his NICU stay. It has been incredibly exciting to be a part of the growth of the organization over the years.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy spending time with my family (family game nights, traveling). I also like to bake and decorate cakes. I have been decorating cakes since I started in 4-H at 10 years old. One of the first large cakes I made was an anniversary cake for my grandparents 50th anniversary party when I was in high school. Now I make fun cakes for birthdays.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Huntington is my hometown. I still live just a few miles from where I grew up. I always knew that I would stay in the area so that my son could grow up close to family, like I did.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I enjoy being an advisor to my clients and getting to train, encourage, and be a part of others growing and thriving. There are so many things that are going on in the area and getting to be a part of that is exciting. I also enjoy the variety of what I get to do on a daily basis. Every day is different and there are always new challenges and opportunities to continue learning.

What does success mean to you?

Success means being a role model to others and always doing the best that I can.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was young, I would have said elementary teacher. But as I got older, I started helping my parents with their family business

and found that I enjoyed accounting.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

I have been working since I was 16. I was a cashier at Owens grocery store in Huntington. Growing up on a farm, my parents taught me to work hard from a young age. Everything in life leads to something else and since I enjoyed working with people, I started working at a local bank towards the end of college. I stayed at the bank until I started my internship at Baden, where I have been ever since.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

I have had so much support in my career. I have an amazing husband who makes sure everything at home runs smoothly, which allows me to focus at work during my busy time of the year so that I can be present with my family when I am at home. My parents have always supported and encouraged me. And I’ve had many directors and managers at work that have been awesome in teaching and mentoring me along the way. I would not be where I am today without the support of so many people.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment is becoming a director last year. It was not something that I set out to accomplish when I started my career but over time, I decided it was something that I did want to attain. I am incredibly proud to be able to work alongside so many talented people.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I am a perfectionist and a people pleaser so learning when to stop

and say no is difficult for me. I have learned that it is OK to ask for help, to let the small things go, and to say no, even when it isn’t easy to do so.

What are your current professional goals?

I am continuously learning to be the best that I can be for my clients and co-workers. Nothing stays the same so being a lifelong learner is very important.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Standards are always changing so there is constant training. Technology is also always changing and so looking ahead to what’s available or will become available.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I have a lot of help from my husband to keep things at home running so I can focus on work and then on spending time together when I’m not working. I try to be intentional with my time, especially during the spring. I enjoy volunteering for events where I can also get my family involved to combine that time and also teach our son the importance of giving back.

What do you do to relax?

I enjoy traveling with my family, baking and decorating cakes. Although the perfectionist in me can also cause cake decorating to be stressful, I’ve tried to relax a bit more over the years and enjoy it instead of stressing over perfection.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Northeast Indiana really is a small community and relationships are so important. Don’t be afraid to push yourself outside your comfort zone and meet new people.

BLACKMON-EDMONDS FROM PAGE 4

opportunities. I wish I would have tried more things as I figured out my career path.

What are your current professional goals?

I’d like to continue growing professionally. For me, that means increasing my responsibilities and moving into leadership again. In addition, I personally plan to get back to reading and finish 4 books this year.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

The beauty of working in workforce development is that we get the opportunity to research and find out what trainings and materials are the most relevant to professionals in the healthcare field constantly. Which means we should never have outdated material or presentations that we are using to develop our leaders. This also holds us accountable for making sure we stay on top of what is new and what is being used effectively in the training world.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I’m not sure if there is a perfect answer for that. I do my best to be intentional with my time rather than allow my days to push me in

different directions. Planning time ahead with things outside of work is critical. I received some great advice on balancing these things a few years ago and it has helped tremendously. I’ve had to learn what things are priority and what things can be moved around.

What do you do to relax?

I love writing when things are calm in my house (which isn’t a ton of time!). I also love watching movies with my family. They all know that dad is a movie guy so it’s nice that my son has gotten into that hobby with me.

What book do you recommend?

My favorite read is the Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis, but recently I finished Notes of a Native Son by James Baldwin and it is just great writing.

For work purposes, I think everyone should read Emotional Intelligence 2.0. Great read and practical for so many reasons.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell my high school self to not take himself so serious. I was really tough on myself in high school and missed out on a lot of the fun things my peers did. Not the reckless things, but the fun things. I wouldn’t take myself so seriously and learn to balance my fun and my studies.

Congratulations to the entire

Forty Under 40 Class of 2023

We are proud to have one of our own
included in this prestigious group.



Amanda K. Garner, CPA, Director
Badencpa.com | 800-830-2552



Jenna Gunn

Age: 31

Greater Fort Wayne Inc.

Director of Events



What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)

Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management

What community organizations are you involved in?

I’ve done Culinary Queens the last two years in support of Easterseals Arc.

What are your hobbies?

Kayaking, bowling, reading, cooking, gardening

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I always had the dream to move somewhere warm after college but realizing everything our community has to offer, I can’t imagine living anywhere else.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I love bringing people together and seeing the excitement and fun our events bring to the community!

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is knowing that my contributions positively impacted not only the organization but our community.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a lawyer. To this day, I still think it’d be fun!

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first job was the Huntington

See GUNN, page 34

Emily Watkins

Age: 29

Trine University

Assistant Professor

Achieve Physical Therapy and Sports Performance - Physical Therapist



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Doctor of Physical Therapy – Trine University

What community organizations are you involved in?

Trine University Women’s Soccer – Volunteer Coach

Angola High School Track and Field – Volunteer Coach

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy spending time outside with my wife, goofy golden retriever, and the rest of our family, whether that is snow or water skiing, hiking, running, golfing, or enjoying time on Hamilton Lake. I also have fun learning new piano compositions.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I grew up in Hamilton, IN in Cold Springs Resort. My career and family are located in northeast Indiana which have led me to stay in this area.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

In both of my professions, my favorite aspect is working and collaborating with others to help them reach their goals. As a professor, I enjoy connecting class content to real-world examples so that students can see the importance of what we are learning. I find the human body and its capacity to produce movement fascinating, and love sharing in those class discussions with students. I also spend a significant amount of time advising students in the Exercise Science department. During those advising meetings, I work with students on career planning, best study habits, and graduate application planning. As a physical therapist, I

love problem-solving with my patients to cater the best plan of care for them to help them return to various aspects of their lives. I enjoy the stories that I hear from my patients and have fun building a professional relationship with them built on trust and a common goal. I find great motivation and reward in helping others turn challenges into stepping stones.

What does success mean to you?

In my perspective, to succeed means to set an honorable goal and to allocate one’s efforts to reach that goal. I do not think the only way to succeed is to have reached the initially intended goal, as perhaps sometimes success is found in the process of reaching that goal. I think success looks differently for everyone.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

As a child, I wanted to be a veterinarian because I had/have a strong love of animals. I have been able to connect that interest into my current career by pursuing a certification to involve canine physical rehabilitation in my career.


Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from Cold Springs Resort in Hamilton, IN, a business that my family operates. My job at the time was to clear tables and clean dishes at our family restaurant.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

I am thankful to have many wonderful supporters in my life. My wife, parents,

See WATKINS, page 9



CONGRATULATIONS JENNA GUNN

Building a nationally recognized economy at Greater Fort Wayne Inc.

And congratulations to our LEADERSHIP FORT WAYNE ALUMNI

Brittainy Chaffee - Class of 2017


Prachi Hoffmeister - Class of 2022

David Leininger - Class of 2017

Justin Molitoris - Class of 2018

Kristin Smith - Class of 2021

James Velez - Class of 2017



GREATER FORT WAYNE INC.
METRO CHAMBER ALLIANCE



Trine University salutes our member of the Business Weekly Forty Under 40 **Class of 2023**

Emily Watkins
Assistant Professor, Exercise Science

We are proud of your commitment to and care for your students, and salute all the Trine University employees who perform their duties with excellence.



Heidi Buffenbarger, MS, RN

Age: 39

Stillwater Hospice, Inc.

Chief Nursing Officer



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

I have a Master’s degree focused in Executive Nursing Leadership as well as a BSN.

What community organizations are you involved in?

Currently I am the state chapter leader for Free Mom Hugs, a national organization that seeks to ensure everyone knows they are loved! I am also on the Advisory Board for the YMCA Camp Potawatomi. I highly recommend sending your kids to this summer camp!

What are your hobbies?

My spare time is spent typically with my family. We love to bowl, play games, and watch movies. I also enjoy reading murder mystery novels!

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was raised in northeast Indiana and have never given much thought to leaving the area. I enjoy being near my family, having all 4 seasons, and the cost of living is nice. We travel to other cities often but are always impressed by what Fort Wayne has to offer!

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

As a nurse leader my job fills my bucket in so many ways! I love

developing other leaders, performing process improvements, and helping to lead teams to increase quality scores. My role gives me the chance to grow myself and others. The world of health-care is ever changing so my job is never done and I truly appreciate the challenges that brings.

What does success mean to you?

How I define success has certainly changed as I have gotten older. These days success to me means happy and comfortable. It means having a job I love that provides for my family while having the ability to do the fun things I enjoy.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

For the longest time I wanted to be a teacher, then I discovered how much I love math, spreadsheets, and accounting. The idea do become a nurse did not come until later in my life. And now I have a role that allows me to be a nurse, educator, and accountant. It truly is the best of everything I have ever wanted.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My very first actual paycheck came from Wendy’s. I started there as a cashier but by the time I left 2 years

as a result I lacked confidence in my leadership and problem-solving abilities. However, through the years I have recognized that while I will always be a lifelong learner, I can still trust myself to lead and problem-solve effectively. The lesson I have learned throughout this process is to trust myself and the process.

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goals include: Earning my CCRP (Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner) to include canine physical rehabilitation in my career

Refining my classes at Trine University to add more hands-on learning experiences

Gaining further certifications in the realm of physical therapy to add more tools to my toolbelt with treatment options

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I am thankful that by teaching updated content that is relevant to the physical therapy profession, I stay updated on current best practices that I can apply to my clinical career. I also collaborate on research projects with colleagues at Trine University to learn more about our field and contribute to the scientific community at large.

later I could cover every role on the line.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

I credit my career to two of the best men I have ever known. My father helped me get through some of the roughest years and encouraged me to keep going. He set a very hardworking example of perseverance. And my husband has done everything in his power to support me at home so that I can achieve my degrees and pursue my passions at work.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

It is hard for me to name a “biggest” accomplishment. There are several I am very proud of but I think truly the thing I am most proud of is seeing my team succeed. Watching the leaders I am mentoring grow, achieve, and just take over is the most satisfying accomplishment for me. I am blessed to work with some of the smartest, most compassionate, and hardworking people!

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake thus far would be the naivety I had in my twenties thinking I needed to be the best with the most credentials in order to feel fulfilled. That ambition caused unnecessary stress in my life even if it helped me get where I am now. Growing to realize that I just needed to be my authentic self in a role that filled all of my buckets emotionally surrounded by people with common values has turned my stress into bliss.

What are your current professional goals?

Currently I am pursuing my certification in Healthcare Compliance. I hope to achieve this before the end of 2023. I am also considering picking back up some college level teaching. Though my role allows me to educate people routinely, I miss the classroom setting and watching a group of students light up when they are studying their passion.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Healthcare is always changing. New

research is always leading to new best practice. In order to stay current, I read or attend learning sessions. I am on many listservs, subscribe to several journals, connect with organizations that provide webinars, and attend conferences as often as possible. I am very intentional in setting aside time for continued learning.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I think creating a balance in my life has been my greatest learning curve. My priorities have shifted as I have gotten older. It is not about having a delicate balance where each area is given equal time, it is about finding the priority right now and focusing on that. And, perhaps more importantly, it is about self-care. I know what most of my triggers are, I know I can dig in and shut others out when I want to get a task done, but I also know that I will be much happier and pleasant to be around if I put the task away and enjoy time with family and friends. I also choose community service that I am passionate about. That makes it more enjoyable for me and helps me to know when to prioritize it.

What do you do to relax?

I have two states of relaxation. Sometimes I need to be alone and zone out of “real life”. To do this I either watch silly TV shows or I read murder mystery novels. Other times I need to be with people. This could just be getting together with friends to share a meal or play games. I am a board game junky. Everyone else in my house plays video games but they will pause those to play board games or cards with me.

What book do you recommend?

I believe self-awareness is the key to being a fantastic leader and no one does self-awareness better, in my opinion, than Brené Brown. My top picks for her for any leader are Dare to Lead and Atlas of the Heart.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

If I could tell my 18 year old self anything it would be to stop thinking people think so much about you. Life is hard for everyone, and they are not paying that much attention to you. So, you don’t have to be perfect because perfection is a myth.

What do you do to relax?

I take walks outside, play piano, exercise, and read with my wife to relax.

What book do you recommend?

The Shack

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell my high school self to slow down and enjoy the little moments.

WATKINS
FROM PAGE 8

and rest of my family including several close friends have always supported me and believed in me. I will always be thankful for their kind and loving presence in my life. In my professional life, one mentor who has helped me to advance in my career is Dr. Shane Steele. Shane has been an incredible mentor to me in both my clinical and academic careers. I am thankful to have him as a leader in each of my professions to both challenge and encourage me to reach my potential.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

At this point in my career, there is not one accomplishment that seems to stand out from the rest. However, I find my accomplishments in others’ successes. When a student leaves my office finally understanding a confusing topic, passes a difficult class, or for the first time feels excited about a new career path, I feel accomplished. When a patient is able to hold a child without pain, return to their favorite hobby, or move throughout their day without pain, I feel accomplished.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

At the beginning of my career, I felt that I still had so much to learn, and

THE STILLWATER HOSPICE FAMILY CONGRATULATES

Heidi Buffenbarger, RN



Thank you for your dedication to bringing compassionate care to families throughout northeast Indiana.

Stillwater HOSPICE

Justin T. Molitoris

Age: 33

Barrett McNagny, LLP

Associate Attorney

Primarily practicing in business transactions, mergers & acquisitions and cybersecurity



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Graduated from Selinsgrove Area High School in Pennsylvania; B.A. in Political Science and B.A. in English from the Pennsylvania State University. Law degree from Indiana University Maurer School of Law (Bloomington).

What community organizations are you involved in?

Board Member, Fort Wayne Civic Theatre, currently serving as Vice President.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies include spending time with my wife and children and traveling to visit our family. Outside of that, my hobbies are reading, all things basketball and triathlon.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I am in northeast Indiana because Fort Wayne provides all the things I need for a fulfilling life: a great place to raise a family, a community of growth, and complex and engaging work. I arrived in Bloomington thinking I wanted to continue my journey from Pennsylvania through the Midwest to Chicago. After a summer in Chicago, I knew that size of city was not meant for me. Fortunately, my law school roommate was from Fort Wayne, introduced me to the area and, a decade later, here we are today. Seeing all the change in Fort Wayne in the past decade and the potential for even more in the coming years confirms this is the place to be.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

Working in mergers & acquisitions,


See **MOLITORIS**, page 34

Dr. Elizabeth Roush-Lichlyter, O.D.

Age: 38

Drs. Roush and Will Optometrists

CEO



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

I am a 2002 graduate of East Noble High School, 2006 graduate of Indiana University Bloomington, and 2020 graduate of Indiana School of Optometry.

What community organizations are you involved in?

Rotary, Delta Gamma Alumni, Northeast Indiana Optometric Society, and Indiana Optometric Association, InfanSEE, Oak Farm Montessori School Tall Oak Gala and the Shepherd's Summer Concert Series at Sylvan Cellars.

What are your hobbies?

I love to cook and create new things – I can recreate the exact same thing because I don't believe in using a recipe! We enjoy learning about new cultures and foods in our house

and then hopefully traveling to those locations! We also love to travel. We live by the Oak Farm philosophy "The World is Our Classroom"! I also love to plan parties or decorate.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My husband and I were both born and raised in Indiana. We enjoy the four seasons, the sense of community, and picked the Northeast for the incredible lakes! We are excited to be around the growth of the food, drink, and entertainment industries that Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana have been experiencing.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?


One could argue that vision is the most coveted of the 5 senses and that starts to develop in utero. Our vision affects how we feel about

See **ROUSH-LICHLYTER**, page 34

Barrett McNagny congratulates

Justin Molitoris

on being named to Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Forty Under 40 Class of 2023.



A business transactions and cybersecurity attorney at Barrett McNagny, Justin Molitoris assists clients of all sizes including family-owned businesses, sole proprietors and Fortune 500 companies.

Congratulations to Justin and to all of the 2023 *Forty Under 40* recipients!

Congratulations

Dr. Elizabeth Roush-Lichlyter!

We are so proud of you!





Drs. Roush & Will Optometrists
rweyecare.com

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Albion Office

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Albion, IN 46701

(260) 636-7788

Ligonier Office

809 Lincolnway South

Ligonier, IN 46767

(260) 894-3909

Jason Beer

Age: 38

Homestead
High School

English
Teacher



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Northrop High School (Fort Wayne, IN)

The University of St. Francis, Bachelor of Arts (Fort Wayne, IN, 2007)

The University of St. Francis, Master of Organizational Leadership (Fort Wayne, IN 2018)

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

At Homestead High School I am involved in Poetry Out Loud, which is a national high school poetry recitation competition through the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

What are your hobbies?

Writing – both fiction and nonfiction
Spending time with family
Hiking and running
Traveling

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

It is where I am from and where our families live for both my wife and myself. But we also love Fort Wayne – the development of downtown, its parks, trails, and public library systems, and its arts community. We have dear friends here as well. We are grateful to be here.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I love that I get to share my passions with my students. In addition to being a teacher I am also a writer, writing both fiction and nonfiction. I believe it makes a difference with students that I can share my own experiences as a working writer with them.

And I love working with high school-aged students. They are hopeful, excited about life and their futures,

willing to engage with each other, and open to new possibilities. They are a wonderful group of people to work with.

What does success mean to you?

Being happy and healthy, and that my family is happy and healthy. Yes, it takes money to make that happen, but there's a lot more to it than that.

Getting to pursue work and personal projects that are meaningful to me.

Believing I am contributing and giving back to my community.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

Likely a professional athlete when I was middle-school and earlier, either in baseball or basketball.

But even if I never said I wanted to be a teacher, I loved several of my teachers. And many had a life-changing impact on me, more so than just about anyone else in my life growing up.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

I mowed yards, but payment was often in cash, or in pizza and ice cream.

But my first official paycheck came from Pizza Hut. That was my high school job. I started on dishes and eventually did a variety of kitchen tasks.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance in your
career?**

I couldn't name just one person.

Certainly my parents played a huge part, supporting and encouraging me, and helping pay for my college.

And Drs. Stephen Sullivan, Ken Bugajski, Andrew Prall, and Matthew

Smith at the University of St. Francis.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

Being named the 2022 Homestead High School Teacher of the year, 2022 Southwest Allen County Schools Teacher of the Year, and a 2023 Indiana Teacher of the Year Top 3 Finalist.

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

Whenever I didn't ask for help, whether out of pride or fear. There've been several times where I felt overwhelmed or uncertain, and instead of talking to the people, I tried to go it alone. I've learned to always be honest and upfront, tell them what I'm thinking, and admit when I need help.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

I'm currently teaching two classes that I've created – Travel Writing and Novel and Screenwriting. Travel Writing is in its 5th year, but I want to push myself to get more student work published and recognized and to even have students land internships because of the class. And for my Novel and Screenwriting class, which is in its 1st year, to develop it into an efficient and effective course for students interested in pursuing Creative Writing.

I've also been working the past 2.5 years on a novel, and I'd like to get it finished in the next six months.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your profession?**

Reading, reading, and reading. And not just about pedagogy, but book reviews, leading magazines, contemporary fiction.

And with my own kids getting a little older, I'd like to start attending Summer Writing Workshop programs and seminars, to better my own practice but also to learn more activities and methods for my students.

**How do you balance your career,
family, life and community service?**

It's really tough and requires dedicated and constant communication with my wife, and a whole team of family and support in town.

Our artistic pursuits are important to both my wife and me. I always get Tuesday evenings for writing nights, and she always gets Thursday nights for her music. We also switch off mornings for who gets to work out at 5 a.m.

We both work full time, so we need to balance responsibilities with kids and running our home.

And for community service, we are grateful we both work in serviced-oriented fields. Work is service for both of us.

What do you do to relax?

Spend time with family and friends, read, watch movies, travel (especially to northern Michigan in the summer), hike, and ride my bike.

What book do you recommend?

I generally don't recommend books, but for people I'm close with and for topics they bring up on their own, if I know of a book I think they'd like, I'll recommend it.

**Based on what you know now, what
would you tell your high school self?**

The world is much bigger than you can imagine, and there are so many things coming that will be better than you can know right now. Stay the course, do your best, be kind to people, and work on discovering what you love rather than what you think will make others proud.



CONGRATULATIONS JASON BEER

The University of Saint Francis is proud to see alumnus and Homestead High School teacher Jason Beer (BA '07, MOL '18) honored as one of Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Forty Under 40 recipients.



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Tickets are
available at
[kpceventbuzz.com/
forty-under-40](https://kpceventbuzz.com/forty-under-40)




Audra R. Koldyke

Age: 38

University of Saint Francis

Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program Director

Oversee the Echocardiography Academy and Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging programs



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

I attended Belmont High School in Decatur Indiana. I completed USF's Radiologic Technology program. I continued with my Bachelor of Science in Medical Imaging Technology from IUPUI. I am currently completing the Masters in Healthcare Administration from USF.

What are your hobbies?

I love hanging out with friends, going to dinner and catching up! As a family, we love to camp and visit state parks. Spending time with our extended families is something that fills lots of our free time.

What community organizations are you involved in?

Currently, I am mainly involved with Zion Lutheran School-Decatur where my children attend. I oversee the continuous fundraising platform, Scrip. This program provides direct tuition assistance to families who choose to participate. I like to volunteer with their different parent involvement opportunities. In the recent past, I have led the Parent Teacher organization.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised in northeast Indiana. Although I've also lived in Nashville Tennessee, being surrounded by family and friends while working and furthering my education has been the perfect scenario for success.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?


I like to joke that I'm a medical imaging superfan. I've been around healthcare my entire life, but I also love technology. Medical Imaging combines these two things really



CONGRATULATIONS

AUDRA KOLDYKE

The University of Saint Francis is proud to see alumna Audra Koldyke, RDMS, RVT, RT(R)(CT)(M), (AS '06), honored as one of Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Forty Under 40 recipients. Audra serves as USF's Director of Diagnostic Medical Sonography.



UNIVERSITY of SAINT FRANCIS™

well. I landed in sonography where I really appreciate the independent work of finding things no one else can see. Imaging is a critical component of being able to properly deliver good health care. Working clinically, good patient care was a top priority for me. Now working in the education of sonography, I love being able to promote and develop our future generations of sonographers. I am grateful that I'm able to share my passion and hopefully instill that in others. I like to make things better; working as a technologist I am able to help patients and working as an administrator in higher education I am improving our community to address staffing shortages.

What does success mean to you?

I will admit, this isn't something I think about often. I've never had the goal to 'grow up and be successful'. My goals have always been just the next thing I set my sights on; fix that problem, complete that certification, finish that degree. I'm very task oriented so every task completed positively, big or small, feels like a success. Considering the question now, I would say success is happiness and improvement. I believe I am successful when I am making things 'better' and when I am happy.

What has been your greatest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment has been starting the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program at the University of Saint Francis. There is a lot of blood, sweat, tears, and time that goes into the undertaking of creating a new degree in higher education. Building the program from nothing but a few documents of degree approvals has been the most challenging thing I've ever done. I also view the varied imaging certifications that I hold as some of my greatest

accomplishments, these are: Radiography, Computed Tomography, Mammography, Abdomen Sonography, Obstetrics/Gynecology Sonography, Breast Sonography, and Vascular Sonography.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I think that I have made numerous mistakes along my journey. In the way I handled a certain situation, becoming hyper focused on one area and letting others slide, going over and over in my head on what I could have done better, and not just learning from the mistake, but allowing guilt of my decisions to affect me, are just a few that come to mind. I am my biggest critic, even though others may not realize that.

What are your current professional goals?

My current goal is to successfully graduate the first class of USF Sonography students and to complete my Master's degree.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I continue working as a staff sonographer for Fertility and Midwifery Care Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in addition to my educator role. Additionally, I belong to the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine and the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, both of which have a constant flow of information and are a source for connections amongst research, current issues, common topics, etc. Attending conferences and networking with other healthcare leaders, sonographers, organizations, and educators all help to keep me relevant in my profession.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Some days it feels like there can be a lot to balance! I try to be very intentional with what I am doing at the current moment. I also look for the joy in everything that I do. I find that being positive allows for me to better balance the chaos. And let's be honest, I couldn't balance any of this without my mom!

What do you do to relax?

I love to play games: card games, board games, word games, car games, yard games.

I also love sports! I especially love to watch the Colts, and IU Basketball.

What book do you recommend?

I don't really take a lot of time to read books these days, but I do love to listen to Podcasts. My favorites are investigative journalism, such as Criminal, Down the Hill, and In the Dark. Currently, I'm listening to Hell and Gone.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Stay true to pursuing healthcare as a career, continue to learn and give my best work at all times, as this will continue to propel me forward.

Nominations for the Class of 2024 are open at

kpceventbuzz.com/forty-under-40

Megan Oetting Ryan

Age: 35

**Benchmark
Human Services**

**Clinical
Program
Director Family
Preservation
and Licensed
Mental Health
Counselor**



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

I attended Northside High School, I graduated in 2005. I then attended Ball State University (chirp chirp!) and graduated in 2009 with my Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Minor in Social Work. I attended Walden University for my graduate program and obtained my Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling in 2013. I then obtained my licensure 2/15/2017. I completed 3 semesters of my PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision at Walden University, I plan to complete in the near future.

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

- Drug Free Noble County
- Drug Free Dekalb County- Board of Directors Secretary
- Mental Health Collaborative Noble County
- Family Preservation Court Noble County
- Noble County Drug and Veteran's Court Team Member
- Hamilton Park Little League- Coach and Board of Directors
- Stigma Free Indiana Coalition Facilitator
- Our Children Our Future Allen County

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy being active with my kids. I enjoy doing physical activities such as different sports and running, but I also enjoy attending different community events and activities. I recently joined the Peloton movement and it is easily becoming one of my favorite things to do solo. I like being busy ☺ I enjoy my role in the community as a professional and it has also become part of my personal life as well. I also love being at home with my kids just doing whatever comes across our plate. We enjoy playing inside, outside, and just being together. We also spend our time with our puppy June and with my parents.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised in Fort Wayne, attended school in Muncie, took my first career focused job in Richmond, and due to a life changing event, I moved back to Fort Wayne. During that time, I began another job in Albion and my love for Northeast Indiana took off. There is something about the area that draws you in and the rest is history!

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I feel privileged to utilize my platform as a counselor to support

others in many meaningful ways that range from traditional counseling to program development for gaps in the system. With the encouragement of my employer and foundation of my program, I am able to wear many hats throughout my day, week, and overall career. I truly believe my role has endless opportunities and now is the time that human service professionals can take lead in creating social change.

What does success mean to you?

I view and rate my success as doing the best I can with what I have control over. This includes raising my children to be kind. It is utilizing my platforms to advocate for others. It is treating myself and others with grace. It is leaving a footprint that was more helpful than harmful throughout my lifetime.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

I had many ideas! For a long time I wanted to be a meteorologist and then it was a veterinarian. When I was in 8th grade, I had an experience that lead me to counseling. I adored my guidance counselors and very quickly knew that I wanted to be a counselor.

**Where did your first paycheck
come from and what was your job
then?**

My first job was at Krispy Kreme at Jefferson Pointe. It was so fun! I met my college roommate and life-long friend there too!

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

I have a village of people that support me in different chapters and sectors throughout my career. This village continues to change as I change and morph in my career. My family, my peers, my employer, my colleagues, and the families I serve all play significant roles in my career development. I also think the trust in myself has allowed me to take meaningful risks. I always show up for myself in my career and take a lot of pride in the work that I do.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

The biggest accomplishment was taking the leap to a new program and being rewarded with absolute fulfillment as an employee, clinician, leader, and individual.

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

Overcommitting. I learned quickly

and then relearned many more times the significance of committing to what I can handle and I am the only one that knows those limits. I am grateful to be employed by an organization that does not believe that your value of work is rated by endless hours of worktime, but rather by the quality of your work and healthy boundaries you exhibit.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

I want to complete my doctorate in counselor education and supervision. I believe the advancement in my education will allow me to serve others in a different capacity and support the development of future counselors. I want to continue to lead a quality program that preserves a family by empowering and advocating for their needs. I want to expand my leadership role at my current employer to include additional programs that serve individuals and families that are considered at risk and have complex needs. I want to continue to develop my leadership skills and challenge myself to never sit as content in my personal development. I want to continue to present and attend conferences on a local, state, and national level.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your
profession?**

I strive to stay connected and do my best to have an open mind. I believe that the interactions and relationships you have can play a role in your life in the current moment and in the future. These relationships have challenged me as a professional, developed me as a professional, and allowed opportunities of growth and education. It is important to seek answers for what you do not understand. It is important to share what you do know in order to support others in the field. I make it a priority to seek

out new information, education, and training related to my profession. I find it important to also seek training and education from professions that I may interact with such as probation, school, law enforcement, etc.

**How do you balance your career,
family, life and community service?**

Not flawlessly. I do it with grace and sometimes I am not successful, I truly believe that is reality of a balance in these life domains. I have individuals that hold me accountable and I have to constantly reflect and prioritize what needs to come first. It is an ever changing balancing act, but it is not always pretty. I do enjoy bringing my children to events that incorporate my passion for human services. I will always take advice on how to do this with more of an equal balance.

What do you do to relax?

I love working out, I am a high energy person and need to be able to exert that energy in a healthy manner. I also enjoy watching documentaries. I also love self-care such as massages, getting a tattoo ☺, and shopping. On a really busy day, coffee is all I need to take mental break!

What book do you recommend?

I have a lot! Anything by Brené Brown, The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk, and Can't Hurt Me by David Goggins.

**Based on what you know now, what
would you tell your high school
self?**

This is temporary and bloom where you are planted. ☺



**Benchmark Human Services
congratulates Megan Ryan,
Director of Family Preservation Services,
on being named one of Fort Wayne
Business Weekly's Forty Under 40.**

Megan works tirelessly to help at-risk families in Northeast Indiana remain together in safe and healthy ways.

BenchmarkHS.com



Anne E. White

Age: 32

Forvis, LLP

Senior Manager



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Purdue Fort Wayne (formerly Indiana University Purdue University Ft. Wayne)

What community organizations are you involved in?

I have served on the Board of Directors for the Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana since 2017. I chair the Finance Committee and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and also serve on our Audit, Executive, and Investment Committees.

I am a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Indiana CPA Society.

I am also a member of the Mastodon Alumni Community and recently joined the Greater Fort Wayne Women's Network.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy traveling, camping, and am a big concert goer.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I grew up in Indianapolis but have been in Ft. Wayne ever since I moved here for college. I never thought I'd stay in Ft. Wayne but its revitalization, growth, and career opportunities along with the lasting relationships I've built here have allowed my family and me to now call Ft. Wayne "home." It has been a great place to raise a family.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

One might think that as a CPA my answer here should be something "numbers" related. And, while I do

enjoy math, what I actually love most about my career are the people I get to work with on a daily basis – both colleagues and clients. It's always fulfilling to see how the work we do for our clients can help their organization succeed but its even more fulfilling to do that work with colleagues that I consider friends.

What does success mean to you?

I equate success to fulfillment. If what I do in life "fills my cup" then I consider myself successful.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I was big into sports as a kid, especially basketball. So I always wanted to play professional basketball when I grew up. Although I didn't play professionally, I did play Division I basketball in college (Go Dons!) and that is something I'm very proud of.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first actual "paycheck" came from working as an event staff at my high school. We would set-up and tear down the gym for various events. It was by no means a large paycheck as we would only work a couple hours a week but I remember feeling pretty "cool" and grown up when I got that first check.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

Several people come to mind but if I had to choose just one, I'd have to choose one of our former tax partners who I worked with often during the first several years of my career. She provided more of a "tough love" type of mentorship

which was difficult at times but in hindsight I grew to appreciate all the ways she challenged me as a young professional. She would push me out of my comfort zone on a daily basis by asking me to lead client calls on topics, quite frankly, I knew little about. As scary as that was as a young professional, I wouldn't be where I am now without those experiences.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Two things come to mind. One is making Senior Manager a couple years ago. It was the first promotion that had to be approved by a management committee outside of our Ft. Wayne office. The second is having been selected as our office's PRIDE winner a few years ago. This is an award given to the person who best exemplifies our firm's PRIDE values (Passion, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Excellence) and is voted on by all Ft. Wayne employees. It wasn't something I had expected to win at all because I work with a lot of deserving folks so when I did win, it really meant a lot to me.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Early on in my career, I had an opportunity to speak at a small conference through a recommendation from a client of ours. I sort of "took the reins" on it and told my supervisors I would handle putting a presentation together as well as make the trip to Chicago to lead the presentation. Due to my poor planning skills, I waited too long to start putting the materials together. The night before the conference, I was having trouble pulling the data I needed for the presentation and literally didn't know what to do. It was 10 p.m. so there was no one I could even ask for help at that point. I realized then that I was no in shape whatsoever to be able to present and I went into full-on panic mode. After a sleepless night, I went into our office early in the morning and fell on my sword in my supervisor's office. I told her that I didn't know what to do and that I didn't feel prepared to present. She reacted very calmly and said that she would fill in for me and make the trip instead. It was extremely embarrassing, but she met me with grace and compassion. I was so thankful she stepped in.

It's safe to say that's the only time that has ever happen to me. I learned the hard way that preparation is key, but I also learned the importance of communication. We have a saying we use often in our firm – "Don't Go It Alone." This lesson taught me that it's okay to raise your hand and ask for help. Had I communicated to my supervisor early in the process that I needed help with the presentation, this whole ordeal would have been avoided. As embarrassing as that experience was, I learned a great deal from it.

What are your current professional goals?

Right now, I'm focused on growing my network within the community so I'm trying to get involved with more local organizations and networks. I recently joined the Greater Fort Wayne Women's Network and I plan on getting more involved with the Mastodon Alumni Community (Purdue Ft. Wayne's alumni association).

On top of that, I have goals to be promoted to Director and ultimately, Partner within my firm.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

What I do on a day-to-day basis

is greatly affected by what goes on in Washington D.C. So staying up to date on the latest legislation that is being discussed is super important. Our firm does an incredible job pushing out articles, webinars, and trainings that help keep us all current. I also try to attend conferences throughout the year in the various industries I work with to maintain a pulse on the latest trends and practices within those industries.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I think the word "balance" is misleading because it implies that balance is achievable and able to be maintained throughout a period of time... when in reality, balance might be achievable, but it'll only be for a short period of time until the next crazy thing happens, and you have to pivot. Every stage of life is different and there are going to be periods where you are unable to give all the effort you want to a certain area in your life. 10 years ago, when I first started my career, I was a single, broke recent college grad. I was able to pour most of my energy into my career. Now, I am married with a newborn and a toddler. I simply don't have as much energy as I did back when I first started my career to focus entirely on work. However, I remind myself that this season of life is temporary. My kids won't ever be this young again so I want to soak it all in now while I can which may mean I can't give as much as I'd like to in my career. I'll still make sure things get done and I serve my clients well, but I may not have time to do all the extracurricular things that I use to be able to do. Vice versa, there will be times at work when I need to put in some extra hours and not be able to spend as much time with my family. As guilty as that makes me feel, I know it is temporary. So setting boundaries for myself has been important as well as being able to adjust quickly to the different "flows" or "seasons" of life has helped. It's not always pretty (and most of the time I feel like a chicken with my head cut off) but I continue to show up and put one foot in front of the other.

What do you do to relax?

A glass of wine and Grey's Anatomy is a perfect end to any day.

What book do you recommend?

Fair Play by Eve Rodsky is the latest book I've read. I'd highly recommend it to any mothers out there who are struggling with the stress of trying to be everything and everywhere all at once. It outlines a practical system that you and your partner can implement to clearly identify roles and responsibilities within your personal lives to maximize efficiency so that both of you can still have time to enjoy your own hobbies and interests.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I'd tell my high school self to, "slow down." I was always so busy – busy with sports and school and when I did have free time, I'd want to spend as much of that time with my friends as possible. I never really allowed myself the time to get to know myself. That sounds kind of corny but once COVID hit and I had my first child, I spent a lot of time alone with my thoughts without the distraction of the typical day-to-day stress. That time really allowed me to learn and study myself – what are my strengths, what are my weaknesses, what do I value in life, etc. Understanding these things has allowed me to grow because I've been better able to operate in a way that works for me and not just what is the most conventional or popular way of doing things.

Congratulations!

Anne White

Senior Manager named to Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Forty Under 40

FORV/S



Mario Aaron Meraz II

Age: 28

YMCA of
Greater Fort
Wayne
Renaissance
Pointe

Youth &
Family
Director



What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)

South Side High School class of 2013, Ivy Tech Community College - Education

What community organizations
are you involved in?

Neighborlink, The landing, Erins house, FWPD public safety

What are your hobbies?

Soccer, kickball, pickleball, watching The Office

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My mom is originally from northwest Ohio. I was born and raised right here in Fort Wayne. My whole family is here. Fort Wayne is a growing city and I love it here.

What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?

I enjoy that every day is something different. I love working with teens because they always keep everything so interesting. I am very introverted so working at the YMCA pushes me out of my comfort zone. I get to speak with different members and guests of all ages every day. I enjoy working in the southeast because it is my home. I grew up on the south side and I still live here with my wife.

What does success mean to you?

I believe success is being able to live with yourself and the choices you make. Always being able to help others when they need it. Go out of your way to help people achieve their goals.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of

others.” - Gandhi

As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?

Early on I wanted to be a firefighter but in high school I wanted to become a high school teacher and a soccer coach.

Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?

Burger king downtown. I worked there in high school with my best friend.

Who was your biggest supporter who
helped you advance
in your career?

My biggest supporter during my career has been my wife. She has pushed and helped me every step of the way in my career. We both started as interns here at the Renaissance Pointe YMCA together after high school. I would also say the teens that I have worked with. Without even knowing it they all have pushed me to become a better person and now a father.

What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?

My biggest accomplishment thus far has been seeing the youth that I work with grow. I have kids who are like 23 now that started when they were in middle school. Seeing them grow and become adults has made me very proud.

What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake was not

See MERAZ, page 35

Sarah M. Schenkel

Age: 36

Katz, Sapper
& Miller
(KSM)

Audit
Director



What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)

Homestead High School
Manchester University

What community organizations
are you involved in?

Erin's House for Grieving Children – Treasurer

Community Foundation of Greater FW – Audit committee member

What are your hobbies?

DIY projects around the house, traveling with my husband, spending time watching my kids participate in sports – baseball, football and dance. Being active with my kids – swimming, biking, scootering, basketball. Online shopping. Attempting to improve my golf skills!

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Originally from the area and family and friends are here

What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?

Public accounting is never boring and the day just flies by when you're busy helping/advising clients and mentoring/teaching team members.

What does success mean to you?

Having a rewarding career, strong relationship with my husband and happy, healthy kids!

As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?

Elementary school teacher

Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?

Started babysitting full time during the summers at 14 years old. It was a great experience in learning responsibility and hard work!

Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?

Sarah Strimmenos – has really made an impression on me and is someone who I look up to as a mentor. She is a source of encouragement and has had a big impact on my career.

What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?

Being seen as a mentor to younger professionals and growing into my role as a trusted advisor to clients.

What are your current
professional goals?

Serve my clients to the best of my abilities and serve as a role model and mentor to those I work closely with.

How do you remain
current/relevant in your profession?

Accounting profession is never boring – new accounting standards to learn and clients are always facing new challenges. I try my best to learn as much as I can and be seen as a trusted advisor.

How do you balance your career,
family, life and community service?

Definitely not perfect but I just try

See SCHENKEL, page 35



Congratulations to
**MARIO
MERAZ II**
Youth & Family Director,
RENAISSANCE POINTE YMCA

Congratulations, Mario, for being honored in the 40 under 40 class of 2023! Your positive attitude and dedication to youth makes a difference in our community.

We are proud to have you as a member of the YMCA team.
fwymca.org



Congratulations, Sarah Schenkel!

Not only are you a leader in the Northeast Indiana business community, you're also a trailblazer within our own ranks. From all of us at KSM, congratulations on being named to the Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Forty Under 40 class of 2023!



ksmcpa.com

Brittainy Chaffee

Age: 35

STAR
Financial
Bank

Assistant Vice
President,
Private
Banker



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Purdue University Bachelor of Science in Financial Counseling and Planning Class of 2010;
New Haven High School Class of 2006

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Indiana (Board Secretary), The MINDCAP Center (Board Member), Erin's House for Grieving Children (Facilitator), Junior Achievement (Volunteer), Fort Wayne Museum of Art (Scholastics Judge and former Board Member), Greater Fort Wayne (Leads R Us Member), City Church Attendee, STAR's Women In Search of Excellence (WISE)

What are your hobbies?

My main hobby is spending time with my family, especially my nieces and nephews. I also love traveling, reading, journaling, meditating and walking my dog Boo Bear.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I grew up in and around Fort Wayne and love my hometown. No matter where I've been I've always been a cheerleader for, and explorer of, the city I'm in. Northeast Indiana has so many wonderful things to offer in the form of entertainment, trails and parks, cost of living, family activities, and most of all a generous community of individuals.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

My profession allows me to build relationships with exceptional individuals who are passionate about what they

do and are often experts in their fields. I, in turn, help them achieve financial goals and dreams which is very rewarding.

What does success mean to you?

Success summed up to me is living a meaningful life. Living life that is honoring to God. Also making an impact on those you encounter and your community.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

Rocking Judy Jetson. She was a rockstar and lived in a future that allowed outfit and hairstyle changes with the press of a button. She also had a robot maid. My Shark I Robot that I nicknamed Rosie is the closest I've gotten.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

My first paycheck was from an after-school program where I supervised tutored, and helped children with homework.

**Who was your biggest supporter who
helped you advance
in your career?**

My grandparents, Chuck and Karen Chaffee, are some of my biggest supporters. Their examples in growing their own company from the ground up, love and encouragement have helped push me to do better in all that I do.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

Excelling as a woman in a male

See CHAFFEE, page 35

Sadie Fenstermaker

Age: 34

Lutheran
Life Villages

Corporate
Director
of Clinical
Operations



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

College – Bachelor of Science in Public Affairs
College - Master of Public Management from Indiana University

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Years ago, I enjoyed delivering Meals on Wheels and volunteering at the local Council on Aging events. Throughout the pandemic, as a healthcare professional, I have dedicated my time to keeping up with the constant changes and regulations through involvement with our professional organization of long-term care healthcare leaders. I also enjoy supporting the local Chamber of Commerce at various events throughout the year!

What are your hobbies?

Right now, as a mother of 2 small children, my hobbies mainly revolve around them – I love to read, color, do puzzles, play with our dogs, and spend time outside - especially spending the summer on the water!

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Northeast Indiana is, and will forever be, my home. I love the people here – there is nothing that compares to Hoosier hospitality!

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

So many things!! I am a problem solver by nature – I love identifying areas for improvement and working with a team to identify a solution and implement it to achieve sustainable change! I love making an impact on the lives of residents and their loved

ones by making the entire end of life experience as positive and full of love as possible. To care for those that once cared for all of us is one of life's greatest honors. We have so much to learn from them if we are willing to take the time to slow down and listen!

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is going to bed happy and waking up happy, more days than not. It's getting up every day and being excited to start the day because you are doing something you love, surrounded by people you love.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

A veterinarian – I have always loved animals!

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

Sechler's Pickle Factory – I was a Pickle Packer.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

Kelly Borrer. From the moment we met, she has encouraged, supported, mentored, and pushed me to be the best I can be. Without her guidance, support, and unwavering confidence, I wouldn't be where I am today.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

Successfully leading my team through an unprecedented pandemic with a facility-wide outbreak. In 2020,

See FENSTERMAKER, page 33

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Sadie Fenstermaker
Corporate Director of Clinical Operations

Lindsay Davenport Solon

Age: 37

Fletcher Van Gilder, LLP

Attorney and Partner



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Bishop Dwenger High School (2004)
Hillsdale College, B.A. in history and Spanish (2008)
Valparaiso University School of Law, J.D. (2011)

What community organizations are you involved in?

I am a member of Plymouth Congregational Church and I am the chair of the reproductive rights action team, which promotes reproductive freedom and health through advocacy and education. I am a board member of my neighborhood association, working to create a connected and vibrant community. My neighbors are some of my dearest friends and I consider my neighborhood an extension of my family.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy taking walks around my historic tree-lined neighborhood, reading all types of fiction, tap dancing, and traveling.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised in Fort Wayne and my family still lives here. I left northeast Indiana for approximately ten years to attend college and law school. I began my legal career in Elkhart, Indiana. I didn't envision returning to the area until I received a wonderful job opportunity at Van Gilder & Trzynka (n/k/a Fletcher Van Gilder) which allowed for my professional growth and provided mentorship from several highly accomplished attorneys. I was also eager to be close to my biggest support system, my family.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I genuinely enjoy helping people solve complex problems. As an attorney, I am privileged to be invited into my client's lives, guide them through challenges, and advocate for their interests. Law books may appear dry and boring, but the practice of law encompasses the breadth of human experience. I develop genuine relationships with my clients, and it is immensely fulfilling to be a part of their success.

What does success mean to you?

I find success in small moments, like when my three-year-old spontaneously says "I love you, mommy" or when a client expresses their gratitude at receiving a good result.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

My mother and grandmother were nurses. My mother was a nurse educator and college administrator. Both women excelled in their professional lives while being exceptional mothers, wives, and friends. As a child, they inspired me to want to be a nurse. Unfortunately, I learned that I get extremely queasy around blood and pivoted quickly to the law.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

Throughout high school I babysat for various families and in college I taught ballet and tap lessons to children at a local dance studio. The energy, humor, and passion children bring to life has brought me so much joy. I'm the proud mother of two children and my husband, Greg, and I are expecting our third child in July.

See SOLON, page 33

Ethan Pickett

Age: 33

Pure Abilities, LLC



What is your education? a (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Master's degree in Recreational Therapy

What community organizations are you involved in?

Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Indiana (DSANI), Autism Society of Indiana (ASI)

What are your hobbies?

Flying, hockey, travel, fitness

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I am in northeast Indiana as the founder and active recreational therapist of Pure Abilities Therapeutic Services. I am from Cleveland, OH and moved here for work.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

My clients. I have had the pleasure to work with many of my personal clients for many years, some over 9 years. I have been able to watch them grow and see them achieve the goals we have been working on and how their success in therapy has translated to success in the life. They make me a better person.

What does success mean to you?

I view success as a pie chart. All of us has different percentages in each category of the pie chart. I believe success is achieving your goals in that pie chart that you find important. Whether that's financial, relationships, health and wellness, education, other. All of those categories and more can make one successful. It's about what's important to you.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I never knew what I wanted to be.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from Denny's; I was a dishwasher.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My biggest supporter was my mother Kim Wolf and later in life, my girlfriend, Danielle Hartmann.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Pure Abilities being the recipient of the 2022 Torch Awards for Ethics and Business of Integrity.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Not spending more time with loved ones. Starting my business has been a blessing but at times takes me away from my family and friends. I have learned to be more present and to acknowledge this concern and make changes to spend time with those I love.

What are your current professional goals?

Becoming one of Fort Wayne's Forty Under 40! Beyond that, building a new facility that will be able to encompass a larger therapy space for each of our services

See PICKETT, page 31

FVG

FLETCHER VAN GILDER LLP



CONGRATS LINDSAY!

FVG applauds partner Lindsay D. Solon for her contributions to Fort Wayne's legal community and her recognition as a Forty Under 40 honoree.

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40 UNDER 40

Congratulations Ethan Pickett!



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in

2023

Rosalina Perez

Age: 32

Northeast
Indiana
Innovation
Collective /
WEOCC Women’s
Business Center

Bilingual
Program
Manager



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Associates in Paralegal Studies from Ivy Tech Community college, currently finishing my Bachelor’s degree in Economics at Purdue FW.

What community organizations are you involved in?

Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana member and previous board member, Love Fort Wayne- Global Leadership Summit (Spanish Event) and Ignite FW Leadership, Mas Mujer (More Women) member, Hispanic Chamber Member, GFW Women’s Networking events, previous member of Young Professionals of Urban League, and starting LatinFuse (Latino Professionals)

What are your hobbies?

I love listening to audio books on personal development and listening to motivational speakers on YouTube. I don’t really have a “hobby” since most of my leisure time is focused on spending it with my spouse, kids and dog.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised in Fort Wayne, but my mother immigrated from Guatemala and my father immigrated from Mexico. My parents came to Fort Wayne in the 80’s because of their families and met in Fort Wayne. I decided to stay in Fort Wayne due to family and wanting to be part of the development of the city.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

Being able to go out into the community and participate in work-shops, networking events, and connect with business owners and leaders in the community. This opened so many opportunities for me and I love helping others.

What does success mean to you?

Living up to my fullest potential and passing that down to generations, especially my children. I want them to see that you must work hard and push your limits to reach another level in life and seeing them do that and helping those around me reach that, is success to me.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a doctor, but once I started to work as a Certified Nurse Assistance after High School, I realized that it wasn’t for me and changed directions.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck was from Ponderosa Steakhouse as a waitress when I was 15 years old.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My cousin, Sarah Nicole Quintana, she gave me the opportunity to intern for the City of Fort Wayne and that helped me build my professional resume and it started the domino effect of my careers after that position. Every time I change careers, I always talk to her and she gives me her honest opinion and is always rooting for me.


See PEREZ, page 32

Tim Carswell

Age: 31

J.P. Morgan
Chase Bank

Branch
Manager/
Vice
President



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

I graduated from Paul Harding High School. I earned my Bachelor’s degree in Finance from the Doerner School of Business at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

What community organizations are you involved in?

I currently serve as the Past President of the Fort Wayne Urban league after serving as President from Summer of 2020 through Fall 2022. I am CO-Chair over the state of Indiana of an internal group within JPMorgan Chase called BOLD, Black Organization for Leadership and Development. I volunteer for Brightpoint’s JAG program by speaking to jr. and Sr. in high school as well as being a judge on their annual Career Development Competition. I also volunteer for Junior achievement’s “JA in a day”.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, working out, listening to audiobooks, and traveling; usually to somewhere tropical but I love to explore and gain new experiences all over the world.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised on the Southside of Fort Wayne. I always wanted to give back to the community that I grew up in, be a role model, and a mentor so that others can see it is possible to be successful in the financial industry.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I have a passion for financial literacy. I feel replenished when I am able to help someone understand their finances when they may have previously found it complicated. I feel that financial literacy and understanding ways to build equity are tools that could help us all prepare for the future.

What does success mean to you?

Success means to set a goal and accomplish it... no matter how complicated, how many barriers are in the way, nor all the people who believe that it cannot be done.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

As a child I wasn’t sure what I wanted to be, but I knew that numbers were my thing and I enjoy working with others. Then I let my passion drive me to where I could make the biggest impact.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from a place called Reboot (formally known as Macanix) where I interned during my senior year of high school to become an accountant.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

I have had multiple people in my corner along the way who have helped by motivating me, introducing me to a new network, and held me accountable. My biggest supporters would be my childhood

See CARSWELL, page 31



Congratulations, Rosalina Perez, NIIC Bilingual Business Coach!

40 Under 40 Honoree

Felicidades, Rosalina Pérez, Bilingue Gerente de Programa!

40 Bajo 40 Homenajeada



Northeast
Indiana
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JPMORGAN CHASE & Co.

Daniel Diaz Moreno

Age: 38

Owner of
Golden
Green Soap
Company
and
Elemento



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

I have a Liberal Arts Degree

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

I currently serve on the board of Steuben Pride- our businesses currently donate a portion from all sales to provide LGBTQ+ youth safe spaces and events for them to be able to meet like minded individuals. My hope is that they realize it's ok to be different.

I am also a founding member of the Downtown Angola Business Owners Association whose goal is to support small businesses and create a thriving Downtown in Angola.

I also serve on the advisory board for the Fort Wayne Famer's Market

What are your hobbies?

When I have time I love to read. I believe that you have to absorb as much knowledge as you can and pass it along to others. I also love soap making. It started as a hobby and moved into my first business, but I still find it relaxing and enjoy every part of the process.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My partner and I visited the Angola area over 17 years ago and fell in love with the town. We loved being able to spend time at the lakes and could see that the downtown had a lot of potential. We moved here and purchased a building on the square. It was nice to move away from the fast pace of Chicago and to be able to take time to breathe and actually meet people from the community.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I love interacting with people. As business owners sometimes we get pulled away from the customer interactions. The operations and meetings sometime eat up all of your time. However; I still make time to load up the van with Golden Green products and go to the Fort Wayne Farmer's Market every Saturday. It's nice to be able to get away from the business side and be able to talk to people who through the years have become more then customers they've become friends. Elemento has also allowed me to meet a whole different set of people. It allowed me to create an environment where people can evolve mentally and spir-itu-ally and know that it's ok to be you.

What does success mean to you?

Being able to see the same people every week and watching their fami-lies grow. Knowing that they choose us because we see them as friends and not just numbers.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

I always had a creative side and I wanted to be an artist. I loved to draw and paint. I'm still artistic I just paint with soap and micas and want everyone to use the art I create.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

When I was 14 I worked as a camp counselor at a day camp in Chicago. I would spend my day teaching and entertaining kids.

See **MORENO**, page 32

James Velez

Age: 38

Purdue
University
Fort Wayne

Director of
Student Life



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, Concen-tration in Directing and Stage Management – Purdue University Fort Wayne

Master of Science in Organizational Leadership, Concentration in leader-ship – Purdue University Fort Wayne

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Fort Wayne Civic Theatre – Board Member

Miss Indiana Scholarship Organi-zation – Board Member, Candidate Development

What are your hobbies?

I volunteer for the Miss Indiana Scholarship Organization. I serve as the Candidate Development Coor-dinator. In this role I line up different speakers on a variety of topics to help candidates with personal and professional development as well as offer help preparing for competition.

I love to travel and try new experiences.

My fiancé and I love to go to amuse-ment parks like Cedar Point and Disney.

I love to go camping.

I love to spend time with my family and friends.

Spending time with our rescue dog Denver.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Northeast Indiana has always been home to me. I have continued to stay because of the changes and improvements our city has taken to revitalize downtown.

My family, friends, and career are here in Northeast Indiana.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I love having the opportunity to be a positive influence for students who are working their way through their educational journey.

I love being able to create new and exciting programs on our campus that our students, staff, and faculty can all enjoy.

I am proud of the opportunity to mentor young higher education professionals and students.

What does success mean to you?

For me, when I think about success, I look at it from the perspective that if I can go to bed at night feeling like I made a bit of a difference or had a positive impact on at least one person that day, I have been successful.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

I wanted to be a Broadway performer growing up. I love live theatre and performing. To be able to take on different characters and their jour-neys is so incredibly exciting and fulfilling.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

I was a bagger at Scott's Grocery store.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

See **VELEZ**, page 32



Congratulations to
Daniel Diaz Moreno
and to all of the 2023
Business Weekly's
Forty under 40
recipients!

Thank you all for your
continued commitment
to the community.



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Purdue Fort Wayne
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and ongoing dedication from

James Velez
Director of Student Life

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FORT WAYNE

Prachi Sharma Hoffmeister

Age: 39

Flagstar Bank

Head of People-Led Distribution, VP



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Undergraduate from University of Houston, Bachelor of Business Administration, Double Major: Management and Marketing
SHRM Certified Professional, SHRM – CP
Aveta Business Institute, Green Belt - Six Sigma certification

What community organizations are you involved in?

I am currently a Board member of United Way of Allen County for the past 3 years. I am also serving as a Board intern for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana as of September 2022. I am a part of the Greater Fort Wayne Inc. Women’s Network and a graduate of Leadership Fort Wayne, class of 2022. I additionally support Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana as a

Classroom Education Volunteer.

What are your hobbies?

I love traveling the world and I have a huge passion for cooking. If I ever find myself with a little bit of extra time, I also enjoy diamond painting.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I came here because of my previous company, however the people of Fort Wayne kept us here. We fell in love with the community, activities for families, variety of restaurants and the proximity to other major cities. Coming from Texas, it was also a huge win that we do not have traffic and actually get to enjoy four seasons.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

As an HR professional I enjoy working with people the most and

helping them through their career. I am driven by being able to create something new from scratch or enhancing current initiatives to be more robust. Any opportunity that I am able to educate or empower someone to make a difference in their career, just brings a huge smile to my face.

What does success mean to you?

For me it means feeling accomplished and excited about things that I may not have thought were possible. Being challenged and able to grow academically, professionally, financially and even as a parent are success indicators to me.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I really wanted to be a lawyer when I was younger, mainly because I loved to debate.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first job was working at J.C. Penney as a sales associate and I actually also started my first paid internship with Merrill Lynch at the same time.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My parents, Pavan Sharma (father) and Asha Sharma (mother) have always been my biggest supporters in life. They instilled the drive and motivation in me to go for what I wanted and the determination to achieve it. Both being working professionals, they taught me the value of hard work, taking risks and never giving up. My parents have always been my role models and I continue to advance in my career because of their love, support and guidance. I hope to continue to make them proud!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

With each of my promotions over the last decade I was personally asked to apply for the roles because my work ethic and work performance spoke for itself. These were huge accomplishments for me to know that I was wanted to do bigger things.
Earning my SHRM-CP certification and showing that I am a subject matter expert within Human Resources was also a huge feat. I also feel accomplished that I was selected as a participant for Leadership Fort Wayne in 2022 and I am currently being recognized by Business Weekly as a professional and community leader under the age of 40.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I allowed others to dictate whether

I was ready for a role or not. Being told that you must be in your current role performing for a certain time period before you are ready was not the best advice I received early in my career. Lesson I learned from this is that you have to believe in yourself, your capabilities and have full dedication to the role. Don’t ever be afraid to take a chance on yourself!

What are your current professional goals?

To strive to be better than I was the year before. My goals are to continue to grow as a servant leader and keep challenging myself to grow in my career and expand my knowledge.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I attend seminars that focus on the skills and knowledge I need in my current role. I highly enjoy networking with other professionals and learning from their careers, passion and experiences.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

It is definitely a balancing act! I would not be able to do everything without the support of my family. My husband, Michael understands my passion to want to help others and grow in my career, so he has been extremely supportive and continues to assist me. I want to be the best role model I can for my children; Ayden (15), Ethan (12) and Nadia (4), so I involve them in philanthropy opportunities alongside me when possible. Being able to do things as a family makes my heart happy!

What do you do to relax?

I relax by spending quality time laughing and playing card and board games with my family and friends. I appreciate the opportunities when I can just chat and laugh.

What book do you recommend?

It is hard to pick just one, but my favorite book of all time is “To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.” Additionally, I enjoyed and recommend “Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman” as it helped me grow within my HR profession and “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey” as it helped me grow as a leader.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself to slow down and do not rush to grow up. Take the time to fully enjoy life! I was so eager to be independent that I graduated high school early at 16, finished college at 20 and started my first leadership role at 21. Every stage of life has aspects that will help you learn and grow as an individual and every interaction you have will teach you something.



Prachi is a shining example of Flagstar’s STAR values of service, trust, accountability, and results. She is invested in the community through the United Way, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the Greater Fort Wayne Women’s Network.

We agree that she belongs on this prestigious list of top young professionals in Northeast Indiana.

Way to go, Prachi!



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Seth D. Bennett

Age: 36

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Home
Mortgage

Mortgage
Loan
Originator



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bachelor's of Science, Indiana University – Bloomington 2008 – Public Financial Management
Concordia Lutheran High School - 2004

What community organizations are you involved in?

Presently and most prominently – Concordia Lutheran High School – Assistant Football Coach (I have been coaching football in the community since 2008 – 15 seasons). In the past, I spent a significant amount of time volunteering at Erin's House for Grieving Children. As a Husband and Father of 3 children now along with my professional and coaching responsibilities, I no longer have the time freedom. However, my wife and I enjoy supporting various local

non-profits through charitable contributions as we are able. Most notably, we very much support Associated Churches and Amani Family Services. Recently, I have also volunteered as a mentor within the Fort Wayne United Tie Day Program.

What are your hobbies?

Traveling, Golfing and spending time with my family and 3 Children.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Upon college graduation, many of my friends and connections went on to larger metropolitan markets around the country for "more opportunities". In my heart, I knew I wanted to be here because of family, the small-town feel, and it being one of the best places in the country to raise a family. I've always enjoyed the "personality" of Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana and who we are

as a community. In 2008 though, that was a very tough decision to make as Fort Wayne was just beginning to scratch the surface on the development and revitalization of the last 15 years. However, I could see the heart and passion of friends, family and connections that were here. In hindsight, it couldn't have worked out any better. I am honored to be a part of a community and give back to a community that has given me and my family so much.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

Without question, it is the opportunity to serve and walk alongside folks of our community as they are making the biggest purchase of their life. I love human interaction. My personal mission statement is "To provide ethical and responsible lending solutions for families that create long-term wealth and stability in our community." I believe successful homeownership is the lifeblood of a community. Helping folks get into homeownership through financial education is extremely rewarding to me. As much as I am a loan originator, I also consider myself a financial advisor of sorts to make sure our clients are prepared to enter homeownership in a successful way.

What does success mean to you?

I love this question, first and foremost, because success can look vastly different based on individual life preferences and where they are at in life. However, I do believe success has a core defining principle. That core defining principle is balance in all areas of life: Career, Personal Finance, Relationships, Health, Spirituality. Success to me is when I feel I am 10 in all those areas of life. In my personal experience, it is extremely challenging to be a 10 in all those areas of life at the same time. Success is also not an arrival point. Maintenance of success can

be just as challenging, if not more, than the journey to success. If I could wrap that into a simple answer it would be this. Success is a state of mind where I am present in all aspects of life which I am actively seeking to improve each day.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

It changed so many times. However, for the longest time, I wanted to be a Meteorologist. I have an immense respect for the power of the natural world and an infinite curiosity trying to understand how things work and why they happen. My mom sometimes likes to joke that as a young kid, my favorite channel was The Weather Channel. I still to this day find weather and climate fascinating.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

The very first paycheck I received came from The Coney Factory. I had just turned 16 years old and needed gas money and spending money. My neighbor (The Owner – Jeff Sordelet) was gracious enough to give me an opportunity with absolutely zero experience. What I didn't realize, I was getting my first introduction into service-related industries.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

Without question, my mom, who is my manager and biggest mentor. I wanted to get into the mortgage business directly out of high school. My mom told me to go to college and get a degree. If I was still interested, she would help me get into it. I graduated college in 2008 in the middle of the mortgage meltdown. I had no concept of what was occurring at that time. She just told me it wasn't the right time. While I received a degree in Public Financial Management,

See BENNETT, page 33



SETH BENNETT
MORTGAGE LOAN ORIGINATOR
NMLS # 938187



HALLMARK
HOME MORTGAGE
NMLS#53441

40 UNDER 40 AWARD WINNER

Congratulations to Seth and all the 2023 Forty under 40 recipients. We are proud to have Seth as a valued member of our team. Thank you for your hard work, exceeding client expectations, and the positive impact you have on our community every day. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of so many past, present, and future homeowners.

Congratulations, Seth!



Zuri A. Williams

Age: 35

Grace Construction, CFO

The Financial Semester Inc., Founder

RYte On Time Taxes LLC, Owner



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Northrop High School in Fort Wayne, IN

Bachelors of Health Science concentration Physical Science at Tennessee State University

Doctorate of Physical Therapy at Howard University

What community organizations are you involved in?

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. -Iota Chi Omega Chapter of Fort Wayne, Indiana and Young Professionals of Fort Wayne Urban League

What are your hobbies?

Listening to live music with friends

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised here. I left for college and lived other places for a while but came back to Indiana to study for a test and I have been here since then.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

Helping others. In each of my roles I deal with finances. Finances can be very confusing when trying to maintain a business. I entered the health field to help others but now I am in the tax field and finance world helping others improve their financial status.

What does success mean to you?

Success to me means setting goals and accomplishing them then setting another one. Also, being financially stable and mentally stable is very important to me.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A Doctor. First an OB-GYN then transitioned to Physical Therapy in my high school years.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

Queen of the Nile, a beauty supply store. I was a stocker/ cashier.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My biggest supporter has been my father (deceased), my mother, and siblings.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Graduating from Graduate School. Although I no longer work in that field, I worked hard getting accepted and worked my way through.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake was not recognizing my depression signs and symptoms sooner. Therefore, I delayed my mental health care further, in which it got worse before it got better. When I finally took the steps to get help, which lead me to medication, I was saddened that I didn't initiate it sooner. But I am truly grateful that I eventually acted. I learned that it is okay to admit you have a problem then take action instead of wishing it away.

See WILLIAMS, page 32

Jess Hopkins

Age: 34

First Merchants Bank

VP Market Leader



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

I have a Bachelor's degree from Indiana Wesleyan University in accounting and a Master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan University in Human Resource Management.

What community organizations are you involved in?

I am the Financial Chair and Community Events Chair for the Pine Valley Community Association Board.

Committee Member of the Marketing and Development Committee for the YWCA.

Advisory Board Member for Dress for Success.

Additionally, I organize/plan community days for my team every quarter. Assisting at various organizations such as Community Harvest Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, Humane Fort Wayne, The Fort Wayne Children Zoo are a few we have assisted.

What are your hobbies?

I like to travel and spend time outdoors, hiking, swimming, listening to music.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born/raised in this area and my family is here.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I enjoy coaching and development. Getting to assist someone meet their goal, grow within their role is extremely rewarding.

What does success mean to you?

Success means leaving it better than when you found it. Elevating yourself, your team, your community to the next level.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a veterinarian.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck was at the age of 16 from McDonald's. I was a drive thru order taker.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My husband Shane. He is my

motivator, support, my rock. Without him I would not be the person I am today.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

In less than two years with my company I elevated my market to being recognized as market of the year, as well as helped multiple team members achieve their next step in their personal career goal journey.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

At an earlier point in my career, I attempted to take on too much all at once and felt significant burnout. The lesson I learned was to know my limit and also have the courage to say no if you do not have the time to fully commit without taking quality away from other areas.

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goals are to continue to grow into the next level of leadership within the consumer bank and create a strong succession plan for my market to ensure there is not a gap in leadership.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I am always looking for opportunities to challenge myself to be a stronger leader. The more I can enhance my skill level the better I can support my team.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I plan out my weeks in advance and ensure that I am dedicating the appropriate time to my family and my other commitments.

What do you do to relax?

Having small children means there isn't a lot of down time, but being present at their games, or swimming in our pool helps me unwind from a busy day.

What book do you recommend?

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Every challenge is an opportunity to grow and push yourself to be a better leader.

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DR. ZURI WILLIAMS, CFO



Nominations for the Class of 2024 are open at kpceventbuzz.com/forty-under-40

David Leininger

Age: 35

First Merchants Bank

Commercial Relationship Manager



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)
Born in Fort Wayne I graduated from Homestead High School in 2006 and Indiana University's Kelley School of Business in 2011.

What community organizations are you involved in?
I've served on the Board of Directors for Community Transportation Network (CTN) since 2017 when I joined the board as a Leadership Fort Wayne intern. I'm currently serving in my second year of a two-year term as Board President for the organization. I also have the privilege of serving on various committees for Turnstone Center for Children and Adults with Disabilities, and for the United Way of Allen County.

What are your hobbies?
In the warmer months, my family and I spend as much time as possible on the golf course. We are also a family that loves to travel and are fortunate to do a bit of that throughout the year, especially throughout the winter months watching our son, Abel, play travel hockey.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
After moving away from Fort Wayne for several years I returned home in 2014 to be close to family, and to start a family of my own. Since that time, I made a commitment to myself to get involved in the community as much as time would allow. What I found in doing so was a city with unparalleled momentum and a philanthropic focus that is woven into the fabric of its identity. There's a level of collaboration amongst for-profit, not-for-profit and local government that is rarely seen in other communities. The result of that collaboration is that Fort Wayne is becoming as much a destination community for graduates and young families as any other in the Midwest.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?
As a commercial banker I'm afforded the opportunity to meet and partner with the individuals and companies that move our local economy forward. No two clients are the same and the challenges each face are unique. Being able to learn and provide solutions to those unique challenges is what makes my profession truly fulfilling.

What does success mean to you?
I define success not necessarily from the standpoint of achieving

outcomes but more in how I pursue those desired outcomes. I've discovered that over time the right activity will produce the right results. The concept of continuous improvement, centered around one's ability to be 1% better today than they were yesterday, is something that drives me in all aspects of my life. While successful outcomes are a moving target, the pursuit of continual improvement will result in realizing my full potential; as a husband, father, banker and leader.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
One of my favorite movies growing up was Apollo 13 and as a child I was fascinated by the idea of space travel. While the dream of being an astronaut has come and gone, I'm still holding out hope that commercial travel to space is something I get to experience in my lifetime!

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?
The first paycheck I received was from the Arby's at Coventry when I was 16 years old. While that job didn't last long, I certainly took a great deal out of that experience!

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?
I've been incredibly fortunate to surrounded myself with a diverse group of individuals that have experienced great success, both personally and professionally. These people have guided me and mentored me throughout my career, and while all deserve my gratitude, nobody has supported me more than my mother, Vicki Leininger. My mom is one of the smartest and most selfless individuals I know. I'm fortunate because our careers, while in different industries, share a lot in common. I've learned a great deal from observing the commitment she has toward her profession, her clients, and her community. She has excelled at developing new relationships throughout her career, but what has impacted me most is her ability to retain and grow existing relationships so effectively. She works in the ultra-competitive commercial insurance industry and, without the benefits of advanced education afforded to so many others in her profession, has achieved an amazing level of success in her career. It's my opinion that she embodies the principle that people will conduct business with people that they "know, like and trust." Her work ethic has led to her "knowing"

the right people, clients "like" her because she's genuine and they "trust" her because her exceptional level of integrity drives every decision she's makes. I feel privileged to have had her influences and strive to follow that same blueprint in my career.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
Without question the greatest accomplishment of my career is being chosen to serve as President of the Board of Directors for Community Transportation Network. It's humbling to have people, for whom I have tremendous respect, unanimously demonstrate their confidence in my ability to help lead such a dynamic non-profit at the age of 34. My hope is that I've made a fraction of an impact on CTN as the organization has made on me.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?
One regret that I still live with is not following the opportunity to be an exchange student my senior year of high school. While I'll never know if that decision was an actual mistake, I'm disappointed in myself for making the decision that was comfortable instead of stretching myself to pursue an opportunity that most students never get to experience. That said, when presented with unique opportunities, I find myself more inclined to push aside all the reasons not to do something and find ways to say "yes"! We have one life to live, and I try to minimize the possibility of looking back and asking the dreaded "what if?"

What are your current professional goals?
What's top of mind for me is that I'm right in the midst of, what I believe, is the most exciting 6 months of my tenure as Board President for CTN. Prior to the end of my two-year term in June we will be launching a couple of unique initiatives that approach community transportation needs in ways that we've never addressed them in the past. I'm most excited for the opportunity we are going to have as an organization to directly impact families that need access to safe and reliable transportation but today live a reality where access to transportation is a barrier to growth.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?
I'm passionate about what I do

which makes it quite easy to remain a lifelong student of my profession. It's the expectation that I have for myself, and that my clients have for me, that I stay current on relevant information related to our local economy, macro-economic policy updates, and industry-specific changes that may impact their business today or in the future.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?
I don't necessarily believe in being able to "balance" career, family, life, and community service. While nothing is more important to me than faith and family, I believe that there are days and weeks that one aspect of my life consumes more of my time than others. I used to focus a great deal of time on making sure my life was "in balance" but now I focus my efforts on making sure that the time I spend is quality time and that I'm living in moment.

What do you do to relax?
When I'm not binge watching the latest season of Yellowstone, I enjoy reading.

What book do you recommend?
It's difficult to recommend just one book. A fictional book that really grabbed my interest was "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig. It is a story based on the correlation between decisions we make and the endless potential directions our lives can take as a result of those decisions. A non-fictional book that I believe everyone, especially young professionals, should read is "Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals" by Oliver Burkeman. Assuming you live until the age of 80, this book takes a radically different view of how you should approach the roughly 4000 weeks you have on this earth. These are examples of two of the most thought-provoking books I've ever read.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?
It's fine to have a plan but embrace uncertainty! The only thing that is certain about a plan constructed by an 18-year-old is that it will change. Experience all that you can and enjoy the journey!



CONGRATULATIONS!

to David Leininger and Jess Hopkins for being named to Business Weekly's 2023 Forty under Forty list.



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Keirsh A. Cochran

Age: 32

Huntington University

**Chief of Police and Safety/
Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice**



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Franklin Community High School (Franklin, IN) 2009, Huntington University (B.A.) 2013, University of the Cumberlands (Ph.D.) 2023

What community organizations are you involved in?

Jennifer’s Harbor Domestic Violence Prevention (Board Vice-President), Knights of Columbus Council 1014, International Association of Chiefs of Police, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (Membership Committee), International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, Huntington County Republican State Convention Delegate (Elected)

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy spending time with my wife

Christie and our daughters Eve and Nola. I love collecting baseball cards and police patches from all over the world. I am an Indianapolis 500 fanatic and spend most of the month of May at the track. I love reading and playing video games when I get some free time.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I fell in love with northeast Indiana when I moved from central Indiana to attend Huntington University. As a Hoosier, I knew I wanted to stay in the greatest state after I graduated. The opportunities and communities that make up northeast Indiana are, in my opinion, the best place to raise a family and work to live out God’s calling for my life.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I honestly believe I have the best

job in the world. The ability to work for criminal justice reform as a police chief, learn from my fellow officers, and work to keep Huntington University one of the safest campuses in the country is exciting. The addition of being able to teach the next generation of criminal justice professionals has been a passion I did not know I had. It is one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

What does success mean to you?

I am not sure I can say it any better than Ralph Waldo Emerson who said “To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the approbation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty; To find the best in others; To give of one’s self; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived -This is to have succeeded.”

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

As a young child I had the opportunity to watch my dad, who I think is the best police officer ever, do the job with excellence. That inspired me to go into law enforcement. I also really wanted to be the play-by-play announcer for the New York Yankees.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck was from Rascals Fun Zone in Whiteland, Indiana where I worked as a go-kart attendant. That job was a blast!

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

This is a tie between my dad and my wife. Everyday after the police academy or a tough call one of those two would hear my tears, frustrations, stresses, and fears. I would not be who I am or where I am without them.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

I loved working for the Fort Wayne Police Department. Graduating police academy was my biggest accomplishment until I had the opportunity to become the Chief of Police at my alma mater Huntington University. Being able to serve the HU community really is my biggest accomplishment to date.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

It took me far too long to realize “this too shall pass”. This is a lesson I am still working on. I have faced criticism for the non-traditional and unorthodox approach I take to criminal justice. I am constantly reminding myself that no matter the circumstances or frustrations I am facing, “this too shall pass.”

What are your current professional goals?

As a first-generation college graduate I am eager to finish my dissertation and become part of the less than 1% of police officers with their doctorate. I hope to grow the Huntington University Criminal Justice program in quality and quantity to position it to be a nationally recognized program. Law enforcement administrators have already begun seeking out our graduates for their skillset, knowledge, communication skills, and cultural competency.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Being neck deep in dissertation research it is easy to stay current on current criminal justice data and methodology. However, that is no replacement for the constant collaboration and communication with criminal justice professionals from all over the world through conferences and conventions.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Priorities: God, Family, Work (in that order). I am constantly evaluating that balance and being intentional with my time. One thing I don’t think leaders do well is set healthy boundaries with their time.

What do you do to relax?

As an introvert I know it is important for me to spend time alone reading or listening to music. I enjoy a meal, movie, or even a trip to an amusement park alone to recharge and relax.

What book do you recommend?

This depends on the day and who I am recommending it to, but if I had to give just one recommendation it would be Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. The movie is good, but the real eye-opening happens in the book.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

The critics will never go away, you will never make everyone happy. Follow your own compass and keep out-working everyone else, even if it seems like no one is watching or recognizing.

MEET

Keirsh Cochran

Chief of Campus Police and Security

> HU alumnus, Class of 2013

> Recipient of the Fort Wayne Police Department meritorious service citation in 2017

> Recipient of Huntington University's 2019 Young Alumnus Award

AND NOW, HE’S ALSO ONE OF BUSINESS WEEKLY’S 40 UNDER 40 CLASS OF 2023.

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Jennifer Lynn Sharkey

Age: 38

Purdue University - Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

Lead Research Engineer



What is your education? (i.e. High School, College, etc)

Pursuing a Master’s of Public Administration from Purdue University (2024)

Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Ball State University (2012)

Master of Science in Civil Engineering (MSCE) from Purdue University (2009)

Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE) from Tri-State (Trine) University (2007)

Lakeview High School in Battle Creek, Michigan (2003)

Several professional certifications including:

Licensed Professional Engineer (PE) in Indiana

Certified Public Manager (CPM)

Project Manager Professional (PMP)

What community organizations are you involved in?

- Poka-Bache Trail Coalition – Chair - Leading a coalition of over 33 members from public, private, and volunteer organizations to accelerate the planning and development of an 81-mile long regional trail that will traverse 11 different government units and connect Pokagon State Park in Steuben County to Ouabache State Park in Wells County.
- Steuben County Trails, Inc. – Treasurer - Part of a local non-profit that helps support the planning and implementation of trails and activities within our communities.
- Steuben County Community Foundation – Grants Committee - Assists with grant application evaluation to provide positive impacts to Steuben County non-profits and their missions.
- Trine University – School of Civil Engineering – Industrial Advisory Board - Assists with program development and evaluation to ensure civil engineering students are graduating with the skills and education necessary to be successful in the industry workforce.
- Senator Braun’s Indiana Transportation & Infrastructure Advisory Council - Provide technical assistance and input on federal legislation and activities as it relates to transportation and infrastructure in Indiana.
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) – Region 4 Governor representing 6 Midwest States, Practitioner Advisor for the Trine University Student ASCE group, Advocacy Captain for Indiana

- Trine University Women’s Soccer – Volunteer Assistant Coach

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy traveling and learning about other cultures, histories, and ways of life. I’ve been afforded the opportunity to travel to over 15 different countries, from Australia to China to India and most of Europe. I’ve visited every continent except Antarctica (which is on my bucket list to visit in my lifetime).

I also enjoy being active by taking ski trips out West, hiking in state parks and national forests, spending time locally on Hamilton Lake, and visiting family and friends in Michigan.

Coaching is also a passion of mine, having coached at the youth, high school, and now college levels. I enjoy interacting with athletes and being able to play the game I love and pass on that love of soccer to athletes of all ages.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I didn’t think that when left home at 18 years of age to attend Tri-State University that my roots would be planted in Angola. But Northeast Indiana is a special place to live, work, and enjoy. I was born a Michigander, but I am a Hoosier by choice.

Northeast Indiana has a sense of community and kindness that makes everywhere you travel feel like home. The collaboration and vision of our communities to work in harmony provide a safe, accessible, and quality place for residents to live which really sets us apart. Not to mention the natural beauty and recreation of our state parks, lakes, and other community centers.

I chose Northeast Indiana for the educational and professional opportunities and I stay rooted in Northeast Indiana because of the amazing people of our shared communities.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

Transportation infrastructure is part of our daily lives. I am passionate about ensuring that those traveling our roadways and transportation facilities get to their destinations safely and timely. Having served as a civil engineer designing projects for a consulting firm and a county engineer managing the road and bridge network for Steuben County government, I’ve learned how engineering principles, public policy, and program management must all work in unison to serve our community’s needs

In my role with Purdue LTAP, I am fortunate to be able to share this experience with cities, towns, and counties across the State of Indiana. I love being able to assist local government officials with identifying, evaluating, and solving transportation problems that positively impact the quality of life of their citizens. This technical assistance ranges from engineering to managerial to financial to operational. Having walked in those shoes, I am able to provide valuable guidance and support to communities.

What does success mean to you?

To me, success is working hard, learning from mistakes, and leaving positive impacts on the people you meet and places you travel.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I’ve always had an interest in building and designing things. Spending time with my grandpa who was a draftsman and talented woodworker, I was drawn to architecture and buildings. However, realizing I was more technically inclined than artistically inclined, civil engineering ended being up a better fit.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck was from the Battle Creek Enquirer when I was a paper delivery kid for my neighborhood. Although I must admit, I had a lot of help from my dad who would drive me around when the time was short and I couldn’t complete the route fast enough by biking or walking.

My first independent job was working in Guest Services at Binder Park Zoo where I first learned how to use a credit card machine with carbon paper.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My biggest supporter has always been my mom. From a young age, she encouraged my sister and me to get involved in community activities and service projects, which ignited my passion for serving others. She showed us the importance of putting in hard work and taking the extra step to do things right. With her guidance and unwavering love and support, I gained the confidence and skills to pursue my dreams, no matter how hard the process may be to reach them.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment isn’t a single project or program implementation, rather, it has been the ability to bring together people and ideas to solve problems for the greater good.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Having just finished my MBA studies and working full-time while coaching high school soccer full-time, the last thing I wanted to do was make time to study for the professional engineer’s licensing exam. Although I did do some preparation, I did not put in the effort required to be successful. As a result, I was not successful in obtaining the PE designation on my first attempt. However, from this experience of significant disappointment, I learned how to be resilient and channel that

disappointment into discipline. In the following months, I laid out a study plan, put in the work, and breezed through the exam with confidence, scoring in the upper percentiles for each examination category. This incident reminded me of the importance of discipline and putting in the hard work upfront to be successful in the long run.

What are your current professional goals?

I am working on obtaining a Master of Public Administration and desire to be more involved in public policy and government operations. I have a passion for local government and look forward to the opportunity to utilize my experience and educational knowledge to better my community through service.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I am very active in professional organizations and continuing education opportunities. Presenting at conferences and tackling complex challenges through research and networking allows me to stay abreast of emerging topics in the transportation industry.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Organization, time management, communication, and respect. I outline monthly, weekly, and daily goals to keep me organized both professionally and personally. I am strategic with my time and have learned how to say ‘no’ to commitments, no matter how much I want to participate. It’s better to give dedicate my full attention to select activities than to give part of my attention to several. But above all, my family is my priority and I will always have time for moments to spend together.

What do you do to relax?

I enjoy reading while curled up with my two cats, taking walks with my wife and golden retriever, and socializing with friends and family.

What book do you recommend?

Start with Why by Simon Sinek. This book is phenomenal and is a must-read. It connects the “what we do” and “how we do it” to the “why we do it”. Having a strong sense of “why” is like having a north star to guide us in our activities. If I ever have doubts about what I’m doing or how I’m accomplishing it, I always circle back to why I am doing something in the first place. Having this grounding question allows me to clear out the noise and focus on what is really important.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Be humble, be kind, and have a continuous thirst for knowledge. Don’t be afraid to speak up, ask questions, or look foolish. Mistakes help us grow and setbacks help us learn. You never know where the next step may lead, so have faith and trust in yourself.

Derek Holst

Age: 34

Circle
Logistics

Senior Vice
President



What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)

Indiana Tech

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I love having the opportunity to coach others to success.

What does success mean to you?

Being seen as a leader in all aspects of my life. A great dad, a great husband, a great friend, great leader and hopefully an impactful boss.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted desperately to be a firefighter. I knew I wanted to have an impact in some way and when I was young firefighters were the epitome of being impactful on everyone.

Where did your first paycheck

See **HOLST**, page 31

What community organizations are you involved in?

My family and I devote time to Adopt a Greenway, St. Mary's Soup Kitchen and Salvation Army during the holidays.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies are spending time at the lake, taking my kids to the park, running and honing my expertise in logistics.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I was born and raised here in Fort Wayne, IN. I am raising my family here and expect to stay and continue to grow in my career in Northeast Indiana.

Alisha Norris, CFA

Age: 35

Credent
Wealth
Management

Senior
Portfolio
Manager



What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)

Crestview High School (2006); Ball State University, Bachelor of Science in Finance (2010); Ball State University, Master of Business Administration (2011); Chartered Financial Analyst, CFA Institute (2015)

What community organizations are you involved in?

I serve on the board of directors for the Kendallville Day Care Center and am a member of the Noble County Young Professional Network. Over the years, I have served on the board of directors for the Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce and have supported Oak Farm Montessori School and the Kendallville Christmas Bureau.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies include traveling with my husband and two daughters, running, swimming, and reading. I also enjoy watching my daughters dance and supporting them in their various activities.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My husband's family are business owners in Noble County, and I have always supported his dream of working for and growing the third-generation company. Northeast Indiana has also provided me with a wonderful employer and opportunity for professional growth.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I enjoy helping individuals achieve financial independence and success. Each day I am blessed to work with a very talented team at Credent Wealth Management. Together we serve our mission which is to guide clients throughout life's most important financial events with service and expertise above and beyond client expectations. In fulfilling my role as a senior portfolio manager, I enjoy staying abreast of the evolving nature of global economics and capital markets, managing investment strategies, and building household allocations for our clients.

What does success mean to you?

Success is finding purpose and fulfillment personally and professionally, engaging in life-long learning, and mentoring others along the way. Success is a result of being disciplined, authentic, passionate, selfless, and living a life of integrity.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Because I have always loved math, I envisioned a career as a math teacher.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from Thrivent Financial. I worked as an intern alongside my father, a financial associate, and my mother, an office professional.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My father and my husband have been two of my biggest supporters. I chose my career path after working with my father for two summers in college. He is disciplined, hard-working, and successful and has motivated me to be the same. My husband, Brody, has always shown me unwavering support not only in my career but also in life. He pushes me to be the very best version of myself.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment was being awarded the Chartered Financial Analyst designation by CFA Institute.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake is allowing stress from work to follow me home. Work life balance is so important for our health, and I am learning to focus my efforts on being fully present when with my husband and daughters.

What are your current professional goals?

My professional goals are to keep learning and growing in my role as a senior portfolio manager, to strengthen my leadership abilities in order to better support my team, to become a partner at Credent Wealth Management, and to enhance my involvement in my community.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Global economics and capital markets are forever changing so to stay current I read articles published by Bloomberg, BCA Research, and the Wall Street Journal daily. I maintain relationships with our firm's strategic partners and network with others in the investment management field.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Work-life balance is a juggling act.

See **NORRIS**, page 31

CREATING FORTY WINNERS

Business Weekly

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WINNER



CIRCLE LOGISTICS IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE

DEREK HOLST!


John Nolan

Age: 32

Fort Wayne
TinCaps

Broadcasting &
Media Relations
Manager

Broadcaster for
the Mad Ants,
Purdue Fort
Wayne Athletics
and 1380 The Fan



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Saint Joseph High School
(Metuchen, NJ)
Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY)

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Real Men Read (Big Brothers Big Sisters)
Junior Achievement
Indiana Association of School Broadcasters

What are your hobbies?

Running, working out, being a bad golfer, and even though it's also my job – following sports.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

After growing up in New Jersey

See **NOLAN**, page 31

and going to college in New York, I came to Fort Wayne in 2013 to work for the TinCaps. What kept me here? The TinCaps are a first-class organization with an amazing culture. On top of that, the continued growth of the city, especially downtown. Getting to work for the Mad Ants, Purdue Fort Wayne Athletics, 1380 The Fan, and others has also enhanced my experience. I've appreciated the Hoosier Hospitality.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I enjoy the opportunity to meet a wide-range of people and share their stories. The adrenaline rush I experience calling play-by-play of a game makes my job usually not feel like work.

Tandalla Jackson

Age: 39

Jackson
Enterprises

Owner



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bachelor's Degree in General Studies

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Realtist Association of Northeast Indiana ~ RANI
Greater Northeast Indiana Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana

What are your hobbies?

Dancing, Reading, Traveling, Shopping, and Volunteering.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My sister moved here 18 years ago and I followed her. My husband and

I decided to plant some roots here and it's been fruitful ever since.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

I enjoy every aspect of my profession. As an entrepreneur who occupies space in multiple industries, it affords me many opportunities to meet and serve people from all walks of life.


What does success mean to you?

I see success as a journey. I believe any achievement, recognized or unnoticed is a success. Success always feels better when I am able to see what it does for others. Being able to leave a positive impact on someone's life is a success to me!

See **JACKSON**, page 30





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BB Sam & LB Colson

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Head of People-Led Distribution, Flagstar Bank
BBBS Board Member



Austin Krouse
Associate Attorney, Brotherhood Mutual
Real Men Read Volunteer



John Nolan
Play by Play Broadcaster, Fort Wayne Tincaps
Real Men Read Volunteer



Tandalla Jackson
Owner, Jackson Enterprises
School Buddy Volunteer



Jason Beer
English Teacher, Homestead High School
Big Brother



Mario Meraz II
Youth and Family Director, YMCA Greater Fort Wayne
Former Little Brother



Kristin Smith
SBA Lender, 3Rivers Federal Credit Union
Big Sister

Mayra G. Presley

Age: 31

The City of
Fort Wayne



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

I have a master's in Business Administration from Purdue Fort Wayne and a bachelor's degree in Business Management and Marketing from Indiana University.

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

I am part of the Greater Fort Wayne Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy working out and outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking, and nature walking. I also love traveling and learning from other cultures and traditions.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

My parents moved to Fort Wayne from Mexico when I was 12 years old, and since then, Northeast Indiana has been home to me.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

As a Professional Development Manager, part of my responsibility is employees' growth and professional development. I enjoy being part of their growth and path to success – impacting someone's life gives me meaning.

What does success mean to you?

Success means many things: in my personal life, success means joy and comfort. In my professional life, it means finding my voice, meaning: being in a position where I can effortlessly help others while on a platform that inspires change.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

I've always wanted to be a businesswoman.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from, and what was your job then?**

My first paycheck came from The Reclamation Project, and my job was translating documents from Spanish to English.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

I have a team. My family, I have a cheerleading team that includes my parents, five sisters, and my wonderful husband.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

My most significant accomplishments in my career are:

Obtaining my MBA

Working with The City of Fort Wayne, where I have the pleasure of working with over 2000 people

Being nominated for the forty under 40

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

My greatest mistake thus far has been allowing people to influence my beliefs by making me think I am incapable of doing what I want. I learned that I could do anything I set my mind, regardless of what others think.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

Some of my current goals are:

To successfully design a System best to serve the employees of the City of Fort Wayne

Become a credentialed coach with the International Coaching Federation

Become more involved with the community - especially the Latino community

Manage my work-life balance successfully.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your profession?**

I am a lifelong learner – I like reading and being informed about what is happening in the world. I also love networking and learning from others.

**How do you balance your career,
family, life, and community service?**

I take time for myself - which has been my most incredible tool to avoid burnout. Mental and physical health is a priority in my life, and loving myself extends to loving my family, career, and community.

What do you do to relax?

I like to go to the gym and put my headphones on while listening to Spanish reggaeton or paint my fingernails at home listening to soothing classical music. I also like writing, drawing, and painting.

What book do you recommend?

The seven habits of highly effective people by Stephen R Covey is a must-read.

**Based on what you know now, what
would you tell your high school self?**

I would tell my high school self that it is ok not to fit in and embrace being different because being different will set me apart from others. Mastering the English language is more possible than it seems - everything will be ok.

Madison Seifert

Age: 28

Vera
Bradley

Digital Sales
Support
Analyst



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

A graduate of Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne, I received Bachelor of Science degrees in Business Management and Business Marketing, an Associates of Science degree in Business Administration and a minor in Psychology.

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

I have been a supporter and volunteer for the Miss America Organization, Leader Dogs for the Blind and Children's Miracle Network for over ten years. I also love volunteering locally, and some of my favorite events have been VisionWalk, Run for Riley, Ronald McDonald House and Dancing with the Stars. In the ten years I have lived in Fort Wayne, I have been involved in over 200 volunteer projects (and counting).

What are your hobbies?

When I am not making TikToks with my cat, Tootsie, I enjoy traveling to new places with my fiancé. We are looking forward to a trip to Santorini and Mykonos this fall. In the summer you can find me at the YLNI Farmer's Market, and in the winter I love cheering on the Fort Wayne Komets.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I grew up in Auburn before attending college in Fort Wayne. I loved the city so much that I decided to make Fort Wayne my post-graduate home. My favorite part about living here is the deep-rooted love of community and the fun events, festivals, and organizations. There is truly something for everyone!

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

In the five years I have been with Vera Bradley I have held different roles, but an ongoing theme of each role has been the sense of friendship and community within our company and with our customers, too. My colleagues are so hard-working and passionate about the brand that it inspires me every day. Customers continue to return to the brand because they have built long-lasting relationships with us. It is really a win-win all around!

What does success mean to you?

Success is like a ladder. You don't have to reach the very top of the ladder to be successful. Each rung that you advance to is its own triumph and should be celebrated.

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

As a child I loved baking with my

Mom and Grandmother, and I always thought it would be fun to have a bakery or bake and decorate cakes. This month I am living out my childhood dreams and am taking a professional cake decorating class for the first time.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

The summer after I graduated high school I had a part-time job at Dunham's Sporting Goods, the irony being that I don't have a very big interest in or knowledge of sports.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

Aside from my parents being my number one supporters, Jill Hart and Wes Skelton were two very influential professional mentors during my college internships. At a very impressionable time in my life, they taught me how to be confident in myself and my ideas, to be an attentive listener and to focus on character over competency. I owe many of my career-focused achievements to them.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

My biggest accomplishment is being selected as a Chapman Scholar at my university. As a Chapman Scholar, I received a four-year full ride scholarship. While strong academics are important to earn this scholarship, the heart of the Chapman Scholars organization lies in its community service and give-back initiatives.

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

I am overly critical of myself to a fault. I am learning to be more kind to myself and more appreciative of all that I have accomplished. It is something I am working on daily.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

I recently started a new role at Vera Bradley and my goal is to master digital merchandising on an E-Commerce level over the next year and beyond.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your
profession?**

Always be willing to accept constructive feedback from your peers. Be open to new ideas and processes. Keep your skills current.

Austin Krouse

Age: 30

Brotherhood
Mutual
Insurance
Company

Associate
Attorney



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

Bishop Luers High School, Indiana State University (Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science), Indiana Tech Institute of Technology (Master of Business Administration), and Northern Kentucky University-Salmon P. Chase College of Law (Juris Doctorate).

What community organizations are you involved in?

I am currently involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America, Allen County Indiana Bar Association, and the Christian Legal Society, but I continue to look for further opportunities to work with community organizations in Fort Wayne. During college, I was part of a student mentoring program at Indiana State University, where I mentored college students who were either first-time college students, differently abled college students, or other students struggling to acclimate to the college environment. Any student at Indiana State University could request a mentor. Since then, BBBS’ Real Men Read Mentoring Program has re-ignited my passion for mentoring. This program allows mentors from the local community to visit classrooms and read to students. Before I read to them, I explain to them how important reading is, how it has impacted my life, and how I read every day at my job and in my free time.

What are your hobbies?

My number one hobby is spending time with my wife, two boys, and our dog. I also enjoy having cook-outs with my parents, siblings,

nieces, nephews, and extended family. When I am not spending time with my family, I do enjoy playing pickleball, watching college football, and reading the news. A newfound hobby of mine is playing Crokinole with my co-workers in the legal department.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

Outside of being born and raised in Fort Wayne, I live here because it is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. I grew up in the 46807 area of Fort Wayne and had a great childhood being able to ride my bike to school, Foster Park, and friends’ houses. At the end of the day, I hope to offer my children the same experiences that I had growing up.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why?

I enjoy my profession because I am always challenged to learn something new and resolve issues. Being an in-house attorney at Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company is both a rewarding and fulfilling experience for me as it allows me to work on various topics within the law at a company with almost 600 employees. Every day, there is always something new that I am learning, whether it be assisting the underwriting department, claims department, or IT department. Another rewarding and fulfilling experience is speaking with ministry leaders through our Legal Assist service. Brotherhood Mutual’s Legal Assist service is a free risk management resource that allows ministry leaders at churches, camps, K-12 schools, and colleges/universities to contact in-house

attorneys. Brotherhood Mutual’s Legal Assist team provides free guidance and resources on child abuse prevention, employment, safety/security, and other topics that ministry leaders across the country may encounter.

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is a never-ending ladder. Each rung of the ladder may represent an accomplishment or being one step closer to achieving a goal.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

At a very young age, I always wanted to be the owner of a fire-work store or an inventor. As I aged, luckily, my fascination with pyrotechnics began to dimish, but my passion for solving problems continued to grow. During college, I read about individuals solving problems in business, the law, and history, so I decided to pursue a Law Degree and a Master’s in Business Administration.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from pushing shopping carts at Menards.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

There isn’t just one person who has always been my biggest supporter. My wife, parents, siblings, and faith have always been my greatest supporters. I am beyond blessed to be surrounded by such great role models.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment thus far in my career is passing the Indiana Bar exam and obtaining a job at Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. As for my biggest accomplishments in life, I would say being married to my best friend, having two beautiful boys, and being able to provide for them.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistakes in life involved not having a positive mindset when approaching a difficult task, whether it involves speaking engagements, educational endeavors, career development, building relationships, etc. With each failure, whether perceived or real, I truly believe that it has led me to where I am today, and

I wouldn’t change a single thing. Today, I know that each person has their own trials and tribulations, but what truly matters is continuing forward while obtaining knowledge along the way.

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goal is to obtain my Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter professional designation in risk management and property-casualty insurance and continue to excel in my career. At the same time, my everyday goal in the legal profession is to ensure that everyone I work with excels in their goals and business endeavors.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

As an in-house attorney at a company, I have to continue obtaining knowledge, building relationships, and being a problem solver to remain current in my profession.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Balancing my career, family life, and community service is like balancing a beam scale. Every day requires adjustments, but no person can balance their career, family, and life alone. My family, co-workers, friends, and especially my wife, Chelsea Krouse, help me achieve this balance. There truly isn’t a one-size fits all approach, but I do give great praise and admiration to my wife, who is also a Nurse Practitioner at Parkview, in everything she does for our two boys and me. She sacrifices a lot of her time on a daily basis to ensure that our family is well taken care of.

What do you do to relax?

I listen to podcasts and read books or the news to relax. When I am with my wife, we always watch funny movies or TV shows to relax and unwind at the end of the day.

What book do you recommend?

“Resisting Happiness” by Matthew Kelly or “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Every day, do something to improve yourself because everything will work itself out as long as you keep moving forward.

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AUSTIN!

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AUSTIN KROUSE
Brotherhood Mutual Associate Attorney

Brotherhood Mutual is proud of you and your passion for serving Christian ministries. Your dedication and legal expertise are essential for ministries navigating complex issues, allowing them to focus on their important work. Thank you for making a positive impact.



Tara Michelle Streb

Age: 36

Be Noble Inc.

Administrative
Community
Relations
Specialist



**What is your education?
(i.e. High School, College, etc)**

High School

**What community organizations
are you involved in?**

Historic Downtown Kendallville,
President

Kendallville Redevelopment Commis-
sion, Secretary

Noble County Young Professionals
Network

Thrive by 5, serving Lagrange and
Noble Counties

Kendallville Economic Development
Advisory Council

Parkview Noble Patient & Family
Advisory Committee

Crossroads United Way Strategic
Investment Committee

What are your hobbies?

Hiking, camping, furniture rehab

Why are you in northeast Indiana?

I love the relationships and collab-
orations that come with smaller
communities. In this region there are
endless opportunities to get involved
in things I'm passionate about.

**What is it about your profession
that you enjoy and why?**

Community Development. I love
being a part of a business's success
and growth, events that bring fami-
lies together, bringing downtowns
back to life, etc. I am happiest when
I'm serving others.

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is creating a commu-
nity that my children and grandchil-
dren don't want to leave because
businesses, families and the commu-
nity are thriving.

**As a child, what did you want to be
when you grew up?**

I wanted to be a teacher when I grew
up.

**Where did your first paycheck come
from and what was your job then?**

My first paycheck came from Flint &
Walling. I was as a secretary fresh
out of high school.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

Mayor Handshoe has been my
biggest supporter. She has always
encouraged me to step out of my
comfort zone and be confident. She
empowered me to realize what I'm
capable of.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

Earning the trust of businesses,
schools, city leaders, and the
community.

Securing over \$650,000 in COVID
relief funds for Noble County small
businesses to help them stay open
during the pandemic.

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

Taking a job that made me miser-
able because it was easy, and I was
too afraid of being challenged. I've
learned that outside of my comfort

zone is where I find the things I'm
passionate about. Now I have a new
perspective and consider mistakes
lessons that help me grow.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

My current professional goal is to be
elected to Kendallville City Council.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your profession?**

Great question. I always tell people
I'm involved in so much because I
show up and make myself relevant.
I surround myself with movers and
doers and support others in any
way I can. When you genuinely care
about the community you're in, it's
easy to stay connected.

**How do you balance your career,
family, life and community service?**

I limit my evening meetings to 2-3/
month, and when I'm working at
events my family enjoys tagging
along and helping. I'm home for
dinner every night and we're able
to spend quality time together. We
juggle appointments and practices
when we need to. Luckily, I have a
career I love and a very supportive
family. It all works out easily at the
end of the day.

What do you do to relax?

Spending time with my husband and
kids at the end of the day, watching
a show, and talking about our days is
how I relax.

What book do you recommend?

Based on what you know now, what
would you tell your high school self?

It's okay to be uncomfortable! Don't
dwell on the hiccups. Be confident.
You are capable of so much more
than you think you are.

JACKSON
FROM PAGE 27

**As a child, what did you want
to be when you grew up?**

As a child I wanted to be a Police
Officer or a Forensic Pathologist.

**Where did your first paycheck
come from and what was your job
then?**

My first paycheck came from Dot's
Clothing Store. I was a sales
associate.

**Who was your biggest supporter
who helped you advance
in your career?**

My biggest supporter is my
husband. My husband motivates
me to step outside of myself and
go for what may seem impossible.

**What has been your biggest
accomplishment thus far
in your career?**

My biggest accomplishment thus
far in my career is completing the
necessary training to receive my
Appraiser Trainee License.

**What has been your greatest
mistake thus far and what
lessons did you learn from it?**

My biggest mistake thus far is
relying on the relationships and
connections my husband obtained
and believed that I would inherit
them. I learned that it's important

for me to step outside of his
shadow and develop my own rela-
tionships and connections, because
it's some people that he won't
reach that I may be able to.

**What are your current
professional goals?**

My current professional goal is
to become the first Black Certi-
fied Residential Appraiser in Allen
County.

**How do you remain
current/relevant in your
profession?**

I remain current/relevant in my
profession by attending networking
events, staying up-to-date with my
continuing education, volunteering
in the community, and attending
conferences.

**How do you balance your career,
family, life and community service?**

Honestly, I have not found a true
balance. I just remember my "Why"!

What do you do to relax?

I listen to books on Audible and
binge watch reality t.v.

What book do you recommend?

I recommend any book written by
Ashley Antoinette.

**Based on what you know now, what
would you tell your high school self?**

Based on what I know now, I would
tell my high school self to not get
distracted by things that appear to
be more interesting than the goals
you set for yourself. I will also tell my
high school self that it's much harder
to lose weight the older you get.

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nominations for next year are available at
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PICKETT

FROM PAGE 17
(recreational therapy, behavior management, and music therapy). Also to create a coffee shop, bakery, or health food shop where individuals with disabilities could work.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I routinely attend continuing education trainings and conferences in the field of recreational therapy as well as similar fields of study. Also, obtaining certifications in more job specific related content helping to increase my expertise in the field and using best practices with my clients.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Take time to say no to things. This helps us prioritize ourselves first. Which in turn will have dramatic benefits on our mental health which will positively affect your career, family, life, and community service.

What do you do to relax?

Sit in the sauna.

What book do you recommend?

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself to keep saying yes, try new things, and continue to be open-minded.

NORRIS

FROM PAGE 26
While I am far from perfect, I am a big believer in prioritization, planning ahead, and setting boundaries. My family will always be my top priority, yet I am able to dedicate time to my career and community involvement because of these attributes and the support of my husband and our village.

What do you do to relax?

To relax, I like to spend time with my family and friends, travel, take walks on the trail, and read.

What book do you recommend?

“Lean In” by Sheryl Sandberg

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Trust in the plan that God has for you. Learn to enjoy the moment instead of thinking about what is next. Continue to push yourself and strive for personal growth.

NOLAN

FROM PAGE 27
What does success mean to you?

To me, success is going to bed at night knowing you’ve utilized your God-given abilities to provide a positive contribution to those around you.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

In my 8th grade school yearbook I said that in 10 years I wanted to be a sports broadcaster. Nearly 20 years later, that’s what I’m doing.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first job in high school was caddying at a local golf course. One of the perks of that job was being paid in cash. In high school

CARSWELL

FROM PAGE 18
friend Raven Morton as well as my cousin/mentor Dr. Bryan Meriwether.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

I am Co-Chair of an internal group within JP Morgan Chase called BOLD, Black Organization for Leadership & Development, over the state of Indiana. Last year, I led in organizing an event called Chase Youth Summit that BOLD put on for Jr. and Sr. students in high school. What made this accomplishment so special is that we typically perform this event in Indianapolis only and last year we were able to stretch this event to Fort Wayne as well. We were able to touch over 50 students between the two locations across 5 non for-profit organizations from Indianapolis and Fort Wayne.

HOLST

FROM PAGE 26
come from and what was your job then?

When I was 11 years old, I spent my summers working for a farmer picking up rocks, bailing hay, and mowing grass.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

Eric Fortmeyer, the CEO of Circle Logistics

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

So far, it has been running a \$350 million office at the age of 33. I committed to Circle right when I got out of college, and this means everything to me.

SEIFERT

FROM PAGE 28
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I am detail and schedule-oriented which has been helpful in achieving balance. I am the opposite of a procrastinator. I like to complete my tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible to allow the most time for family and community. I am lucky

I also worked part-time at the local newspaper, so that was where my first paycheck came from.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

Firstly, I wouldn’t be where I am without the support of my parents, who’ve encouraged me to chase my goals, even as it’s led to me to be a 10-hour drive away. For the last four-plus years, my now-wife (Nicole) has been my teammate through the highs and lows. With the TinCaps, Vice President Michael Limmer and Team President Mike Nutter have been incredible leaders and mentors.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

I consider my biggest accomplishment to be maintaining my career

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Fortunately, due to mentorship I was able to get advice and learn from others’ mistakes. One lesson I learned was to “strike while the iron is hot!”

What are your current professional goals?

I always strive for growth; I aim to continuously find new opportunities that will allow me to elevate and mentor others.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I believe that volunteering to speak with students and others in the community helps me stay current on what is going on and ways that I can continue to help.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I put a lot of effort into being

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I have made several mistakes, that I always learn from, but the greatest one so far has been assuming that everyone feels the same way about being successful. I tend to put my heart and soul into raising folks up and I have been taken advantage of in the past.

What are your current professional goals?

I want to help Circle increase business to a billion dollar company in 2023.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I participate in industry conferences, research beneficial process improvements and constantly collaborate with my team.

that my work, home and philanthropic endeavors all overlap one another.

What do you do to relax?

I am getting married in May so there isn’t a ton of time to relax right now, but I do love getting outside and taking a walk with my fiancé and cat, catching up on the Bobby Bones Show or binging a Netflix show (I’m taking recommendations!).

while also getting to now call Nicole my wife.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I certainly make mistakes all the time. One of the greatest has been doubting myself. I’ve learned the importance of self-confidence.

What are your current professional goals?

I aspire to work for a “big league” professional sports team/college or network.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Have a mindset of “adapt or die.”

How do you balance your career,

intentional about balance. That means being sure to participate in things, being present in my family’s life, and taking time away for myself.

What do you do to relax?

When I want to relax, I prefer to take a trip to a resort and not do anything; I also enjoy listening to music and lounging around the house.

What book do you recommend?

“Think Again” by Adam Grant

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would say these two quotes...
“The difference between what you will earn 20 years from now is not what talents you have but how well you use the talents you already have” – Warren Buffet
“If you do what’s hard, your life will be easy. If you do what’s easy, your life will be hard” – Jeezy

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

It is difficult to have balance and be 100% to everyone. My family is a priority and I make the rest of my life fit in around them.

What do you do to relax?

I have been running long distances since I was in college and I will still grab my shoes and hit the pavement when I get a chance.

What book do you recommend?

Rich Dad, Poor Dad

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself to never stop attempting to be successful even in the face of a few failures, keep going no matter what! You can achieve your greatest dreams through hard work and dedication.

What book do you recommend?

I am a big fan of autobiographies and I always recommend “The Beautiful Ones” by Prince.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Keep going. All of your hard work will pay off better than you could have ever imagined. Also, you will never use Pythagorean Theorem in the real world.

family, life and community service?

That’s something I’m definitely still working at. The scales aren’t necessarily even all the time, but I try to be “all in” on whatever’s present.

What do you do to relax?

Spend time with my wife (Nicole) and our dog (Jackie).

What book do you recommend?

“Don’t Take Yes for an Answer” by Steve Herz

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

The habits you practice now are likely to continue into adulthood, so make them good ones. Also: work hard, be nice, and have fun.

MORENO

FROM PAGE 19

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My mother and my partner both pushed me to keep going. My mom was always there with emotional support when I was younger and she made sure I had the education and knowledge I needed to succeed.

My partner convinced me to move to Indiana and encouraged me to follow my dreams. He also gave me the push I needed to keep that forward momentum. When I wanted to stop because we weren't making any sales he helped me figure out how to keep going till we made it.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Opening our second business. Elemento allows us to serve the community in Angola in a different aspect then Golden Green does.

WILLIAMS

FROM PAGE 22

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goals are to have a successful tax/ financial business and have a successful non-profit that will help others understand the importance of financial literacy.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

VALEZ

FROM PAGE 19

I have had many people over my time that have helped me to get to the next phase of my career steps or pathway. Below are just a few of the people who have been impactful to me though:

- Dr. Kristina Surface – Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and the Student Experience, Purdue University Fort Wayne
- Penelope Bernier – YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne
- Craig Humphrey – Faculty, Purdue University Fort Wayne
- Kenneth Christmon – Associate Vice Chancellor, Purdue University Fort Wayne

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

8 years ago two colleagues and I began the Top 50 recognition program at Purdue Fort Wayne. In this program we recognize 50 of our best and brightest students to not only excel academically, but are

PEREZ

FROM PAGE 18

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Getting out of my comfort zone, I used to stay stuck at a desk at my previous job when I worked at an immigration law office. I knew I wanted more in my life but didn't know how to do it. Although I took a huge pay cut working in a non-profit, I have had so many opportunities, made so many connections and have developed myself more than I ever have in my life and that makes it all worth it.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Not setting boundaries and saying yes to too many things. I always

At Elemento its more about helping people grow and find their path. We have picked the perfect staff and do way more then sell crystals and local art. We listen to people and some-times that's all they need.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake was hiding who I really was. As a youngster I was not able to understand that it was ok to be different. I was full of self doubt and worried if I was ever going to be happy. By accepting who I was I learned that I was not only worthy of love, I was able to find it.

What are your current professional goals?

My partner and I are currently in the process of creating a new nonprofit that will be geared towards helping our community find funding and space for micro-businesses. We want to see young artists and entrepreneurs be successful and fill in the

I stay current/ relevant by taking classes and reading to keep up with the tax changes. I also research different ways to deliver lessons to kids and young adults about being financially responsible.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

The community service I participate in is very family oriented. I can take my daughter with me so she can understand the need to serve the community as she gets older. As

serving their communities, no matter where that may be, in the best ways possible. It is a highly competitive program to be selected for, but to be able to tell the stories of our students has been one of the most rewarding professional accomplishments due to the program and its longevity.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Professionally, I had to terminate an employee last year after a long overdue process. I consider it a failure because I allowed the behaviors to continue hoping that my redirections, evaluations, and conversations would change but it didn't. I had to learn that you can want people to be successful in their roles, but they have to have the want themselves. Most importantly, I learned a valuable lesson that in life you can only control yourself and the way you act and respond.

What are your current professional goals?

As simple as it sounds, right now my

said yes to helping or taking on more work than I could handle and it caused me to burn out, miss deadlines, and not live in the moment. I'm still learning, but this year I set my top five priorities and anything outside of it, must be let go.

What are your current professional goals?

Learn everything I can about business development, I want to open my own business. I'm offering immigration form services as a side hustle and want to launch it out to the public, but since I'm not an attorney I have to find a way to do it ethically and make sure it is done right.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I listen to audio books, podcasts and attend workshops. Also, within our organizations we share content

empty retail spaces with people who have a passion and vision for the future.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Education is key. You can't ever stop learning. I travel to conventions and keep tabs on current trends. I also try to collaborate with other small businesses. These partnerships benefit both parties and it allows us to reach people who may otherwise not know about us.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

By realizing that you can't do it all. You have to have a good team in place and trust that they have your best interest at heart. In the beginning I wanted to do it all but quickly burnt out, now I take time off for myself and my family. I say no to projects when I know I won't be able to give my all and let people know when I am available to help. I truly believe you can't fill others cups

far as balancing my life, I make a "to do" list daily. This helps me keep things in order. If I do not complete everything on my list in that day, I show myself grace and continue to the next day. I will reach out for help if a task calls for it. I never want to over stress myself so I ensure I do something for myself that will make me smile. This can be anything from a beauty treatment to buying myself a nice dinner.

What do you do to relax?

Facials are my current go to.

primary professional goal is just to stay happy with what I am doing and not become complacent.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I am constantly looking for ways to continue innovating and making the student experience as great as it can be. Especially in a more post COVID-19 pandemic world, our student's needs are different than previously. Their engagement is also different. So I work to stay current on common practices in higher education student activities through conferences, associations, and networking with my counterparts at other institutions.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

This is probably the biggest challenge for me and one that I am continually evaluating. I have the problem of thinking that I am not doing enough in my career, family, life, and community work. But what I have found is learning to say no when you need to and determining how to best split your time. I also

that is relevant and help each other stay updated. Since I work with businesses and start ups I have to do research and network with other organizations to ensure that I give our clients the most updated information.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I try to live in the present moment and take one day at a time. Thanks to a performance coach, I learned to reduce friction, such as social media / email apps on my phone, set focus times and plan my week on the weekends. Most important, keeping fitness/ eating healthy a priority to have energy to do all day-to-day work.

What do you do to relax?

I usually watch movie/shows with my kids and husband. We cuddle on our couch and those are moments when

when yours is empty.

What do you do to relax?

Take a drive. My partner and I love to just get in the car and drive somewhere we've never been. It allows us a chance to talk and reconnect if it's been a hectic week and it also allows me to meet new people and get ideas to bring back home to share with others.

What book do you recommend?

Mira Kirshenbaum – Everything happens for a reason. It's a great book that pushes us to look for the best no matter what the situation is.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Everything will be alright. When you fail don't give up, everything is going to turn out ok. Give yourself time to grow and shine eventually everyone will see who you really are. The people who hurt you are really just trying to mask the hurt they feel themselves- so forgive them.

What book do you recommend?

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself it is okay to take self- care/ mental break days during the week. It is okay to fail if you learn and do it better next time. It is okay to change direction from the original path you created. And confidence will come as you grow and learn.

love when any and all of the pieces above can be connected together. I balance as best as I humanly can, knowing that it is not always easy.

What do you do to relax?

I like to go for walks, spend time with my family and friends, play boardgames, go on car drives, travel, be at home watching movies or tv. A lot of the things I do outside of my work time relax me.

What book do you recommend?

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance. By Angela Dickworth

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

It won't always be easy. But it will be worth it. Take chances when they come up and don't let fear hold you back from taking steps toward the unknown. You don't have to know everything right now. But listen, be aware, and have fun. Most importantly, never forget where you came from because it will keep you grounded and push you to be the most authentic you possible.

I just really take in because coming home to them reminds me that life doesn't have to stressful or complicated. They remind me that life is good.

What book do you recommend?

Pardon my French, the You're a Bada** at Making Money– by Jen Sincero. This was the book that opened my mind and change the way I think about money. After I read this book, my personal development journey really took a turn for the best!

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Stop caring what other people think of you, don't compare yourself to anyone but yourself and stop buying so much stuff, you'll get rid of 80% because materials don't make you happy!

BENNETT

FROM PAGE 21

upon graduation, I realized that I had no interest in working in the public sector. I always loved numbers and finance, so I decided to pursue getting a Post Baccalaureate Accounting Certificate. After about a year of doing that and working for a Public Accounting Firm, I had another revelation that I desired more human interaction as part of my career. At the time, a close friend from college and high school approached me about an opportunity to become entrepreneurs. I learned so much during those 2 years that helped me begin to think about business like an entrepreneur, regardless of position or where I worked. In the summer of 2011, Hallmark Home Mortgage was growing and had the need for an internal accounting clerk. My mom helped me get my foot in the door. When the time was right, she helped me transition into the sales side of the business as a mortgage loan originator. While she has taught me so much about the mortgage business, I owe immense gratitude to her for teaching me how to be a good person, a contributor to our community, the importance of family and faith, and generally just about everything in life.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

For me personally, it has been the ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. When I first started as a loan officer, it was all about how hard I could work to develop relationships and make more loans. To be honest, I had a bit of ego involved as I wanted to prove to others I could be the best. In full transparency, it was

100% self-serving. Other areas of my life started to become impacted by this incessant goal to be #1. In 2018, I realized I would never truly accomplish my goals and dreams this way. Even if I did become #1, would it even be worth it if every other area of my life was suffering? At this time, my 2nd child was on the way and my wife gave me a bit of an ultimatum that my career was getting in the way of our family. It was humbling to hear that. I quickly realized that everything I wanted would evaporate if I didn't make a change. I enlisted the help of a business coach around this same time. I had to go through about a year-long process to eliminate some limiting beliefs. I didn't think it was possible and nor was I worthy of a life totally of my design. During this time I worked extremely hard to become a better person so that I can make a positive impact on others through my career. I knew I had to become more systematized in my daily activities. I needed to be a more effective communicator. I needed to find ways to let others know Who I Am and What I Do that didn't require a ton of time or a large amount of monetary investment. Today, I am happy to say I run a business that values and respects both people and time. I feel honored that I have the opportunity to share that with others as well as my career continues to advance. I love seeing others accomplish their dreams and goals that they may not fully recognize on their own.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake was really highlighted above as well as the lessons learned from it. I had placed my ego and self-serving needs on

a pedestal. It made me take a step back. I realized that you can have everything you desire if you have a give first and freely type of mindset. I love helping others and leading others to accomplish their goals first. If I do that, I know that I will be better for it in the long-term as well as our community.

What are your current professional goals?

At this juncture, it really is to give more and lead others. As much as it is a professional goal, I would say it is a personal life mission statement. I have been blessed with so many amazing mentors that have poured into me. It would only be right for me to honor and continue on their legacies through sharing that with as many people as possible in whatever capacity I am called to do so.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Networking with peers all-across the country. I have some amazing and close friends in the mortgage business all over. Additionally, I aspire to be a life-long learner and "student of the game". The playing field is always changing. It is never constant. In order to strive for greatness, you must be willing to adapt, try new things, fail, get back up and repeat the process over and over again. More than anything, I have learned to embrace the journey and become as present as possible in the moment.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Priorities. Every decision I make at its core comes down to my priorities in life. For me, my priorities are very

simple within a hierarchical order: 1. God/Faith 2. Family 3. Career 4. Everything Else. Everything flows from that. Every time I stumble through adversity, it is because my priorities have become misaligned. I quickly work to get back to balance within my priorities.

What do you do to relax?

Prayer/Meditation. Self-Affirmations. Positive personal development books (Matthew Kelly and Jon Gordon are my 2 favorite authors). It's more personal pleasure, but I love history. I believe so much wisdom can be gleaned through historical research and analysis.

What book do you recommend?

Oh shoot! I honestly can't just recommend one. However, here is my short list: The Bible – Specifically The Book of Proverbs, The Untethered Soul – Michael Singer, Resisting Happiness – Matthew Kelly, The Energy Bus – Jon Gordon, Can't Hurt Me & Never Finished – David Goggins. Forewarning, The David Goggins' books are quite vulgar and raw. It isn't for everyone. Every single one of these books have had massive impact and created positive change in my life.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

The future is bright. Do not conform to the world. Listen to your heart and soul. When your spirit and soul feel called in a direction, GO! Paralysis by analysis is real. Life is full of choices that will all require a level of faith. Being right and doing right are not the same. When all else fails, choose kindness, choose love, choose peace.

SOLON

FROM PAGE 17

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My parents encouraged me to attend law school and were supportive when I graduated during a bleak job market following the recession. They knew I could be successful before I did. My law partner, David Van Gilder, has also been an incredible mentor. He is always open to collaborating and is full of sage advice. Whenever I am tasked with a difficult legal question, I ask myself what David would do.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

My biggest accomplishment has been becoming a working mom. I always respected working moms but until I became one myself, I did not truly appreciate the magnitude of

their dedication to their respective professions and devotion to their families.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

When I was a young attorney, I spent most of my time working and spent very little time on self-care. Legal work can be very intense, and some attorneys get burnt out. I learned the value of taking time for myself and in the process became a happier attorney.

What are your current professional goals?

Currently, I'm focused on growing my law firm, Fletcher Van Gilder, and expanding our Social Security disability practice. We offer representation to individuals seeking Social Security disability benefits, from the initial application through all levels of administrative appeal and federal district court appeals.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I am a member of the Allen County Bar Association, the Indiana Bar Association, and the National Organization for Social Security Claimants' Representatives. These organizations offer continuing legal education, opportunities to connect with other attorneys, share ideas, and build relationships.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

I am intentional about how I schedule and spend my time. My mom, who balanced working full time and raising two children, gave me the best advice when she said, "whether you are at home or at work, be present." I try very hard to put down my phone and engage with my family when I'm at home. When I'm practicing law or participating in a board meeting, I'm focused on the work and getting results.

What do you do to relax?

I have found there are very few stresses that cannot be soothed by a bubble bath and a good book.

What book do you recommend?

"When Breath Becomes Air" by Paul Kalanithi, a memoir written by a neurosurgeon who was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer at age 36. He poignantly writes from the dual perspectives of physician and patient and reflects on suffering and death but also the perpetual hope that flows from a life well lived.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

As a high school student, I had many goals and worked hard to achieve them but I also took myself too seriously. I would tell my former self to relax and enjoy life.

"Live in the sunshine, swim in the sea, drink the wild air." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

historical fiction to personal growth books – there is something so relaxing about escaping into another world and seeing things from a new perspective!

What book do you recommend?

Dare to Lead – Brené Brown

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Do not stress about needing to have it all figured out right now and making sure everything always goes according to plan. Life takes a lot of unknown twists and turns and rarely ends up working out exactly like you plan - no matter how hard you try. Trust that there is a unique path meant just for YOU, you just don't what it is yet. So, relax, focus on doing good, practicing gratitude, having fun, and helping others – I promise, the rest will work itself out!

FENSTERMAKER

FROM PAGE 16

COVID was extremely challenging for those in healthcare, especially long-term care, where so many of our loved ones didn't make it. We were challenged every day to do more with less – less staff because they were sick also, less supplies due to shortages, less overall knowledge on what we were up against, and less resources because no one at the federal/state level even knew exactly how to handle it back then – we were all learning as we went. We worked with the state every day for months doing the best that we could do. For me, not breaking down and continuing to lead while shouldering all the stress and heartbreak everyone was feeling has been my greatest accomplishment – it made me realize that I am stronger than I've ever given myself credit for.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Taking what people say as the truth without verifying the credibility/accountability that goes along with it. A wise woman once taught me – trust, but verify. Those words have stuck with me and from that point on, I have always verified first!

What are your current professional goals?

I am just starting an exciting new role as a Corporate Director of Operations over multiple campuses – so right now, I really want to continue to expand my knowledge base and experience and grow in my leadership abilities. I am excited to see where my love of learning, teaching, and helping others takes me!

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Read – a lot! And stay engaged with a network of peers; there is always so much we can learn from each other.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

It truly takes a village! I am blessed to have a great support system that helps me balance it all. I have learned to be intentional about my time and energy and have gotten comfortable with saying no. There is always so much to do, and it can never all get done and that's ok! I've learned to stop shooting for perfection and instead be happy with what I have accomplished each day.

What do you do to relax?

I love to read – everything from

ROUSH-LICHLYTER

FROM PAGE 10

ourselves, how we perform in school or work, and our independence. The most joy I get is helping kids into their first pair of glasses that can be life changing in improving their school experience, ability to focus in life, self-esteem, and extracurricular activities. I believe no child should fall behind in life due to lack of vision!

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is knowing that your contributions have had a positive impact. That success mentality can carry through work, family, life, and community. I always hope to leave anything I touch better than when I found it!

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

An Optometrist! I am a third generation optometrist that grew up around the profession. There is just something in the water at our offices!

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

I have worked every job at Drs. Roush and Will Optometrists. I started filing papers in medical records before moving into the optical lab, answering phones, and more! I can truly say I have sat in every seat!

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

My husband Craig is by far my

biggest supporter. He is my rock, sounding board, and cheerleader in every way. He keeps me moving when I'm not motivated, grounded when I'm overwhelmed, and takes me traveling when I really need a break! I couldn't be where I am today without him!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

As generic as it may sound it would be getting through COVID. Healthcare practices had a real challenge in being shut down from any income for multiple weeks/months but still having a full staff to pay and continue providing care for patients outside the office walls; telemedicine, online offerings, and phone triage. We did our best to continue to provide service for our patients, jobs for our staff, and look to the future during such a great challenge. COVID has left us with a change in the mentality of the workforce for healthcare even now which we continue to address daily. I never know what the day may throw at us but after surviving the COVID pandemic I feel we can navigate almost any challenge!

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake is thinking I can or should help everyone. It is hard to be in a profession that has you take an oath to help everyone that comes through your door and not be able to. You learn that not everyone wants your help or will follow the advice/recommendations given. I have had to take a step back and

extremely profitable.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Not saving every penny I made when I was younger. I've learned to start saving it now and to teach others to start younger.

What are your current professional goals?

I would love to join a board that I'm truly passionate about. The events I plan for GFW Inc. are a fundraising tool to help our organization grow jobs, wages, and the economy. With that, I'd love to become a better fundraiser!

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first paycheck came from my father's home building business. I was a general laborer which, that summer, consisted of a lot of sweeping, cleaning, and organizing the manufacturing facility.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

Outside of my parents and wife, the biggest supporter in my career has been John Barce. John willingly took on a role as mentor, both professionally and personally, and actively invested in my growth. I would not have had the same opportunities to develop into the person I am today without his trust and support. I am deeply thankful for all he has done.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Its tough to point to a definite event as my biggest professional accomplishment. I can say it's the continued trust and responsibility given to me by my clients and the partners and my colleagues at Barrett McNagny.

remember I can provide the guidance or solution but I can not force anyone to abide by it. Personal responsibility of a patient is something that can't be changed but is hard to accept.

What are your current professional goals?

I strive to advance the offerings for patients to stay local for as much care as they can. I want to continue to help both pediatric and adult vision despite the many challenges presented currently: increased screentime, ADHD medications, and harmful cheap online eyewear.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I believe if you aren't actively advancing yourself then you are falling behind! My profession is a legislated profession with a regulated scope of practice. I believe in training and practicing to the highest level that scope allows. I have certified myself with additional training in every area a medical optometrist can practice in the state of Indiana. I also believe that it is necessary to advance the business and practice itself. I belong to and participate in multiple associations for the advancement of optometry including IDOC, PECAA, and VSP vision SHIFT. I am fortunate to have a team around me that allows for my offices to continue to become so advanced in Northeast Indiana.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

In our lives they are all intertwined. Our work is what allows us to

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I love learning so I'm always researching what my peers, in other cities, are doing to make their events successful and applying them to our own events.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

There's no perfect solution to balancing it all but I do recommend blending. I try my best to be 100% present wherever I am and make sure wherever I put my time and energy is beneficial.

What do you do to relax?

If it's nice out, I LOVE sitting

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

My greatest mistake was probably exhibiting a complete lack of self-awareness when it comes to personal and professional commitment. I learned that you only get one cup and you get to choose how to fill it, but, if you choose everything, sooner or later it overflows and it's a mess.

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goals are becoming a partner at Barrett McNagny and continuing to assist my clients with complex issues, including increasing awareness around cybersecurity and privacy issues in the business setting.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

The best way to stay current in the practice of law is to continually practice – I have been lucky to practice during one of the most active mergers & acquisition markets. Additionally, I developed a cybersecurity/privacy practice based on client needs. I attend various seminars

be so involved in the community which we share with our kids as a family. We all participate in many community activities from ringing the Salvation Army Bell at Christmas to working the Rotary booth at the Apple Festival, to volunteering at Shepherd's Summer Concert Series at Sylvan Cellars, and more. My work with Oak Farm Montessori Tall Oak Gala allows me time at my kids school while they are there and allows us to expand the offerings to the current kids and additional kids in a Montessori education. Our staff is more like family to us and my kids feel at home at our offices. As a small business owner our lives are fulfilled by the interwoven connection of work, life, and community.

What do you do to relax?

What does relax mean?! My favorite way to relax is Friday night family night with a movie and fun food creations with my husband and kids! We try not to let too much get in the way of having those nights – even if they have to be moved to a different night one week! I love to relax by travelling and spending time on the lake in the summer.

What book do you recommend?

The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell her when in doubt listen to "I Drink Wine" by Adele!

And remember you can't be everything to everyone!

outside in the sunshine with a good book or inside with a good book is a close second.

What book do you recommend?

I love murder mystery books but if I had to pick a book that helped me grow into a better leader, I would pick strengths finder. It uncovers your strengths and makes sense of what you already know to be you. It also teaches you how your strengths benefit you.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself to appreciate the downtime and treat life as a marathon not a sprint. I was in such a hurry to grow up.

and also on the topic to ensure I'm staying current with the developments in that area.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

By having the most supportive partner and a shared family calendar. Family is always the first priority and, fortunately, I work in an environment that recognizes that. Emphasizing the structure around my schedule over the past few years has provided great results.

What do you do to relax?

I relax with the family - watching our oldest teach his baby sister anything. Or anything basketball, including making my way to the 5 AM game at Jorgensen YMCA.

What book do you recommend?

The Space Barons, by Christian Davenport.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Don't be afraid to pursue interests that fall outside of the traditional track. Also, save the knees and play less basketball.

LOCK

FROM PAGE 5

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career?

On a personal level, my husband, Philip, has been my biggest supporter, never holding me back from the next career opportunity. My mom, Pam, has always been my biggest fan. On a professional level, there are too many to name. However, some of the strongest voices of support and motivation have come from past co-workers and leaders in Allen County Government, several state legislators, and current co-workers and leaders in Parkview Health. They know who they are!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?

Because I work closely with the Indiana General Assembly every

session, my biggest accomplishment is when a bill or amendment I have helped draft or influence becomes an Indiana law. I remember several years ago that I was hosting a birthday party for my daughter on a Saturday but, as a last-minute request, needed to get some language to a legislator to formalize into a second reading amendment. I quickly put together some bullet points and sent via email. Those bullets ended up verbatim in the Indiana Code – and are still there today.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

I’ve learned that bad news does not get better with time. It’s best to be honest and open about it at as quickly as possible.

What are your current professional goals?

I’ve been at Parkview Health just

under three years and I am building a government relations program from the ground up. I hope to create a robust team that can create stronger partnerships between the region’s largest employer and all levels of government.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I do my best to stay up to date on current events or news – locally, nationally, and globally – to understand the inclination for change and the narratives that will drive state and federal policy.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

It truly can be difficult. I have a strong support system in my husband and my family. I also have a great work-life balance promoted by my employer, Parkview Health. At the end of the day, I remind myself that my faith and my family come

first because I value them the most – the other things will work themselves out.

What do you do to relax?

To relax, I catch up on hobbies that I haven’t had time to do. I also like a good cup of coffee with a one-on-one conversation with a close friend or family member. Sometimes, I just need some time to myself to think, to read, or to pray. I also will use the Calm app on stressful workdays.

What book do you recommend?

“The Culture Map” by Erin Meyer and “Ask It” by Andy Stanley.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Never compare yourself to others but stay true to your beliefs and values, regardless of your surroundings. People respect honesty and genuineness. Also, in all things, have courage and be kind.

realizing the impact I had on youth earlier. I started working with middle and high school students when I was 20 so I didn’t really look at myself as an adult yet. I developed relationships that forced me to mature.

What are your current professional goals?

My current professional goal is to continue to grow and become a better leader in my community. I would like to run my own YMCA

branch one day or possibly have a metro level position that works only with youth and help oversee our association.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

I continue to build relationships and talk with all the youth that come into our building. I listen to podcasts and lectures about growing myself spiritually and in my leadership. I also enjoy going to the gym and playing games with the youth, going to school’s lunches, sporting events or any school performance.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

The beautiful thing in my life is that my wife and I work together. Working together has its pros and cons but way more sunshine than rain. People will probably tell you not to work with your spouse, but I enjoy it. We just had our first daughter this last fall. My wife and I share the same mindset for helping others, so it comes natural to my family.

What do you do to relax?

I am a huge introvert so to relax I enjoy peace and quiet. I also enjoy listening to all kinds of music, movies

and television. However, the best thing for me is to take a drive.

What book do you recommend?

Oh, the places you’ll go! - Dr. Suess
How to be perfect – Michael Schur

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

I would tell myself that it’s okay to not know what’s about to happen next. Save money. Spend more time with my grandpa. Being high school sweethearts, I would also tell myself to marry my wife sooner, pretty much the day I met her.

to take each day at a time and do my best each day. My husband and my parents are a huge help and I couldn’t do it without them!

What do you do to relax?

I like to get my nails done at the salon or watch a good TV series to relax. I also enjoy taking walks alone or with my husband when the weather is nice!

What book do you recommend?

Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Don’t be in such a hurry to grow up!

dominated industry. I became a branch manager at 25 and an Assistant Vice President at 34. I’ve built a reputation as a trusted advisor amongst my clients and peers that I’m very proud of.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?

Not speaking up for myself. I can be a strong advocate for others but sometimes struggle to be assertive when it comes to myself. Now I’ve learned to have my own voice.

What are your current professional goals?

Continue to advance in my career

and build upon my professional and personal network.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

Reading and listening. I read several publications, attend leadership seminars and reach out to my vast network of professionals.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

To me this isn’t really a balance. It’s more of a continuum and a teeter totter. I do try to focus on using my “best yes” and incorporating my family and friends into my community involvement and work events as I am able.

What do you do to relax?

Walk my dog, read, spend time in

laughter with my friends, meditate and pray.

What book do you recommend?

Essentialism by Greg McKeown, The Best Yes by Lysa TerKeurst

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

Spend more time with your family and friends. Don’t stress about the small stuff. Ask questions and write down responses from your loved ones. You never know when they no longer may be with you. My mom died when I was 25 and my biggest regrets are all the things that I didn’t have the chance to ask her.

proven helpful with me though this journey of “learning to say No”.

What are your current professional goals?

This is a great question. This year I recently heard the keynote speaker Ben Nemtin speak and purchased his book “The Bucket List Journal”. This book has you separate your life into 10 categories and set goals for each. I won’t bore you with all of my goals in these 10 categories of life, but I will give you a few of my professional goals. 1) Achieve my MBA – Human Resources from Indiana Tech by end of 2025. 2) Achieve my SPHR certification 3) Be President of my local SHRM Chapter [NIHRA in 2024 & 2025] 4) To naturally & organically grow within my company as a higher level and speculative business strategy key partner to support the overall business more holistically

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?

In order to stay current & relevant

with Human Resources & Business trends, I intentionally focus on how to be “always learning”. One way is through annual conferences such as the NIHRA Annual Conference at Purdue Fort Wayne (5/18/2023), the HR Indiana Annual Conference in Indianapolis, or the SHRM Annual Conference. I am an avid SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management) member and attend my local monthly SHRM Chapter luncheons, webinars, & seminars on many “hot button” and trending HR & People topics. The Human Resources, Talent, & Workforce landscape has changed immensely over the last 5 years (especially post-pandemic). By immersing myself into continuous learning, a growth mindset, and striving to be 1% better every day has kept me agile and ready to tackle new professional tasks with awareness of current best practices and trends.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?

Truth.... I don’t admit to having found that “secret recipe” of a perfect Zen balance. In full transparency, when I am “rocking it out” in one area of

my life I am likely not “rocking it out” in the other areas of my life. What I do is my best to “blend” my career, family, life, and community involvement. I work hard each week (usually Sunday evenings) to strategically plan and coordinate my upcoming week schedule and priorities. A strong support system (which in my case is a very understanding husband) is my key success factor in juggling all my competing demands.

What do you do to relax?

My favorite place to relax is at my lake cottage on Lake of the Woods near Stroh, IN. The property has been in my family since 1987 (when I was 1 year old) and I look for any & every opportunity to relax & recharge there with my family, friends, lake neighbors, or even solo. Being there is very nostalgic and cathartic and is my “Chicken Soup for the Soul”.

What book do you recommend?

“Snow Globe Leadership: Shaken Not Settled” by Jeff Nischwitz. This booked singlehandedly motivated me to morph into the transformational leader I am today. To not be afraid to

be brave, bold, and lead in different and people-focused ways. To lead in the absence of leadership. To lead regardless of your job title. To lead regardless if you have direct reports. Don’t let your ‘snow globe’ or your company’s ‘snow globe’ settle and become stagnant----become a “snow globe shaker” and shift your thinking, perspectives, decisions, actions, and leadership influence----that’s where the magic happens. I have been shaking up my leadership since reading Jeff’s book and embracing his guidance to aim and claim your seat at the table and deliver more business impact.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?

People throw rocks at things that shine---Stay the course. Do the work. You are making a difference and an impact on People, on Business, in your Community, in your Profession, in your Family. Be You. Be undoubtedly and authentically you. It won’t always be easy, the road to success has a messy middle and takes grit, but you’ve got this Carly.

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