



GREATER FORT WAYNE
Business Weekly

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SECTION B

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TERI WILDER, 35

Employer: Northeastern Center
Education: Bachelor of science in psychology (minored in French); master of science in counseling psychology and mental health counseling; PhD (Pursuant) in counseling education and supervision
Community organizations: Noble County Drug Court; Noble County Chamber of Commerce; previously — North Dakota Governor’s Council Rehabilitation Committee

Hobbies: Reading, singing and time with my family.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? After having my first child in North Dakota and realizing how distant we were from family, we moved to Indiana to be closer to family, allowing us to raise our children with family present and nearby.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Counseling and therapy are my passion. Psychology fascinates me, and understanding human nature helps me to work with people on a 1-to-1 basis. I absolutely love being a therapist and helping people find their way through the dark times in their lives. I have spent a great deal of my life in school for counseling and psychology, providing me with a solid foundation of study and understanding of the science. I have taken this education and am focusing on completing my PhD to help train new members of the counseling industry on being passionate, motivated, and effective clinicians.

What does success mean to you? Success means that I have reached and achieved my individual goals that I have set for myself and am pursuing those that have not yet been achieved. It means that I continue to push forward, regardless of the struggles, and can see my mission in my everyday life of helping others and being present for my family.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? My mom always told me I reminded her of a librarian because of how much I loved to read. I even wore my hair in a ponytail always, which apparently was something that librarians did. However, I initially saw myself working with computers because they fascinated me. After a Psych101

course in my senior year of high school, I found myself approached by a 12-year-old who told me she wanted to commit suicide. The school was unprepared to handle the situation that day, no guidance counselor or principals on the property, not even the school nurse. They asked me to sit with her, talk with her, despite being 18 with no professional experience. Afterward, I spoke with a favorite teacher and the psychology teacher, affirming that the things I said and did were appropriate and right. This was the turning point that made me want to be a therapist, without a doubt, and feel that I could do well with it.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? Long before I had my first “real” job, I babysat. I babysat for the neighbors, I babysat for my niece, and I babysat for my cousins. I was good at it and always willing to do it, so I had a lot of people calling me for sitter jobs. When I did get my first real job, I worked as a dishwasher in a bar/restaurant and then as a vendor at a movie theater.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My mom has always been a huge supporter of me, allowing me to explore my dreams and encouraging me to follow them. She never let me give up, even when it was tough. She encouraged me to keep going, reminding me of the Serenity Prayer. Unbeknownst to her, the Serenity Prayer is popular in recovery and while I never realized I would be working so heavily in substance abuse treatment, it’s right where I ended up. Secretly, my dad would also tell everyone he met that his daughter was going to be a “psychologist” someday. While I am not a psychologist, I am a therapist and an associate director.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? I feel like I have had so many accomplishments in my career, achieving so much and having such wonderful experiences along the way. If I had to highlight any one big achievement, it would have been my promotion to an associate director. Not only was it a move into leadership, but it was also an opportunity to advance my

skills both clinically and professionally and begin to guide others in the development of theirs. I was not always sure of becoming a leader, but I find enjoyment in the everyday experience of both my work and the direct application of my knowledge and experience to others.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? By far, the biggest mistake I’ve had thus far was not taking the opportunity for leadership sooner. I had allowed nervousness and fear to keep me from fully embracing a director’s role years earlier, uncertain of my qualifications, whether I could do the job justice, and just doubting my overall skills and qualifications. Since then, I have learned that if it does not scare you, you are not growing. Anxiety can be healthy and can be a guiding factor into allowing you to develop yourself, but also, change can be challenging. Rather than avoid or pull-back from challenges, I have learned to embrace them and allow myself to continue to be challenged.

What are your current professional goals? Currently, I am working on completing my PhD in counseling education and supervision. Completion of this degree program will allow me to take on a teaching role or to continue in my supervision and leadership within my organization. I am currently beginning the dissertation phase of my degree and preparing to begin recruiting research participants. It is a very exciting time!

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? One of the benefits of being a lifetime learner, is that I am continually learning about changes in the field and engaging in constant research, utilizing journals and articles that I have access to through my school and professional memberships. My profession, employer, and current licensure status require ongoing continuing education to ensure that skills remain up to date. I engage in annual trainings and seek out additional skill building trainings that allow me to stay up to date in the most recent advances within the field.

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



get asked this question a lot, particularly by friends who tell me, “I don’t know how you do it.” I have had to create a delicate balance, in which I spend my weekdays with my career, my evenings with my family, nights and weekends completing schoolwork (after the kids are in bed) and ensuring that extras are balanced into a very delicate schedule. I spend a lot of late nights doing schoolwork and planning how the next day will look. I have a supportive family who push me forward and help me with my kids, when needed.

What do you do to relax? I enjoy reading when I have some down time. I enjoy playing games with my kids and going to parks with them, as well as, traveling. I take the chances that I get to travel to new places and sharing these experiences with my children.

What book do you recommend? “Pride and Prejudice”

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Don’t ever let fear hold you back! You can fly, you can travel, you can experience the world. Don’t hesitate to do the things your heart leads you to, but also don’t forget to ask for help you need it.

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Thank you, Tyler!
Dedicated to developing
a thriving community right
here in DeKalb County, our
community is better
because of your leadership.

Congratulations!
Tyler Cleverly
Executive Director

United Way
of DeKalb County

LUKE HOFFMAN, 35

Employer: Vice president of construction at Granite Ridge Builders

Education: Concordia Lutheran High School 2004; IPFW - associate of architectural engineering 2006 and bachelor of science for construction engineering 2009

Community organizations: I serve on the Fort Wayne Home Builders Association, currently acting as vice president. I've partnered with several organizations to facilitate our Granite Ridge Community Service Day including NeighborLink, the SPCA, Gigi's Playhouse, and more.

Hobbies: Spending time with my children at the lake boating, fishing, swimming, and being with the rest of my family. I also enjoy reading, traveling, and working on DIY home improvement projects. I've completed several marathons, half-marathons, and an Ironman competition. I am also a lifelong Chicago Bears fan.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in Fort Wayne and have always admired how the city continues to grow and change and the unlimited potential it has.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy that every day is different with new challenges to face. I get excited about the process of problem-solving and coming up with a solution as well as researching along the way. I am also passionate about educated and training my colleagues and assisting

them with their own personal and professional growth.

What does success mean to you? Success means to be fulfilled and happy, which is all I want for myself and anyone. I want to know that my life was not lived in vain and that I took advantage of every day.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a professional soccer player.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from running my paper route.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My dad for being my representation of true determination, Tony Reincke for his example of immense passion for what he does, and countless local business owners who have shown me the power of partnership.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Helping others see their true potential and watching as they overcome their own fears and perceived limitations. Another pillar of pride for me would be that we, Granite Ridge Builders, have helped over 5,000 families into a place that they can call home.

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



determined. It isn't really a mistake if it helps your grow and learn; it's more just another opportunity.

What are your current professional goals? To continue to help others achieve professional and personal success through guidance and education as well as my own growth.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I take every opportunity to educate myself whether through my own research or attending classes and workshops. I am also always looking to

elevate my knowledge by obtaining new certifications and licenses; currently I am studying to receive my Master Graduate Builder certification. I also attend the International Builder Show every year and visit several different contractors in the industry factories and businesses.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? It is not easy, and it doesn't always work out but it takes being intentional about my priorities. My family and my health must be forefront of mind because without them, what is everything else for? I carve specific time in my schedule for every aspect of my life such as picking my kids up from school, going to their events, having date nights, etc.

What do you do to relax? Occasionally, I will make time to completely unplug from technology and escape to nature; either to a cabin or camping. No cellphone, no internet, just me and the outdoors. That is when I truly feel relaxed.

What book do you recommend? "The Count of Monte Cristo" by Alexandre Dumas

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Continue to push yourself outside of your comfort zone and always strive for personal growth. To not be so afraid of failing and to look at my mistakes as steppingstones of opportunity.

KELLIE ADKINS, 30

Employer: Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation / City of Fort Wayne

Education: Northrop High School – Class of 2009; bachelor's in biological sciences from Purdue Fort Wayne – 2013; currently enrolled at Indiana Tech for Organizational Leadership certification

Community organizations: Volunteer for Fort Wayne Derby Girls; member of LC Nature Park, Indiana Buddhist Temple

Hobbies: Roller skating is my main hobby. I started playing roller derby in 2009 then retired in 2018. I started "aggressively" roller skating in skate parks in 2016 and now teach others how to safely skate in parks. Outdoor recreation is my other passion and I enjoy backpacking, hiking, and kayaking. I also enjoy crocheting, painting, and playing Dungeons and Dragons and board games.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I am Fort Wayne born and raised! After college I spent one year in Maine, 1 year in northwest Indiana, and one year in southern California, but found my way back to NE Indiana when I was hired at Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Strengthening our sense of community and creating avenues for people to play all while protecting natural resources are all rewarding aspects of my career. I like to identify community barriers that prevent people from accessing services provided by FWP&R. I try to use my privilege and the resources available to me to create more inclusive and accessible services and amenities for all people to enjoy. When I am frustrated at work I make an effort to visit parks and watch wildlife and people enjoy the fruits of labor from me and my colleagues. It puts the impact of our work into perspective. It's also my greatest honor to be in a position to defend natural resources.



issues that negatively impact wildlife, ecosystems, and people. I started volunteering at 11 by collecting donations for Animal Care and Control each year. At 13 I started volunteering for the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, and by 15 I was a volunteer for Black Pine Animal Sanctuary. At 18 I joined the North American Freshwater Turtle Research Group and became a volunteer researcher and interpreter.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My very first paying job was a hostess job at a corporate restaurant that my older sister worked at. I didn't enjoy the job and didn't get along with management, so I quickly found a different job at a pet store.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? There are a lot of folks that I think contributed to my success, but by far my dad has been my greatest supporter. My parents were always supportive of my volunteer endeavors (imagine driving your 15 year old to and from Albion once a week so she could volunteer). At 17 my mom tragically and unexpectedly passed away, so my dad was the one to see me off to my first college in Maine and tolerate my gallivanting all over the country as I tried carving out a career for myself. After mom passed my dad began volunteering at Black Pine with me. My dad has always supported my older sister and I, whether we wanted to start a big family or focus on a career, he has cheered us both on every step of the way.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? At FWP&R I think one of my proudest achievements is the sunflower field at Salomon Farm Park. Soil tests had not been done since before I was hired, and we found that one field had abysmal soil; crops would not grow well in this field. In 2019 after brainstorming with my team at the time we decided to try cheap black oil sunflower seeds just to see what would happen. The field was a major tourist attraction that year and gained the park a lot of exposure. The next step was to create a sunflower U-Pick to develop an additional revenue stream, because Salomon Farm Park does not receive tax dollars to support its operational expenses (so it must operate like a business). In 2020 we added specialty varieties of sunflowers and we safely opened the sunflower U-Pick. We were overwhelmed by the support of Fort Wayne. In that short time we made comparable revenue to that of our main revenue stream (facility rentals). Not only was it a huge financial success for the park, it was rewarding to see the field bring so many people joy in a year that was full of stress, heartbreak, and disappointment.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I can easily get caught up in other people's experiences and emotions and have learned to deal with highly sensitive issues much more mindfully. Without getting into details (to protect privacy of others) I remember a time I was swept up in someone else's frustrations and anger, which I projected on to other colleagues and created a disrespectful situation. It's embarrassing to look back on, but I have learned ways to slow down, reflect on a situation from many angles, and have found colleagues I trust enough with whom I can share ideas or concerns. The experience and process has helped to ground and humble me.

What are your current professional goals? I wish I could say I have a grandiose 5-year plan of becoming some super successful career-woman, but in reality I don't. My goal is to always be in a career in which I am helping. I'm not out to make a lot of money, a name for myself, or gain power. I simply want to do good and enrich my community, wherever I find

myself. I want to use my position of privilege and power to correct injustices.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Continued education and openness to change are important to me. I am fortunate enough to work for an organization that invests in its employees in this way, such as sending us to conferences. I also enjoy making connections and bringing community partners together, so I find myself talking to local, state, and national groups. I'm always searching for new methods. I also enjoy problem solving, so when I identify a need or a barrier I am excited to research ways to deal with each.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I am a firm believer in play! Play is an important tool to shaping our perceptions and rejuvenating our minds. I don't have a family unit, although I thoroughly enjoy being an aunt of 3 nephews and 1 niece. I am serious about my work, but I'm equally serious about leisure time because I understand how important it is to my physical and mental health. Keeping a regular schedule helps me ensure I have time for family and leisure activities outside of work.

What do you do to relax? There's nothing more relaxing for me than spending time in nature with my two dogs. When I need to recharge, my dogs and I hit the trail; sometimes it's a day hike at an ACRES nature preserve or sometimes we take a weekend hiking/camping trip in the backcountry. It's refreshing to be fully present in the moment and enjoy all the wonders nature has to offer.

What book do you recommend? "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas. As a white woman, this book gave me incredible perspective and sense of sympathy. It's an easy read and has the potential to open minds and hearts if given the chance.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? DUMP THAT GUY AND PROSPER, SIS. Really though, it's more about knowing how to determine what relationships are beneficial and which are harmful. Determine your boundaries in a relationship and speak open and honestly when they are crossed. It is not overreacting to ask for what you want and need.

ANDREW THOMAS, 38

Employer: Indiana Legal Services
Education: Juris doctorate, master of public administration
Community organizations: The Villages (foster parent), Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana (“Big” volunteer), and Fort Wayne Area Community Band (band member)
Hobbies: Music, writing, cooking.
Why are you in northeast Indiana: I was offered employment in Fort Wayne seven years ago and it became my home.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I help people solve urgent, complicated legal issues every day for folks that otherwise would not be able to get help.
What does success mean to you? Success is being a little better today than I was yesterday.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Classical musician in an orchestra.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from mowing lawns in the summer.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My Uncle Jim, a lawyer and one of the best people I ever knew, provided me with a copy of “Team of Rivals” (about Abraham Lincoln) when I was trying to decide what to do for a career. I realized later he had nudged me into becoming an attorney.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Starting the Tenant Assistance Legal Clinic, which has served hundreds of Fort Wayne residents to help avoid eviction from their homes during the pandemic.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? For quite a while I did not focus on my personal and mental health when

focusing on my career and family. I have since much improved my health. I have learned it is crucial to take care of yourself, even when serving others.
What are your current professional goals? I hope to continue to learn and master being an attorney.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? The law is always changing, as are the challenges facing my clients. It is crucial to remain flexible and have the ability to learn and adapt to new challenges.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I get very little sleep, especially with two toddlers at home.
What do you do to relax? I enjoy writing, movies, and cooking to help relax.
What book do you recommend? “Evicted” by Matthew Desmond
Based on what you know now,



what would you tell your high school self? Failing is necessary, being normal is boring, and kindness is the greatest strength.

DAVID GRANT, 39

Employer: Creative Technology Solutions, Inc. I am also the executive director for Sari Bari USA as a volunteer.
Education: High school – I grew up about an hour outside of Detroit and attended a small, private school called West Highland Christian Academy. I graduated from Grace College in December 2003 with a BS in religious studies and minors in music and youth ministries. I plan to graduate this summer from Trine University with an MS in business analytics.
Community organizations: I am on the leadership team and co-lead worship ministries at my church with my wife, Marah, at Branches Vineyard Church in Warsaw. I am a member of the North Star BNI chapter in Fort Wayne.
Hobbies: I am a HUGE fan of my two dogs, Remy — a shepherd/Rottweiler mix and Millie — a chocolate lab, and I let them take me on walks as frequently as weather permits. My wife and I have been part of our CrossFit gym, CrossFit Haymaker, in Warsaw. I love playing my electric guitar. I like to pretend that I am in a “biker gang” with a buddy of mine. What really happens is we tinker with our bikes, go out for rides, and bump fists at traffic lights.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? My wife, Marah and I never intended on staying around after college, but life and jobs kept us here. We’ve come around to the idea, and now are happy to be in such an exciting place where we can enjoy the benefits and excitement of a big city within a small and inviting environment, as we have found in Fort Wayne. We’re happy to call Northeast Indiana our home.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I fill a couple roles at Creative Technology Solutions, Inc (CTSi). I am the Director of Marketing and Sales. I help out when needed as a technician. I serve customers as a business analyst. In whatever capacity I am sliding into with a customer or helping to grow our business, I want to be a worker who provides value to those I am working for. I enjoy helping to make something happen — to help someone meet their objectives. That what I like about working with our customers. It’s an opportunity to help them to use technology, rather than fight it, to support growth for their business.
The same is true for my work with Sari Bari. The purpose of Sari Bari USA is to support a platform on which the business of Sari Bari, based in Kolkata, India, can thrive so there are product orders coming in to facilitate employment opportunities for women who have been exploited by the sex industry, or who are vulnerable to human trafficking. Additionally, we raise funds to make services available for



a woman to choose from if she will find greater success in her journey of freedom by taking advantage of them (job training, school benefit program for their children, preventative health checks, HIV/AIDS support). MY job is to do what is possible for HER to be what she is.
That’s the point, and that’s what I do whether I’m working with a small business in Fort Wayne or sharing the story of a woman in India.
What does success mean to you? Success is a process. It is directional. I want to know where and who I want to be, understand what I’m coming from, and recognize where I’ve come from and where I am today, in this moment. Success is moving to become more of what I hope to become. At the same time, I try to be careful when talking about failure. If I didn’t take a step in the direction of what I want to become, is that really failure, or is it that maybe I don’t really know what I want to become. Maybe I need to adjust my goals. After all, who decides what I want to be other than me? I also believe strongly in recognizing the length of the journey. I don’t need to beat myself up for where I am today, or by the apparent stagnation I feel this week. It’s going to take time, and that’s what we have. I want to give myself, and others in the same way, grace and move on.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? When I was young, all I wanted to be was a brain surgeon. I have no idea where that came from or why that was what I wanted to do. I remember my parents being entertained but supportive of the idea, even purchasing a computer game called “Life or Death,” which was a simplified doctor “simulation.” I don’t remember where that dream died, but I’m honestly glad. I’ll leave brain surgery to the professionals.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?My brother and I mowed yards in the summer for a couple years starting when I was around 10. We worked hard, and I was making around \$100 a week, which felt like a ridiculous amount. I had other odd jobs and taught music lessons, but I’d say my first “job” job was as summer labor for the Oakland County Road Commission near Detroit. I was working on the guardrail crew.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I’ve been fortunate to have an army of supporters throughout my life. In particular, my parents always encouraged me to dream and be what I want to be. Also, my wife, Marah, and I will be married for 20 years this January 1st, and have dreamed together and supported each other as we figure out what our futures will look like. She never questions my ability and encourages me on toward our plans.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? It is the relationships that feel most significant. I’ve had a positive career and have exited each job knowing I provided value and have maintained positive relationships with my employer. I enjoy knowing that I was valuable and hope these contacts consider me trustworthy and a friend. I’ve had opportunities to get to know people around the world and cherish the fact that I have friends I deeply love and care for me in a couple different countries on the other side of the globe.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I give myself opportunities too frequently that remind me that I can’t do this (life, work... whatever) on my own. We need each other, and that requires vulnerability, honesty, and teamwork. Particularly when times are tough, responding to fear or difficulty can tend to drive me inward, and that’s where things fall apart. That’s what I’ve learned. DON’T do it alone.
What are your current professional goals? I’m working to complete a master’s degree from Trine University in business analytics, and will hopefully graduate this summer. This is one step toward developing business opportunities to offer consulting services that are predictive and guide customers to proactive decisions to motivate their growth. I want to grow to be a resource to work through problems and support business in their process to accomplish their goals.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Of course, technology is changing constantly. Ongoing education, study, and certifications are important to continue increasing

knowledge in relevant fields. Additionally, we need to be students of our profession. The world moves too quickly to succeed by just doing what you do each workday. I need to be engaging with news, reading blogs and books, following industry leaders, listening to podcasts, and continually updating and reimagining. It can be a challenge to maintain your own identity while engaging so deeply in your profession, but growth demands we enter into that struggle.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Sometimes ... not very well. I think preparation and understanding the possibility that life happens in seasons is important. I try to keep reminding myself of what I want moving forward and let that guide my understanding of what I need to do today. Then I just stick to the plan. Right now, the balance may be all “out of whack,” but maybe it needs to be for now so things can be right in the future.
What do you do to relax? In our house, we are happy with cuddling on the couch with our chocolate lab, Millie, and our Shepherd-Rottweiler mix, Remy, while we binge-watch (insert favorite show of the week). When it’s nice out, we all go for a walk. We also LOVE visiting our nieces and nephews and having vacations where we head out in the morning without much of a plan and let the day happen to us.
What book do you recommend? To be honest, I tend to really enjoy instructional manuals, so I don’t know what I read is particularly interesting to most. I suppose, for business, I found “Traction” by Gino Wickman to be really helpful in thinking through organizational structure and growth. “Pre-Suasion” by Robert Cialdini is helpful for marketing. I’m a person of faith and I found the “Red Letter Revolution: What if Jesus Really Meant What He Said” by Shane Claiborne and Tony Campolo to be a great way to process how to love genuinely. Although a little rough at times, for a good, honest, and uplifting experience of life, I love every David Sedaris book. Finally, if you really do want the “geeky” stuff, “Automate the Boring Stuff With Python” by Al Sweigart is a fun starter for beginners looking to learn programming.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I don’t think I took advantage of resources available to me that could have helped me to better understand myself and take some more meaningful steps in my career. I believe I wasted time and spent a lot of energy trying to discover who I am. I don’t know if I would have listened, but I’d want to help in that process.

OLIVIA FABIAN, 32

Employer: One Lucky Guitar
Education: I have a bachelor's degree in marketing with a minor in fine art and an associate's degree in management. Though the education that set me up for the most success in my career came from years of being homeschooled and watching my mom make the most amazing things you could ever dream of.
Community organizations: I am one of the founding members of Middle Waves Music Festival and co-founder of HollyPop Pop up Shops. One Lucky Guitar is my real in with community organizations, though. We serve the most inspiring nonprofits and organizations and it's so fulfilling to create meaningful work for these people who are doing incredible things for our neighbors.
Hobbies: My hobbies are Legos, lightsaber battles, coloring and making things out of recycled materials. I have a 6-year-old son and making him a nice young man is my main hobby. Though, truth be told, our interests do have a lot of overlap.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? Northeast Indiana is big enough to be fun and small enough to do things that matter.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I like to be presented with a challenge and then figure out how to make it happen. Last week I was on set filming a room full of kittens. The week before that we launched a project to bring meaningful change to our community. The challenges vary greatly which is what makes my job

interesting and fun!
What does success mean to you? To me, success means being happy and fulfilled in your work and appreciated by those you trust.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? As a kid I wanted to be a NASCAR Driver or Olympic figure skater. Or ninja.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I was a professional figure skater and an ice skating coach as a teen and continued that career into my 20s. I also taught martial arts classes from a young age and eventually helped my dad run his studio.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Matt Kelley believed in me and gave me the chance of a lifetime. Nancy Ruedebusch and Jamie Fabian taught me how to work really hard to utilize great opportunities. Cheryl Fabian and Monia Alexander gave me the tools to think creatively and trust my instincts. But Derek Mauger makes it all possible.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Becoming an associate creative director was a big deal for me. I have always created things but to know that a place like One Lucky Guitar thinks that I'm worthy to help guide creative work is an honor.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake is not asking others for help. I had this feeling of not wanting to bother others

or that the accomplishment would mean more if I did it all on my own. I now see that work is so much stronger when multiple perspectives are included.
What are your current professional goals? My current professional goal is to learn and thrive in my new role of associate creative director. I also have an ongoing ambition to encourage and help girls to be leaders in advertising and production.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I remain relevant in my profession by being surround by the most talented people I have ever met in my life every single day. Just being near sharp and talented people helps you pick up the nuances of being good at this job. Observing, overhearing, and even chitchat become areas to learn new and exciting things.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I don't balance everything very well, but my husband Derek Mauger is a very understanding and supportive person of this action-packed, fun-filled life we've created. Without his work, there is no way I would be able to do mine. Also, we have the most amazing network of grandparents, they are more like X-Men characters, and they hop in to support my family at a moment's notice.
What do you do to relax? I'm in a club called The Circus Ladies and we do all sorts of themed activities and adventures. These gals are always encouraging and make sure everyone is taking care of themselves and feels supported.



Honorable Mention: "Seinfeld" + margaritas is my patented relaxation technique if all else fails.
What book do you recommend? "Becoming" by Michelle Obama; "The Chiffon Trenches" by André Leon Talley; "How to Write a Song" by Jeff Tweedy. Not a book BUT "Beauty is Embarrassing" is my favorite documentary and I think everyone should watch it.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I would tell my younger self that being scrappy and being true to your weirdo self is the thing that is going to bring you success. Trust your instincts, girl.



CONGRATULATIONS
Aaryn Eady & Meghan Short
*Building a nationally recognized economy
at Greater Fort Wayne Inc.*

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR LEADERSHIP FORT WAYNE ALUMNI!!

Stephanie Crandall - Class of 2018
Mandy Drakeford - Class of 2020
Beth McAvoy - Class of 2018
Jessica Morales - Class of 2020
Wade Owen - Class of 2018



GREATER
FORT WAYNE INC.
METRO CHAMBER ALLIANCE

AARYN EADY, 28

Employer: Greater Fort Wayne Inc.
Education: Homestead High School, graduating class of 2011 with honors; Indiana University Bloomington, graduating class of 2016 with a bachelor of science in human biology with a concentration in human health and disease, minors in Spanish, chemistry and public health
Community organizations: Northeast Indiana Chamber Coalition member, I am also fortunate to have been and currently be a part of several community initiatives and projects in partnership with various local agencies, in a more behind-the-scenes logistics role.
Hobbies: I have always loved traveling. I have only been out of the country once, China in 2010, but mostly in the country. I hope to resume domestic traveling again soon, slowly building up to my first real international trip. Anything that has to do with arts and culture is also a hobby of mine — a museum or art gallery, theater, cultural performances, etc.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? Northeast Indiana is the only home I’ve known. After my sister and I graduated from college, I came back home to be with my family.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I love that community service is built into my profession. As a chamber professional, community-centric initiatives are just a day-to-day part of my role. I get to be a part of projects that help and support other people first. I get to pull on all of my non-profit and customer service experience to help a lot of people and businesses in ways that go much further beyond me.
What does success mean to you? Success to me means that I am happy where I am, and simultaneously am working toward my desires for greater



or more. I think those two elements of satisfaction and aspiration have to be combined in order to have success.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a doctor.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? The Indiana University Bloomington Undergraduate Office of Admissions, I was an admissions application processor/recruiter.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My mom, Stephanie Eady. She has always had a vision for my professional and personal future, and I value her speaking that into life over me even when I didn’t see it for myself. She has forever encouraged me to do things in my career that I was “just a little not ready” to do, and I have always grown and become better because of it. Thank you, Mom, I love you!
What has been your biggest

accomplishment thus far in your career? I have two that are equally significant! In Bloomington, I lead a volunteer after-school reading program for Boys & Girls Club for 4 years. A full-time paid position became open there and I was encouraged to apply. My interview was at 8:30 a.m.; by 11 a.m. I was hired. I went from a volunteer to the Program Director in 2 hours. Similarly, when I started at GFW Inc. in April of 2019, I was in a more entry-level role as a project coordinator. In August 2019, there was an opening for a director role, and I was honored and very grateful to be promoted internally into my current role as director of investor engagement.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake was not speaking up for myself in a difficult situation where my professionalism and my personal character was being unjustly attacked, verbally, to my face. I learned that not saying anything IS saying something and that it’s perfectly fine to gracefully and decently let ANYBODY know they cannot talk to you any kind of way. Period.
What are your current professional goals? I have numerous of goals within my current role that are right now in progress! In addition to that, I want to grow into an identity of being a career “student,” where I’m doing because I’ve learned to do, not doing because I did. I value education and want to focus more on professional development and mastering my career craft from industry professionals, learning best practices, and becoming lifelong learner within multiple areas so that I can translate those skills anywhere. My biggest professional goal for this year is to be more involved in community organizations, boards, committees, etc. and extend my

experience, talent, and resources further.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? On any given day, I can be talking to leaders in 10 to 15 different businesses across our community; I’m interfacing with people outside of my organization the majority of my time, creating connections that allow me to best serve those external needs. I am privileged to be the only black woman in my organization, and I am very blessed that I have space created for me to be proud in that identity and acknowledged often at the community level.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Different areas of life get interchangeable levels of priority depending what’s going on for me. Some times of the year are really career heavy, others are more personal life heavy. I am grateful that this season in my life allows more time for me to prioritize “just me,” so I can adapt into balance easily when I need to.
What do you do to relax? As a natural introvert, just going home after a busy day and being quiet is enough. When the weather is nice, I love walking our parks and listening to music. My grandpa and late grandma have had the same house for over 50 years — pretty rural. In the spring, I’m out sitting in the garage just talking to him. All you hear is the wind in the trees and I am at absolute peace.
What book do you recommend? The Book of Proverbs; it will get you together every time.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Take the ACT. It’s never too early to start building your personal economy, so start now. NOTHING is without consequence, good or bad. Take driver’s ed. IU is an EXCELLENT university to go to. Mind the business that gets you to graduation.

BRAVA, OLIVIA!

Thank you for your hard work, commitment and vision to make One Lucky Guitar, Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana such a vibrant, exciting place to be. We're proud to see you recognized alongside many of our clients, collaborators and even (former) colleagues (congrats, Beth McAvoy!).

ONELUCKYGUITAR.COM

Ambassador Enterprises extends its
CONGRATULATIONS TO SETH NASH
President & General Manager of Dutch Made, an AE affiliate company.

Seth's selection as a **Forty Under 40** honoree is a well-deserved recognition of his leadership at AE, its affiliates, and now Dutch Made. More than that, it's a tribute to his positive impact on our people, our companies, and our community.

Congratulations to Seth and all of the 2021 recipients.

SETH NASH, 39

Employer: I work as president and GM at Dutch Made, a part of Ambassador Enterprises.

Education: Bachelor of arts, Grace College 2004; I’m currently enrolled in the advanced management program at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Community organizations: I currently serve on the board of trustees for Grace College and Seminary, and we’re very active in our church. I recently completed my term on the board of directors for the Center for Whitley County Youth. It’s a fantastic organization serving youth in our community.

Hobbies: I enjoy photography, cycling and reading. I like to say I’ve got a pretty fast bicycle with a slow engine! Board service and volunteering has really been my biggest hobby through the years. I’m learning the benefit of really engaging in some rest and relaxation.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? Initially, I came to northeast Indiana to attend college at Grace. After graduation, I started working with Biomet and my wife, Erin, and I decided to stay in the area. We’ve stayed because it’s a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Our region is rich with opportunity and it’s rewarding to be a part of a vibrant, growing community.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy building great teams that build great products. It’s rewarding to help people grow as leaders and see them tackle big challenges. Working as part of Ambassador Enterprises is especially rewarding because of the variety of markets we have the opportunity to touch. It’s early in my time with Dutch Made, but I can already tell I’m going to enjoy working with our team there. We have some very dedicated, talented craftspeople who produce an amazing product. Helping teams like ours achieve more is exciting for me.

What does success mean to you? My definition of success used to be related



to competing and comparing myself with others. However, I’ve learned that success is really about doing the very best with what I’ve been given and helping those around me do the same.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Early on, I wanted to be a surgeon or an attorney, probably because of the earning potential. As an adolescent, I thought I’d become a pastor.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? When I was about 12, I had an afternoon paper route for the Wooster Daily Record, our hometown newspaper. That’s pretty old-fashioned sounding to my kids.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife, Erin, has been my biggest supporter, by far. Without her encouragement and the way in which she carries a heavy load for our family at home, I would not be where I am. In the

workplace, John Susaraba gave me my first opportunity at Biomet. Wil Boren helped shape me into a business leader. Jim Lancaster taught me how to bring systems and discipline to managing a team. In the last few years, Daryle Doden has been a major accelerator of my growth. He’s a coach, mentor and friend.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? I was part of a team at Biomet that reshaped the company after we were taken private. We developed a global approach to our business, expanded market share, and reinvented our product offering. It was an intense but highly rewarding time. I’ll always look back on that team and what we accomplished with fondness.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? During my time with Biomet, I led us into a deal that ended up being a very expensive mistake. At the heart of my error was avoiding some people I perceived to be difficult who had a perspective that I needed but didn’t want to hear. Because I didn’t actively seek their input, and even avoided it, I cost us a lot of time and money.

I’ve learned to invite dissent and to pursue people who may seem difficult, encouraging the team to be fully assertive and cooperative to ensure we get the best result.

What are your current professional goals? My professional goals are focused on helping Dutch Made provide better service to our customers, improve profitability, and increase opportunity for our team members.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Reading is key. I try to identify areas where I need to grow or develop new knowledge and build a reading list to help accelerate my learning. I’m also taking some classes at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. It’s a huge privilege to interact with the faculty and my fellow students there. Finally, maintaining a

network of advisors and friends from other disciplines and industries helps bring fresh perspectives.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? For me, “balance” doesn’t work. The word implies separate and equal. That’s not realistic or even beneficial. Instead, my goal is to integrate these parts of my life. I want my family to be included in my work. I want my coworkers to see me as not just a professional, but also as a dad, husband, and member of the community. I’m better in each role when I let the other parts of me shine through.

That being said, we’ve also worked to establish some rhythms. Erin and I have a date night every week. We’re very disciplined about protecting this time. We have family dinners a couple of nights a week. Our phones are not welcome at the dinner table. Sunday mornings are reserved for time with our church family. I’m learning to be a fully present, integrated person wherever I am.

What do you do to relax? I enjoy unstructured time with our family and friends; a good playlist, a nice glass of wine, something tasty to eat and lingering conversation are relaxing.

What book do you recommend? The Bible. I grew up in church and even majored in biblical studies, but I began to experience some powerful change in my life when I really started to read it for myself. I would recommend that someone new to the Bible start reading in Proverbs. There is incredible wisdom to be found.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Take school more seriously. Study math and finance. You actually will use that stuff one day. Read more. Work less. Develop better habits. Discipline is your friend. Relax. Joke around a little more. Don’t take yourself so seriously. Don’t care so much about girls. God will bring the right woman into your life at the right time. Treat your friends well. Become a man of integrity.

TYLER CLEVERLY, 38

Employer: United Way of DeKalb County – executive director

Education: Master of arts – physical education with an emphasis in sport administration, Ball State University (2007); bachelor of science – sport administration with a minor in foundations of management, Ball State University (2006); DeKalb High School (2000)

Community organizations: NeighborLink DeKalb County; Auburn Classic Noon Lions Club; St. Martin’s Healthcare; Young Professionals DeKalb County; DeKalb LEADS; Youth Sports for basketball, baseball, and soccer

Hobbies: Watching sports and doing community service projects

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in DeKalb County and wanted my kids to grow up in the best county possible.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I love making a difference in our community. I served on the board with the United Way of DeKalb County before becoming the executive director. There is a large need of assistance needed in our county, therefore to make a greater impact, we must identify those needs and react quicker than we ever have before.

What does success mean to you? Success means that I did everything in my ability to make a lasting change on the lives of those I interact with and challenge them to become a better version of themselves in the future.

As a child, what did you want to

be when you grew up? Growing up I always wanted to be a professional basketball player. I soon enough realized that was not going to happen, so I shifted my focus on ways to be involved in sports besides playing. That lead me to a ten-year career coaching or working in the WNBA, NBA and Division I basketball prior to returning to DeKalb County.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from delivering newspapers in Auburn with my brother when I was 8.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I have had many supporters over the years that allowed me to follow my dream of working in basketball. The steadying voice over the ten years would be my wife, as she was the one who held everything together when I was always on the road recruiting or traveling for an away game.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? My biggest accomplishment in my career would probably be helping lead Florida State to the Elite Eight in the 2010 NCAA Tournament. My most recent major accomplishment would be helping lead a task force of community leaders in our relief efforts during the current pandemic.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? The greatest mistake I have made this far in my career was

thinking that I could take on a new role and turn around bad situations overnight. To fix any issue and make a change for the better, you must first see what the root of the problem is and then find ways to correct that issue before you can help move any team or organization forward.

What are your current professional goals? My goal is to continue being a voice for lasting change in DeKalb County.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? To remain current in my profession, I continue to learn what the needs are of our county. I am always meeting with people to learn what the needs are and finding ways that we can try and partner with others to provide the best resources possible.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Balance has always been a struggle for me. Community service has always been something that I have focused on, even before being in my current role. If I have the time to make a lasting change, I am always willing to join in. That service has now become a career, so those work hand-in-hand. Trying to find more time for my family, is my weakness. I try and coach my kids in any sport they play and be present at all their events, but I need to continue trying to find more time to spend as a family outside of sports.

What do you do to relax? I am not sure I would consider it “relaxing,” but in my free time I really enjoy working with youth sports. I am as competitive as the



next person, so it might not be considered relaxing, but I do enjoy being on the court or field as often as I can. I also spend a decent amount of time talking to coaches around the country about their teams and trying to give advice or ideas when I can.

What book do you recommend? “What is Your WHAT” by Steve Olsher

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? To focus on giving to others more than worrying about yourself. If you take care of others, they will take care of you right back. Doing the right thing is better than doing whatever is quick and easy.

BETH ANNE JOHNSON, 35

Employer: Home Builders Association of Fort Wayne, Inc.

Education: Homestead High School; bachelor of science in advertising and graphic design from the University of Southern Indiana

Community organizations: YLNI, Junior Achievement

Hobbies: I enjoy being active outdoors, reading a good book, binging a great show, spending time with family and friends, and enjoying snow skiing and scuba diving while on vacation.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I grew up in Fort Wayne and moved back to the city in 2017 to be closer to the ones I love.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? My favorite thing about my profession is the great network of people I get to interact with. I am constantly pushed to do my best and reach outside my comfort zone.

What does success mean to you? To me, success means using and developing your skills to do good in the world and overcoming fears that hold you back from your true potential.

As a child, what did you want to be

when you grew up? My family visited Sea World when I was still in elementary school, and since then, I had always wanted to be a dolphin trainer.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from the downtown Fort Wayne YMCA where I was a lifeguard.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Rex Dillinger, one of my old co-workers and a great mentor, has always been one of my biggest supporters. He sees my potential and continues to push me never to settle.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Besides being recognized with this great group, I'd say my most significant accomplishment has been being recognized as the 2018 new executive officer from the National Association of Home Builders.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I think one of my greatest mistakes was not spending time on my own after college. It's hard to know your wants, needs, likes and dislikes when making decisions to suit yourself and

someone else. The best advice I could give from my mistakes is truly spending some time looking within for fulfillment before looking to the outside world.

What are your current professional goals? I want to start working towards getting my MBA. It's been on my radar for years, I've just never pulled the trigger.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I do my best to be involved in professional groups that will aid in keeping me up to date on relevant trade information and training. It also provides a great peer network to lean on. We can learn a lot from professionals in the same field, whether it be by their successes or failures.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Life is hectic and the balancing act is hard. If you don't make time for the things that are important to you, they won't happen. I use my calendar for everything. Often, I'll book out time with friends 3-4 weeks in advance to make sure nothing interferes.

What do you do to relax? I enjoy going to the gym to work out the day's stress or unwind with a glass of wine.

What book do you recommend? If



you're looking for a casual read, I'd recommend "The Wreckless Oath We Made" by Bryn Greenwood. It's a suspenseful love story.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You're never going to have all the answers, and your life will continue to evolve and change over time. Don't get stuck in the past. Always move forward and work towards your future.

BETH MCAVOY, 39

Employer: NeighborLink Fort Wayne as director of operations

Education: Bachelor of science from Indiana University, Kelley School of Business. Concentration in marketing.

Community organizations: I am the co-chair of Middle Waves Music Festival and on the board of the Community Development Corporation. It's been a wild ride being in charge of a music festival in a pandemic. Our team worked incredibly hard to plan the 2020 festival, which had to be canceled. We cannot wait to return to a time when it's safe to hang out with 5,000 of your pals in the community you love.

Hobbies: I love going to concerts and spending time with friends and family.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I came back after college to be near my family but have stayed because of the opportunities to contribute to making the community a better place. So much has changed in the area since 2003, for the better. It's be amazing to be a part of some huge community projects from the inside, and not just as a spectator.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I love working at NeighborLink because it's an incredible organization that mobilizes people to help marginalized neighbors in Fort Wayne through tangible ways. Not only does the organization do great work, but my role really aligns with my strengths.

What does success mean to you?



Enjoying what you do and being proud of your accomplishments.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I don't really remember what I wanted to be as a child. In college, I wanted to work in advertising. I am fortunate to have had that experience.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paying job was a Homework Helpline attendant for Lincoln Financial. They offered phone tutoring assistance for their employees' kids. A kid or parent would call me saying they needed help

in a particular subject, and I would relay the information to the on-call tutor in that topic. I was 16 years old and a junior in high school when I did this job.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My husband. I have had quite a few career moves, but he's always supported my desire to tackle new roles.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? My biggest accomplishment has been successfully working in the advertising/marketing industry. I didn't start after college in the field and was rejected by nearly every advertising company in Fort Wayne at some point. Ten years after graduating college, I started my first job in the industry. I knew I had the skills and could finally prove it to myself.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake is trying to make too many changes too fast in a work-place. I learned that people do not like change. I learned to fully investigate if a change is truly needed. If so, walk people through the process so they can see the benefit of the change.

What are your current professional goals? I want to keep on learning as much as I can and build my skills as a manager of people.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I try to subscribe

to industry newsletters and sign up for webinars. The pandemic has made that easier, as more virtual trainings are readily available.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? NeighborLink takes the approach of work-life integration, over balance. Anyone who has tried to achieve the balance has probably noticed the right balance can be hard to achieve. You always feel like something is lacking. Something may always need more attention. At NeighborLink, we recognize that and realize it's all part of one whole life. Requirements for your time will ebb and flow, and it's your responsibility to manage your time as best as possible. And then sometimes, you just go with it. My 8-week-old son napped in a box of T-shirts during setup for Middle Waves Music Festival 2018.

What do you do to relax? I enjoy spending time with my family (husband and 2-year-old son), going to Pretty Lake with my family, going to concerts, and being out and about in Fort Wayne.

What book do you recommend? I just finished "How to Be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi. I recommend that every single person read it.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Nothing will go as you plan it out in your head. Get used to it.

DUSTIN PAPENBROCK, 36



Employer: Churubusco Police Department

Education: Four years of college

Community organizations: Head Golf Coach/Churubusco High School

Hobbies: Golf, hunting, shooting sports, archery

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I love my hometown and family.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? The diversity of each day along with the other officers in Churubusco.

What does success mean to you? Raising my two boys to be better than I am.

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

Where did your first paycheck come

from and what was your job then? Eel River Golf Course Pro-shop staff

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My parents and Fred Ray!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Receiving a Life Saving Award.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Spending too much time at work and missing out on important family events. This continues to be something that I must become better at.

What are your current professional goals? To become a full-time firearms instructor.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Always taking

new training opportunities with an open mind and relying on the officers I am surrounded by.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Listen and allow yourself to be humbled by the people you surround yourself with. Maintaining friendships outside of law enforcement has been a high priority for myself in this career.

What do you do to relax? I enjoy golfing and hunting to get my mind off work.

What book do you recommend? "Extreme Ownership" by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Treat others better!

CHYNNA PRESLEY

Employer: Huntington University
Education: Bachelor of social work, master of science in organizational leadership
Community organizations: I am currently using the pandemic as an opportunity to pull back and re-evaluate where I put my energy. Outside of making donations and investing in students’ lives outside of work, I am not involved with any community organizations. But I plan to make intentional decisions about volunteering and board involvement in the coming months.
Hobbies: I love creating memories with my family, whether that be trying new recipes, painting canvases, day trip explorations or starting new traditions. I also enjoy writing, traveling, and dabbling in novice level photo editing and design.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I came to NE Indiana for college and never left! I love living in a city with leaders who are innovative, constantly seeking to improve the area. I have developed a fondness for this place. I want to continue to plant roots and build a legacy here.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? What I most enjoy about my profession are the opportunities I get to connect with incredible, empowering, knowledgeable, passionate, skilled people. A bridge is made stronger when it’s fortified with connected pieces. The same goes for us. We need connection to make us stronger and more effective. I love knowing that the connections I make are building bridges.
What does success mean to you? I measure success by impact. It doesn’t matter to me how many people know my name or know my work. What matters to me is that people, systems, communities feel the impact of my work. If I make a positive impact in people’s lives, in organizations, in communities, then I am successful.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? In 1992, I watched the Summer Olympics and saw Black women being excellent. This was the first time I ever saw anyone who looked like me on TV, doing something that seemed amazing. I decided that summer I wanted to be an Olympic track athlete.
Where did your first paycheck come

from and what was your job then? I was 16 and I worked at the jewelry counter in a department store.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I have more “big supporters” than I can count, but one person who is important to mention is my good friend, Arthur Wilson. When I was working my first job after college, I was also volunteering in the youth group at a church where Arthur was an assistant pastor and interim youth pastor. I was miserable at my job, but hadn’t shared that with him. One day, he looked at me and said, “I think I have a job for you.” He told me about a job opportunity he was passing up, but he thought I’d be a better fit for it. I applied for the role and not only did it move me to Fort Wayne, but it launched my public speaking career and helped me establish myself in the nonprofit field in a city I was not native to.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? I am a big believer in purpose. I believe purpose has nothing to do with us, but it has everything to do with how we use our gifts and talents to affect the world around us. I feel my greatest accomplishment thus far in my career is learning how to exercise my purpose in a way that empowers others to grow into their best selves. I’ve had the opportunity to work with some amazing people as clients and as colleagues and I am humbled that I get to be a part of their stories.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake was spending too many years doubting myself and fearing failure. I passed on job opportunities that could have elevated my career and expanded my reach much earlier, all because I was afraid to fail. I have learned that I can never be fully prepared for every challenge that comes my way and that is truly OK. I have the confidence now to face my fears and challenges, research, ask for help and give it my all. Sometimes I will fail, but I won’t make the same mistakes twice.
What are your current professional goals? I have titled my current professional goals B3W (Book, business, board and work), because I’m quirky like that!

In a few months, I will finish writing a book and I plan to publish it before the end of the year. I am also developing content for a coaching/consulting business I plan to launch in the future. Within the year, I’d like to join a board or two. Finally, most prominent goal is to continue to work with HU in developing sustainable culturally competent solutions for the institution. I am also (slowly) working to become fluent in Spanish, so I can speak conversationally with Spanish speaking students and their families.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession?
For much of my career I struggled to find a mentor, so I had to learn how to sharpen my knowledge and skills on my own. Even though I have had the opportunity to glean knowledge from other amazing people, I continue to be a continual learner. I try to keep my mind fresh by researching current and historical trends and facts. I seek knowledge from others and intentionally put my learning into practice. Working with people means I can never be satisfied with “the way I’ve always done things.” The world is ever-changing.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?
I don’t think I’m a great picture of work-life balance. In fact, I went through some major life transitions recently and asked God to give me rest. The pandemic hit and I took that as a clear sign that it was time to take a step back and re-evaluate my commitments while trying to stay healthy and keep my family healthy. So, I am currently in the middle of my year of “receiving rest.” I go to work, I go home. I am intentional about the time I spend with my family, and I am intentional about the time I spend alone. I am making decisions about where I will donate my time in the future and how I will be able to best give my resources to my community when this season of rest is over, so I will be efficient and effective as possible.
What do you do to relax?
I pay attention to what my body is telling me it needs! Sometimes I need to exercise so I can de-stress. Sometimes I need to sit and binge a Netflix show. Other times, I need a good laugh with friends or family. On rare occasions, I



need to focus all my energy on getting a project completed before I go to sleep so it won’t haunt me in my dreams. But, my biggest secret is that I’m not as social as everyone thinks, so solitude at home or in nature is usually a surefire way to rejuvenate myself.
What book do you recommend?
Three books I’m currently reading and enjoying are “The Ascent of a Leader” by Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath; “The Ride of a Lifetime” by Bob Iger; and “The Memo” by Minda Harts.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I have three lessons to tell my high school self: 1. You will become your wildest dreams when you stop dimming your light and learn to harness your power. Become comfortable in your own skin. 2. Don’t focus on what you want to be when you grow up. Focus on what you want to accomplish and let that guide you. 3. Every big vision you have is only a narrow scope of what God wants to do with your life. Relinquish the feeling of needing to be in control and just live in the present. Learn to sit in the experiences you’re going through and forge a purpose out of them.

From Sweetwater and the Sweet Family of Companies

Congratulations, **Wade Owen**

FORTY UNDER 40 AWARD RECIPIENT

The people in our community have benefited greatly from your significant contributions, and we’re proud to serve alongside you.

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!

Sweetwater
Music Instruments & Pro Audio

Congratulations!

THOMAS SUMMERVILLE
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER & 40 UNDER 40 HONOREE

Your drive and determination to help people with disabilities pushes all of us forward. Thank you for fearlessly finding innovative ways to support our consumers!

Northeast Indiana

DANIEL STICHTER, 34

Employer: CFO at Nextremity Solutions, Inc.

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Accounting — Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana

Community organizations: Etna Green Church of Christ; NG3 Triton – Group Host; Kosciusko Community Foundation – scholarship reviewer; Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation (KEDCo) – board member; Kosciusko Community Development Corporation (KCDC) — treasurer; Kosciusko County United Way – Finance Committee

Hobbies: Spending time with family, watching sports, puzzles, reading

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in the small town of Etna Green, Indiana. My wife, Emily, and I elected to move back to the area in 2011 to be near family after we had our first child. We love the small-town environment, coupled with the wide-ranging career development opportunities in Warsaw, Indiana, the “Orthopedic Capital of the World.” I never thought I would return, but now see the tremendous value in being near family and engaging in intentional community.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? As a CFO I love to analyze data and work with a team to make wise decisions and mitigate risk. Focusing more on management and finance allows me to have an important spot at the decision-making table, working alongside other exceptionally talented leaders at Nextremity. The ability to directly influence the outcomes in our business is incredibly exciting.

What does success mean to you? Success is being known as someone who



loves God and loves others. Raising a family and contributing to a company that embraces the same values is an incredible blessing and my definition of success.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? As a child, I wanted to be a math teacher and a coach. I had wonderful examples in my life of individuals who poured their hearts into young people through teaching and coaching. Ultimately, I chose to pursue accounting and finance, but will always have a tremendous respect and admiration for educators and their dedication to young people and our collective future.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from the Speicher Buffalo Farm. I was responsible for everything from trimming to clearing brush to weeding flower beds. I learned a lot about

a hard day’s work for \$5/hr.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife has been an incredible blessing, from managing our home and our small children when I traveled for work, to being my sounding board when things don’t go as planned. She is an amazing partner, and I would not be receiving this honor without her support and encouragement.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Working with the team at Nextremity to stabilize and grow the business. The team pivoted the business strategy just before I joined as CFO and we have worked together to finalize and execute a plan that has included multiple new product development contracts, the acquisition of a manufacturing facility, and a planned move into the Warsaw Tech Park.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake is often taking for granted the amazing personal and professional blessings I have been given throughout my career. As a naturally competitive person, I’m always looking for the next achievement, and that has driven success, but sometimes it keeps me looking past all of the amazing things happening in the moment. I continue to learn the value of being present in the moment.

What are your current professional goals? I hope to continue to grow our team and company at Nextremity, elevating my knowledge and leadership abilities as we impact the lives of our team and the surgeons and patients we serve. We have a very long runway with many exciting years ahead.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Engaging with those you respect in the profession and staying engaged with current trends and topics is incredibly important. I have the benefit of having a number of great mentors and a group of area finance leaders who often share information and ideas as we navigate the uncharted territory of things like COVID-19.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? It’s an incredibly tricky balance that involves far more correcting than it does planning. I realize it is time to realign things when time with family or personal health and wellness begin to suffer. It’s also very important to engage with things about which you are passionate. If career, life, and community service commitments aren’t fueled by passion and interest then it may be time to consider a correction.

What do you do to relax? My wife often says I don’t relax well! Spending time in a good book or working through a game or puzzle helps me to unwind. I love to learn, and I enjoy watching YouTube with my kids as we learn about skills and interests from YouTubers around the globe.

What book do you recommend? “Talking to Strangers” by Malcolm Gladwell is my newest favorite.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Continue to be driven but never at the expense of others. Value relationships and reconcile as soon as possible if you realize you’ve made a mistake. God has a plan for your life and if you commit to following Him you will end up exactly where you are meant to be.

Alex is a Forty Under 40 winner!

Congratulations from all of us at Parkview.



Alex Krouse
Legal Counsel

Every year, Business Weekly honors outstanding business professionals in our region with the prestigious Forty Under 40 award. We’re proud that Alex Krouse has been selected for his talent, ambition and dedication to serving our community every day. Thank you, Alex, for making a difference.



NICK DARRAH, 35

Employer: Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership

Education: South Side High School, 2004; IPFW (IU degree) BA Political Science, 2012; IPFW (IU degree) MBA, 2017

Community organizations: PFW Organizational Leadership Department, advisory board member; YLNI, member/former Community Engagement and Advocacy Committee chair; Healthier Moms and Babies, marketing and development committee; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana, Big Brother; Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association (NIDIA), governing board member; National Defense Industry Association Greater Indiana Chapter, advisory board member; Northeast Indiana Base Community Council, member; Veterans of Foreign Wars, member; Disabled American Veterans, member; Golf 2/4 Memorial Day Foundation, Board/Treasurer; International Economic Development Council, broadband task force member; Allen County Republican Party, precinct committeeman

Hobbies: Running, movies, spending time with family, traveling, reading, spending time with friends.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised here. As a teenager, I couldn't wait to leave. After coming home from the Marines I still planned on going somewhere else. As time went on I realized how great this community is – the people, the opportunities, the parks/restaurants/theaters/etc., the proximity to other places to visit, the kind of home and lifestyle that my family could have. All of those things combined eventually made the decision pretty obvious that this is where I wanted to be.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? It really feeds my passion for purposeful, mission-driven work. We help businesses grow and be successful. Those businesses create opportunities for their employees (our friends, family, and neighbors) to be successful, secure, and happy. We also help to make this community a place worth living in and investing in through quality of place projects, storytelling, and community building.

I especially enjoy learning about the incredible people and businesses that build, grow, and create amazing things here. I get to learn about how they got started, what makes them special, what they struggle with, what drives them to succeed, etc. Then we figure out ways to help support them in those pursuits.

What does success mean to you? Success starts and ends at home – it means being a good father and husband. Professionally, though, it means making a solid living by doing work that I enjoy, and that provides me with a mission that I find meaningful and fulfilling.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a Marine from the age of 12 or so. I knew I was going to enlist as soon as I could, and I honestly didn't have much of a plan after that.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I started caddying at the Fort Wayne Country Club when I was 13.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I've been extremely blessed to have so many supporters.

As a child parents created an incredibly supportive environment that set my sister and I up for success.

In my adult life, my wife has been in my corner offering support, encouragement, and an occasional dose of reality when needed!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Earning the title of United States Marine. Although I was only 18 at the time, that accomplishment paved the way for so much of my personal and professional success. From Day One in boot camp and throughout my four-year enlistment, I was faced with a number of obstacles; each one seemingly more challenging than the one before. But somehow (thanks in large part to leadership, mentors, and peer support) I overcame them all. Once you overcome enough obstacles, they start to lose their intimidation factor. So by the time I left the Marine Corps, things like going to college, finding a career, personal and professional setbacks, etc. didn't seem insurmountable. They were just the next thing I would overcome.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Early on I had a singular focus on what I thought I could/should do for my career. I got very discouraged when that didn't seem to be working out. I was so focused on that one specific career path that I probably missed out on some excellent opportunities to explore other paths and develop other skills. Eventually my wife helped me realize that path wasn't what was best for me and our family. That realization helped open my eyes to other possibilities and ultimately to my current career.



Lesson learned would be to focus on the "why" of what you're doing, not the "what." When you can identify why you want to do something, then you can explore ways to achieve that. If you stay focused on a title, or job, or even specific industry, you might end up chasing an idea, instead of achieving the real reasons pursuing it in the first place.

What are your current professional goals? To continue to grow and develop my skills in order to apply them towards maximum impact of our mission, and to advance into more senior leadership roles. Since leaving the Marine Corps I always had the next big thing in my mind. However, since joining the Partnership I haven't had a clear picture of what this would lead to next. My wife gave me excellent advice when I first brought that up, she said "your next step is to get really good at this." That's what I'm hoping to do.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I'm very fortunate to work at a company that prioritizes professional development, and that looks for ways to maximize our individual strengths. So I've had the opportunity to take structured professional development courses.

The nature of our work is so diverse and extensive. So I'm also able to participate in and sometimes lead initiatives that are outside of my official job description, based on my skills and strengths.

Those opportunities help me to further develop my skill set and networks, which often end up creating new opportunities.

All of which help me stay current and relevant.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Prior to the pandemic I was very intentional about not bringing work home. I would literally leave my laptop in the office as to not have the temptation to open it up during family/me time. Since COVID, that line has definitely been blurred. I have no choice but to bring my computer home, but working from home has created other opportunities to spend time with my family. So it's a mixed bag.

I make sure to kiss each of my girls in the morning before looking at any notifications on my phone and try not to do emails or over the weekends in order to maintain that separation.

For a while my natural response to requests for joining a board or other community activity was "yes!" because it seemed interesting and fun. Those opportunities often still seem interesting and fun, but I have to really be selective on what I commit to, for my family's sake as well as the organization.

My boss and mentor, John Sampson, often reminds us of a lesson his wife, Pam, helped him learn a long time ago – he missed a key milestone for one of his kids when they were young because he decided to work late that night. When he got home and realized what he missed and asked how he could make it up. Pam told him that "some meetings can't be rescheduled." So I try and keep that story in mind as much as possible.

What do you do to relax? Running has helped me clear my mind and distress, especially since COVID. However, I do just like to unplug, be by myself and do nothing. Sometimes I'll end up staying up later than I should in order to have alone some alone time, with no tasks, chores, or deliverables to focus on.

What book do you recommend? "Call Sign Chaos" by James Mattis. General Mattis tells a great story about his life and experiences, but also provides nugget after nugget of wisdom that relate to business, leadership, public service, and just personal development and character.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You don't know nearly as much as you think you know, about literally everything. Listen more, talk less. And pay more attention in math class. It will save you a lot of headaches and frustration in college.



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JESSICA BIGGS, 36

Employer: Indiana Tech
Education: Master’s degree in parks, recreation and tourism admin. — Western Illinois University; bachelor’s degree in criminology — University of Northern Iowa
Community organizations: We have volunteered with the Fort4Fitness, Allen County Public Library and Community Harvest Food Bank.
Hobbies: I enjoy being outside, hunting and spending time in nature with my family.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I took the women’s basketball coaching job in 2012 at Indiana Tech.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy watching people grow and develop into who they want to be. Seeing people identify their passions and then start to channel their lives in that direction is very fulfilling. Giving 18-24-year-olds a space that enables them to grow and find themselves is enjoyable.
What does success mean to you? Where there is progress there is success.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? DNR — Department of Natural Resources Officer or a detective in the FBI.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? Concession stand worker at sand volleyball courts.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My biggest support is my wife; she is the rock of my world and encourages me to chase my passions. For my career I have been fortunate to work for head coaches and administrators that have supported and encouraged my career growth. Randi Peterson was my first boss right out of college and instilled the importance of empathy and caring about developing others not just winning college basketball games. The administration I have worked for at Indiana Tech has encouraged me to grow as a person and leader.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? United States Marine Corps/WBCA Regional Coach of the Year (2018);

Business Weekly’s Forty under 40
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Taking things for granted in college. I try to get my students now to understand they don’t get these days back. Make the most of them.
What are your current professional goals? To keep positively impacting people’s lives.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Currently there are a ton of virtual events and sessions, as well as yearly conventions on relative topics. Also just listening — students are a valuable resource to what is relevant. Listening and then research and reading can go along way.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I try to keep everything in perspective and remember my priorities. Too much of anything all the time is not good. Slowing down and enjoying the moments we won’t get back are important to me.
What do you do to relax? I love walks in nature or building things.



What book do you recommend? Jon Gordon — “Energy Bus”; Glennon Doyle — “Untamed.”
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Enjoy life, play harder, work smarter not necessarily longer and YDY (you do you).

MARK BAINS, 37

Employer: Barrett McNagny LLP
Education: Woodlan High School, Wabash College, Indiana University Maurer School of Law (Bloomington)
Community organizations: Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors, Emmanuel-St. Michael Lutheran School Board
Hobbies: Golfing, coaching my kids’ youth sport teams, cheering for the Hoosiers, and grabbing the occasional beverage with friends at (JK O’Donnell’s).
Why are you in northeast Indiana? Because it is a great place to raise a family both because I have family/support here and because the practice of law can be done while still having a decent work/life balance.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Helping a client successfully complete a development from start and finish and seeing the positive impact the same has on our region.
What does success mean to you? Success to me is performing excellent and timely legal work for my clients that helps their businesses thrive while still being a



present husband and father.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Not entirely sure. Probably a professional athlete or a teacher.
Where did your first paycheck come

from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from Autumn Ridge Golf Course, where I was on the maintenance team (responsible for maintaining the golf course). It was a great first job.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Outside of my profession, I would say it was my wife, who helped support and encouraging me from law school until present. In my profession, though, my biggest support has been Tom Niezer, who has pushed me to become a superior lawyer.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Being a part of various signature Fort Wayne real estate developments that are helping reshape downtown Fort Wayne.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Not investing in real estate in downtown Fort Wayne 10 years ago!
What are your current professional goals? To continue the success of Barrett McNagny LLP by, along with my partners,

performing superior legal work for the firm’s current and future clients.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? A combination of formal and informal continuing education efforts and staying connected with what is going on in our area.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? By having a great support system at home and at the office, and by putting down my phone as much as possible so I can be present wherever I am.
What do you do to relax? Hang out with my family and friends, play golf, and watch embarrassing amounts of sports.
What book do you recommend? “Red Letter Challenge”
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You are just getting start on what will be a great journey. Continue to work hard and have fun. Oh, and student loan interest rates are going to triple during law school, so have fun with that!

KASEY SHIREY, 36

Employer: Partner at City Chevrolet and City Ford
Community organizations: Columbia City Rotarian; American Heart Association; board member Whitley County Chamber
Hobbies: ATV’s; collecting coins, bullion, and guns; spending as much free time in the mountains of Colorado as time permits
Why are you in northeast Indiana? Born and raised in northwest Ohio, my high school sweetheart (now wife) and I came here so she could further her education after high school, fell in love with the area and made it our home.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? This is probably the most frequently asked question I get, and the answer is quite simple. I truly get satisfaction out of helping people that come to my stores in need by helping them better their current position. For example, that individual who wants to start up their new landscape company and isn’t sure which truck is the best to accommodate their unforeseen needs, or the growing family who isn’t sure which vehicle will be the best fit for their new addition. Asking some questions and getting to know each person’s personal wants and needs allows

us to best serve the customer and some times ends up helping them into a vehicle that wasn’t even on their radar.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Easy. Car salesman. Never waived.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? Pizza Barn, started when I was 12.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife. We have been together since we were 16, married at 21. I began my automotive career at 19 and she has supported me and made the sacrifices the job demanded through all the years.
What does success mean to you? Helping everyone I encounter become better. Personally and professionally.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Working for the same organization for 17 years. In this industry, to be able to say that is a feat in itself. Working hard, maintaining great leadership and keeping a positive attitude has afforded me many growth opportunities. The most recent, I was able to become a partner in the two dealerships I presently run in 2018.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn



from it? I wouldn’t necessarily call it a mistake, but trying to rush career growth. You may think you are ready for the next advancement, but only patience, focus, and determination can create the path.
What are your current professional goals? My goals develop and evolve regularly. Presently they are to continue to better position my dealerships’ presence and awareness in the market, which will promote future growth in the area and

allow me to better serve the community that supports me.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? By creating awareness through the various media outlets reminding customers we are here, trying to stay top of mind. Staying competitive within our service offerings, and most importantly, treating every customer who does business with us as an honored guest in our home, leaving them with a positive, lasting memory.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? That is a question I am still trying to answer. Unfortunately, I have not been able to perfect it yet, but, I continue to do my best daily and with support from people within each area, I am making it work!
What do you do to relax? I am not wired for that.
What book do you recommend? I have read many good books throughout my life, but I would have to say the most impactful two have been “Who Moved My Cheese” by Spencer Johnson and “Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You were right.

REBECCA ESSIG, 33

Employer: Purdue University Fort Wayne – assistant professor of engineering in the civil and mechanical engineering department

Education: Bachelor of science in civil engineering – Purdue University; master of science in civil engineering – Purdue University; doctor of philosophy in civil engineering – Purdue University

Community organizations: Future Girls of STEM summer camp – creator and faculty leader; St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative – Board of Directors

Hobbies: Taking my dogs on walks; yoga; Dungeons & Dragons

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I moved here after I was hired by Purdue Fort Wayne, but I’ve spent most of my life in Indiana. I grew up near South Bend, moved to West Lafayette for 10 years for school, and then moved to Fort Wayne for work.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Being a professor is the best job. I love getting to work with students. I meet so many people from different backgrounds with different stories and different life goals. I learn so much every day. I teach the first-year engineering students, and it’s awesome getting to be their entry point into their engineering careers. I get to share with them what I love about engineering and help them find their path, whatever that ends up being. It’s so rewarding.

What does success mean to you? As cheesy as it sounds, I think true success is being happy in whatever you are doing. At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter what it says on your business card if you aren’t happy doing it. If you are excited to go to work most days and feel fulfilled, that is the true measure of success.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? In elementary and middle school, I really wanted to be a teacher. I liked the idea of running a classroom and working with the students. However, in high school I started to see how underappreciated K-12 teachers are, so I started to look at other careers and that’s when I fell in love with engineering. I lucked out where my job now is the perfect combination of engineering and teaching.



Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I worked at the local little league ball park concession stand serving drinks and food.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I am lucky where I have had so many great, supportive people in my life. My family has been my constant cheerleaders throughout school and since I started my career. Any time I have a rough day or something great happens, I immediately call my husband, parents, and/or siblings to talk about it.

At work I’ve also had great mentorship from my department chair, Nash Younis, and my senior faculty mentor, Don Mueller. Starting your career can be very overwhelming especially as a woman in a predominantly male field. I had an amazing support system and mentors who regularly push me out of my comfort zone and celebrate my accomplishments.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? The activity I’m most proud of is the creation of the Future Girls of STEM summer camp. FGS is a summer camp designed to introduce 2nd-5th grade girls to different engineering fields. A team of five female faculty at PFW (including myself) started the camp back in the summer of 2019 in partnership with the Girl Scouts of

Northern Indiana Michiana. After the first year of traditional, in-person camp, we had to rapidly convert our camp to a virtual format for summer 2020 and plan on continue virtually for 2021. Our goal is to teach girls about engineering majors in a fun and interactive way, and to hopefully increase their self-efficacy and interest in pursuing a future in an engineering field.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I can’t think of any epic fail during my career, thankfully, (knock on wood) but something I used to be really, really bad about was constantly taking my work home with me. When I first started as a professor, I would often work 70+ hours per week because I felt like I couldn’t afford to take a break. Although I’m really grateful for my work ethic back then, I definitely hit a wall after my second year and had to slow down because I was afraid I was going to burn out. The big lesson I learned from it was that I need to remind myself to leave work at work. Doing fun things like service projects, hobbies, or relaxing is so important so that I can go back in fully charged each Monday morning.

What are your current professional goals? My most immediate professional goal is to earn tenure and promotion at Purdue Fort Wayne. I turn in my application this August. After that I would like to work on creating a Women in Engineering program at PFW. This school year I started the process of creating a chapter of the women in engineering social sorority, Phi Sigma Rho, at PFW, and I believe the students who identify as women in our college would greatly benefit from the support of a full Women in Engineering program.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Academia is setup to encourage people to constantly learn and grow in their field. I regularly attend teaching workshops and activities, read engineering education publications, conduct rigorous assessments of my teaching and other professional responsibilities, and learn from the other excellent educators at PFW.

How do you balance your career,

family, life and community service? Something that I have to constantly remind myself is to be mentally present in whatever I’m doing in each moment. I am not very good about leaving work at work, so I need to regularly remind myself to put away work and focus on whatever I’m doing in the moment. An example of this is at dinner time each night. My husband and I always eat dinner together at the kitchen table every night. We use it as time to talk about our days and spend quality time together. I am very bad about bringing my phone with me everywhere I go, and if I’m not careful I will fall into the trap of responding to emails while we eat instead of focusing on my husband. I’ve gotten better in recent years, but this is something I am constantly working on. Be mentally present as well as physically present.

What do you do to relax? I’m not the best at relaxing because I genuinely enjoy working on things constantly. However, 2020 was a mentally exhausting year, so in the last few months I have started using yoga and reading as a way to reduce general stress. Taking some time for myself at the end of each day to stretch or get lost in a book really helps me leave my work at work and fall asleep faster.

What book do you recommend? Full confession, I usually read romance novels because I like the happy endings. However, last year I read a great book that my husband gave me called “Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A life” by Jane Sherron De Hart. The book is a beast, but it’s filled with so much valuable backstory and information about RBG. Really glad I read it.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I used to worry a lot because it seemed like everyone else had such a clear plan of what they wanted to do with their lives. They all seemed so certain of their majors and future career paths. It was really intimidating. Now that I see things from the other side and work with first-year college students all the time, I see that is not actually the case. So, my advice would be, “Don’t worry so much. You’re doing a great job.”

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Hoosier Personnel

JAMIE MCCOY, 34

Where are you employed? COO of Hoosier Personnel Staffing

What is your education? Bachelor's degree in business administration

What community organizations are you involved in? MDA volunteer, member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, assistant baseball coach at Wallen Baseball Complex, BizTown leader — JA Fort Wayne

What are your hobbies? Watching my two boys, Peyton and Braylon, play baseball; avid "Cheesehead" of the Green Bay Packers. We enjoy going on walks with my two dogs, Wrigley and Chippy, repurposing furniture and community service.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? In Northeast Indiana, I live out my values every day. I keep things simple, treat people with respect, and help our neighbor. That is how I have always done it. "The Hoosier Hospitality Way."

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? It is simple. Helping people. My desire and passion for helping others is intertwined with my personal and professional life experiences. I have always felt happiness is found in helping others. I instill this in my team at Hoosier Personnel as well.

What does success mean to you? Success is a moving target. I do not think we ever achieve "it," at least in my own mind. But I do know this: if I think, I have achieved my greatest success, I clearly have decided to stop pushing myself.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I have always wanted to be a mom. This may sound cliché, but honestly since I was little, I have always wanted to be the perfect visionary of a good mom. Now that I am a mom, I have the ability to be a mother figure at work as well.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from being a server at Ponderosa. I believe everyone should work in the restaurant industry at least once in their life. I learned servicing others improves

confidence in my personal dedication. An appreciation of the small things in life not only helped me determine what I need to do to get to a place where I am content with my surroundings, but also provided me with a deeper understanding of who I am as a person and what I can do to improve myself.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My biggest supporter would be my mom, Kim Badders. She not only is my mom but the office manager at Hoosier Personnel Staffing. She always pushed me toward perfection and to have resilience. After unexpectedly losing my brother Jeremy this year, as a family we took that extremely hard. Hoosier Personnel was our way of coping, and in return my mom showed me how to handle hard situations. Most importantly, she taught me to never give up.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? My biggest accomplishment this far would hands down be this nomination for Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly Forty under 40. What an honor to be a part of a community that celebrates the hard work and dedication it takes to be in business.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? In my honest opinion there are no "greatest mistakes." Every mistake is in fact a lesson. Before answering it, I would like to rephrase the questions for myself as "What is your greatest lesson thus far and what lessons did you learn from it?"

My husband, Chris, mom, Kim, and I, opened a new and preowned clothing store back in 2007. While attending our first year, in Business 101 we created a business plan and that motivated us to make it a reality. We were in operation for 4 years. The economy and recession simply made the business unsustainable and forced us to close our doors. Looking back, mistakes are a part of what molded me to be where I am today. Every mistake I have made has in turn been my biggest reward.

What are your current professional goals? To partner with Sweetwater Sound to help with their staffing needs as our new client in 2021.

I would love to grow within our community partnerships with businesses and continue to help people advance in their careers. To unsure Hoosier Personnel Staffing is a staple in the Fort Wayne community for decades to come.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? By going to networking events in my industry like luncheons, dinners, workshops, trainings, talks and more. This way I am getting to know as many people in my industry as possible and staying relevant by always being present. Besides staying relevant, these events are also just great to go to in order to learn of new happenings, stay on trend with the latest and greatest in our community and other news, and they're wonderful places to make friends and find professional contacts.

How do you balance your career, family, life, and community service? I used to think that I was the only one who could solve my work-versus-family-life conundrum. However, over time I realized that there is no way for me to get things right if I only rely on my perspective. Since then, I have made it a point to have discussions with my family regarding their perceptions, opinions, and even objections to my work and how much I am focusing on it. Talking to my family and having the support of my business coach, Ann Marie Labenberg has supported me in having that happy balance.

What do you do to relax? Working out has recently been a huge stress reliever for me. I love running on my treadmill at the end of a long day.

What book do you recommend? I would recommend the book "Untamed" by Glennon Doyle. It is the story of how each of us can begin to trust ourselves enough to set boundaries, make peace with our bodies, honor our anger and heartbreak, and unleash our truest, wildest instincts so that we become



women who can finally look at ourselves and say: There She Is.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I would say to myself, Look, how were you supposed to have the perspective to know that your sweet belly button ring would one day not be so cute (especially the rather large hole it would leave behind in your stomach)? Or that platinum blonde hair does not really suit you? But it is OK — this time of your life is meant for experimentation and being a bit carefree. Once you are older, it becomes a lot less socially acceptable to try drastic things every other day, so enjoy it now.

Social status doesn't matter. When you're in high school, it is easy to get caught up in the social scene — who you're hanging out with, if you're nominated for prom queen or where you sit to eat your lunch on the lawn. But honestly, none of it matters. If you're able to move between groups and socialize with everyone, you'll be much more well-rounded. So, treat everyone kindly. Be nice to everyone and do not get caught up on how you're perceived but by how you treat others.

MATTHEW PURKEY, 38

Employer: United Way of Allen County

Education: Master degree. PhD candidate.

Community organizations: United Way, United Front, Team Rubicon

Hobbies: Physical fitness, reading, going to the lake with my family, spending time with my kids, annoying my wife

Why are you in northeast Indiana? When considering a move, northeast Indiana checked all the boxes: low cost of living, short commute, quality public schools, choices in faith, etc. I also get to make a living by doing something that does not feel like "work."

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I get to wake up every day and attempt to make our community better. Selfishly, I accept responsibility for improving the community that my children will grow up. Like in the Marine Corps, I still have enemies, but they look very different; systemic racism, hunger, homelessness, infant mortality, veteran suicide, etc. I bring the same strategic focus that I did as a Marine, and the same tenacious pursuit of mission accomplishment of eradicating the needs.

What does success mean to you? Leaving this world better than what we inherited.



As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? My dad. I remember watching the dirty water roll off his hands in the sink as he washed them before dinner. And then one day he put on a shirt and tie instead of his work boots. I didn't know what he did at the time, I just knew that hard work eventually paid off. And I wanted to do THAT.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I was a busboy at Der Dutchler, an Amish

restaurant in Waynesville.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife, Amanda. She selflessly takes care of our home so I can pour myself into my work and PhD. She encourages me when I am down, and grounds me when needed. I believe she is the only person in this world that believes in me more than me.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Leadership is personal. Just like many great leaders (and some bad) poured into me, my biggest accomplishment comes every time someone tells me I had a positive impact on their life, help them find their calling, or gave direction when they had none. Every time I lead well, and it helps someone else, that is my greatest accomplishment.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Believing every person can fit in a culture. There were times I tried to change myself according to a specific opportunity. Not every opportunity is a good opportunity, and it is OK to say no to things that do not align with your passion, experience, beliefs, and skillset.

What are your current professional goals? To build a culture at United Way that attracts and retains the right talent to make a measurable impact in the lives of

those in Allen County.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Community needs are constantly evolving, the minute a nonprofit becomes stagnant is the exact moment they start to become irrelevant. Irrelevancy is worse than non-existence for a health and human service organization, therefore I must always be willing to dive into a community need, no matter how uncomfortable.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I don't. I am just fortunate that we live a life that is intertwined. My career is one of community service, which is an effort to improve life for not only my family, but everyone's. Balance isn't necessarily something that is sought when you are walking a path specifically designed for you.

What do you do to relax? Read, listen to podcasts, and when time permits binge watch true crime or historical documentaries with my wife.

What book do you recommend? "Once a Warrior" by Jake Wood

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You are going to make mistakes, and it's OK. The lessons you learn during your failures are much more valuable than those learned through success. You are going to be just fine.

MANDY DRAKEFORD, 33

Employer: GiGi’s Playhouse Fort Wayne – executive director; adjunct instructor with the University of Oregon

Education: Master of arts in communication, University of Cincinnati, graduated 2011; bachelor of arts in communication, public relations, University of Cincinnati, graduated 2009; Magna Cum Laude with Distinguished University Honors, Phi Beta Kappa; Napoleon High School, graduated 2006

Community organizations: I volunteer my time with Greater Fort Wayne, Inc. and serve on the Onboard Fort Wayne program leadership team. The goal of Onboard Fort Wayne is to provide newly relocated newcomers with an intentional program of social interactions and informational opportunities to accelerate their connection and experience being welcomed to our community. As a part of this initiative, I lead the Community Connectors, which is a group of ambassadors that provide a concierge role, answering questions and guiding new residents to find their local favorites.

Hobbies: I wish I had more time for hobbies, but as a working mom with two young children, there’s not much time left at the end of the day. With that said, I love to cook! I spend each Saturday morning planning our meals for the upcoming week. You can find me cooking up a huge pot of soup on Sunday afternoons and meal prepping for the week. I love cooking holiday meals for my extended family, and they always request my beef tenderloin, honey cornbread dressing and Buche de Noel Cake recipes.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? In 2018, my husband had the opportunity to move to the Fort Wayne area for a promotion with his company. While we loved living in Charlotte, NC, with two children, we yearned to live closer to our family in Ohio. Our move to Fort Wayne provided us with the opportunity to live within 2.5 hours of our parents, siblings and grandparents. After living hundreds of miles away for nearly 10 years, we love living within a few hours from our family.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I currently serve as the executive director, and I spent the last 12 years working in the nonprofit industry, with experience in fundraising, marketing, public relations, and digital communications.

Early in my career, I ventured outside of the nonprofit world and worked for a PR agency. While I enjoyed the work and different types of clients, it didn’t fulfill me the way nonprofit work did. I know that every minute of work I put in each day goes to benefitting someone in our community. I strive to support underserved populations and communities, and a career nonprofit helps me achieve my mission in life. In each of my nonprofit roles, I’ve had the opportunity to help people in a variety



of ways, and I couldn’t see myself doing anything else.

What does success mean to you? Success to me means the opportunity for continual growth. If I’m not growing in my personal and professional life, I’m not successful.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Funny enough, when I was about 3, I wanted to be a giraffe. Later in my childhood (once I realized that wasn’t possible), I wanted to be a veterinarian.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from Camp Widewater in northwest Ohio. Once I turned 16, I found a job at the camp as a lifeguard and cook to earn and save money for college. I knew I would be responsible for my education, so I worked as many hours as I could, usually working 12-14 hours a day during the summer camps. By the end of the summer before college, I had saved \$10,000 to put toward my degree.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I owe my career success to so many people in my life, and it’s impossible to pick just one. My parents instilled a strong work ethic and grit that has powered me through difficult times. My husband and I married before we had careers when we were 21. From my first job in the real world to leading a nonprofit, he’s been a tremendous supporter as I’ve grown in my career. Many of my college professors remain my biggest mentors and I can call on them anytime. Several of my former bosses and current colleagues provide mentorship and encouragement through challenging moments and achievements. I wouldn’t be where I am today without my parents, husband, college professors, former bosses and current mentors.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? In 2018, just six months after receiving a promotion at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, NC, my husband accepted a new position out of state. While

the move helped us get closer to family, I was devastated to leave my position as the senior vice president of development and marketing after I had spent six years building my network and career in Charlotte.

Two years later, I’ve rebuilt my network in Fort Wayne and found a rewarding position with GiGi’s Playhouse Fort Wayne. I stepped into this role amid the pandemic and worked together with the board and my team to reopen our Genesis Health Bar and in-person programs at the Playhouse. GiGi’s Playhouse Inc. recognized our team’s efforts, and we were awarded the Core Value Award for Believe. The Core Value Award for Believe is given to a Playhouse that has stepped outside its comfort zone and has a presumption of success. GiGi’s Playhouse Fort Wayne also finished No. 6 in the network of 50+ playhouses for the number of participant program hours in 2020. As a new team, I’m proud of the success we’ve found together during a pandemic to ensure individuals with Down syndrome still have therapeutic, educational and career training support in our community.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? After my first son was born, I thought I could be a super mom and do it all — drop off and pick up from school, handle all the doctor’s appointments and sick days, exclusive breastfeeding, etc. — all while working full time. My husband was more than willing to help but I wanted to prove that I could do it all. I was struggling to maintain everything and was so unhappy. I spent 18 months pushing myself to the limit and didn’t share how I was feeling with anyone. I thought I was just struggling like every other working mom and didn’t realize I had postpartum depression. My biggest mistake was not speaking up sooner. I’ve often looked back and felt like I wasted the first 18 months of my child’s life. Thankfully, that experience taught me to keep my mental health in check by getting enough sleep, eating 3 meals a day, working out more regularly, and asking for help when I need it — both at home and work.

What are your current professional goals? My current professional goal is to continue to grow GiGi’s Playhouse Fort Wayne and serve more individuals with Down syndrome. In the last 5 years, GiGi’s Playhouse Fort Wayne grew to serve more than 300 families in northern Indiana. As Down syndrome is the largest chromosomal disability in our country and the least funded, our goal is to reach as many individuals with Down syndrome and their families as possible in northeast Indiana. Our free therapeutic, educational and career training programs have helped so many participants reach their next stage in life, and I strive to provide these programs to more people in Fort Wayne and beyond.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I’m always challenging myself to learn by reading best practices articles and research, participating in leadership programs, and meeting with mentors and other leaders in our community. If I’m not feeling stretched, I know I’m stagnant and need to seek out more opportunities to grow.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? After working and raising a family over the past 6 years, I’ve decided there isn’t a perfect balance. Some weeks, I’ve spent well beyond 40 hours at work, and other weeks, my children require more of my focus and attention. Over the years, I’ve learned to view work-life balance as more of a work-life blend. Balance implies that my work and personal life never overlap, and if you have children, you know that’s impossible — kids get sick, schools close (especially in a pandemic) and work extends past the traditional 9-5 hours, especially in a leadership position. If I have to leave work early to take my kids to an appointment, I jump online later in the evening to complete any outstanding priorities for the day. If I’ve been spending the majority of time dedicated to my job, I’ll cut out of work a little early and pick up my children from school before they go to aftercare to spend some more time with them. I’ve learned as a working mom that striving towards a perfect balance leaves me unsatisfied and work-life blend allows for the flexibility needed to be a working parent.

What do you do to relax? At the end of each day, no matter what, my husband, two sons and I sit down and eat dinner together. I love sharing a meal together and hearing about what my kids did in school and what my husband accomplished throughout his day. Spending time with my family grounds and relaxes me.

What book do you recommend? For fun, I love to read psychological thrillers. I recently finished Megan Miranda’s “The Girl from Widow Hills.” It kept me on the edge of my seat, and I finished it in a day.

For personal growth and enlightenment, I would recommend reading “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents” by New York Times bestselling author Isabel Wilkerson. “Caste” examines the history of racism, inequality and injustice. In order for us to move forward together as a community and country, we must collectively understand and confront our history.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I would tell my high school self not to worry and stress so much about the future. Looking back, there’s no way I could’ve ever predicted my last 15 years — both personally and professionally. My life has exceeded anything I ever dreamed of in high school, and not because I spent so much time worrying about it!

DAVID BUUCK, 34

Employer: CASS Housing
Education: Concordia Lutheran High School, Concordia University Chicago-Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Master of Arts in Human Services

Community organizations: CASS Housing

Hobbies: Tech, personal finance, playing games, following the Cubs

Why are you in northeast Indiana? There are endless opportunities in this community.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? As the executive director of CASS Housing, I get to actively partner with parents of adults with disabilities to address their fear of what’s going to happen to their children when they are no longer around, while concurrently helping individuals with disabilities live the life they’ve always wanted. As a team, we get to dream really, really big dreams and the

skillsets are there to make them happen.

What does success mean to you? Hearing “I never thought this would ever be possible.”

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Teacher or pastor.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? Working drywall with my stepdad.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife, Amy.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Ribbon-cutting of our first home with 200 of our closest friends in -20 degree weather.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? A handshake isn’t a signed contract. Plans are just dreams until you own the piece of land.

What are your current professional goals? Create housing, employment and support opportunities for adults with disabilities.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I talk to the families interested in our program. CASS is simply trying to address gaps that aren’t being filled.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Not well the last few years, but as our team has grown, I’ve been able to get out of the startup pace just a bit.

What do you do to relax? I love coffee and naps.

What book do you recommend? “Return of the Prodigal Son” by Henri Nouwen

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Keep at it. Love wins.



MEET *Chynna Presley*

- DIRECTOR OF INTERCULTURAL ENRICHMENT
- MEMBER OF OUR FIRST BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK CLASS
- MASTER OF ARTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEGREE HOLDER
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KATHRYN MILLER, 36

Employer: STAR Financial Bank
Education: Homestead High School, 2003; University of Notre Dame, 2007; Master of Science in Accountancy, University of Notre Dame, 2008
Community organizations: YWCA of Northeast Indiana – board chair; Kate’s Kart – board member; Erin’s House for Grieving Children – board member; University of Saint Francis – Development Committee member; Fort Wayne Estate Planning Council — member
Hobbies: Running, cycling, cooking, traveling

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I attended high school in Fort Wayne and worked here for a short time after graduating from college. My husband and I lived in Philadelphia for several years as young professionals. We returned to northeast Indiana when we decided to start a family.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? No day is the same as the previous day. Every client’s situation is unique. I enjoy working to find solutions for individuals who are looking to transfer wealth to the next generation. I also have the privilege of working with some of the very best estate planners and wealth



management professionals daily at STAR and throughout northeast Indiana.
What does success mean to you? Growth and progress toward personal and professional goals. No matter how small. No matter what setbacks arise. Defining the path forward, building for the future, and finding joy along the way.
Where did your first paycheck come

from and what was your job then? I spent many nights babysitting when I was younger. However, my first real paycheck came from STAR Financial Bank when I worked there as a teller in high school.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My father. He lives by the phrase “work hard, play hard.” Whether it was sports when I was younger or my career as an adult, he has always challenged me to do my best every day. And to have fun along the way!
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Obtaining my accreditation as a Certified Trust and Financial Advisor.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? The mistakes I have made usually stemmed from a lack of clear communication. I have learned along the way to not shy away from asking clarifying questions, and to be as transparent as possible when communicating with others.
What are your current professional goals? Continue to develop my skills and grow in my role. Provide a positive and memorable customer experience. Collaborate with teammates to meet the financial

needs of our clients.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? One of STAR’s core values is a commitment to lifelong learning. I attend conferences and webinars that are relevant to my industry.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? It’s a challenge! I exercise before the rest of my family wakes up, so that I don’t forget to take time for myself. We eat dinner together as a family almost every night and we place a priority on being present for our kids’ events. I am fortunate to work for a company that values community engagement, which provides me the flexibility to serve on several local nonprofit boards.
What do you do to relax? Go for a run or have a glass of wine.
What book do you recommend? “The Pillars of the Earth” – Ken Follett
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You aren’t as smart as you think you are. There is a lot that can be learned in the classroom, but the real world provides lessons on a daily basis that will shape the person you become.

NATALIE DEWITT, 35

Employer: Taylor Rental/Party Plus Auburn
Education: DeKalb High School; Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne — no degree
Hobbies: I love spending time with my family. We love hanging by the pool, gardening, and exploring parks and trails. I enjoy time at the lake, reading, volunteering, and learning new things about my community.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I love Indiana. I treasure everything Northeast Indiana has to offer: lakes, history, murals, some of the best wineries and breweries in the state, history, and trails. Our quality of place is top notch and we are only getting better.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I’m a planner at heart. Planning special events for my clients and assisting them, to ensure their special event goes over flawlessly gives me joy. The trust they instill in my company and team is something we have worked hard to achieve. I’ve been lucky to be in the business so long that I’ve done the same clients’ graduation parties, weddings, baby showers, and child’s birthdays.
What does success mean to you? During the recession it was hard, and now going through a pandemic I’ll say we have been able to apply what we learned during the recession and adapt quickly when the pandemic hit. We are still on our toes like everyone else, but I’m proud of being able

to retain all of our employees and keep the doors open.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I really didn’t have a great plan, I prayed a lot for God’s guidance to lead me where I was supposed to serve.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I grew up babysitting for families at our church, but my first ever paycheck was from Mad Anthony’s (then it was Munchies) in Auburn. I was a hostess and loved it, mainly because of the people.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I’m lucky to have such a supporting husband. He’s always Mr. Positive and pushes me when I need to be pushed outside my comfort zone.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Becoming partner. When I started over 15 years ago, I just wanted to plan events. I never envisioned being a partner. There’s always 90% good and 10% bad, I try to not spiral on the 10%. At the end of the day for our small business it’s always about the people and our team, who is family.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I remember my first year at TRC I had made an order for wedding tuxedos for a client. On Friday evening at rehearsal (they) called the store and said the vest colors were all wrong. They didn’t notice

it when they picked them up, but I had inverted the letters of the vest color option. I felt terrible and there was no way to fix it. They weren’t mad, they just wore the vests inside out and made it work. From that point on I had to just slow down when taking orders and make sure my T’s were crossed and my I’s were dotted.
What are your current professional goals? I’m currently in leadership training with the Lugar Series 2020-2021 Class. Learning how to be a better leader and public servant excites me. I know I will always serve my community to the best of my ability and wherever God leads me.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? We have three divisions in our company. Special events are ever changing, especially with COVID. Right now we focus on micro events and how to better serve our clients during this climate. With our portable restroom division, we immediately added sinks inside a bulk of our units to accommodate the needs of our clients during the shutdown. Equipment rentals we added several items to our fleet for all of our clients doing at home projects.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Balance for any mother doesn’t ever seem like an achievable goal. Some days are faster and heavier than others. I try to roll with each day and be as present as I possibly can with my family and friends.
What do you do to relax? I love yoga,



meditation, and hitting the gym in the morning while everyone else in my house is sleeping. This time is the only quiet time I have throughout the day to shut everything off and get focused for the day. Snuggling my kiddos at the end of each day also is such a relaxing time and what I look forward to the most.
What book do you recommend? “The Servant, a simple story about the true essence of Leadership” by James C. Hunter. I recently met with Auburn (Fire Chief Michael) VanZile. We got to chatting and he mentioned this great book. I went home right away and read it in a day. It asks the question “Do you leave things better than you found them? Will people be glad you were there?” A great perspective with a consistent reminder to stay focused and grounded.

NABILA SAFDAR, 37

Employer: Do it Best Corp., Purdue University Fort Wayne, Nabilities
Education: College
Community organizations: American Red Cross; Study Connection; United Way; United Front Initiative
Hobbies: Traveling, hiking
Why are you in Northeast Indiana? Love the growing community!
What is it about your professions that you enjoy and why? I enjoy all 3 parallel professions. All of them give me a chance to learn from others while serving them to achieve their best.
What does success mean to you? Being engaged in consistently improving myself and expecting the same from others.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Teacher
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My family, friends and mentors.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Starting my consulting and training company to help individuals and companies with continuous improvement.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Taking on too much. I have learned to set an annual strategic plan which covers all aspects of my life. It helps me align my goals, track them and adapt them on a monthly basis.
What are your current professional

goals? Continue to grow myself into a strong innovative leader.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Every week, I plan to learn a new concept by applying it.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Taking it all one day at a time.
What do you do to relax? Cook, read
What book do you recommend? “Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones” by James Clear
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? A quote by Paulo Coelho, “The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion.”



THOMAS SUMMERVILLE JR., 32

Employer: Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana
Education: Master of Business Administration
Community organizations: INARF (Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities); Indiana APSE (Indiana's Association of People Supporting Employment First)
Hobbies: Enjoying the company of family and friends. Buying tennis shoes
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in northeast Indiana and the development and opportunities the region provided made me want to continue my career and life here. My biggest supporters (family and friends) are residents of northeast Indiana so it made sense to pursue a life here long term.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy the opportunity to give back and change the way the world defines and views disability.
What does success mean to you? Success means setting goals, working hard towards those goals, and believing in yourself that you can achieve those goals
As a child, what did you want to

be when you grew up? I wanted to be a dentist
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from Arbor Glen Retirement Community where I worked as a server in the dining area.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I don't believe I have just one supporter. I believe it takes a village and my parents, family, friends, coworkers, and bosses all have played a role in supporting me in some form or fashion. Our current president and CEO has really helped me advance my career and given me the opportunity to develop into the executive I am today.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Being name chief operating officer of Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? One of my greatest mistakes was feeling like I needed to do everything on my own. I learned the best leaders are those who have the humility to know what they don't know and surround themselves

around people who know those things.
What are your current professional goals? To become president and CEO of an organization that supports individuals with disabilities and to ensure I am always providing opportunities and support to young individuals who may not have the same opportunities or resources as their peers.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I ensure I remain connected to trade organizations inside and outside of my profession to ensure I remain current on what's new across different occupations.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I try to ensure I have "white space" to balance career family and community life. There are times where my career has been priority however, I am working to ensure I maintain a healthy balance with all.
What do you do to relax? I sit on my recliner and look at cars and order gym shoes.
What book do you recommend? "Managing Transitions" by William and Susan Bridges and "The Coming Jobs



War" by Jim Clifton
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Be patient and keep doing what you are doing. It will pay off!

STEPHANIE CRANDALL, 39

Employed: City of Fort Wayne
Education: Gateway High School, Monroeville, Pennsylvania; bachelor of arts, with majors in political science and Spanish, a minor in philosophy, and pre-law concentration, Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio; juris doctor, William & Mary Law School, Williamsburg, Virginia.
Community organizations: United Way of Allen County, Women's Fund of Greater Fort Wayne, Allen County Bar Association Women's Law Section, YWCA Northeast Indiana, AVOW, 100+ Women Who Care, Ohio Northern University Getty College Council & Alumni Affairs
Hobbies: Volunteering, reading, political and civic engagement
Why are you in northeast Indiana? My husband and I moved here from Washington, D.C. when I was selected for this job, but we were drawn to Fort Wayne because I had family in the area. Now, we have 3 little boys and we stay because it's a great place to have a family, while being a part of this chapter in Fort Wayne's story.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy being a bridge between policymakers and the people most impacted by those policies. We work together to move the needle on complicated issues facing our city and hopefully, make our community a better



place to live.
What does success mean to you? Success means using the gifts you've been given to fulfill the purpose to which you're called. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I felt called into public service when my high school civics teacher started a discussion about how few women there were in government. At the time, I aspired to be the President of the United States.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then?

My first official paycheck came from the Municipality of Monroeville (Pennsylvania) Tax Office. I did data entry as a summer youth worker.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Over the past decade, my biggest supporter has been my husband, Joel. He always encourages me to pursue my dreams and has helped me realize my dream of being a mom while having a career.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? I spearheaded the mayor's initiative to create and enact a paid parental leave policy, providing birth and adoptive parents paid time off to adjust to their new family situation and bond with their new child. Paid parental leave supports a child during a crucial time of mental and physical development; it reduces the stress on a parent to focus on one's family without fear of losing a paycheck; and it helps a community like Fort Wayne show that we value families as much as we say we do.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? In a previous job, I waited for assignments to come to me and missed out on some great opportunities. Now, I am more confident to seek out projects where I believe my skillsets can provide benefit.
What are your current professional goals? Currently, I'm focused on

advocating for policies and programs that help as many people as possible get through this pandemic. I also remain dedicated to addressing issues and barriers that women and girls face as they strive to reach their full potential.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I am constantly learning about ways other communities tackle their most difficult challenges to see what policies, programs and system changes we might be able to adapt here in Fort Wayne. I also work to strengthen my networks, both locally and outside the area, to connect with people who are serving their communities in various ways.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? With a lot of grace. There probably aren't a lot of toddlers who like to watch City Council so they can spend time with their mom.
What do you do to relax? I unwind by binge-watching tv with my husband and reading with my kids.
What book do you recommend? "The Dream Giver" by Bruce Wilkinson and "The Simple Faith of Mr. Rogers" by Amy Hollingsworth
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? You don't have to be an elected official to serve your community. Also, you don't have to be perfect because you're always a work in progress.



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*Congratulations,
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FORTY UNDER 40 2021 WINNER

Director of Operations

NeighborLink
FORT WAYNE

WADE OWEN, 35

Employer: Sweetwater
Education: College graduate with degrees in computer science and information systems
Community organizations: Big Brothers Big Sisters – Big Brother and Board of Directors; Greater Fort Wayne — Leadership Fort Wayne in 2018 and Leadership 2.0 in 2020
Hobbies: Being the best husband and dad I can be, first and foremost. All things music (listening, playing, writing, performing in my '90's rock band called "Wade's World" with my best friends.) Woodworking, building furniture and guitars.

Why are you in northeast Indiana?
Born and raised. I grew up in Albion and graduated high school from Central Noble. Then stayed in the area and graduated from college at IPFW while working full time as a software engineer at General Dynamics. I traveled the country and parts of the world in that job, and knew Fort Wayne was always going to be home.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy the people-leading side of my profession the most. I'm fortunate that I get to be involved in someone's career journey. I'm a part of their professional growth, their challenges, share in their career milestones, and overall find out what make them successful. The enjoyment in this for me is not where someone may end up, but how that someone takes what they've experienced and apply it to their own life or encourage others in their leadership career.

What does success mean to you?
Success is accomplishing your ultimate goals. Whatever those may be. My successes have been milestone goals I've



been fortunate enough to accomplish, with more goals I'm working towards in the near-term and long-term futures. These experiences are small, and some are large, with each one having its own planning phase and execution strategy. I don't measure myself on my success but measure myself on my experiences; some of which may not be considered accomplishments.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I first wanted to be an astronaut as I've always had a fascination with space and astronomy. Then, I found my dad's drum set and childhood guitar as a kid and my world changed to wanting to be a musician and rock star, like Eddie Van Halen. I frequently state "I made it" because of working in the music industry at Sweetwater.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My older brother and I did a weekly cleaning

of our local barber shop while we were in middle school. The barber would leave two \$5 bills on the counter for each of us every weekend, and then candy bars during Christmastime.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Definitely my parents. They pushed me as a student and athlete in school. They challenged me in college to make the grades and take on more responsibilities. They are 100% the reason why I'm where I'm at in my career today. The foundation of discipline was set early on in my life by my mom and dad.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career?
Probably my ability to lead a team of talented and driven individuals who are successful in their own careers. I've enjoyed the experiences of leading more than any certain career accomplishment.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? We're all here to make an impact somehow. I often think, "am I making enough of one in my work where there's lasting success and positivity in those around me"? I too often think big change, big impact. That's been my mistake. Instead, I'm learning everything requires small changes, then comes big impact.

What are your current professional goals? My main professional goal is to see success (small or large) in those around me that I've challenged and led over the years. The ultimate goal as stated in the book "Lead Simply," is to have those individuals on my team start caring enough to encourage the people around them to be more engaged through their actions and through their words.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I stay close and communicate often with my team and my leaders, as well as the mentors in my life that have helped shape me into the person I am today. I want to remain at the forefront of any operation, but then also enjoy taking a step back and let those around me that I've had influence with take the reins on a decision, experience, or success.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?
I see it as a "blend" because each one may feed into or affect another. It takes frequent practice and adjustment to find out how one side of my life adds to or takes away another. I'm constantly refining each segment to ensure I'm always "balanced" with my family always being first in taking precedence over all the others.

What do you do to relax? Spending quality time with my wife on our frequent dates as if we were still dating. With my son, Graham, playing with Hot Wheels cars and baseballs or footballs. Playing music is a relaxing, clear-the-mind hobby of mine for nearly my entire life. Exercising in the morning relaxes me for the day ahead.

What book do you recommend?
"Lead Simply" by Sam Parker. Super easy to read, follow, and it's a main reference book for me when I need a refresher on the simplest of strategies in putting together and leading a successful team. I have it at arm's reach all the time.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self?
Stay with it and keep focused. There are so many distractions in life that could pull you away from your ultimate goal. The foundation that is set in stone won't crumble if you continue building on it and around it.

CONGRATULATIONS

Melanie Funk

for being recognized as a 2021 "Forty under 40" recipient!

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Business Weekly

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2021

WINNER

CHURUBUSCO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

JOHN WEIMER, 39

Employer: Perfection Bakeries: DBA, Aunt Millie’s Bakeries

Education: This question always makes me chuckle ... Lakeland High School, LaGrange

Community organizations: I’m ashamed to say that at the moment, I really am not actively involved in any. However, my family has a very big soft spot for handicapped and special needs children, as our youngest one fits into this group. We try to include him in as many extracurricular activities as we can, and as a result, end up helping at many of the events that our son participates in.

Hobbies: Hmmm, I don’t know that I have any. With an 11-year-old, 9-year-old and 7-year-old there’s not much time left in the day for any hobbies of my own. I guess my hobbies are probably whatever the kids are interested in at the time.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? We grew up here. I’m originally from Lagrange and my wife is originally from Kendallville. We did move to Wisconsin for several years for Aunt Millie’s, but in 2018 we moved back to Indiana and now live in Fort Wayne.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? People. It’s the people and the relationships that get made through all the interactions and conversations day in and day out.

What does success mean to you? Being influential and impactful. I did not always measure success this way, but I believe you need to leave an impression on people, on things you’ve participated in and worked on. If you are going to be on this earth for 80 years or eight years, you can make a difference in people by being inspiring to those around you. I really do believe that an 8-year-old child can be more successful than a multi-millionaire business owner at the age of 80.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be in the Air Force and be a fighter pilot.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? JL Electric. The owner, Jeff Leu, needed an extra set of hands on the job site and that’s exactly what I was. I wasn’t old enough to drive yet so Jeff would pick me up and drop me off every day during summer break.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your



career? It would have to be my wife, Jessica. I have had some awesome mentors and people who I have been able to learn from and look to for guidance, but Jess has been my biggest supporter. When there are late nights at the office or out in the field or if my responsibilities have me away overnight, I have always known that home base is taken care of and in good hands. When the opportunity came to relocate to Wisconsin for Aunt Millie’s, Jess was all in. It may be my name that is on that paycheck from Aunt Millie’s, but she has earned every bit of it as well.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? It’s hard for me to answer this question. I have been a part of many teams throughout my career that have achieved sales growth year after year or that have met efficiency goals year after year.

I can think of multiple efforts from teams I’ve been a part of that have set out to do something and done it; certain things that 10 to 20 years ago people inside Aunt Millie’s might have thought unachievable without compromise but we made it happen. But again, we did it as a team.

I’ve received calls from customers who need something on extremely short notice — such a short notice that our industry might say it just isn’t possible. But time and time again, Aunt Millie’s always

comes together, and multiple people from multiple departments rise to the occasion to get that otherwise unachievable task accomplished.

I guess my greatest accomplishment thus far has been that I’ve always been on winning teams at Aunt Millie’s that have always risen to the occasion no matter what that occasion might be.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Putting a focus or priority on the wrong thing. Question 8 asked about what in my profession I enjoy the most. My answer is people.

Once upon a time, I placed major value on simply being the best at everything I was working toward or competing in. I wanted the best sales trends and revenue growth, or I wanted the best efficiency numbers as they pertain to specific metrics in our industry. I wanted to achieve certain milestones that I felt marked successful people around me or business in general and I did not focus much on what my teammates’ goals or needs might have been.

I have learned that the way to achieve sustained success and to make a bigger impact is to develop and grow a team. You must make your teammates and the needs of your teammates a priority and when you do, things will happen that you’d have not been able to achieve on your own.

What are your current professional goals? Help develop key members on my team who can take the next step in their careers. Approach this goal with the mindset that I am training my own replacement.

Make improvements on the amount of time I put into work without limiting my results.

Exceed sales and efficiency goals for this FY.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Always make yourself accountable. One must be accountable to his superior while also being accountable to his subordinates. Also, always look to lead, even when you are not necessarily in charge. And, never lose integrity. If you lose integrity, you really don’t have anything left to offer anyone.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I’m probably not the right person to ask this

question to.

I find that by purposefully scheduling time into my calendar, and being self-disciplined enough to honor that time, helps me balance what is important to my family along with everything else that may be going on. I am easily distracted and when I get focused on something, I can lose track of time easily or just plain don’t want to stop whatever it is that I am working on. Knowing my schedule ahead of time, being able to plan and prepare for a thing helps the most.

What do you do to relax? Get rid of a daily schedule or daily itinerary. This may sound silly but it’s honestly what I find relaxation in the most.

A beautiful day with my family and not a thing to do, that’s relaxing to me.

What book do you recommend? The Bible. Some might call this answer cliché but it’s honestly the single most important book I could recommend to anyone. There’s wisdom and knowledge aplenty along with good instruction.

Two other reads I’ve enjoyed are “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team” by Patrick Lencioni and “Turn the Ship Around!” by L. David Marquet. These are excellent books on leadership and building goods teams.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Don’t have children, they only get in the way of success.

I’M 100% KIDDING ABOUT THE ABOVE COMMENT. LOL

Seriously though, I’d tell my high school self: Listen to those who have been there before and don’t get in a hurry. Be confident in what you’ve learned but be ready to try again. Read your Bible every morning and record a journal every night. Never fear telling someone you don’t know the answer, but you better do everything you can to find it.

There are situations in life when you absolutely cannot win or beat what you are up against and that’s OK. What is not OK is when you are in a situation you cannot win, and you do not grow from it, either.

God doesn’t give people what they can handle. God absolutely allows things in people’s lives that will break them. It is only through relying in Him and seeking His obedience that you will make it through those times.

RON HOWARD, 38

Employer: Indiana Pacers and Lutheran Health Network

Education: Whitney Young Magnet High School, Chicago; Marquette University; bachelor of arts in communications, Valparaiso University

Community organizations: I’m involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana as a member of the board of directors. I’m a part of the Resource Development Committee and the Real Men Read Program. I also serve on the board of directors at the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo where I am on the Donor Development Committee as well as a board member of the Mad Anthony’s Children’s Hope House.

Hobbies: My hobbies are watching documentaries of all types. I love to draw and cook breakfast for my family with my kids. I’m also really into antiquing and visiting the zoo.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I came here for a Mad Ants open try-out and my wife and I fell in love with Fort Wayne and decided to make it our home.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I enjoy being involved in the business of sports. There is so much that goes into preparing for and executing our season before

our players ever arrive and I enjoy that process. Once our players arrive in market I love being able to work with and help them accomplish their goals and dreams. I also enjoy connecting with the people of our community.

What does success mean to you? Setting my children up with a great future and feeling proud about the decisions I made along the way to achieve that.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be an architect. I still love architecture, art and design.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? A summer camp at my high school.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My wife without a doubt! From Day One she has been there to help me in every way thinkable. As a player she was there to pick me up during the rough times and celebrating with me during the good times. Her support of me and dedication to our family allows me the time to dedicate to my career and the community. Probably helping me with something as you read this.

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

Being able to seamlessly transition from a professional athlete to a business professional.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I’ve learned that when people show you who they are, believe them and act accordingly, even if they haven’t done anything to you yet.

What are your current professional goals? To continue to do what I love while being an integral part of this community.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? By always being willing to learn. I’m competitive so I want to win, that drives me. Whatever I’m doing I strive to be the best and because of that I have to be a constant student of the business. In the sports world you have to be creative, innovative and know your business.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? This can be challenging but I try to balance it all by being fully present in each setting.

What do you do to relax? Binge watch Netflix with my wife. Cooking with my daughter Chloe. Drawing, painting or playing with dolls with my daughters,



Peyton and Nola or being an Avenger and keeping Thanos from getting all the infinity stones with my son, Justin.

What book do you recommend? The Bible

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Times flies, live in the moment. Before you know it you’ll be pushing 40!

ALEX KROUSE, 34

Employer: Parkview Health
Education: I went to Bishop Luers High School and then graduated from DePauw University with a bachelor's degree in history. I then attended Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law and Indiana University School of Medicine, receiving a dual law degree and master's of health administration (JD/MHA).
Community organizations: Locally, I am an adjunct faculty at the University of Saint Francis in their master's of health administration program, serve as president of the Harrison Hill Neighborhood Association, and run the Historic 07 Facebook page. The page is really meant to support the history of the various neighborhood associations and businesses in and around the 46807 ZIP code. Nationally, I am Vice-Chair of the Fair Market Value Section within the American Health Lawyers Association and the board chair of the American Association of Provider Compensation Professionals.
Hobbies: The hobby that takes up most of my time is reading about our local history, specifically the south end of town. I manage the History 07 Facebook page, where I post most of what I find. This also includes fundraising for the area neighborhoods to ensure we maintain the historic and vibrant feel within the 07. The goal is to create a fund we (collectively the neighborhoods) can use to support historic preservation and reinvention on the south side of Fort Wayne.
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born here, but I spent more than a

decade outside of NE Indiana, including a fair amount of business travel across the country. To me, there aren't many places like northeast Indiana. It's a big enough place to enjoy culture, art, and history, but small enough to maintain a sense of community. It's a place where everyone's good enough to contribute, and not many people sit on the sidelines. You can't ask for much more than that.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Being an attorney requires a certain mindset. It requires someone to think about the nuance in issues, words, and situations. I like being able to think through complex issues and ultimately offering pathways for clients. It is rewarding on multiple levels.
What does success mean to you? Success to me is being a good parent, spouse, and community member. If you can strive for being the best you can be in those roles, you will experience success.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Early on, probably a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball player. Later on, I was reasonably confident I would end up practicing law.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My grandpa. He owned land out southwest and, once retired, would have the grandkids come out and mow the lawn, do yard work, and other tasks.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My spouse, Caitlin. We both are pretty driven, and it has required a give and take for both of us. Without her and

my family, I don't think I would be where I am today.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Professionally, I published a book before I was 30. It was on health care compliance, so not exactly a best seller, but still something I am very proud of.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Professionally, many attorneys try to do a bit of everything. My mistake was pursuing that route in some ways. While some can do it, in health care, it is tough, and it impacts clients. They want to have confidence that you are the expert on the topic. Over time I have tried to limit my expertise in specific areas. This has allowed me to become recognized for the sub-specialized expertise and support clients in a few overly complex areas.
What are your current professional goals? First, I want to continue to grow my career with Parkview Health. It is an excellent organization. Second, my goal is to continue to grow within my profession and supporting several associations I am involved with.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? Speaking and writing. Health care law changes all of the time. It evolves, grows, and modernizes, but unfortunately, it is still quite complex (perhaps mimicking the US health care delivery system itself). Speaking and writing allow me to innovate in my practice, which is essential.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service?



Balance isn't reality. Your profession, family, interests, and community are all a part of who you are. Strive to support and foster each. There will be tradeoffs, but do your best to ration those tradeoffs the best you can.
What do you do to relax? Reading, or taking time to enjoy being with my two children. One is a little more relaxing than the other, but both allow me to disconnect a bit.
What book do you recommend? I have enjoyed lots of books, so I am not sure which one I would recommend, but I am reading Steven Pinker's "Enlightenment Now." It is an excellent book so far!
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Slow down and enjoy the little things.

SAVANNAH ROBINSON, 34

Employer: Chief legal talent officer for Barnes & Thornburg LLP
Education: Indiana University-Fort Wayne, bachelor of science in public affairs and legal studies; Indiana University-Fort Wayne, master of science in public administration
Community organizations: President, Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana; board member, Greater Fort Wayne, Inc.; board member, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership; board member, Northeast Indiana Association of Legal Administrators; committee member, GFW's Economic Development Action Plan Steering Committee; committee member, Mayor's Age Friendly Advisory Council; former board member and current volunteer, Dress for Success; member, NEW (Network of Executive Women)
Hobbies: Learning — I love all things personal growth; hosting women empowerment events; reading; shopping; spending time with my family and my dog, Walter; roller skating; working on puzzles
Why are you in northeast Indiana? I moved to Indiana from Kentucky and truly never thought it would be my long-term home. I thought I would stay through college and move to NY or LA. In 2013, I decided to get involved with Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana and it wasn't until then, that I started thinking Fort Wayne may be a city I would want to reside in long term. I wanted to feel connected to the community while having the chance to make an impact. In 2014, I was asked to reside in Chicago part time for work. So, I lived in Chicago and Fort Wayne for nearly 2 years and ultimately turned down the opportunity to move to Chicago full time. Fort Wayne provides people with an opportunity to have a voice, experience big-city amenities at small-town costs. Most importantly, our city values its people. We continue to attract and cultivate top talent. Fort Wayne



isn't a spot where people just end up or where they feel like they "have" to be; this is a place where they want to be.
What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I get the opportunity to work with so many different people and personalities all over the country every day. Some days are tons of fun; other days are too long and riddled with tough decisions and courageous conversations. AND all of the days are meaningful, and I enjoy the impact I get to make at the firm.
What does success mean to you? Success is having the courage to show up as your authentic self and being brave enough to share your gifts with the world. Success is happiness.
As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? At age 10, I declared I would be a lawyer working in NYC. At age 22, the universe told me otherwise. I'll never forget the day my baby sister called and told me she was pregnant with my niece. In that moment, I knew going

to law school would be put on hold and I decided to shift the trajectory of my career.
Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? I started working my first job when I was 13 years old. I wanted a new pair of jeans and my mama never missed a chance to teach me a life lesson. She told me if I wanted the jeans, I needed to figure out how to earn money to pay for them. I came home that day and told her I had a job. I convinced my school bus driver to let me work for her at her laundromat.
Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I have had and continue to have several mentors at the firm and outside of the firm who have impacted my career. The person who has had the most profound impact on me is my mama. The woman is tiny but mighty and even on days when I didn't believe in me, she did. It's because of her that I continue to have the courage to push forward and stretch myself, even on the days when it feels too hard, and especially on the days when it feels uncomfortable.
What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Working with our firm's diversity partner to create the firm's VISION program to ensure we are making space for our seasoned talent to sponsor and champion our more junior talent and to ensure we are bringing the necessary soft skills to our talent is something I am very proud of and get to see the results of consistently.
What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Neglecting my health for everything and everyone else. Putting my health first used to seem selfish and now, I know it's critical. To give the best of me to those around me, I need to be the best me which means making my wellness top priority.
What are your current professional goals? I want to continue to learn and

grow to become the best version of myself. I am constantly trying to put myself in situations and rooms where I am not the smartest and where I don't know everything so I can grow and expand. I want to show up every day better than I was the day before.
How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I am a member of several professional organizations that provide trainings and webinars to keep legal professionals up to date on the industry. Knowing where we are compared to our peers is helpful in carving a path forward that allows us to lead the way. Innovation and stepping outside the norm is required to remain relevant.
How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I don't. I don't think you can truly balance it. I think they all intertwine and you have to be intentional about scheduling what's most important to you. I live by my calendar and that means I schedule everything from date nights to mama-daughter time; from board meetings to work presentations; from workouts to meditations. It all gets scheduled. We don't get what we want in life, we get what we schedule.
What do you do to relax? Spa days and beach vacations! I also have a terrible addiction to Bravo's "Real Housewives" - All of them. I feel like I'm telling you my deepest, darkest secret, and I almost feel embarrassed to admit, but I cannot stop watching the housewives!
What book do you recommend? So many....but I love "Untamed" by Glennon Doyle and "Americanah" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Stop trying to please everyone around you. Let go of who you think you have to be and lean into who you are. Surround yourself with people who deserve your magic.

JESSICA MORALES, 33

Employer: Canterbury School
Education: Master of Business Administration — Iona College; bachelor of arts, mass communications, Spanish — Iona College; Mark T. Sheehan High School

Community organizations: Boys and Girls Club of Fort Wayne — board member, secretary and external affairs; Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana (YLNI) — board member, Leadership Development; Greater Fort Wayne Inc. Onboard Fort Wayne Program — founding member; St Joseph Missions — committee member, communications; Input Fort Wayne — contributor

Hobbies: My hobbies include traveling (domestic and international), spending time with friends and family, health and fitness, sports, music (especially concerts), culinary experiences (restaurants, breweries, vineyards), philanthropy and volunteering, professional and leadership development, and anything involving our French bulldog, Brooks!

Why are you in northeast Indiana? Before moving to Northeast Indiana, I grew up in the Connecticut and New York City area and was accustomed to a big, metropolitan setting; however, I was growing to realize that I wanted something else, something different, but I didn't know what it was until January 2018. It was then that northeast Indiana caught my eye after I learned of this job opportunity at Canterbury School, a premier pre-K-Grade 12 independent school in the Midwest, which would afford me tremendous professional growth and impact. Having never been to the region before, I was excited to learn more. Ultimately, what ended up grabbing my attention and sealing the deal was the undeniable investment, growth, momentum and pride in Fort Wayne and the northeast Indiana region. In my opinion, this level of development and excitement can only happen when people genuinely love where they live and want the best for their home and neighbors, and that is not something one finds just anywhere. I knew I wanted to be a part of something bigger and I learned that "something" was northeast Indiana. So, I moved here in June 2018 and in June 2019, my fiancé joined me in Fort Wayne— we never looked back since. What I have learned since our relocation is that accessibility is so alive here and it often remains one of the most underrated, overlooked drivers for a greater quality of life. Often, we as a society can gravitate toward living a life of "excess" rather than "access," and I have learned that it can (and should) be the other way around like it is here in northeast Indiana. Since I moved here, I have learned how the ease in accessing things such as travel, time, cost of living, networking, people, outdoors, entertainment, leadership and other amenities have transformed my quality of life. I have been able to make it my own by way of access to things that add value to my life and to my story, which I didn't have access to (or ease of access) before.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Working in education has always been a rewarding and fulfilling career, and now working at Canterbury School, my purpose, passion and meaning has only elevated. In my role as director of advancement, I oversee the enrollment, marketing and development functions for the school; therefore, my work directly affects and impacts the story, connection, success and love for every Canterbury student, parent, teacher, alumni, and supporter. I also realize that



my work not only impacts Canterbury School but the greater community at large, northeast Indiana as a whole, and outward. Children are one of the biggest (if not the biggest) assets in our region and by investing in them and providing the best educational opportunities, we will only move our region forward. By working at Canterbury, I get a look into the future of our region and our world and I can confidently say that the future is bright.

What does success mean to you? For me, success is any outcome where growth happens because I see success as an infinite journey not a finite destination. Success means accomplishing a goal as well as falling short of a goal because in either case, one learns and grows from the process despite differing outcomes. The point of success, in my opinion, is lifelong learning and impacting the world with your lessons, your experiences and your gifts. This includes your biggest wins as well as your hardest losses. Often we think of success as only winning but I feel differently. There are wins within losses, as long as one chooses to see and build on the lessons in that outcome. In my experience, my most hardest and hurtful losses have only redirected me toward something better — that is success.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? When I was a child, my aspirations changed by the day, but I ultimately landed on becoming a journalist. I was an avid reader and writer growing up (still am!), and always sought to accurately inform the people around me with news and "did you know?!" moments. Most importantly, I was so curious as a child, and still remain curious, about the idea that true journalism goes where the silence is. In other words, journalism, in my opinion, is not about the obvious stories, what's on the surface nor the "who, what, when, where, why, and how." Journalism gives a voice to the voiceless, aims to bring forward a solution and ultimately goes beneath the surface of what we consider news. To this day, I am still compelled to go where "the silence" is in both my professional and personal life.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first regular paycheck was babysitting in my early teens. My mom ensured I got

certified with the American Red Cross safety course and then, I started my own babysitting business when I was 13 years old, which continued into my mid-20s!

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Without question, I would not be where I am today without my family! They set the bar high in terms of work ethic, self actualization, accountability, love and integrity. My parents raised my brother and I with the values of hard work, integrity, kindness, and respect. They have supported me through everything — the mistakes, the accomplishments, the relocations, the career moves, and the challenges. Their mantra is, "We always have your back," and that reigns true today.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? My biggest accomplishment in my career is building a new, strategic advancement program and strategy from the ground up within an organization and seeing it work to the benefit of the organizational goals, profit, sustainability, and productivity both short-term and long-term. I think the best part is after I departed that organization, the strategy and program is still being used today and the organization has measured impact and sustainability. It's amazing to see my impact at work!

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My biggest mistake is equating motion with progress. My history shows that I often move very fast and can be impatient during the process. My personality is a competitive one and I am a quick study, and while these are great qualities, they tend to focus on the speed it takes to reach the destination rather than the quality of the journey. In my experience, with that speed, has come mistakes and errors. While I can't pinpoint one mistake that led to this realization, I have a series of examples since my adolescence that demonstrate this lesson and serve as a constant reminder to slow it down and do not rush.

What are your current professional goals? My professional goals are not measured by a title or a salary, but instead, they are scaled by way of impact. My biggest professional goal is to help students discover, develop, and apply their unique potential. While this goal may seem broad, I am hyper focused on individual education experiences and the accessibility of educational opportunities for every student, so they can be the person they want to become and be a contributing member of society. Other goals include empowering team members, elevating efficiency in operations, fostering a strategic-minded culture, and celebrating each person, always!

How do you remain current/relevant

in your profession? For me, lifelong learning is an important professional commitment that allows me to stay relevant in my profession, and I have two key tactics that help me achieve this. The first is a goal to learn one new idea or concept per week that I can apply to my leadership or my profession (whether immediate or later on). This may mean reading an article, listening to a podcast episode, absorbing information from a team meeting, researching a new concept, attending a webinar or conference, asking curious questions and more. The second is to constantly ask for and remain open-minded to feedback about my work and the industry. I firmly believe you can't be complacent and often my best opportunities for growth have been wrapped up in a moment of tough feedback or constructive criticism. I learned early on that in these moments it is important to stay in the work.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? In order for me to find balance, it starts with being organized, which then allows me to discern the best amount of time and energy allotment to each aspect of my life at a given moment. Each aspect deserves my attention and active presence, and I make the commitment to each aspect very much like money in a bank account. In a bank account, there are times where purchases are pretty balanced and expected. Then there are times where certain investments get more of your resources — you spend more in one area or an unexpected expense comes up. It is important to recognize that variance and give your energy to the aspect that needs you most in that moment. But it is important to recognize this occurrence and save your resources for when you do have a choice to save or splurge the next time around. This remains the same for professional and personal balance. Be aware of what/who you're giving your resources to and know when it is time to give more or less to one thing over another.

What do you do to relax? Relaxation comes in a variety of forms for me: physical activity like yoga, working out, hiking, and simply being outdoors; spending quality time with family, friends and loved ones; all kinds of sports and attending sporting events; enjoying a great brewery, vineyard or restaurant; and listening to music, especially live music; and being at home with my fiancé, Jerry and my dog, Brooks.

What book do you recommend? "A Place of Yes" by Bethenny Frankel

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Don't rush. Embrace the journey. Popularity means nothing. Your intuition is always right. Stay humble and kind.

Congrats

NICK DARRAH
 is honored for his regional leadership
 as a recipient of the
2021 Forty Under 40 Award

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MELANIE FUNK, 38

Employer: Artemis International, Inc. Also an adjunct instructor for online courses at Trine University

Education: Homestead High School – 2000; Purdue University Fort Wayne – Bachelor of Science (Biology), Minor in Spanish – 2004; Purdue University Fort Wayne – Master of Science – 2006

What community organizations are you involved in? Volunteer co-director of Miss Fort Wayne Scholarship Organization

Hobbies: Building Lego sets with my kids — we have quite the collection! Crafting – i.e. making wreaths, wood items

Why are you in northeast Indiana? After moving around a lot as an “Army Kid” my family settled down in Fort Wayne when I was 9 years old and we have been here ever since. I stayed local for college due to the wonderful scholarships I received from IPFW (now PFW) and my husband and I have planted firm roots in Fort Wayne with our careers and community ties.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I have always loved science as well as writing and my current role allows me to incorporate both interests. I particularly enjoy the variety of tasks and the ability to continuously learn and grow in a dynamic industry while serving as a communicator and educator in the field to help others learn about the health benefits of berries.

What does success mean to you? Simply put, success means working hard to achieve goals. Being handed good fortune doesn’t necessarily mean someone is successful. Setting goals, no matter



how big or small, and then taking actions to make those happen helps to build character and ultimately, a sense of success. It is very personalized for each individual, but I view success as doing my absolute best in everything I am involved in. I also believe a truly successful person strives for self-improvement as well as positively impacting others.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I have always loved science and learning about the human body and therefore I wanted to be a

physician.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck was as a dance instructor at the studio where I had learned to dance (L.A. Dance). I taught tap, jazz, ballet, and hip-hop to kids and adults.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Leslie Gallo, who is now the president of Artemis International, has had a huge influence on my career. We have worked together for the past 15 years and she has served as a mentor to help me carve out my path and achieve continuous growth.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? I am especially proud of being a regular quoted contributor in several industry publications that reach out for my expertise in the industry.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? One thing I have had to overcome is underestimating the amount of time something takes to get done. One time this was combined with waiting too long to start a project and it ended up a long and stressful night. I learned to build in extra time when budgeting how long something might take and to get things done early whenever possible.

What are your current professional goals? My goal is to continue to expand my personal and professional development and to ultimately become the chief science officer.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? My job requires that I stay on top of newly published scientific

research as well as industry trends so I make a habit of reviewing scientific literature databases, reading articles, and researching/networking to remain current. I think it is also important to take advantage of continuous development opportunities like additional courses or seminars.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? It certainly is exhausting some days and requires sacrificing certain things at times, but it’s worth it to be able to be a present parent, reliable employee, and community volunteer. I always try to make efficient use of my time each day. It definitely helps having a company that supports a healthy work-life balance and is flexible for working parents.

What do you do to relax? Making time to relax and recharge is something I need to prioritize more, but I’m trying to focus on listening to music and reading more — and I’ve been told I should take up yoga! Mostly any downtime is spent soaking up the quality time with my family while my boys are still young!

What book do you recommend? My guilty pleasure is re-reading the Harry Potter series when I need a break from the daily grind. I think everyone should read it at least once — child and adult alike.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Growing up as a perfectionist, I would tell myself that I don’t need to be so hard on myself and that it’s possible to find happiness and satisfaction in many different ways than you thought. And also, time flies by fast. Savor it and make the absolute most of it!

Congratulations

LUKE HOFFMAN

2021 Forty Under 40



Vice President of Construction

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BUILDING A
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EMMA TAYLOR-METCALF, 31

Employer: Owner of Lyn-Maree’s Boutique and co-owner Auburn Brewing Company

Education: Graduated from Purdue with a bachelor’s degree in communications; marketing/advertising and organizational leadership and organization with a minor in journalism.

Community organizations: Downtown Auburn Business Association, Auburn Main Street, DeKalb Chamber Partnership

Hobbies: Photography, painting and traveling

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised here, and always wanted to get away. Now that I am an adult, I realize how important having a safe place to call home is; not only is Auburn safe, but the cost of living is such that we can have a home and still afford to travel. We love our hometown so much we also decided to put two businesses here, Lyn-Maree’s Boutique and Auburn Brewing Company.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Being an entrepreneur, to me, has the greatest challenges and rewards. The best part about owning both businesses is that I can give back to my community in so many ways and the amazing relationships I have formed with customers and employees (now friends and family).

What does success mean to you? Success to me is being able to run my own businesses while being able to travel as much as possible. Finding the right balance between a sustainable business



while continuing to grow at the right speed is key.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I always wanted to be an interior designer.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first job was with Mad Anthony’s Brewing in Auburn as a hostess when I turned 15.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My biggest supporter is my husband, Josh. Without his encouragement I would not have purchased Lyn-Maree’s after just graduating college. Purchasing the business and dedicating a

year of not taking a paycheck to grow the business quickly was a huge strain on a young married couple. Once Lyn-Maree’s Boutique took off we started thinking about other things our town needed that we were passionate about and could provide. And that was when decided Auburn needed a brewery. Without his support for my boutique we wouldn’t have started a brewery and who knows where we’d be now.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Maintaining happy employees and customers. The knowledge that someone else could love your business as much as you do and keep coming back has been so humbling.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake is taking on too much. I love being able to just go go and do it all, however I did not learn from this huge life mistake until COVID made much of my daily activities and duties come to a halt. For me, this was great timing because I was also pregnant. Spending some time on the couch, simply watching TV without working on the computer at the same time was just not something I did. I slept more, ate more and truly relaxed. For me, the real lesson was that the world will still turn, business will still go on, some things can just wait. Take care of yourself, it is not being lazy.

What are your current professional goals? Hiring the right people so I can get back to traveling more often with my family.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I like to see what other businesses like mine are doing; listen to podcasts and webinars about what breweries and boutiques are doing in-house and online – I try to listen to several sources of information and then take what they say and figure out how to make it best work for us.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I have not learned how to balance life, work, family and community service but turning off my phone and computer in the evening has helped me delegate my time better during the day. That time in the evening not working helps me recharge for the next day. Having an infant really teaches you how to be very productive in small amounts of time.

What do you do to relax? Traveling is my favorite way to relax. Relaxing after opening our second business tends to be a glass of wine and Netflix, or a walk listening to crime podcasts since we’ve not been able to get away.

What book do you recommend? Kevin O’Leary’s “Men, Women and Money.”

Everyone should know how to properly save and spend money. You can only spend a dollar once, so you need to spend it wisely no matter how much money you make.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I would tell my high school self to ask more questions and not worry about what others thought.

BETHANY BALLARD, 33

Employer: Indiana Tech

Education: Bachelor of science from Taylor University (2006)

Community organizations: I am the board vice president for Fairfield Neighborhood Association and a member of Packard Area Planning Alliance. I am also a member of ACRES Land Trust and Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory. Indiana Tech is passionate about teaching our students the importance and value of volunteering. I have planned and participated in volunteer opportunities with Community Harvest Food Bank, Fort Wayne United, Turnstone, Habitat for Humanity, Vincent Village and NeighborLink.

Hobbies: I love being outside — camping, hiking, kayaking, biking — and am a firm believer that while there are beautiful places all around the world, there is much to discover and enjoy in our corner of the Midwest. Last year, I became a member of ACRES Land Trust. I was a frequent flyer at several ACRES properties, but this year I made a goal to visit every single property. I have visited about 10 so far and have really enjoyed exploring each new preserve. The other hobby that takes up most of my time is my small business, Headwaters Lifestyle Co. I create Fort Wayne-themed T-shirts and Fort Wayne city flags with the goal of promoting a sense of belonging and pride in Fort Wayne.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I initially came to northeast Indiana for work, but I stayed for the community. I had planned to be in Fort Wayne for just a few years, but I fell in love with the people, the city, and the opportunity that exists here to make an impact. There are so many good things happening in this city, and I see the potential for so much more to come.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? From the day they move in, helping students find their place as part of our campus community and explore how they can be active and

involved members of society is what I love most. I love being able to focus my time and creative energy on helping them grow as a whole person during such a formative time in their life. Having participated in and observed their journey, watching students walk across the stage at commencement is absolutely the most rewarding part of my job.

What does success mean to you? Success is rooted in making a positive impact. Whether that is helping a college student complete their degree, creating a safer and more equitable neighborhood, or increasing pride in our community.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a teacher because my teachers in elementary school were such an inspiration to me.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first paycheck came from working summer basketball camps in high school.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? My supervisor at my first position in higher education, Shawn Rawson, really helped lay the foundation that allowed me to get to where I am today. Despite my lack of relevant experience, Shawn saw my work ethic and capabilities and gave me opportunities to advance and prove myself. His trust and belief in me gave me the confidence and platform to get to where I am today.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? The accomplishment I am most proud of came out of COVID-19 this past year. As the owner of Headwaters Lifestyle Co, in partnership with YLNI, I raised over \$35,000 from #FortWayneTogether and “Better Together” T-shirt sales in support of local businesses during the initial coronavirus shutdowns and restrictions. This money helped businesses pay their bills, support their staff, and produce hand sanitizer for our community. I was grateful to be just one avenue through which so many chose to show their support and

love for our community.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? I have certainly made many mistakes throughout my life. One of those mistakes was not taking advantage of more opportunities to gain first-hand experiences in my field while in college. As a result, I spent the first several years after college jumping around and trying to find my place. Looking back, that taught me the importance of not only taking advantage of opportunities when they are in front of you but also to not let fear hold you back from doing something.

What are your current professional goals? I am a connector. I get energized and excited by bringing people or ideas together to create something that is bigger or better than what currently exists. My goal is to continue working in a capacity that allows me to foster new relationships and connections that create positive outcomes.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I have found one of the most effective ways to remain current both in my career in Student Affairs and as a small-business owner is to stay connected with others in similar positions. One of the positive things that came out of COVID-19 is the increased availability of online resources and the ease of making new connections. Because of this, I have been able to attend virtual conferences where I made new connections with individuals from around the country that I would not have otherwise met. Having a network where you are able to share your challenges, ideas, and successes benefits everyone involved.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? Over the years I have learned the importance of being able to effectively delegate as well as create and maintain boundaries. There are certain times throughout the year that one aspect of life inevitably outweighs the others because of the pace or importance. I’ve learned to accept the



rhythms of life and look ahead to identify where I can prioritize other aspects of my life that may have been neglected. I have also learned the hard way about the importance of saying no.

What do you do to relax? Spending time in the outdoors is my favorite way to decompress and relax. I also enjoy playing the piano and reading.

What book do you recommend? “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” by Jane Jacobs. It will transform the way you see your neighborhood and city. I also am a huge John Wooden fan, and would recommend “Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court.”

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? It’s OK if you don’t know what you want to do “when you grow up.” Many adults still don’t know the answer to that question. Instead of focusing on trying to figure everything out, just do your best in the moment where you are, take advantage of opportunities as they come your way, and do the next right thing. Just do the next right thing.

MEGHAN SHORT, 29

Employer: Greater Fort Wayne Inc. I also run a modern calligraphy studio called Moonlit Design Co.

Education: Northrop High School, Class of 2010; Ball State University, bachelor of arts awarded May 2014; major in hospitality and food management, specialty in events management; minor in business management; Honors College graduate

Community organizations: Event coordinator and board member of 4WARD; advisory board member for Pave the Path Youth Leadership Summit; vice president of Ball State University Northeastern Indiana Alumni Board; volunteer at Fort Wayne Civic Theatre (before COVID-19)

Hobbies: Calligraphy, traveling, live music, cooking, DIY house projects, board and card games, riding my bike, hiking, musical theatre, enjoying breweries and wineries, Fort Wayne festivals

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in Fort Wayne, only moving away once for college in Muncie. I was offered a job right after graduation and moved back home, thinking it would be temporary until the next best thing came around in Indy or Chicago. Each year I fall more in love with this city though and am blessed with continued opportunities to grow while still living near my family. I enjoy the small-town feel with the variety of events, food, art, and culture a big city could offer. The people in this community also look out for one another and are always willing to lend a helping hand when in need!

What does success mean to you? I believe success is measured by doing what makes you genuinely happy, humbly serving your community, and making a



positive impact on every life you touch.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I grew up in magnet arts schools, so my world has been painted in vibrant colors since Day One. I knew I always wanted a job that would allow me to incorporate my creative side and started college studying interior design.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first job was at Panera Bread busing tables and washing dishes. My teammates always joked about me being the most organized cleaner during my shifts and missed it when I moved into the cashier role. “The Panera Experience” was always warm and inclusive, which helped develop my standards for genuine customer service.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? In my career, I’ve been blessed with many mentors, teachers, coaches, and bosses that have encouraged me, counseled me, and paved the way for my success. But my biggest cheerleaders have always been my parents – they never let me settle and challenge me to shoot for the stars in anything that I do!

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Honestly, being nominated and selected for this award! I’ve read through many Forty Under 40 lists thinking how amazingly talented all of the leaders were/are, never imagining that my name would be one of them. I am also proud of my small calligraphy business and how much it has grown (along with my talent) over the past six years.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? Early on in my career, I allowed my perfectionism to get in the way of getting things done. Not only would I take twice as long to complete tasks, but I had a hard time allowing others to help. Learning to delegate and trust in my team was extremely important and necessary for my growth.

What are your current professional goals? My current goal is to continue growing my personal brand and skillset to be the best leader I can in my organization and community. I hope to also help advance and expand the impact of the GFW Inc. Women’s Network and United Front Initiative to empower, connect, and inspire others to bring about positive change in Fort Wayne.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? As much as I love

reading, I often find myself listening to podcasts more often for personal and professional development. This past year during the pandemic certainly impacted the events industry, so learning how to pivot and adapt through trainings and webinars was important to keep connections alive. I also love surrounding myself with those further into their career and learning everything I can from leaders who have already experienced success.


How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? In the past, I struggled with work/life balance and experienced burn out in past positions. This led to poor mental health and high stress levels. I’ve since learned to set boundaries in my life, schedule priorities in my calendar, unplug from technology often, and say no to things that I don’t have true passion or time for.

What do you do to relax? Exercise, listen to music, spend time in nature or at the lake, or movie/game nights with friends and family

What book do you recommend? “Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living” by Shauna Niequist. This book was introduced to me after attending Global Leadership Summit and is always a good reminder of how to slow down and reset.


Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Trust in God’s timing — I’m still telling myself this every day! It’s also OK to ask for help, to not have all the answers, to change your mind, and to jump without knowing what’s next. I have learned that my gut is almost always right and sometimes things don’t go as planned; they might even turn out better.

Barrett McNagny
congratulates
**Mark
Bains**
on being named to
*Greater Fort Wayne
Business Weekly’s
Forty Under 40 Class of 2021.*



Mark Bains is a partner with Barrett McNagny and assists clients in the areas of real estate and construction law.

Congratulations to Mark and to all of the 2021 *Forty Under 40* recipients!




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We would like to congratulate
Teri Wilder, Associate Director
for being named to
Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly’s
Forty Under 40 Class of 2021



ALEXANDRA HALL, 35

Employer: Owner of A H Public Spaces Consulting LLC (consultant); owner of Art by Alexandra Hall (artist)

Education: Bishop Dwenger High School; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Indiana University, Bloomington; bachelor of arts in Slavic languages and literature, bachelor of arts in political science; minor from Russian and East European Institute (REEL) with a language certificate in Russian

Community organizations: Art This Way, Art This Way Art Crawl Committee, Downtown Economic Improvement District (FWDID)’s Public Realm Committee, Music + Mixology Committee (Fort Wayne Philharmonic), Fort Wayne Artists Guild, Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne Award Committee, Fort Wayne Public Art Commission, Fort Wayne Public Art Commission Steering Committee, Broadway Street Stroll Committee

Hobbies: Travel, reading nonfiction, running, live music, walking my dog, linguistics, and good food

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born in Indianapolis, raised in Fort Wayne, and I returned home after college because of a health issue.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? Consulting never presents me with the same challenges! It is thrilling to build new projects, work with different goal-sets, infuse art into the design of pedestrian spaces,

and troubleshoot along the way. Seeing the result is also rewarding; public art projects alter perceptions about our region, increase pedestrian foot traffic and make our communities a better place to live and work. There is a vulnerability in sharing one’s artwork—artists invite an audience to examine a piece of themselves. Artwork is a catharsis for me, and the realities of my life inspire me to create alternate worlds. I hope that through my work I jolt the viewer’s imagination and catapult them into a joyful place.

What does success mean to you? Success means improving the community in which one lives, projecting positivity into the world, remaining curious and open to new ideas and perspectives, and accomplishing my goals with integrity and grace.

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

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? 14 years old; Don Hall’s Restaurants; busing tables

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? Andrea and Scott Hall (my parents)

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? Consulting for Arts United and Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership’s Make It Your Own Mural Fest was a huge

privilege and one of the most significant projects of my consulting career. My biggest accomplishment as an artist was selling my first painting.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? My greatest mistake was doing something I do well for free.

What are your current professional goals? A H Public Spaces Consulting has continued to expand, and I’ve taken on clients outside the state. Should this momentum continue, I will need to hire some employees! I’d like to continue to take on larger and more challenging public realm and private development projects.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I travel to discover new mural talent, observe other community’s public spaces, and find inspiration for my work. I read public realm development articles and books. I also love to engage in conversation with other community’s art leaders and economic development organizations; I garner a great deal from contrasting their methodology against mine.

To maintain balance each year I try to plan at least two long trips, often outside the country. This helps me to stay inspired, become invigorated by new ideas, and take a break from my routine.

What do you do to relax? Running and reading relax me. I also love live music — it does not matter if it is a band



in a dive bar or a huge concert venue.

What book do you recommend? “Being Mortal” by Atul Gawande; “When Breath Becomes Air” by Paul Kalanithi

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? Respect your elders, but do not make the mistake of confusing age or authority with wisdom. Even if you are in a room full of people who intimidate you, your perspective is valuable. Be confident.

ASHLEY HAND, 37

Employer: Allen Circuit Court

Education: I graduated from Huntington North High School, PFW with a Bachelor Degree, and Indiana University McKinney School of Law with my JD.

Community organizations: Allen County Bar Association – Family Law Executive Committee; Allen County Bar Foundation; Wellspring Interfaith Social Services board of directors; Foster Hope for Children board of directors

Hobbies: In my free time, when I have some, I love baking, hiking, reading, and spending time with my family.

Why are you in northeast Indiana? I was born and raised in NE Indiana. It is a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

What is it about your profession that you enjoy and why? I really enjoy the practice of law. Prior to being appointed as a magistrate, I practice primarily in the area of family law and civil litigation. I really enjoy working with families going through divorce and custody cases. They are not easy issues to deal with, but I find it very rewarding to help families work through their issues and resolve disputes.

What does success mean to you? Success to me means doing what I love to do to the best of my ability with dignity and respect to those around me.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I always wanted to be a lawyer.

Where did your first paycheck come from and what was your job then? My first job was as a cashier at a gas station in Roanoke.

Who was your biggest supporter who helped you advance in your career? I am fortunate to have had a number of mentors and people who have



supported me throughout my career. In college, one of my professors, Georgia Wralstad Ulmschneider, really encouraged me to follow my dream of become a lawyer — even though I did not do as well as I think I did very well on my LSAT exam.

While practicing law, John Brandt taught me how to be a good lawyer and to practice with civility and integrity. Finally, my husband, Adam Hand, has always supported me and encouraged me to be the best lawyer and now magistrate I can be. Without his support and encouragement, I would not be where I am today.

What has been your biggest accomplishment thus far in your career? At this time, my biggest accomplishment has been being appointed by Judge Felts as a magistrate for Allen Circuit Court in 2020.

What has been your greatest mistake thus far and what lessons did you learn from it? We all make mistakes and I have made my share. I think the important thing to learn from your mistakes to acknowledge your mistake, correct your mistake (if you can), and ask for help if you need it.

What are your current professional goals? I would like to be more involved at the state level working with judicial committees on family relation issues. In addition, I really want to continue to improve and be the best magistrate I can be for our community.

How do you remain current/relevant in your profession? I try to stay current/relevant in my profession by being involved in the local bar association and a state committee on domestic relations which help me stay connected to important family law related issues.

How do you balance your career, family, life and community service? I try to keep my work and home life

separate by not working when I am home. It does not always work, but I do try to set boundaries so I can focus on work when I am at work and focus on home when I am home. I am fortunate to have a husband that helps me balance my work, family, and life commitments. I also think it is important to take vacation time so I can refocus on myself rather than all my other commitments.

What do you do to relax? When I have some time to relax, I love baking, hiking, reading, or spending time with family.

What book do you recommend? “Outlander.” Although, I confess I watched the series before I read the book.

Based on what you know now, what would you tell your high school self? I guess I would tell my high school self to follow your dreams and do not be afraid to fail or step out of your comfort zone. Be true to yourself and try not to worry about what others want from you or for you.

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