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Ask Connie

Connie Antoniou answers all of your real estate questions, please email me at questionsforconnie@gmail.com

Spring-Summer Real Estate Market in Chicago & Suburbs: A Season of Opportunity

As Chicago and its suburbs bloom with the arrival of spring, the **real estate market is shaping up to be one of the most promising in the past five years**. With **stabilizing mortgage rates, increased inventory, and new industry changes**, this season presents an exciting opportunity for both buyers and sellers.

Why This Spring Market is Special

A More Balanced Market – Buyers have more options and negotiating power, while well-priced homes still attract strong offers.

Mortgage Rates Are Stabilizing & Expected to Decline – After a period of uncertainty, rates have leveled off and are even projected to **trend downward**, encouraging more buyers to enter the market.



City & Suburb Trends Are Shifting – While urban living is making a comeback, **suburbs like the Greater Barrington Area** continue to attract those looking for space, privacy, and top-tier amenities.

Luxury Market Is Thriving – The **demand for high-end homes** remains strong, with buyers seeking **turnkey properties, expansive outdoor living spaces, private pools, and state-of-the-art smart home technology**. Buyers are increasingly prioritizing **modern, move-in-ready estates** over renovation projects, and homes with **lake views, gated entries, and custom architectural details** are commanding top dollar.

NAR Settlement Brings Changes – New policies **enhance transparency** in real estate transactions, affecting how commissions are structured and negotiated.



*If you would like to discuss your unique real estate needs **confidentially**, you may call or text me at +1 847.508.7775 or email connie.antoniou@sothebysrealty.com.*



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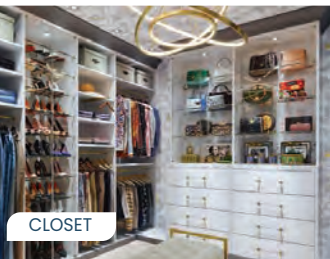
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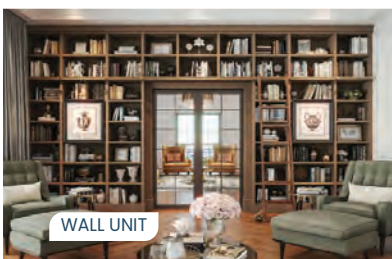
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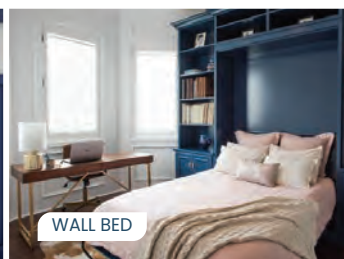
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Napoleone Martinuzzi Pineapple-Form Murano Glass Table Lamp, 1 of 2 (\$6,033)

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Interior Designer Laura Tribbett wearing Brunello Cucinelli sweater and jacket, Theory skirt, *neimanmarcus.com*.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**

STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

HAIR & MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST**

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J.W. CONATSER
Founder & Publisher

KEMMIE RYAN
Executive Projects Director

MEGAN WEISBERG
Editor-in-Chief

Contributing Editors MICHELLE CROWE, ERIN DONALDSON,
DUSTIN O'REGAN

Style Director THERESA DEMARIA

Contributing Writers THOMAS CONNORS, TRICIA DESPRES,
WENDY FRANZEN, JANIS MVK,
PERLA LONG, MONICA KASS ROGERS,
ANN MARIE SCHIEDLER

Copy Editor MORGAN HOGERTY

*Production Manager/
Graphic Designer* LINDA LEWIS

*Advertising Coordinator/
Graphic Designer* NATALIE PHILLIPS

Graphic Designer ABDON LOERA, SAM SUAREZ

*Contributing
Photographers* MARIA PONCE BERRE, DIMITRY LOISEAU,
IAN MCLEOD, RUNVIJAY PAUL, MONICA
KASS ROGERS, KATRINA WITTKAMP

Illustrator TOM BACHTELL

Advertising Sales ANJA AZDEJKOVIC, GRETCHEN
BARNARD JENNIFER STURGEON

How to reach COUNTRY Magazine

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES: ADVERTISING@JWC MEDIA.COM / 847.926.0911

EDITORIAL INQUIRIES: MEGAN.WEISBERG@JWC MEDIA.COM /
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EDITOR'S NOTE

In thinking about our April issue, which happens to be our inaugural *Home & Design* issue, I began to ruminate upon what home means. Home is more than just a place to sleep. It's a haven from the world, a thoughtful place to invite over new friends, old friends, and family; to make memories, to laugh, to cry; and to feel safe. My hope is that in these pages you resonate with the talented

professionals' work featured in *Luxe Living* that together make our dream homes a reality. This phenomenal new section highlights some of the area's most prestigious individuals who work behind the scenes where we live, work, and entertain. In our *Features* we share the

story of the McArdle family who purchased Frank Lloyd Wright's Fredrick House in Barrington Hills and then turned to Mariani Landscape architect Tony Lobello to revitalize the exterior.

As a child, Tom Kusmerz worked for his grandfather's lawn maintenance and gardening business and now is at the helm of the reinvented family business, The Barn. After working for Alessandra Branca in the Gold Coast, interior designer and cover star Laura Tribbett launched Outline Interiors in 2015 and has been designing beautiful projects all over Chicago and beyond.

And who doesn't need help when it comes to organizing? Ashley Rapp capitalized on just this when she started her home organizing and staging business—organizing, decluttering and helping us keep the chaos at bay. We debut two new sections in this issue, *NEXT* and *10 Questions With*. As always, I'd love to hear your thoughts on the magazine, please do get in touch at the email address below. And wishing you a happy home.

Best,

Megan Weisberg
Editor-in-Chief
megan.weisberg@jwcmedia.com



Professional stager and organizer Ashley Rapp in Dorothee Schumacher blouse and skirt, neimanmarcus.com

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SHOWHOUSE SPLENDOR

WORDS BY **MONICA KASS ROGERS**

Celebrated interior designer, Mary McDonald is delighted to represent the design community as Honorary Chair of the 20th Annual Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens. Viewing this year's Showhouse, a limestone Georgian designed in 1895 by Henry Ives Cobb, with landscape architecture by Frederick Law Olmsted, and additional design work by David Adler and his sister Frances Elkins, "my reaction was literally, 'Where is my room?'" McDonald laughs. When asked to choose favorites from her own showhouse design work, McDonald hesitates. "That is almost like trying to choose a favorite child," McDonald notes. One favorite was Kips Bay Decorator Show House in New York. The Kips Bay room featured a new Schumacher wallpaper "so it was very layered, and kind of collected European," describes McDonald. "The room was almost a cabinet of curiosities because of the wallpaper. I loved the eccentricity of that and got to layer it with antiques and oddities." "I'm excited that maximalism is having its day right now," she continues. "There's an appreciation for pattern on pattern, layer on layer, and oddly collected curiosities. Displays with an almost museum collector quality—so, tablescapes of these collections on top of a mix of patterns." To hear more from McDonald, join the Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens luncheon on April 28 where she will be the keynote speaker. Dara Caponigro, Editor-in-Chief of design magazine *FREDERIC*, will moderate the talk and sign advance copies of her new book, *Glorious Gardens: Private Edens of the World's Leading Interior Designers*, to be released in May.

For tickets to the luncheon, the opening night benefit party, or to visit the showhouse, visit lakeforestshowhouse.com.

Mary McDonald. Photography
by Melanie Acevedo

ARBOR DAY PLANT SALE, MORTON ARBORETUM

The annual Arbor Day Plant Sale at The Morton Arboretum (April 24 - April 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) is one of the largest plant sales for a public garden in the U.S. It offers thousands of carefully chosen plants, including hundreds of species and varieties of trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, ferns, vegetables, and herbs. Specially chosen by the Arboretum's expert staff, all plants are suitable for Chicago-area gardens. Helpful "Plant Geniuses" are available throughout the sale to answer questions and suggest plants. To get your garden ready for the warmer months ahead, be sure to get your tickets—now available to Arboretum members and available to nonmembers on April 14—at mortonarb.org.





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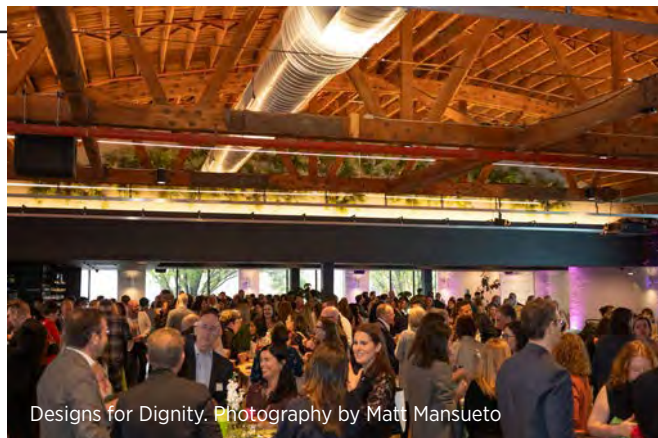


LAKE BARRINGTON WINE & DESIGN TOUR

The Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce introduces the inaugural *Wine & Design Tour* in Lake Barrington, an inspiring afternoon featuring home décor, interactive demonstrations, and sipping wine scheduled for Saturday, April 5, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Live demonstrations will be led by home and design experts with attendees learning how to make the perfect floral bouquet, style a shelf, create an inviting table setting, take part in a mini charcuterie class, and so much more. *For tickets and more information, visit barringtonchamber.com.*

SPIRIT OF DESIGN

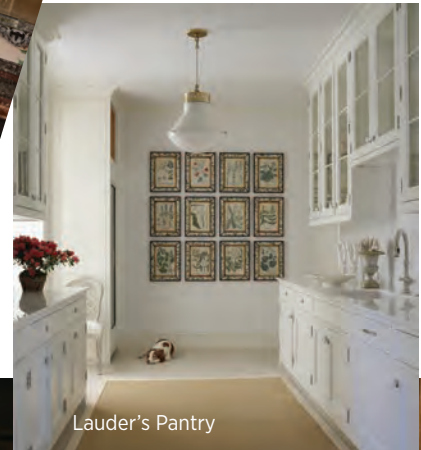
Designs for Dignity, a nonprofit organization devoted to transforming nonprofit environments through pro bono design services and donations, is hosting its 25th annual Spirit of Design fundraising event on May 15 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at The Geraghty (2520 South Hoyne Avenue). The evening will feature delicious fare, craft cocktails, a live auction, exciting raffle prizes, and lively entertainment. Proceeds from the event will directly support the renovation and enhancement of nonprofit facilities throughout Chicagoland. For more information, visit designs4dignity.org.



Designs for Dignity. Photography by Matt Mansueto

@THISOAKHOUSE

Follow along as Annie Meyers-Shyer remodels a beautiful old home in Los Angeles. Her ethos behind the Instagram account is to make design decisions accessible, much like fashion influencers do. Meyers-Shyer generously shares dozens of tips and tricks: from window treatment brands, styles, and colors; to paint colors and finishes for different surfaces; to where to find the best pillow box cover, preferred candles, doormats, mattresses, hardware, dish towels, and more. She even shared with her almost 100,000 followers her layout for utensils, cutting boards, and every other item found in her kitchen. Meyers-Shyer is thorough and talented and her dream remodel is helping others create their dream remodels. *Follow along on Instagram @thisoakhouse.*



Lauder's Pantry



Aerin Lauder

PLUM SYKES SUBSTACK

English-born fashion journalist, novelist, and socialite, Plum Sykes, has a storied (pun intended) career as a contributing editor at *Vogue* and *Tatler* and is the bestselling author of multiple books.

Now, she is bringing her signature wit to Substack.

One of her earliest posts ranks her houseguests by their hostess gift—a hilarious and insightful recount. In a more recent post, she shares a glimpse of her aspirational bedside table, including solid book recommendations. She calls her work on the platform her “live style notebook to record ... the delicious and funny extras that make life fun, chic, and interesting.” You can find Sykes’ work at *P.S. by Plum Sykes* on Substack.

LIVING WITH FLOWERS

Aerin Lauder’s love of flowers is deeply personal and was passed down to her by her celebrated grandmother, Estée Lauder, as well as her mother, Jo Carole Lauder. Just in time for spring, in her new tome *Living with Flowers* Lauder shares the many ways she brings flowers into her home. Whether it’s an arrangement of daisies in the kitchen to welcome friends or family for dinner, or a single stem on her desk to brighten the workday, flowers are an essential part of her home and her lifestyle. With creative ideas for designing arrangements—from embracing the simple elegance of a neutral palette or incorporating a whimsical mix of color, to enhancing your holiday décor with seasonal blooms—Lauder generously shares her favorite tips and secrets. Lauder also takes readers through her homes, showing how her décor brings the garden indoors. rizzoliusa.com



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An indulgence you wouldn't give up? Having three houses that I love in Naples, Chicago, and Tuscany.



2

Last thing you bought and loved? A stunning Italian business secretary, with deep wood tones and a turquoise interior paint.

3

The best way to spend \$20? A cappuccino and an almond croissant from La Fournette—down the street from the Chicago store.



4

The last item of clothing added to your wardrobe? A vintage leopard coat I found in a consignment store in Naples, Florida.



Preferred way to take a note? Handwritten notes. My go-to pen is a Needle Point TUL black pen.

6



5

Most loved art exhibit, museum, performance, or gallery? Field Museum 1893 World's Fair Columbian Exposition Exhibits. My family came to Chicago through the World's Fair. I have the beautiful glass bells that my great grandfather blew for the fair in my home in Chicago.

7

Preferred mode of carry? When perusing the markets abroad, I favor a cross body for the convenience.



10 Questions with Karen Abell

Leading antiques resource, Patina Collection has expanded its footprint and opened a new retail location in the heart of Chicago's Old Town neighborhood. Its offering of highly coveted European antiques and treasures, decor, and tabletop items is sourced by Karen Abell who took a moment to answer a few questions with Country.

patinacollection.com

8

Most beloved piece of home decor? An antique writing secretary. It was newly added to my home collection in Naples, but things do change, and I am sure there will be another new "favorite" very soon!

9

What's the best thing about running a business? Happy customers

10

Favorite place to source items for the store? Italy, Belgium, Sweden, France... the list goes on





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Growing up in Inverness, **Lindsay Dausch** loved coming to Barrington to use the library and have brunch with her family. After living in Chicago for more than a decade Lindsay, her husband, Matt, and their two (now three) young children, Bennett (6), Audra (3) and Declan (2 months), rediscovered Barrington with its perfect mix of greenspace and a walkable downtown as the ideal place to raise their family. They have found a strong community of friends and neighbors here, and Dausch currently serves as the Chair of the Little Angels Preschool Parent Advisory Board and previously was the Membership Co-Chair for Barrington Junior Women's Club.

EDITED BY **MEGAN WEISBERG** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KATRINA WITTKAMP**
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST** / STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

What actress would play you in a movie?

Mandy Moore

Who from history would you want to travel with? Queen Elizabeth II

Where do you look for inspiration? A long run outside through a nearby forest preserve

Favorite book? *The Briar Club*



Most beloved cookbook?

For our wedding gift, my sister-in-law created a cookbook of favorite recipes from both our families and friends

Best dinner party hack? Draft a preparation timeline and make as much ahead of time as possible.

What's in your bag right now? eos lip balm, goodr sunglasses, wallet, iPhone, keys, and a bag of Peppa Pig BAND-AIDS



Dausch wearing Oscar De La Renta with her 2-month-old, Declan, neimanmarcus.com

LINDSAY LOVES



Gadget:

Scent:



Barrington spot:

Bowlful of Korea and Sundial Brewing



Hostess gift to receive:



Gift to give:

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CLARITY AND SUPPORT

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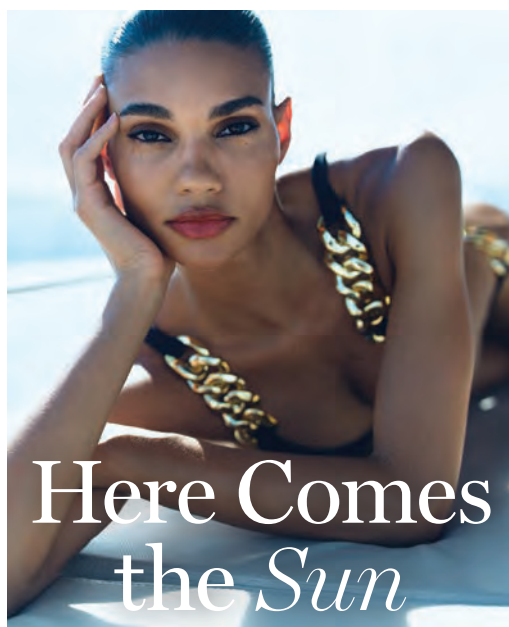
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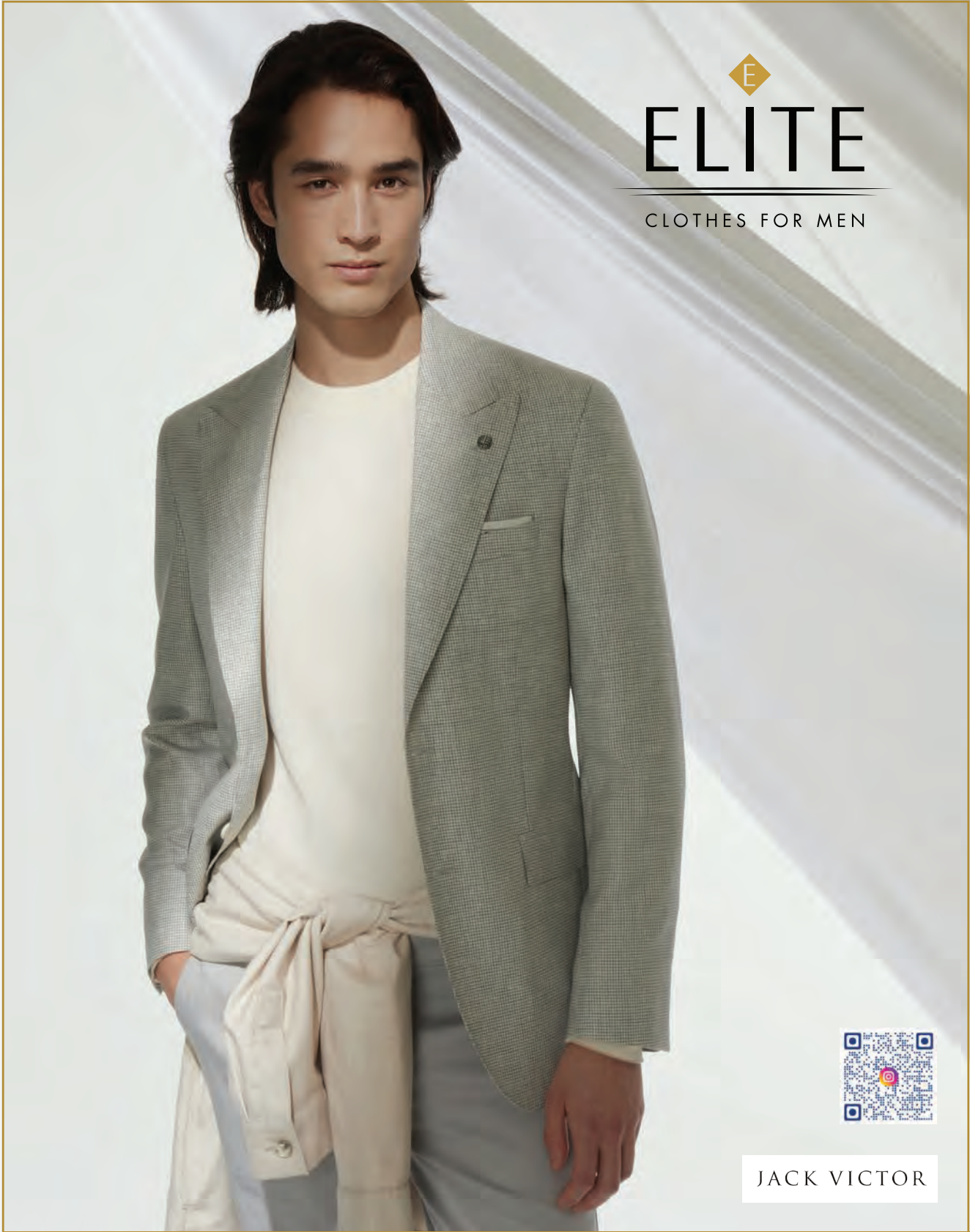
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Top Sunglasses,
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DENIM & DIAMONDS GALA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
IAN MCLEOD

Attendees had a blast at the first annual Denim & Diamonds Gala, enjoying lively entertainment and meaningful connections while supporting the Capital Campaign for the new Impact Center of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northwest Suburbs. The event raised more than \$300,000, showcasing the generosity and dedication of the community in supporting the organization's mission. It was a memorable night filled with celebration, philanthropy, and a shared commitment to empowering local youth in Barrington.
bgcnws.org



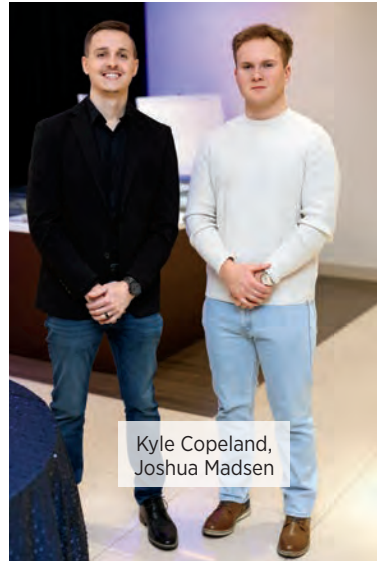
Karen Kay, Tammy Kerr, Katie Wilson



Richard Wickstrom, Kelly & Mike Berkowitz, Amy Wickstrom



Bette & Tom Roeser



Kyle Copeland,
Joshua Madsen



Susan Rejba &
Colin Wickstrom



Yvette & Lou
Klobuchar



Allie Copeland,
Karen Kay, Bella Kay



William Wagasy & Molly Archibald,
Yvette & Lou Klobuchar





Hagar Duel,
Danielle Beardsley,
Megan Gidcumb



Kimberly Happel,
Kacie Ruggio



Eric Duel

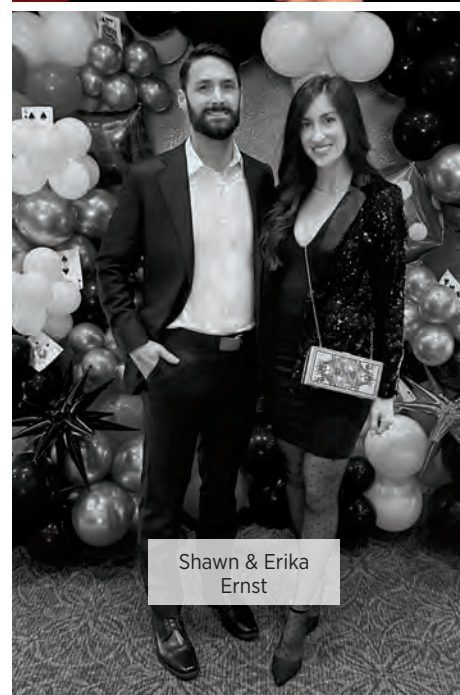


Kate Cooper,
Megan Gidcumb

ROSLYN ROAD ELEMENTARY'S PARENT PARTY: CASINO NIGHT!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
KIMBERLY SWARBRICK

*On February 28th, 2025, Makray
Memorial Golf Club hosted Roslyn Road
Elementary's Parent Party: Casino
Night! It was a spectacular evening that
raised over \$40,000 to help purchase
new classroom furniture at Roslyn Road
Elementary School in Barrington
bgcnws.org*



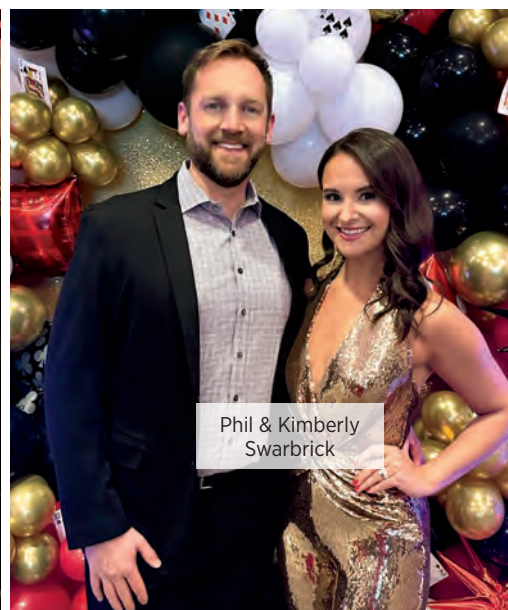
Shawn & Erika
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Becky Leider



Mary Fijal,
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Since her childhood, South Barrington's **Melanie Wokwicz** has felt most content and useful when helping others. This guiding force led her to a career as a physical therapist, which merged her need to help others with her love of physical activity. After several years of staying home to care for her kids, she started her business, Juniper Effect, which provides physical therapy to clients in their homes instead of going to a medical clinic. When not fanatically pursuing her newfound hobby of playing tennis, Wokwicz is busy heading her family's nonprofit organization that aims to begin educating youth about finance and financial literacy in 2025. Her love of seeing the world through experiences has led Wokwicz to travel all over the world with her adventurous husband, Peter, and their two kids, Parker and Gracie.

EDITED BY **MEGAN WEISBERG** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST** | STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

Mantra? No one is responsible for your own happiness except you **Best grooming tip?** The best way to feel beautiful is from the inside out. A good night's rest helps bring a healthy glow to my skin—much more beneficial than a 19-step facial routine **Guilty pleasure?** Champagne. A beautiful bottle of bubbly makes the world



a sweeter place **Favorite foods?** I

love a good homemade pizza; it brings back wonderful kitchen memories. I am also known to be unable to resist a good artisanal cheese plate with an aged gritty cheddar, veiny blue Roquefort, herb chevre, truffle gouda, etc.

Music you love? I imagine music as the soundtrack of my life, so my preferences sway with my mood. When I'm feeling energetic,

I go for grunge rock like Pearl Jam; when nostalgic, moody Norah Jones is my pick. Lately, I have been liking a bit of "feel good" country music, especially Lainey Wilson **Best advice ever given**

to you? Find your purpose. The key to happiness isn't an accumulation of material possessions, it comes from finding joy and purpose in your daily activities **Best advice**

you've given? Strive

for progress, not perfection **Earliest**

memory? During

spring break road trips down to Florida with the family,

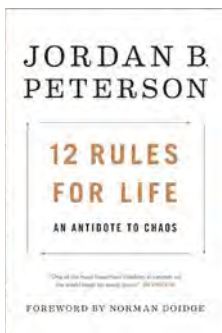
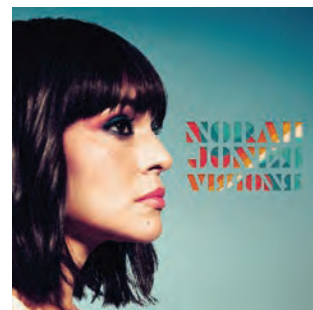
my sister and I shared the long bench backseat and filled the hours with singing and giggling **Before bed, you?**

Turn on my BedJet. I can't imagine living without this now. (It is a cleverly designed device that warms or cools

your bed to the perfect temperature) **What's on your bookshelf?** Currently re-reading *12 Rules for Life* by Jordan Peterson **You can't live without?** My family and my

morning coffee **Love to escape to?** Arizona is my happy

place, closely followed by exploring the atolls of French Polynesia **Advice you would give to your younger self?** Always wear sunscreen



WHEN IN THE COUNTRY

Your style is? Carefree and practical. Jeans, designer tee, and blazer

Can't leave the house without? My sunglasses, I am endlessly optimistic that the sun will shine **Transportation?** You'll find me in my

Tesla **Driving music?** My daughter's latest Spotify playlist on Shuffle, love to hear what she's listening to **Place to eat?** Now that spring is

bringing warmer weather, I love eating al fresco at Mockingbird or enjoying a fabulous pre-dinner cocktail in the open air at LAGO

Shop? I'm guilty of being a late-night online shopper! But when I need a quick gift, Angelina's in the Village can't be beat **Best thing**

about the country? Community and nature. The supportive, generous, and family-centric people I have met in this area create a special

community I am happy to be a part of. And finding time to breathe in some fresh air and take a walk is essential. Spending time in nature

gives me a boost and improves my mood **Worst thing about the country?** Lack of diverse choices **The perfect day is?** Gradually wak-

ing up while sipping a cup of coffee in my favorite comfy chair, then meeting up with friends and playing tennis on the outdoor courts at the South Barrington Club. Family time would be

next: we'd take advantage of getting outside at a local forest pre-

serve like Deer Grove or Crabtree. Then my perfect, easy day would wrap

up with a lively family dinner at The Arboretum



WHEN IN TOWN

Your style is? Classic LBD, personalized with jewelry, and a fun

clutch **Can't leave the house without?** Eye drops and lip gloss **Trans-**

portation? On a sunny day, I always prefer walking, otherwise my choice is Uber—until Waymo bursts onto

the Chicago scene **Driving music?** I find the time flies when listening to a

podcast. *The History Chicks*, *Armchair Expert*, or *SmartLess* keep me smiling through endless construction on the

Kennedy Expressway **Place to eat?** Date nights are built around trying

out new places. Best celebratory experience is at Ever. Also, can't wait to get back to Max-

wells Trading and Ciccio Mio **Shop?** Recently discovered Ramy Brook in NYC,

but my go-to is Nordstrom online **Best thing about town?** Endless experiences—

sights, sounds, tastes **Worst thing about town?** Construction on the Kennedy Expressway **The perfect day is?** Brunch at Maple & Ash,

stroll through the Lincoln Park Conservatory, enjoy a rooftop glass of champagne and sushi, catch the latest well-reviewed theater

performance, late-night live music at Lazy Bird, and retire to a posh hotel to avoid a second round of construction traffic



MAPLE & ASH



Wokwicz wearing ETRO dress,
neimanmarcus.com.

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and Silk Minidress,
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19



18



20

1 Tory Burch, Zip Viscose Sweater, toryburch.com 2 Gucci, Double G Knitted Cotton-Blend Top, mytheresa.com 3 Altuzarra, Nell Pleated Cotton Midi Skirt, net-a-porter.com 4 Clio Peppiatt, Nova Embellished Satin Clutch, net-a-porter.com 5 ALMASIKA, Adiré Diamond Huggie Earrings, neimanmarcus.com 6 Proenza Schouler, Monogram Embellished Leather Loafers, net-a-porter.com 7 Gucci, Horsebit GG Canvas Cropped Straight Pants, mytheresa.com 8 Gucci, Horsebit GG Canvas Jacket, mytheresa.com 9 Razny Jewelers, Every Day Diamond Bracelet, razny.com 10 DeMellier, The Miami Gathered Suede Clutch, net-a-porter.com 11 Gianvito Rossi, Ilia Suede-Trimmed Mesh Mules, mytheresa.com 12 Malone Souliers, Maureen 70 Metallic Mules, mytheresa.com 13 Gucci, Horsebit GG Canvas Romper, mytheresa.com 14 Chloé, Cotton Gabardine Trench Coat, mytheresa.com 15 Maison Margiela, Tabi Split-Toe Leather Ballet Flats, net-a-porter.com 16 Tory Burch, Jacquard Sweater, toryburch.com 17 Tory Burch, Wool Shorts in Dark Sandalwood, toryburch.com 18 Tory Burch, Jacquard Short, toryburch.com 19 Amina Muaddi, Boots, mytheresa.com 20 Valentino Garavani, VLogo Jacquard Mules, mytheresa.com



DIGITAL DENTISTRY

WORDS BY JAMES T. GAVRILOS

Dental work has never been an experience that many find pleasing. Part of the experience used to include impressions. These are the trays that are filled with that messy silicone type of material that hardens as it sits in your mouth for five minutes. The great news is, those

impressions are gone forever.

Digital scanners are changing the world of dentistry. The dentist can prepare teeth for porcelain restorations and immediately scan them to save the information that they would usually get from the impressions. Patients no longer have to feel that unpleasant sense of gagging as the impression material hardens in their mouth.

Our office has been using the 3Shape Trios scanner for a year now and the results have been tremendous. The crowns, veneers, bridges, mouth guards, and implants have seen a significant in-

crease in their quality of fit and finish. The scanner takes approximately 1,500 scans in a three-dimensional mode. The scans are then all stitched together by the software. A 3-D model can then be printed and used for any required restoration. I have been able to use it to measure clearances, preview smiles, and communicate shape and color to the laboratory technician. Our patients have been very vocal about the scanner and they approve.

This technology is not limited to just restorations. Multiple scans of the same patient can be grouped together. This grouping is of different scans over time. The software allows us to see how the patient is wearing down their teeth and how teeth have moved over time. This type of diagnosis helps the patient visualize what is happening with their mouth.

If you are in need of dental work but dread the thought of all those impressions, come see us for a demonstration of our new Trios scanner. Once you have seen how it works, you will never go back.

Dr. James T. Gavrilos is located at 129 Park Avenue in Barrington. For more information, call 847-381-4040 or visit barringtondentist.com.

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A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is smiling at the camera. She is wearing a long-sleeved, button-down dress with thin vertical blue and white stripes. The dress has a matching fabric belt with a large metal buckle. She is standing in a kitchen, with her hands resting on a wooden countertop. In the background, there are wooden cabinets, a stainless steel range hood, and a checkered tea cozy on a stove.

Everything *in its Place*

*Professional stager and organizer
Ashley Rapp knows what goes where.*

WORDS BY **THOMAS CONNORS**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **MARGARETA KOMLENAC**

STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**



Always organizing,
Rapp wearing
ADEAM dress,
neimanmarcus.com

Sometimes we weed out our closets. Sometimes we replant our careers. After a decade spent working for a global supply chain company, followed by stints at a private school and a landscaping company, Ashley Rapp reinvented herself as a home staging and organizing pro. “When starting my business, I could not see just a staging or just an organizing company, I saw both,” says Rapp, who launched HELLO! Staging+Organizing post-Covid. “In my mind, you cannot have one without the other. When I’m organizing, I’m staging and when I’m staging, I’m constantly organizing.”

Starting a new business from scratch can be daunting and as she went about launching hers, Rapp turned to MBA—Ms. Business Association—for an assist. “I knew I would need a strong support group around me as I navigated a completely different career journey. So, I joined MBA, a women in business network in the Northwest suburbs. The members believed in me and helped hold me accountable for ultimately doing what I really wanted to do. And to this day, I know I would not be where I am today without the strong, smart, innovative, courageous, and collaborative females I have in my corner. Women supporting women is something I feel very strongly about and am very proud to be a part of this amazing community.”

Back in the day, someone selling a home could bake some cookies the morning of a showing and hope the scent would seduce would-be buyers into making an offer. Today, tactics are



Rapp in
model's own.

“...once the client sees the final outcome, they are blown away by the results.”

a tad more sophisticated, and a proper staging can go a long way toward making house hunters see your place for what it is and can be. “I do not have a large warehouse of staging furniture because my niche is being able to use a lot of what the client already has,” says Rapp, “and repurposing it into different spaces, grouping different items together. I’m respectful of budget and resourceful when it comes to staging.”

Going into a stranger’s home and making decisions about their possessions and design style can be tricky. But Rapp says most folks are happy for this second set of eyes. “I’m empathetic and once the client sees the final outcome, they are blown away by the results. I often hear them say, “Why didn’t I have you come when I actually wanted to live in my home?”

Rapp’s roster of staging services ranges from a Staging Report—a detailed “punch list” listing out all the recommendations room by room that is generated within 48 hours of a walk-through—to a Day of Photography Support, during which she helps prepare the home so that it looks just right when the photographer arrives to shoot the property for a real estate listing. “Ninety percent of buyers look online first when searching for houses, and sixty percent of those buyers look only at photos, skipping the written description,” notes Rapp. “I arrive two hours before the photographer to prepare your home to look its best for photos that truly reflect the visual appeal buyers are looking for.”

When it comes to organizing—which, as Rapp says, often goes hand-in-hand with staging—she is equipped to address closets, kitchens, pantries, and any other area where things have accumulated, and can help declutter garages and basements and provide assistance in packing and unpacking. “This past spring,” relates Rapp, “I joined The Container Store as an In-Home Organizer. The idea behind this service is that when customers come into the store, the associates can only help so much because they can’t follow the customers back to their homes and help them. But I can.”

Now that she is established in business, Rapp delights in giving back, lending support to WINGS, Barrington Giving Day, and Saint Anne’s House of Hope. Each year, with “HELLO! Giveback Day,” she adopts a local family and, with the help of volunteers, completely reorganizes their home. “This year, I am partnering with CASA of McHenry County on the 12th Annual Little Black Dress event on October 10th at the Holiday Inn in Crystal Lake. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of McHenry County is a

nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring a safe, permanent, and nurturing home for children in the foster care system by providing trained and dedicated volunteers to advocate for their best interests.” CASA volunteers work within the courts in collaboration with key agencies, legal counsel, and community resources to represent the best interests of children in juvenile abuse, neglect, and dependency proceedings.



“The secret to getting ahead,” Mark Twain sensibly observed, “is getting started.” For some of us, busy lives and busy schedules make that easier said than done. For Rapp, it’s a snap. “Either you have the gift, or you don’t. And I’ve got it.”

For more information, visit hellostagingorganizing.com.



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Destined *to* Design

*Interiors maven Laura Tribbett has
been reading rooms all her life.*

WORDS BY **THOMAS CONNORS** / PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY **LEANNA ERNEST** / STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

Laura Tribbett didn't stand a chance. She was born to be an interior designer. As a kid growing up outside the Twin Cities, she loved building with Legos and making shoebox dioramas. By the time she was in high school, she was hooked on TV's *Trading Places* and begged her parents to let her redecorate her room. When they gave her the green light, she took inspiration from a colorful comforter, sponge-painting the walls yellow and hanging a wallpaper border. "It sounds super cringy now," she says, "but I felt so empowered, and I'm really grateful that my parents gave me the freedom and the space to explore this passion."

That passion took her first to Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, where she received a BS in Interior Design, then to New York. "That's when my true design education started," says Tribbett, who worked in customer service at a furniture showroom before landing a junior designer job at William T. Georgis Architect. Gigs with other leading design professionals—including David Easton and Thom Filicia—followed. "My last role in New York was as the head of interior design for Danish architect Thomas Juul-Hansen. He needed someone to start and lead the interiors side to interface with his already strong architectural team. When my boyfriend, now my husband, moved to Chicago, so did I. I worked for Alessandra Branca in the Gold Coast for about a year when I decided that it was time to do my own thing."

Tribbett—who lives in the city's Fulton Market neighborhood with her husband, Charlie, and their two very young daughters—launched Outline Interiors in 2015 and has enjoyed sustained growth over the past nine years. "What started out as just me designing literally any space that family and friends needed, has grown into a firm with six full-time employees, an established office in the West Loop, and



Barrington kitchen by Laura Tribbett
 Backsplash tile: Bedrosians Cloe
 Kitchen Hardware: Alno
 Island Cabinetry: Custom Outline Interiors
 Island Countertop: Ocean Blue Quartzite / TM Supply
 Breakfast & Island Pendants: Hudson Valley
 Cabinet Paint: Benjamin Moore "Boreal Forest" and "Old Prairie"

KITCHEN PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARGARET RAJIC

unique, beautiful projects all over Chicagoland and beyond."

In addition to getting a bead on a client's taste and lifestyle, Tribbett works diligently to manage homeowner expectations. "Online resources and social media are great tools for clients to communicate the look and feel they're interested in, but it takes time to craft design options that meet their functional needs, aesthetic goals, and pricing and timeframe parameters," notes Tribbett. "It's my job to educate my client, and once we understand what those needs, goals, and parameters are, we can talk about budget and quality expectations. Many clients are inundated with online ads and emails from retailers with items that look great, but perhaps aren't the best quality. This is where we come in—to steer them in the right direction."

When a client purchased a house in Barrington where the kitchen was "50 shades of margarine," Tribbett's charge was to better align the space with the rest of the home. She painted

the cabinetry a deep green (Benjamin Moore's Boreal Forest), updated the backsplash, and custom-designed a new island. She kept the slate stone floor because it carried out into other rooms and dressed the walls in a beautiful trellis wallpaper from Sanderson. "One of the biggest upgrades to this space," shares

Tribbett, "was flipping an old coat closet to open into the kitchen and installing custom cabinetry and under-counter refrigeration. Pocket doors painted to coordinate with the cabinetry conceal this space when the client doesn't want it on display."

No matter what the project, Tribbett's design approach comes down to creating "moments of joy for others," which she calls "MOJO." "Style, colors, textures aside, I want the space to function for the client and create a sense of pride in their home."

For more information, please visit outlineinteriors.com.

“...I want the space to function for the client...”

Tribbett wearing Giorgio
Armani Collection,
neimanmarcus.com



A portrait of Shana Vitek, a woman with blonde hair, smiling and wearing a light blue, shimmering, long-sleeved jumpsuit. She is seated and looking towards the camera. The background is a warm, out-of-focus interior with wooden elements and circular wall art.

SHANA VITEK

EQUITY PARTNER
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DIVORCE WITHOUT COURT

Divorce is a very personal and emotional process that often involves children. However, anyone with an internet connection can access most divorce court documents. Additionally, divorce court often takes place on Zoom and is broadcast on YouTube where anyone can log on and watch.

It is concerning that children can go online to read the details of their parents' divorce, or that a nosy neighbor could pull up another family's divorce paperwork on their phone.

There is simply no reason the details of any divorce need to be public. Even the most contentious divorces can be handled without going to court. Better options are available if both parties agree they want to keep their divorce private. Alternative dispute resolution processes like mediation, arbitration, and collaborative divorce are very effective ways to accomplish this goal in the most efficient manner possible.

Shana Vitek is an Equity Partner at Beermann LLP, the largest family law firm in Illinois. For over 20 years, she has practiced family law exclusively and is trained in mediation, arbitration, and collaborative law.

For more information, visit www.beermannlaw.com/team/shana-l-vitek.

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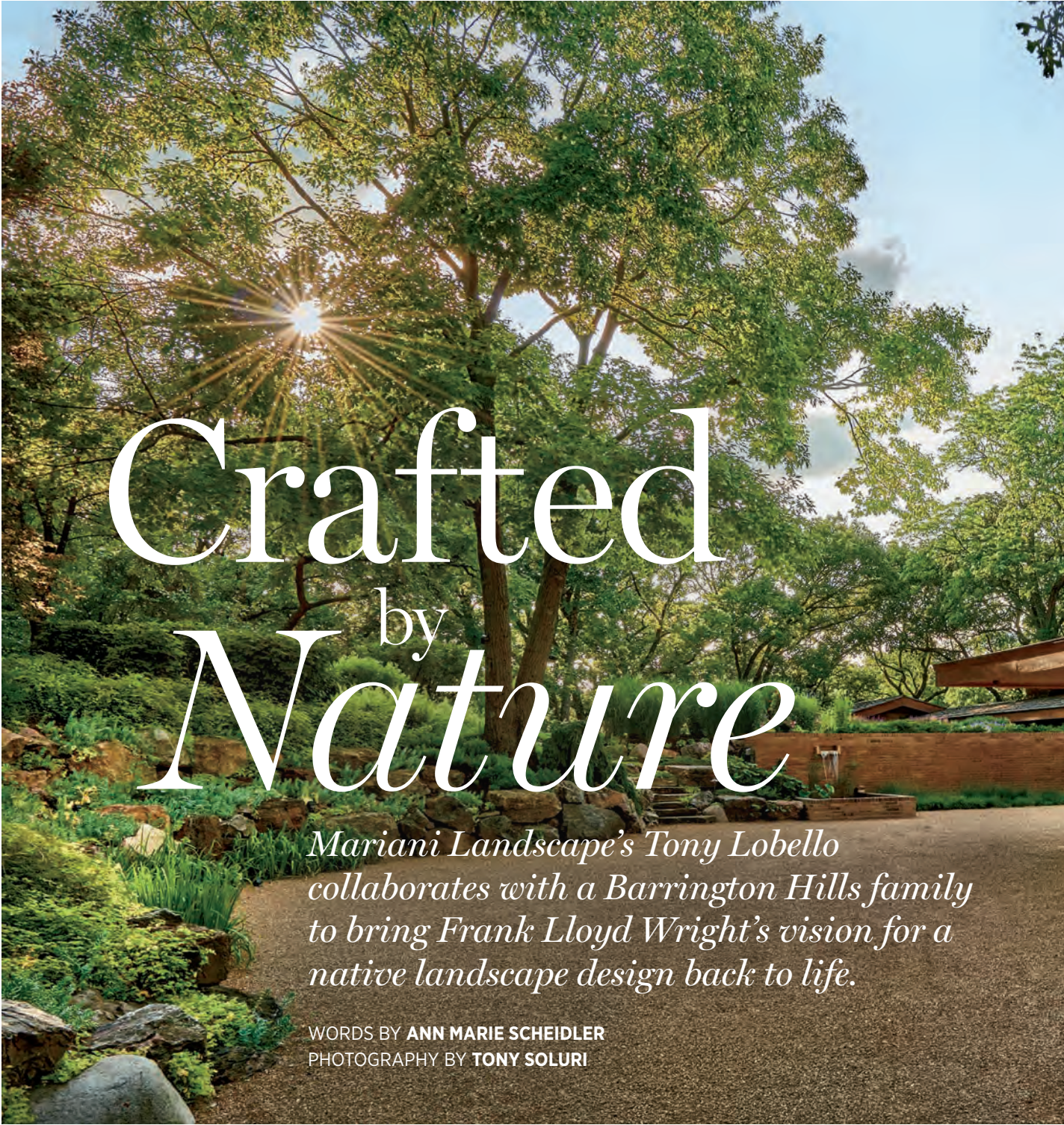
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Crafted by *Nature*

Mariani Landscape's Tony Lobello collaborates with a Barrington Hills family to bring Frank Lloyd Wright's vision for a native landscape design back to life.

WORDS BY **ANN MARIE SCHEIDLER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TONY SOLURI**



The water feature, originally from the late 1950s, was non-functional and required complete renovation, as did the boulder walls.





At the top of the driveway, the entry court greets the visitor upon arrival.



The perennial garden was planted on the hilltop so, as one looks out the galley windows just below the roofline, it fills the view outside.

A

fter Dave McArdle purchased Frank Lloyd Wright's Fredrick House in Barrington Hills, he tapped Mariani Landscape architect Tony Lobello to help revitalize the exterior. Lobello was thrilled.

"Dave truly has a passion for these projects, for Frank Lloyd Wright homes in particular," Lobello explains. "I worked with Dave on another home in Barrington Hills that was designed by Faye Jones, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. Dave also owned and restored Wright's F.B. Henderson House in Elmhurst, a home built in the early 1900s. I was excited when he reached out about this new project in Barrington Hills. The community is unique because of the large spans of oak trees, topography



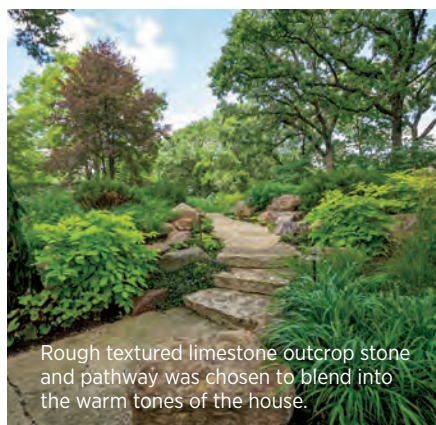
The property sits on a hilltop with major elevation changes throughout. Behind the groundcover, a retaining wall holds the parking court in place.



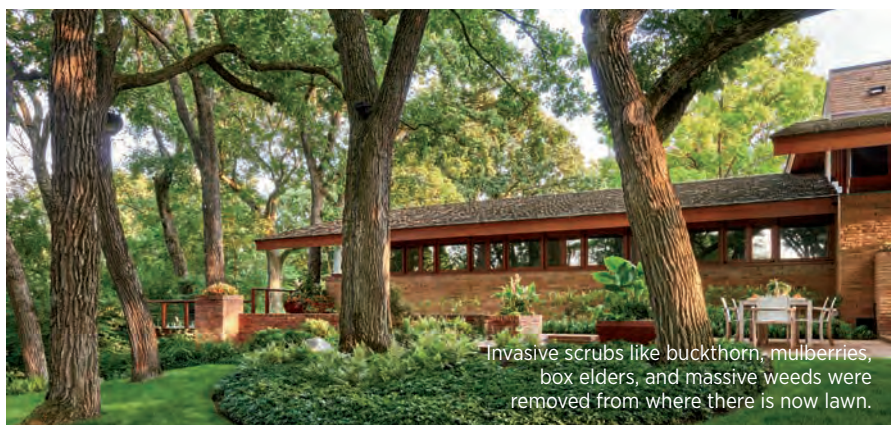
An elevated wood pathway connecting the front to the backyard replaces the old pathway. It avoids damaging the root systems of the oak trees. A cable rail opens the views to the savannah.



The teahouse was recently constructed and was a part of Wright's original architectural plan. The formal entrance to the teahouse is flanked by boulders that were part of the original plan. The team had to search the country for them because what was available in 1957 and what's available today are two different things.



Rough textured limestone outcrop stone and pathway was chosen to blend into the warm tones of the house.



Invasive scrubs like buckthorn, mulberries, box elders, and massive weeds were removed from where there is now lawn.

changes, and its many creeks. But this home has an interesting topography all its own, and a woodland space that isn't typical for the area. It sits on one of the highest points in Cook County. How the house is situated on the property is also pretty masterful."

McArdle wanted to define spaces around the home's exterior because everything had become so overgrown. "There was no lawn, no gardens, no outdoor entertaining spaces—the woods had overtaken everything," Lobello recalls. "The McArdles also wanted to add in some color, all while working within the Prairie-style architecture. People get up in arms if you take away from the master's work, so we never wanted to lose sight of what the original vision for this landscape had been. Dave was very involved, very interested in the details. It really helps to get inspiration from the homeowner."

With renovation and restoration as his marching orders, Lobello got to work. The first order of business was clearing the land of overgrowth and addressing the drainage issues. After invasive plants like buckthorn, mulberries, box elders, and massive weeds were removed, a lawn was created.

At the top of the McArdle's driveway was an

country and found a pretty good match. This is one of my favorite parts of the project."

Although Wright was a proponent of bringing the outdoors into his interiors, the property lacked inviting exterior entertaining spaces. Lobello remedied this by installing a stunning patio that is now home to an outdoor kitchen and dining room. "Getting people onto the land and property was a huge accomplishment," Lobello explains. "It's hard to think of this home functioning properly without these outdoor spaces."

Another innovation of the landscape design was seamlessly connecting the various outdoor vignettes to the house. "How things were linked was very important to our plan. An elevated wood pathway connects the front of the home to the backyard," he says. "We were able to construct this without damaging the root systems of the oak trees. You can feel the Japanese influence that inspired Wright in our use of the cable rail, but it's fused with more modern lines—you could call them Prairie lines—allowing for open views to the savannah."

The McArdles discovered that Wright had orig-

“It’s hard to think of this home functioning properly without these outdoor spaces.”

entry court that no longer served its purpose. "The parking court was just too small," Lobello says. "It was a challenge to figure out how to modernize it. Where do we make the adjustments? How do we make sure it still flows nicely with the house? What we ultimately decided on gives a much better view of the home and made it much more functional for the family."

The property was also home to some original architectural elements that had fallen into disrepair.

"There was a 1950s water feature that was still intact, but in bad shape and no longer working," Lobello says. "We had to completely renovate it. This water feature is phenomenal because you just don't usually get things like this on sites. We also searched for a stone to rebuild the wall in the drive court. The stone they originally used hasn't been seen since this home was built. We searched the

inally intended to build a small horse barn on the property. Using Wright's drawings, the couple had the building constructed with some modifications to be used for storage and as a summertime Japanese teahouse. The boulders flanking the teahouse's formal entrance were sourced by the design team and are a near-perfect match to Wright's 1957 vision. "The final product is outstanding," Lobello says. "This house looks as if it has always been this way."

Lobello worked with the McArdles for the better part of two years on this project, but he hesitates to say it's complete. "Landscape is a living art. We're never really finished. This is truly one of my favorite projects and I enjoy visiting and maintaining the outdoors each year."

To learn more, visit marianilandscape.com.



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Your Home. Your Style.



Tom Kusmerz
of The Barn
wearing model's
own.

How Does Your Garden Grow?

For over 50 years, The Barn has transformed ho-hum yards into stunning landscapes and great escapes.

WORDS BY **THOMAS CONNORS**

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE**

STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

You can go home again. Just ask Tom Kusmerz. As a kid working for his grandfather's lawn maintenance and gardening business, Len's Landscaping, he pulled weeds and watered plants for \$3.56 per hour. After attending the University of Iowa, where he studied business and finance, Kusmerz worked at the Board of Trade. But it wouldn't be long before he felt dirt under his nails again. "As the floor trading was disappearing," he recalls, "I went back to the family business and have never left since."

By then, the family business had metamorphosed into The Barn Nursery & Landscape Center, a retail garden center and landscape construction business. In 2022, the family sold the retail side to focus on landscape design, construction, and maintenance under a new name, The Barn. Located in Barrington, its many services range from expert maintenance programs and custom potting to full-scale landscape design and construction.

Like a well-tended garden, the business has weathered its share of changes. It began quite humbly as a lawn mowing service in the city. In 1973, Kusmerz's father and grandfather set up shop in Hawthorn Woods and branched out to provide landscaping services for suburbanites who wanted more than a weed-free lawn. Over the years, the company went from installing simple paver patios, planting trees and shrubs, and erecting retaining walls to creating sophisticated outdoor rooms that allowed families to make the most of their outdoor space. "We have expanded from basic timber retaining walls and brick patios to full masonry construction, landscape lighting, outdoor kitchens, water features, pools and spas, pergolas, and pavilions," says Kusmerz. "And we use very high-end 3D software so that our clients can fully visualize the end result of their potential project."

No doubt about it, tiki torches, boom boxes, and the ubiquitous plastic Monobloc chair have given way to sophisticated outdoor lighting designs that extend usability into the evening, first-rate audio systems, and furniture that wouldn't look out of place in a family room. One of the biggest changes is the popularity of hardscapes as a central element in contemporary outdoor design schemes. "Patios, fire pits, and outdoor kitchens have become must-have features, turning backyards into true extensions of the home," notes Kusmerz. "Homeowners are no longer just thinking about traditional lawns and garden beds, they're designing complete outdoor 'rooms' that offer both beauty and practicality."



New England granite walls, mortared bluestone walkways with limestone accents, and precast limestone planters with seasonally changed flowers frame the entrance.



Beneath a pergola of over 100 year-old hand-hewn beams wisteria weaves through bistro lights casting a warm glow over this storied barn. At its heart is a steel fire pit.

Turning a so-so yard into something special takes real planning. “When homeowners are looking to enhance their outdoor space, the first step is understanding how they want to use it,” Kusmerz explains. “Just as an architect or interior designer considers functionality inside the home, we take the same approach outside. We ask key questions: Do you entertain often? Do you love to cook and need an outdoor kitchen? Do you want a peaceful retreat with lush gardens, or are you looking for a low-maintenance space for kids and pets to enjoy?”

Once a client’s needs have been determined, The Barn’s landscape architects and designers devise the best approach to realizing the aesthetic and functional requirements of the project. “Layout and flow are crucial,” says Kusmerz. “Just as rooms inside a house need to connect seamlessly, outdoor spaces should feel natural and inviting. Sun exposure and shade play a big role in comfort, and we often incorporate pergolas, umbrellas, or even strategically placed trees to create the right balance. Materials matter, too. Durability and maintenance are

key, whether selecting pavers that withstand harsh weather or choosing plants suited to the climate.”

Recently, Kusmerz and team transformed a 14,233-square-foot lot in Elmhurst into a well-appointed retreat for year-round entertaining. The scope of work ranged from relocating a pool and setting it against a masonry wall punctuated with LED lighting—all backed by a formal hedge of long-blooming hydrangeas and espalier-shaped European hornbeams—to creating an outdoor kitchen equipped with a drop-down screen to provide shade and bug protection. “Beyond aesthetics, we incorporated smart solutions for stormwater management,” relates Kusmerz. “A large dry well behind the pool was repurposed to support a custom putting green, surrounded by permeable gravel and stone coping, ensuring proper drainage while adding a recreational feature. Landscape lighting enhances both safety and ambiance, making the space usable well into the evening.”

Three generations on, The Barn very much remains a family business. And that

family includes the devoted team that has made the outfit such a success. “Our longest-standing employee just retired after 43 years,” shares Kusmerz. “This year, our delivery driver, Martin, will be here 36 years, seasonal designer, Martha, 25 years, and construction supervisor Angel, 27 years. I believe this a testimony to treating people with respect, trusting them to make their own decisions, and creating career growth opportunities. I fully trust my team to do whatever it takes to exceed our clients’ expectations.” And after many years there himself, Kusmerz continues to find deep fulfillment in helping homeowners achieve the landscapes of their dreams. “Getting a text from a client enjoying the pool with their kids, sitting by their new fire pit with friends, or preparing some fabulous meal in their new outdoor kitchen is what really keeps me pushing to create the next perfect space.”

The Barn is located at 237 West Main Street in Barrington. For more information, visit barnlandscape.com or call 847-658-3883.

“...outdoor
spaces
should feel
natural
and
inviting.”



Travertine pool deck and upper terrace are connected with natural limestone steps and softened with blooming hydrangeas and perennials.



Pool, spa, waterfall, firepit & outdoor kitchen with pergola and wood-fired pizza oven.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

Town & Country **Chic**

Life in Barrington and its surrounding communities comes with an elegant pedigree that evokes horse country, the Scottish countryside, and the charm of a historic downtown. But this legendary lifestyle would not be possible without the expertise of the world-class designers, luxury home builders, and top-ranked real estate professionals who make our dream homes a reality. With smart home technology trends evolving and more people working from home than ever, these are the trusted experts we rely on to curate the stories of our lives. On the following pages, *Country* is proud to feature some of the area's most prestigious luxury home and design professionals, realtors, and other suppliers behind the spaces where we live, work, and entertain. We hope you'll be inspired by what awaits in our annual *Luxe Living* feature.

PRODUCED BY **KEMMIE RYAN**

EDITED BY **SHERRY THOMAS**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARIA PONCE BERRE, JAMES GUSTIN, IAN MCLEOD, AND KATRINA WITTKAMP**

STYLING BY **THERESA DEMARIA**

HAIR & MAKEUP BY **DORIA DEBARTOLLO AND
LEANNA ERNEST**

This feature was greeted enthusiastically and will be a recurring annual series. If you like what you see in these pages and would like to recommend an outstanding home design professional for our 2026 feature, please contact us at features@countrymagazine.com.



Design Build Brothers

Third-generation builders Maxx and Jack Klein say that design/build is in their blood. The brothers are focused on ushering Airoom Architects, Builders and Remodelers into a new era by innovating and integrating cutting-edge technology into every aspect of the business. For more than 66 years, Airoom has been a premier home remodeling company with a reputation for designing and completing high-end projects with superior service and craftsmanship.



Maxx and Jack Klein

What elements define your style? Where do you find inspiration?

We love to use clean lines, natural materials, and plenty of light to create spaces that feel open and airy. We tend to incorporate unexpected details and textures to keep things interesting. We find inspiration everywhere—from nature and art to travel and history.

In your opinion, what qualities make an outstanding architect/builder?

We believe the best architects and builders are those who are passionate about their craft, listen closely to their clients, and are constantly striving to innovate. They should also be excellent communicators, able to clearly explain their vision to clients and collaborate effectively with their tradespeople. Collaboration is key.

How do you decide which projects are a good fit for you and your firm?

At Airoom, we believe every home deserves exceptional design, and our robust team of architects, designers, and builders allows us to tackle projects of all sizes with the same level of meticulous care and creativity. While we specialize in larger-scale renovations and new builds that leverage our full range of expertise, we're always open to discussing unique projects that align with our passion for pushing boundaries and exceeding expectations.

What are the top architecture/building trends for 2025?

This year we have been seeing trends that reflect a renewed focus on well-being and maximizing space efficiency within our homes.

- **Health & Wellness Retreats:** Recognizing the importance of physical and mental health, homeowners are increasingly prioritizing dedicated wellness spaces. This could include adding saunas, steam rooms, or cold plunges, creating home gyms for convenient workouts, or even installing golf simulator rooms for entertaining.
- **Curb Appeal Makeovers:** Beyond the indoors, 2025 will see a surge in exterior renovations. Homeowners are eager to give their facades a complete transformation, that often includes new roofs, windows, doors, porticos, and siding.

Do you have a dream design project?

We recently booked our dream project. We're partnering with Boys Hope Girls Hope of Illinois to design a home that fosters academic excellence, community, and brighter futures. This space will be a springboard for young people to rise above circumstances and achieve their full potential. It's not just architecture; it's building hope, brick by hopeful brick.

For more information, call 847-325-5447 or visit airoom.com.

Trusted Authority

Connie Antoniou was born to Greek-American parents with deep roots in the motion picture business. As a result, she was exposed to unique work and life experiences, including dining with such Hollywood icons as Sylvester Stallone and Donald O'Connor. Today, this global real estate advisor has established herself as a trusted authority in luxury real estate—serving buyers and sellers in Barrington and beyond. As Senior Vice President of Sales at Jameson Sotheby's International Realty, her knowledge of what high-profile buyers are looking for in luxury properties has allowed her to foster meaningful, long-term relationships with an elite clientele.



What trends are you currently seeing in the real estate market, and how do you anticipate it evolving over the next year? How do you think the local real estate market differs from other regions in the U.S.?

Higher mortgage rates have cooled demand, but low inventory keeps prices stable. Buyers are more selective, and turnkey properties are in demand. Retail and mixed-use spaces are rebounding, while office spaces face uncertainty due to hybrid work trends. If interest rates drop, buyer activity may rise, but affordability will remain a challenge. Luxury and investment properties should stay strong, with high-growth job markets driving demand. Chicago's suburbs like Barrington offer stability, strong schools, and luxury homes. Unlike fast-growing Sun Belt states, our market is steadier, with long-term value and a balanced pace of transactions.

How do you ensure that your personal brand stands out in such a crowded and competitive real estate space?

I differentiate my personal brand by focusing on expertise, exceptional client service, and a strong local presence. Experience isn't expensive—it's priceless—and I bring deep market knowledge, strategic marketing, and strong negotiation skills to ensure my clients get the best results.

The luxury market has its own dynamics. How do you tailor your approach when working with high-net-worth individuals or luxury properties?

The luxury market demands a refined and strategic approach. I provide high-net-worth clients with discreet, concierge-level service, combining market expertise with tailored marketing and negotiation strategies. I prioritize confidentiality, attention to detail, and a personalized experience, ensuring every client receives the highest level of professionalism and discretion.

Connie Antoniou can be contacted at her Barrington office by telephone at 847-508-7775 or by email at connie@jamesonsir.com. For more information, visit connieantoniou.com.

Illuminating History

Idlewood Electric is a third-generation, woman-owned lighting business that has been serving the Chicago area since 1958. Led by CEO and President Barbara Lansing and her daughter, Vice President Jessica Lansing Cohen, this premier lighting showroom and electrical supply distributor is synonymous with superior customer service and premium quality products. Barbara is the second generation to take the helm and she is thrilled to be working alongside daughters Jessica and Rachel Lansing Sotoloff who entered the business a decade ago together. Jessica oversees the day-to-day operations of the lighting division, while Rachel leads the marketing team and focuses on designer relations.



How do you tailor your services to meet the unique needs of luxury homeowners?

Whether it's a complete renovation or designing a brand-new home, we meet our clients where they are, ensuring that each aspect of their lighting is thoughtfully planned and executed. Our brick-and-mortar showrooms allow clients to see lighting fixtures in person—offering the opportunity to visualize how each piece will enhance their home. If a client is working with a designer or builder, we collaborate with them to ensure that the lighting integrates beautifully and functionally within the overall vision for the space.

What's one of the most memorable projects you've worked on, and what made it stand out for you and your client?

One of the most memorable projects we've had the privilege of working on was providing lighting and electrical supplies for a Wounded Warrior project. It was truly an honor to play a small role in helping a veteran move into a beautifully designed home, and the experience was incredibly meaningful for our team. What made this project stand out was the collaborative effort involved. We worked alongside a diverse group of vendors who generously donated their time and products—all united by the common goal of creating a

home that was not only functional but also worthy of our brave veterans.

What are some of the latest innovations in your industry that you're particularly excited about?

The warm-dim technology has completely changed the lighting landscape by allowing LEDs to mimic the same type of color output as now discontinued incandescent lighting. We're excited about new and evolving lighting CCT (Correlated Color Temperature) technologies which offers adjustable settings, allowing users to switch between different color temperatures from warm and neutral to cool and bright tones for their fixtures. We're very eager to see rechargeable and cordless lighting technology take shape where you'll be able to mount lights, such as sconces on either side of a fireplace, without requiring a junction box. These are all innovative changes in our industry that Idlewood has to offer our clients.

Idlewood Electric is located at 317 W Northwest Hwy in Barrington. For more information, visit idlewoodelectric.com or follow Idlewood Electric on Instagram @idlewoodelectric.

Extraordinary Home Expert

Judy Gibbons of Jameson Sotheby's International Realty is an accomplished realtor, licensed in Illinois, Michigan, and Florida. With an impressive list of accolades and a wealth of experience, she has become a prominent figure in the Chicago area real estate industry. This local expert with global credentials is known for her ability to seamlessly connect extraordinary homes with extraordinary lives.

What trends are you currently seeing in the real estate market, and how do you anticipate it evolving over the next year? How do you think the local real estate market differs from other regions in the U.S.?

Right now, we're seeing low inventory keeping home prices strong, despite higher interest rates. In luxury markets, buyers are prioritizing lifestyle-driven purchases—whether it's waterfront properties in Florida, second homes in Michigan, or estate properties in Chicagoland. Over the next year, I anticipate a more balanced market as interest rates stabilize.

Many top producers also invest in real estate themselves. Do you have any experience with property investment or development? How has that influenced your perspective as a broker?

Having bought, sold, and invested in properties myself, I know firsthand what it takes to make smart real estate decisions. I am well versed in short-term rental properties and standard rental properties. I walk the walk and talk the talk! I believe my clients appreciate my inside information and place their trust in me. It makes me so happy to be able to be part of their dream and see them create legacy properties.

How do you ensure that your personal brand stands out in such a crowded and competitive real estate space?

I focus on authenticity, storytelling, and visibility. My presence on *American Dream TV* allows me to showcase properties in a way that connects with clients on an emotional level. My brand is built on positivity, expertise, and delivering extraordinary results for my clients.

What are some of the most unique or standout properties you've ever worked with, and what made them so memorable?

Recently, I featured a stunning \$2 million beachfront property in Panama City Beach, Florida, on *American Dream TV*. Another standout was a historic estate in Barrington Hills that had equestrian facilities and timeless architecture. My seller wrote a song about the house and I was able to get him featured on WGN. These homes tell stories, and I love bringing those to life for buyers.

For more information, visit judy-gibbons.com.





White Glove Experience

Chris Pickering, owner of Curated Audio in Skokie, has been a music lover and audio system devotee since he cobbled together his first system in 1980. He believes that music is a passion and high-end audio is a great way to get there—a vision that inspired him to start the business in 2022. The focus of Curated Audio is bringing high-end audio sound to a wider audience. According to Pickering, audio systems with an amazing sound have evolved from arcane and expensive to reasonably priced and convenient. While Curated Audio has showrooms at its Skokie location, one of its specialties is bringing audio systems directly to the client to audition—in their own home. “Curated Audio works because of a shared passion amongst the team and a focus on making every customer feel the White Glove experience,” says Pickering.

What trends are you currently seeing in your industry, and how do you anticipate these trends evolving over the next year?

There is a growing sense of how slowing down and taking time for simple pleasures are important components of self-care. Making good-sounding music part of your everyday can be an important part of a self-care routine. Our home audio systems sound superb and are very easy to use, providing a simple, sublime pleasure that can be part of an everyday routine.

How do you tailor your services to meet the unique needs of luxury homeowners?

A good home audio system starts with listening to our clients. Sometimes it is just letting the client talk. Other times we ask questions and use conversation starters to help us define which audio system will make the client not just satisfied, but thrilled. We pay particular

attention to how the clients want to control their music. The system has to work easily as well as sound great. We also install with an emphasis on visual subtlety, providing a great sounding system that blends into the aesthetic of the room.

How do you elevate a space?

We have all been in the car when one of our favorite songs comes on the radio—that can absolutely set the mood, whether it’s ecstatic, jubilant, or sad. The great sounding home audio systems we provide our clients enables them to set that mood any time they want and turn their home into their own music venue.

Curated Audio is located at 8214 McCormick Boulevard in Skokie. For more information, call 224-361-9400 or visit [curatedaudio.com](https://www.curatedaudio.com). You may also follow Curated Audio on Instagram @curated_audio.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA BARRETT

Exceeding *Expectations*

As the No. 1 agent in closed sales volume in the 60010 area since 2010, John Morrison is a trusted expert in residential real estate and the owner of Morrison Home Team with @properties Christie's International Real Estate. Known for his professionalism, communication, and market expertise, John leads Barrington's top team, outselling every local Barrington brokerage firm since 2019.

What trends are you currently seeing in the real estate market, and how do you anticipate it evolving over the next year?

The real estate market remains competitive due to tight inventory, with homes under \$1.5 million still receiving multiple offers. In contrast, properties over \$2 million see more balanced or buyer-friendly conditions. These trends are expected to continue, though broader economic and local factors may bring changes. Staying adaptable will be key.

How do you think the local real estate market differs from other regions in the U.S.?

The Northwest Suburbs market is remarkably steady, with low inventory and strong buyer demand keeping prices stable. Unlike hotter markets facing corrections or pressures from post pandemic growth, natural disasters and rising insurance costs, our area remains resilient and balanced.

What would you say is your key to success in this competitive market?

My success stems from deep market knowledge and a commitment

to my clients. From providing expert advice to seamless problem-solving, my team and I excel in negotiations and navigating challenges. With streamlined systems and a highly skilled team, we deliver a smooth experience for clients and colleagues alike.

What do you consider the biggest challenge in the local real estate market today, and how are you addressing it?

The biggest challenge in our market is limited inventory, which benefits sellers but can create hesitation for those unsure about finding their next home. To overcome this, my team uncovers off-market opportunities through our extensive network and provides clients with real-time market data, helping them make confident decisions in a competitive landscape.

John Morrison is with @properties Christie's International Real Estate, 508 S Northwest Hwy in Barrington. To contact John, call 847-409-0297 or email john@morrisonhometeam.com. For more information, visit morrisonhometeam.com, follow John on Facebook at Morrison Home Team, or on Instagram @morrison_home_team.

Bespoke Service, *Unmatched Expertise*

As a broker with @properties Christie's International Real Estate, Tara Kelleher offers a highly tailored, results-driven experience for discerning buyers and sellers. Her clients benefit from exclusive market insights, a hands-on advisory approach, and proven strategies that optimize their real estate investments. With deep expertise and an unwavering commitment to discretion and excellence, Kelleher ensures seamless transactions that meet the highest standards.

The luxury market has its own dynamics. How do you tailor your approach when working with high-net-worth individuals or luxury properties?

High-net-worth individuals expect privileged access and strategic guidance. I stay ahead of trends, offering off-market opportunities, bespoke staging, and world-class marketing. From high-end videography to exclusive showings, I curate an elite experience. My clients trust me to deliver unmatched value and seamless execution, ensuring their real estate investments align with their financial and lifestyle goals.

What trends are you currently seeing in the real estate market, and how do you anticipate it evolving over the next year?

As the spring market evolves, adaptability is key. I monitor economic indicators, global trends, and emerging investment opportunities to help clients make data-driven decisions. In a competitive luxury market, my strategic approach ensures my clients capitalize on the best opportunities while safeguarding their long-term wealth.

How do you ensure that your personal brand stands out in such a crowded and competitive real estate space?

My reputation for exceptional service, meticulous attention to detail, and an unwavering commitment to client success defines the Tara Kelleher Team. I go beyond traditional real estate—offering a bespoke, concierge-style experience that caters to the unique needs of high-net-worth individuals. This commitment to excellence has made my brand synonymous with trust, sophistication, and market expertise in luxury real estate.

Tara Kelleher is a broker with @properties Christie's International Real Estate, 508 S. Northwest Highway in Barrington. For more information, visit tarakelleher.com or follow her on Instagram @tarakelleherteam, on Facebook at the Tara Kelleher Team, and on LinkedIn at Tara Kelleher.



Exceptional Client Service

When you work with Keller Williams real estate agent Melanie Parsons and her team, you get a knowledgeable and committed ally to negotiate on your behalf with the backing of a trusted brand. With its state-of-the-art technology, Barrington-based Parsons Premiere Homes is leading the way in how homes are sold and purchased through digital marketing. Parsons says her job is to simplify the real estate process and make her clients feel confident in their decisions. She prides herself on providing exceptional client service, earning trust, and fostering valuable referrals. “I expand my reach through a strong online presence, which helps me connect with a wider audience,” she says. “Consistent professionalism and active community involvement further sets me apart in the industry.”

What do you consider the biggest challenge in the local real estate market today, and how are you addressing it?

The biggest challenge is the lack of inventory. There are simply not enough houses on the market. This shortage drives up prices, creates intense competition among buyers, and makes affordability a real challenge. This, combined with fluctuating higher interest rates, is making it more challenging than ever for buyers and sellers to navigate the market. This is why I focus on being strategic, resourceful, and adaptable to help my clients succeed, no matter the conditions.

The luxury market has its own dynamics. How do you tailor your approach when working with high-net-worth individuals or luxury properties?

Tailoring real estate services for the luxury market and high-net-worth individuals requires a personalized, discreet, and detail-oriented approach. It starts with trust and then understanding their unique lifestyles, preferences, and investment goals.

Many top producers also invest in real estate themselves. Do you have any experience with property investment or development? How has that influenced your perspective as a broker?

Yes, I chose to invest in vacation rental properties in both Door County, Wisconsin, and Rockport, Maine. These properties served as both personal vacation homes and successful short-term rental investments on Airbnb and VRBO—proving to be highly lucrative. I would be more than happy to share how this works.

For more information about Melanie Parsons and Parsons Premiere Homes, call 847-772-7179 or visit melanieparsons.com.



Lutron Triathlon battery-powered shades beautifully control natural light, protect furnishings, and provide privacy.



Poetry in Automation

Created in 2002 with husband, Gary, Sound Living is Jarmila Singer's passion project. A graduate of Indiana University's Kelly School of Business who earned an MBA from Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management, Singer brought her corporate experience into the boutique consultancy. Her Sound Living team of professionals deliver a "high touch" approach to building custom home automation solutions. "We offer our experience and consulting skills wisely and with kindness," she says, adding that when you buy Sound Living, you get the whole team on your project.

What trends are you currently seeing in your industry, and how do you anticipate these trends evolving over the next year?

The first is streaming audio and video. Everyone has been getting rid of their cable boxes and streaming their shows using YouTube TV, Netflix, Prime, and other apps. Audio is streaming at home, too. Just add a Sonos device and now you can stream music using Pandora, Tidal, and Spotify. Other trends are an increased demand for motorized window treatments, high-speed internet with bigger bandwidth to accommodate that streaming, and AI. Home automation control systems are beginning to develop and integrate artificial intelligence to enhance your daily living.

How do you tailor your services to meet the unique needs of luxury homeowners?

We have a responsibility to be the best steward of our client's budget dollars while balancing the need for solid technical solutions and beautiful aesthetics. Each luxury home is different. Each client is different. We accomplish this by listening and asking questions.

What's one of the most memorable projects you've worked on, and what made it stand out for you and your client?

In 2017, we completed a 20,000-square-foot new construction project for a Barrington family on the shore of Lake Geneva. The home itself is stunning in design, including an indoor pool and a 3,000-square-foot guest wing. Every home automation technology available was implemented, including Lutron motorized shades, Lutron lighting control, and a custom home theater. But the best part of the project was working with the dream team of architect/designer, general contractor, and the homeowners. We are still in touch with them all and we work together on every home thereafter.

Jarmila Singer's Sound Living is located at 115 East Station Street in Barrington. For more information, call 847-926-7034 or visit soundliving.com. You may also follow Singer on LinkedIn at [jarmila-singer-8109817](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jarmila-singer-8109817), on Instagram @slstudiobarrington, or on Facebook at SLStudioBarrington.



LUXURY SPECIALIST

Rob Morrison was Coldwell Banker Realty's No. 1 producer for homes sold in Barrington in 2024 and is on track for the same success in the year ahead. With more than 22 years of experience and \$700 million in career sales, Morrison and his team specialize in luxury homes across the northwest Chicago suburbs. A certified Luxury Property Specialist, Morrison is known for his market expertise, strong negotiation skills, and dedication to client success.



What trends are you currently seeing in the real estate market, and how do you anticipate it evolving over the next year? How do you think the local real estate market differs from other regions in the U.S.?

The real estate market is seeing a rise in demand for luxury properties, with buyers prioritizing privacy, green spaces, and high-end amenities—trends that are shaping both urban and suburban landscapes. Over the next year, Barrington is likely to see continued interest from people who are seeking expansive homes and a strong sense of community. Barrington offers a more secluded, estate-style living experience, attracting those who value space, nature, and a quieter pace of life.

What would you say is your key to success in this competitive market?

My key to success in this competitive market is a deep understanding of local trends, a strong network, and an unwavering commitment to client service. By staying ahead of market shifts, leveraging cutting-edge marketing strategies, and providing personalized guidance, I ensure my clients make informed, confident decisions.

What do you consider the biggest challenge in the local real estate market today, and how are you addressing it?

One of the biggest challenges in the local real estate market today is low inventory. To navigate this, I leverage my extensive network to find off-market opportunities, provide strategic negotiation tactics, and ensure my clients are well-prepared to act quickly. For sellers, I maximize exposure through cutting-edge marketing and positioning to attract the right buyers and achieve top dollar.

The luxury market has its own dynamics. How do you tailor your approach when working with high-net-worth individuals or luxury properties?

In the luxury market, I tailor my approach by offering a bespoke, white-glove experience that caters to the unique needs and expectations of every client. I utilize a combination of market intelligence, exclusive off-market opportunities, and high-impact marketing to ensure each property is positioned for maximum value.

Contact Rob Morrison at 847-212-0966. For more information, visit rmorrisonteam.com. You may also follow Morrison on Instagram @rob_morrison_team, on Facebook at Rob Morrison Team at CB in Barrington, on TikTok at Rob Morrison Team, and on LinkedIn at Rob Morrison.

Window Transformations

Chrissy Roellchen, owner of Skyline Window Coverings in Winnetka, says she could have never imagined that the small business she started with husband, Jason, in 2012 would someday become the largest family-owned Hunter Douglas window treatment dealer in the U.S. From the couple's modest Chicago apartment, the now booming enterprise has grown to include a 15,000-square-foot warehouse, seven showrooms nationwide, and a burgeoning design team. "Our authentic, midwestern approach to professional design services and premier products have become the winning formula in transforming our clients' homes," she says. "From customer needs to building and maintaining long term partnerships, we are in constant refinement of this approach—all while exploring cutting-edge design innovation along the way." The team at Skyline Window Coverings is driven to deliver outstanding service on every project, no matter the size—elevating your space with the luxurious convenience of intuitive design and incredible style.



Jason &
Chrissy
Roellchen

What trends are you currently seeing in your industry, and how do you anticipate these trends evolving over the next year? Trends continue evolving as homeowners become more focused on how their spaces support their lifestyle, goals, and design aesthetic. Right now, the drapery industry is as hot as it's ever been. The desire for a beautiful product that gives you privacy, room darkening, and energy efficiency is growing and clients are not satisfied with off the shelf solutions. With the rise of the smart home, the preference for window coverings that function automatically without manual operation continue to establish themselves as a client favorite. I expect this popularity to rise even higher as more consumers become acquainted with the possibilities these shades can bring to their homes.

How do you ensure your products are both functional and aesthetically pleasing?

I've always seen function and beauty in window coverings as being

two halves of one whole. Sometimes we compare treating a window to styling an outfit. There are different style elements, but you need to pick and choose what feels comfortable, while staying true to yourself.

How do you maintain consistency and quality across different projects, while still ensuring that each project feels unique? Our consistency is found in our process. We have a team that supports every project from A to Z. There is no "one size fits all" method with window treatments, which is exactly why we offer custom solutions for everyone from the visionary homeowner to the interior designer.

To contact Skyline Window Coverings, call 847-961-2626 or visit skylinewindowcoverings.com. You may also follow Skyline Window Coverings on Instagram @skyline_wc, on Facebook at skylinewc, or on LinkedIn at skyline-window-coverings-llc.



Stylish Solutions

Since 1966, Barrett's Technology Solutions has been dedicated to providing the latest home technology for families throughout the Chicago area and Lake Geneva. Working with top architects, builders, and interior design professionals, the company installs technology so it seamlessly blends with your design. "Our Advanced System Implementation Process streamlines your experience," says Brian Perreault, President of Barrett's Technology Solutions. "You can rest easy, and enjoy your indoor and outdoor living spaces with hidden speakers, custom lighting, or full home automation."

How do you tailor your services to meet the unique needs of luxury homeowners?

We specialize in custom projects, creating unique designs that reflect each homeowner's taste and lifestyle—whether that is a home theater because your family loves entertainment or peace of mind from your home's security cameras. Our team designs, programs, and installs easy-to-use systems tailored to each individual or family. Plus, we provide 24/7/365 proactive monitoring and remote repair and a dedicated service team for swift support after installation.

How do you ensure your products are both functional and aesthetically pleasing?

Our Design and Engineering team partners with architects and custom builders to design features like hidden speakers and optimal ventilation for equipment. We also work alongside your interior designer to enhance the vision with circadian rhythm lighting and automated solutions throughout your home, creating unparalleled convenience and sophistication.

How do you maintain consistency and quality across different projects, while still ensuring that each project feels unique?



Every home we work on is unique, but what truly sets us apart is how we do business. In our many years of business, we have not only adapted alongside the luxury home technology industry but have also enhanced our core values and processes. That has contributed to our continued success. Our commitment to excellence is further underscored by winning the CEDIA Excellence in Business Award 2024, reflecting our dedication to maintaining high standards with peers, trade partners, and our clients.

How do you elevate a space?

Collaborating with interior designers and architects allows us to seamlessly design technology into a space by discreetly concealing elements like speakers behind drywall. Imagine a stunning piece of artwork that, with a touch of a button, transforms into a high-definition display, or a mirror that discreetly conceals your television when it's not in use. Our innovative solutions ensure technology is present only when you need it, preserving the elegance of your space.

Barrett's Technology Solutions is located at 793 Springer Drive in Lombard. For more information, call 630-898-2850 or visit barretts.tech. You may also follow them on LinkedIn at Barrett's Technology Solutions.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOLKESKY.



THE BEE'S *KNEES*

Greet guests with this refreshing, simple Prohibition Era-cocktail at your first early spring gathering.

RECIPE BY **FLETCHER & FORK**



SERVES ONE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ounces gin
- 3/4 ounce lemon juice
- 3/4 ounce honey syrup (recipe below)
- 1 large egg white
- Strip of lemon peel, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill a coupe glass with ice and set aside to chill.
2. Place lemon juice, gin, honey syrup, and egg white in a cocktail shaker. Cover and shake vigorously.
3. Take a peek in the shaker: when egg white is foamy, add ice, re-cover, and give it a few more shakes.
4. Discard ice from glass, draining it of any residual water. Strain shaker contents into the glass. Garnish with the lemon peel.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE HONEY SYRUP

Place ½ cup honey and ½ cup water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk gently and frequently until honey is dissolved, about 5 to 10 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool thoroughly. Store in a closed container in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks.



ZaZa's Tavola Italiana

Restaurant and Lounge

With authentic and homemade Italian food in a welcoming environment, ZaZa's Tavola Italiana creates a warm, friendly dining experience.

By combining the traditional flavors of Nonna's kitchen and modern cuisine, ZaZa's Tavola is the premier spot for upscale, Italian dining offering a full service cocktail lounge with live music on Thursday nights and a full menu sure to satisfy the most discriminating diner.



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IRISH BARMBRACK

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MONICA KASS ROGERS**



Although St. Patrick's Day is behind us, it is still the perfect time to bake this beautiful barmbrack (*bairín breac* or “speckled loaf” in Gaelic) a fragrant Irish bread studded with whiskey-and-tea-soaked dried fruit. Although many of the barmbrack recipes circulating out there today are actually cakes (like date or banana breads) barmbrack was originally a yeasted bread. Our recipe sticks with that tradition and yields a fragrant, lightly sweet bread that's very good eaten right out of the oven or toasted the next day and spread with plenty of Irish butter.

Interestingly, like Mardi Gras king cakes, which come with good luck tokens hidden inside (coins, rings, plastic baby figurines), Irish barmbrack is also often baked with trinkets in it that follow Druidic fortune-telling traditions—coins for good fortune, thimbles predicting spinster or bachelorhood, beans portending poverty etc. We've kept our recipe trinket-free, figuring that the whiskey-soaked fruit is treasure enough.

MAKES: 1, 9 X 5-INCH LOAF

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE WHISKEY-SOAKED FRUIT

- 1 ½ cups hot water steeped with 2 teabags of good Irish black tea
- ½ cup Irish whiskey
- ½ cup golden raisins, snipped or chopped in half
- ½ cup Thompson seedless (black) raisins, snipped or chopped in half
- ½ cup your choice of chopped dried cherries, dried cranberries, dried apricots, or dried pineapple, or a mixture of all of the above
- 1 Tbsp chopped citron OR 2 tsp finely grated lemon zest

FOR THE BREAD DOUGH

- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- ⅔ cup milk warmed but not hot
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups bread flour, plus ¼ cup more for dusting work surface
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ cup superfine (caster) sugar
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground clove
- ¼ tsp ground mace
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, softened, plus 1 Tbsp for greasing the loaf pan
- 2 cups soaked fruit from above

METHOD

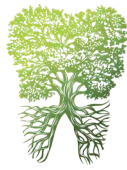
SOAK DRIED FRUIT: Combine black tea with whiskey in a medium bowl. Add all of the dried fruit and soak for 6 hours, or, overnight. Drain and squeeze liquid from soaked fruit and either discard liquid, or save it for another use (it's delicious!). Set soaked fruit aside while you make the dough.

MAKE DOUGH: Warm milk until quite warm but not hot and whisk with yeast in a small bowl. Place bowl in a warm spot to allow yeast to bloom. Once bloomed (takes about 10 minutes) whisk egg into the yeast/milk mixture. Set aside.

Whisk flour, superfine sugar, salt, and spice together. In the bowl of a stand mixer with paddle attachment, add flour mixture plus butter and beat to incorporate the butter. Add reserved yeast/egg/milk mixture to the dry ingredients and continue beating until dough gathers up.

Remove ball of dough from bowl and place on floured work surface. Using your hands, smush the drained fruit into the dough ball and knead. Add a little more flour to work surface as needed until you have worked the dough into a smooth ball with the fruit studded throughout. Shape into a log. Grease the sides and bottom of the loaf pan with butter. Press dough into loaf pan and level. Loosely cover pan with greased plastic wrap. Place a clean kitchen towel over the top. Set loaf pan in a warm place. Allow dough to rise for about 2 hours or until nicely domed above the top over the loaf pan. With oven rack in center position, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake bread for 45 to 50 minutes until bread is deeply brown and sounds hollow when sharply tapped. Remove bread to a cooling rack to cool slightly. Slice and serve while warm, or toast the bread the next day and serve spread with Irish butter.





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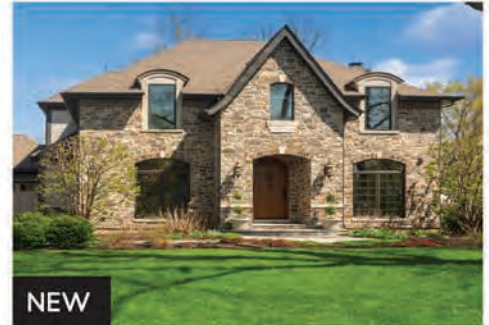
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kate.fanselow@compass.com
M: 773.621.4597

Mo Marienthal
Licensed Real Estate Broker
mo.marienthal@compass.com
M: 847.791.2903

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COZY COPENHAGEN AND HOT HELSINKI

Join me on a journey through two European capitals consistently ranked among the happiest in the world. In this adventure, we explore Copenhagen and Helsinki, where stunning architecture, delicious cuisine, friendly people, and picturesque water views await at every turn.

WORDS BY **DUSTIN O'REGAN**

Our Scandinavian adventure began in Copenhagen, a city bursting with charm. Its winding canals, cobblestone streets, bridges, and colorful facades create a storybook setting, while its many neighborhoods each offer a distinct personality.

We made the NH Collection Copenhagen, (nh-collection.com) perched on the Inner Harbor in the Christianshavn neighborhood, our home base. Translated as “Christian’s Harbor,” this area is named after King Christian IV who created artificial islands hoping to draw Dutch merchants to Copenhagen. Today, it is an idyllic, high-end district within walking distance of almost everything.

Originally built in 1957 by Danish architect Palle Suenson as the headquarters for shipyard Burmeister & Wain, the five-star NH Collection Copenhagen opened in 2021 following an extensive renovation that includes subtle maritime nods to the building’s original tenant. For example, the entryway art installation *Ever Mighty—Forever Transforming* is named after the last ship built at the shipyard.

Sustainability plays a key role in NH Collection Copenhagen’s operations. The hotel is committed to reducing its environ-

mental impact, featuring a Green Sedum Roof and a Seawater Cooling System. These initiatives have earned the hotel prestigious DGNB Gold and Green Key certifications.

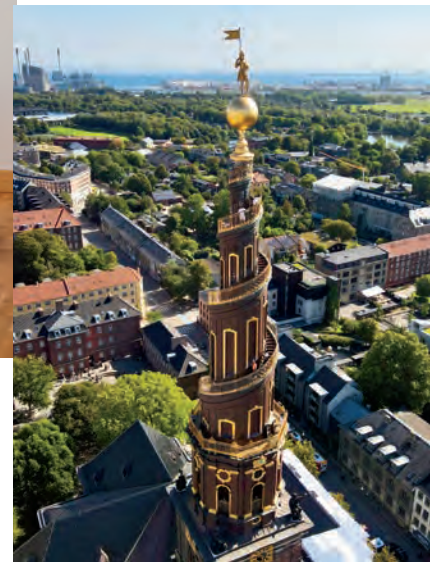
The hotel’s decor is fresh, modern, and distinctly Danish. My spacious suite featured enormous windows offering a beautiful view of the city and Christian’s Church. All guest room windows are equipped with black-out curtains to help guests adjust to the famed Scandinavian “white nights,” when sunlight lingers long into the night. In July, for instance, the sun rises around 4:30 a.m. and sets at approximately 10:00 p.m. Although this phenomenon gives you more time to enjoy the city, it would make for little sleep without the aid of said curtains.

After a blissful slumber, each morning I would enjoy a hearty Nordic-inspired breakfast at the hotel’s restaurant. I adored the traditional *koldskål* made with buttermilk, yogurt, mint, and lime and topped with a tiny biscuit. The attentiveness of the hotel staff was another reason for my daily return. Their every gesture reflects the hotel’s motto “Feel the extraordinary.”

After catching glimpses of dapper Danes bicycling to work—with a hat or scarf placed just so—through the restaurant’s windows, I was not surprised to learn there are more bicycles than



Vor Frelsers Kirke.
Photography by steffie82



Copenhagen Opera House. Photography by alxpin

people in Copenhagen. The city promotes cycling (imposing hefty taxes on automobiles) and has recently pledged to become the world's first carbon-neutral capital city.

On our first day, we opted for a guided walking tour with Slow Tours Copenhagen (slowtours copenhagen.dk), a smart choice as it gave us a deeper understanding of the city's rich history and culture and made later navigation a cinch.

At our first stop, the Vor Frelsers Kirke, we learned a wonderful way to admire the sweeping city views is to scale the spiral outdoor staircase of the Baroque church's gilded tower. Note that this memorable climb is not for the faint of heart.

Just beyond this magnificent church lies Freetown Christiania, a unique area that once served as an autonomous hippie commune. Founded in 1971 and long controversial for its drug trade, the district is undergoing renovations as longtime inhabitants aim to push out the "troublemakers." The area's fascinating history, vibrant murals, and eclectic shops make it an intriguing place to visit.

We continued our exploration north to the island of Holmen, the former grounds of the Royal Naval Base now filled with boutiques, design centers, and the new Royal Danish Opera

House. This massive cultural center, funded by the owners of the shipping company Maersk, is the most expensive opera house ever built, costing over \$500,000,000.

For lunch, we dined at Væksthuset in Opera Park (vaeksthuset.dk), enjoying traditional *smørrebrød*—open-faced Danish sandwiches (a staple of Scandinavian cuisine) made from sustainable, locally foraged ingredients. The restaurant's sun-drenched interior and grass-covered roof enhanced the feeling

of being embraced by nature.

After lunch, we took to the water, booking a canal cruise with Goboat Cruise (goboat.dk) to take in the city's neighborhoods. Our boat tour highlighted the city's deep connection to the sea. Copenhagen's clean waters (the cleanest in Europe according to our guide) are perfect for swimming, but only in designated areas (visitcopenhagen.com).

Sated with sightseeing we headed to Il Bucco (ilbucco.dk) for dinner. A local favorite (opened in 2011), this eatery serves seasonally focused, Italian-inspired cuisine (made with 99 percent locally sourced ingredients) in a hip, industrial setting. My main course was a delicate ravioli in a house-made yogurt sauce, so delicious that I used the homemade bread to lap up every remaining bit. Dessert was a geranium ice cream topped with fresh berries (Denmark's berries are otherworldly!)

The next morning, I ventured out alone to explore Slotsholmen, home to Folketing, the massive and stately Danish Parliament, and the historic Børsen, a 400-year-old stock exchange. Børsen was built in 1625 by King Christian IV. Once, this Dutch Renaissance-style building boasted red bricks, a teal green



Colorful houses behind ancient bridge. Photography by Viacheslav Chernobrovin

copper roof, a richly decorated interior, and a fanciful, distinctive spire formed by the intertwined tails of four dragons. For years it was said that the dragons protected Børsen from destruction. Sadly, in April 2024, an inferno engulfed large parts of the structure and toppled the spire. On that fateful spring day, even the dragons couldn't put out the flames.

A heartwarming tale came out of the tragedy as soldiers, museum conservators, and even members of the public, ran into the burning building and climbed on each other's shoulders to pull down artworks mounted high on the walls. This effort saved almost all the art except for a King Christian IV bust that weighed 4,000 pounds and could not be carried out. The city has promised to rebuild the beloved structure.

Crossing the street, I entered Strøget—the world's longest pedestrian and shopping street. Running between Town Hall Square and The Kings New Square ("Kongens Nytorv"), the approximately 2-mile stretch includes a maze of small side streets and offers fabulous shopping and people-watching.

I then rejoined my friends at the Designmuseum Denmark (designmuseum.dk). This shrine to Danish design is located in a beautiful building originally built as the city's first public hospital. The museum's four wings house an extensive collection showcasing Danish textiles and fashion and furniture pieces from iconic Danish designers like Arne Jacobsen and Kaare Klint. I highly recommend getting the Copenhagen Card (copenhagen-card.com), which offers free access to Designmuseum Denmark, other museums, and public transportation.

With our cultural curiosity satisfied for the day, we rode the incredibly clean subway to Tivoli (tivoli.dk), Copenhagen's famous amusement park, which opened in 1843 and offered the inspiration for Walt Disney's Disneyland. Tivoli isn't your typical amusement park—you'll find Michelin-starred restaurant pop-ups, one of Copenhagen's priciest hotels (the Nimb Hotel, a stunning example of Moorish architecture), performances from the New York City Ballet and stars like Diana Ross, and a charming lake for boating. After hearing Denmark's 84-year-old Queen Margrethe had recently ridden the park's most popular attraction, "The Roller Coaster," I had to try it myself. Built in 1914, it's one of the world's oldest wooden roller coasters and was indeed a thrilling ride. A huge fan of Tivoli, the Queen spends most of her time here working with the ballet on costumes and set design.



NH Collection's ROOF eatery and bar

For lunch, we opted for Tivoli's charming Kilden (kildenibav-en.dk), a cozy restaurant with long wooden tables in a lush garden setting. I indulged in more *smørrebrød*—one a combination of potato and herbs and the other a delight of smoked salmon on herbed cream cheese crowned with a mountain of dill. It was gastronomy at its finest, a far cry from the Six Flags' funnel cake.

That evening we dined at Meyers i Tårnet (meyers.dk), which is perched within a tower of the Danish Parliament building. The expansive city views coupled with a menu of seasonal ingredients and an impressive wine and cocktail list, made for an unforgettable dining experience. Since the restaurant sits in a government building, all guests must pass through security so be sure to allow extra time before your reservation.

On our last day in Copenhagen, we visited the iconic *Little Mermaid* statue. We began with a stroll through the picturesque Nyhavn (translated as "New Harbor" even though it was built more than three centuries ago). Lined with colorful townhouses and historic yachts moored in the canal, it is the city's most touristy area and you might recognize Nyhavn as its image is universally found on Danish postcards. Along the way, don't miss Frederik's Church, also known as the Marble Church. Modeled after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, its stunning Rococo architecture and grand dome dominate the Frederiksstaden neighborhood skyline. Nearby is the royal family's winter residence, Amalienborg Palace, a collection of four Rococo buildings symmetrically arranged around an octagonal courtyard, with a statue of King Frederik V on horseback at its center. Continuing through a lovely park and passing the beautiful Gefion Fountain depicting a Norse goddess, you'll arrive at Copenhagen's most famous symbol—the small bronze statue of the *Little Mermaid*, perched on a rock at the water's edge at Langelinie Pier. The statue was inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's beloved fairy tale and pays tribute to the city's most cherished storyteller.

On our final night, we headed up to NH Collection Copenhagen's rooftop eatery/bar, ROOF (roofcph.com). Our eyes were the first to feast as we admired the breathtaking views of Copenhagen's copper roofs, waterways, and many spires. Once seated, we savored an assortment of seductive cocktails and exquisite dishes crafted by the hotel's talented chefs.

Danish culture is centered around the concept of *hygge*—a feeling of cozy contentment and well-being—which we experienced throughout our stay. With hearts full, we bid farewell to our beautiful hotel and to Copenhagen, one of the cleanest and safest capitals in the world, as we set off for Finland, Denmark's Nordic neighbor.

The iconic domes of Uspenski Cathedral overlooking the SkyWheel and redeveloped warehouses on the waterfront of Helsinki harbour in the heart of Finland's vibrant capital city. Photography by fotoVoyager



HELSINKI

After a smooth flight to Helsinki, the drive to our hotel offered a delightful introduction to the EU's youngest capital, showcasing its Neoclassical and Art Nouveau architecture. Helsinki features a bustling harbor front, a grand main boulevard, towering cathedrals (en route to the hotel you'll pass the massive Uspenski Cathedral), a myriad of islands, and a vibrant design scene.

When I began writing about this city, the first phrase that popped into my head was "Helsinki is hot." After all sauna, pronounced "sownah," is a Finnish word. Saunas are ingrained in Finnish culture; the first written record of the Finnish sauna dates to 1112, making it a way of life for more than 2,000 years and there are as many saunas in Finland as there are people. The Helsinki Ferris wheel, known as the SkyWheel, even comes complete with a sauna cabin, the only one of its kind in existence. In sum, the Finns love heat!

Finns are incredibly friendly and love coffee, consuming more coffee per capita than any other nation, averaging five cups a day. Perhaps this helps them adjust to the long days of the aforementioned Scandinavian "white nights." Helsinki is home to countless charming coffee shops, and I highly recommend Kaffa Roastery.

We stayed at the NH Collection Helsinki Grand Hansa (nh-hotels.com), a perfectly located, historically significant hotel that merges two iconic Art Nouveau-style properties: the New Student House, built in 1910, and Seurahuone, Helsinki's oldest continuously operating hotel. Over a 100-year history, the buildings have hosted countless dignitaries, from presidents to grand dukes.



NH Collection Helsinki Grand Hansa's Presidential Suite living room

The New Student House was designed by Armas Lindgren and Wivi Lönn, Finland's most prominent female architect, while Seurahuone is considered one of Lindgren's greatest works. The Seurahuone building's grand exterior is crowned by enormous soapstone sculptures by Johannes Haapasalo.

Inside the hotel, you are greeted by a rich heritage burnished by modern hospitality. Original architecture and finishes coexist with sleek, contemporary touches like the stunning lobby bar, metal-clad reception pods, and a decorative glass wedge wall. Finnish contemporary art by artists such as Tapani Mikkonen and Kristian Krokfors adorns the rooms and public spaces. My suite was the perfect blend of old and new, featuring an Art Nouveau glass shower, a small balcony overlooking the promenade, and modern furniture by noted interior designer Carola Rytsölä crafted in local workshops.

The hotel's Hansa Café Bar & Brasserie takes guests on a



NH Collection Helsinki Grand Hansa's Presidential Suite

culinary journey, blending classic French cuisine with sustainably sourced local ingredients (hansacafehelsinki.com). For cocktails, the Kupoli bar, located in the historic dome-shaped tower, offers 360-degree views of the city (kupolibar.com/en). Here you will find meticulously curated cocktails that take libations to new “heights.” The USVA spa, inspired by the ethereal mist that drifts over Finnish lakes, offers a modern wellness experience rooted in ancient Finnish traditions. It includes a Finnish sauna, steam sauna, infrared sauna, and a serene relaxation room. We enjoyed a multi-sensory wellness experience, complete with a foot bath, face mask, and salt scrub in the steam room—deeply therapeutic. Adjacent to the spa, you will find an enormous gym—with every machine imaginable.

On our first night, we had an elegant dinner in the hotel's Presidential Suite—a spacious, 646-square-foot apartment fit for royalty. We dined on fresh fish, foraged vegetables, and local wines, with a view of the Helsinki Central Railway Station, regarded as one of the world's most beautiful train stations. Designed by Eliel Saarinen in 1919, the station's entrance is flanked by colossal male sculptures, and its soaring clock tower is a marvel of ornate glass and metalwork.

The next morning, we dove into Helsinki's famed Design Dis-

trict, full of hip furniture stores (Artek), design studios (Studio Sarpaneva), art galleries (Lokal Gallery), and museums (Design-museo). Many of these facades feature Art Nouveau architecture, making the exteriors as captivating as the treasures you'll find inside. After satisfying our design cravings, we strolled to Kaivopuisto Park and visited the charming former home of actress Ida Aalberg, now Restaurant Elm, known for its zero-waste philosophy and delicious sustainable fare.

In the evening, we wandered through Market Square or *Kauppatori*, browsed its vibrant fruit stalls, and took a ferry to Lonna Island to experience Lonna Sauna (lonna.fi). The public, wood-fired saunas offer spectacular views of the Baltic Sea and neighboring islands. Like the locals, we alternated between the intense heat of the sauna and a refreshing dip in the icy sea. Our meal at the Lonna Restaurant, featuring fresh, locally sourced ingredients, was equally unforgettable.

On our last day, we embraced Finland's love of foraging at the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum, where we gathered wild herbs in a forest surrounded by the Baltic Sea (foraginginfinland.com). Our guide introduced us to the benefits of various plants like stinging nettle (an aphrodisiac) and creeping Charlie (rich in vitamin C). Afterward, on a rocky outcrop overlooking the sea,



Helsinki South Harbor. Photography by Niklas Sjöblom



One of NH Collection Helsinki Grand Hansa's Spa Saunas



we enjoyed a traditional Finnish picnic of new potatoes, salmon, herbed butter, and blueberry pie, prepared by Chef Filip Forsberg of the Hansa Café Bar & Brasserie.

For our final dinner, we dined at Savoy (savoyhelsinki.fi), one of Helsinki's most prestigious restaurants, designed by the famous architects Aino and Alvar Aalto. Our meal, a blend of Finnish and French flavors with a Russian twist, was enjoyed on the top floor's glass balcony with a stunning view of the city. We capped off the evening with a stroll through the lively Esplanade Park, reminiscing about our wonderful trip to this energetic city.

Helsinki, with its friendly people, vibrant culture, beautiful design, and fresh food, deserves its accolades as one of the happiest cities on earth. Whether you're soaking in the city's rich history, indulging in its exquisite cuisine, sweating in its saunas, or simply enjoying a cup of coffee in a charming café, Helsinki offers a memorable experience. Don't forget to pick up a Moomin mug or two for loved ones back home. *Kippis!*

Craving a European getaway to two Norse capitals rich in culture and brimming with warmth? This itinerary is sure to delight every traveler.

Rabeca Ann is one of the most sought-after makeup artists in the Chicago area, known for her signature no-makeup makeup look. With a focus on enhancing natural beauty, she teaches her clients how to create a radiant, effortless glow—helping them feel like the best version of themselves. Rabeca creates custom makeup tutorials for her clients, even going so far as shopping with them for their personalized makeup picks and sending email links for individual products to buy. Who doesn't need a makeup lesson refresher every few years to stay current? Here she shares with us where she's traveling next and her top beauty tips for travel.

To book your makeup tutorial, visit rabecaann.com.

EDITED BY **MEGAN WEISBERG**

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DIMITRY LOISEAU**



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Suzanne Tucker Home

Suzanne Tucker Home's most recent textiles collection is a beautifully curated assortment of botanical embroideries, artisanal wovens, and detailed prints. The four unique patterns, Karma, Marguerite, Anastasia, and Tilly showcase exquisite craftsmanship through intricate techniques like hand-woven silk ikat, delicate embroidery, and watercolor printing, blending tradition with contemporary design.

suzannetuckerhome.com

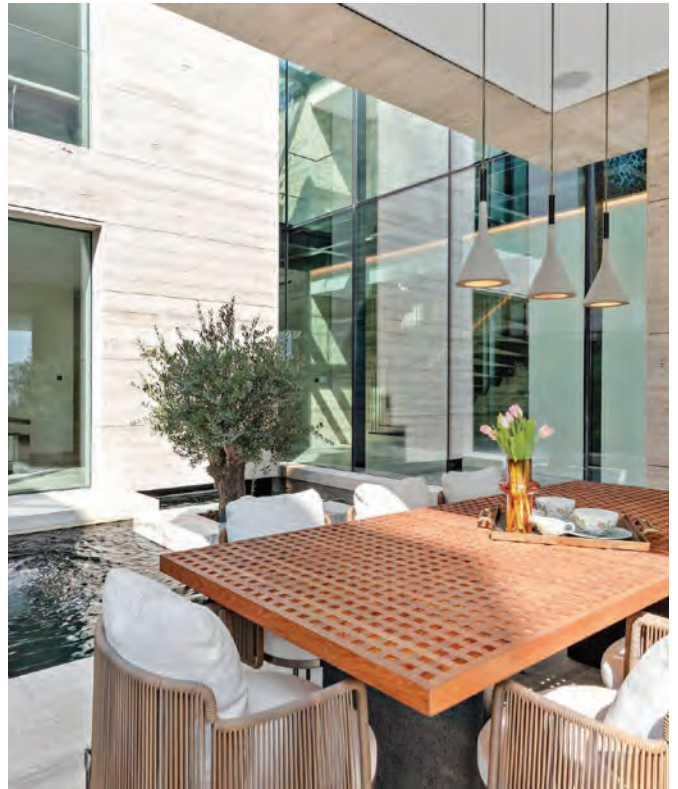




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Crafted by the esteemed Naga Architects, this villa is designed to embrace natural light, harness the refreshing sea breeze, and allow a continuous flow of air throughout. The villa includes a sky garden, three olive trees, a rooftop water feature and views of the beach and sea

The Details: 6 Bedrooms • 7,663 square feet, \$2,740 per square foot • Won Best International Architectural Single Residence Award 2023/2024 by International Property Awards **Contact:** Mersiha Tefilovikj, Engel & Völkers EV, +97144223500

along with direct beach access. Two saltwater pools, cinema room, a Baluthaup show kitchen, Technogym and more are included in the property.



HIGHLAND BEACH \$19 million

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This is a rare opportunity to live oceanfront in one of only eleven estate homes in the exclusive community of Ocean Place Estates, which includes a 24-hour manned security gate. The private pool overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and

The Details: 4 Bedrooms, 7 Baths • 20,000 square feet, \$950 per square foot • Ocean views, direct beach access **Contact:** Catherine A. McGlennon, Engel & Völkers

the property has a large turf grass lot. The home includes a library/office, home theater, exercise room, and balconies from all major rooms.





7 FOX HUNT ROAD \$22 million

BARRINGTON HILLS

Nestled within 70-plus private acres in Barrington Hills, Hidden Ponds is an extraordinary estate blending English country charm with modern grandeur. This masterpiece offers an elevator, Brazilian walnut floors, cathedral ceilings, and five fireplaces. A dramatic great room with a 30-foot ceiling, an old English-inspired kitchen, and

The Details: 8 Bedrooms, 10.4 Baths • 30,000+ square feet, \$733 per square foot • 6-car attached garage, bordered by Hill 'N Dale 205-acre preserve **Contact:** Mimi Noyes, @properties Barrington, 847-421-2836

an opulent dining room set the stage for elegant entertaining. The lower level boasts an English pub, a wine cellar, a movie theater, and a full gymnasium, while the grounds feature two serene ponds, lush gardens, a pool, spa, and a 4,400 plus square feet showroom. Surrounded by horse farms and nature preserves, yet just 40 miles from Chicago, Hidden Ponds is a rare fusion of luxury, privacy, and accessibility.





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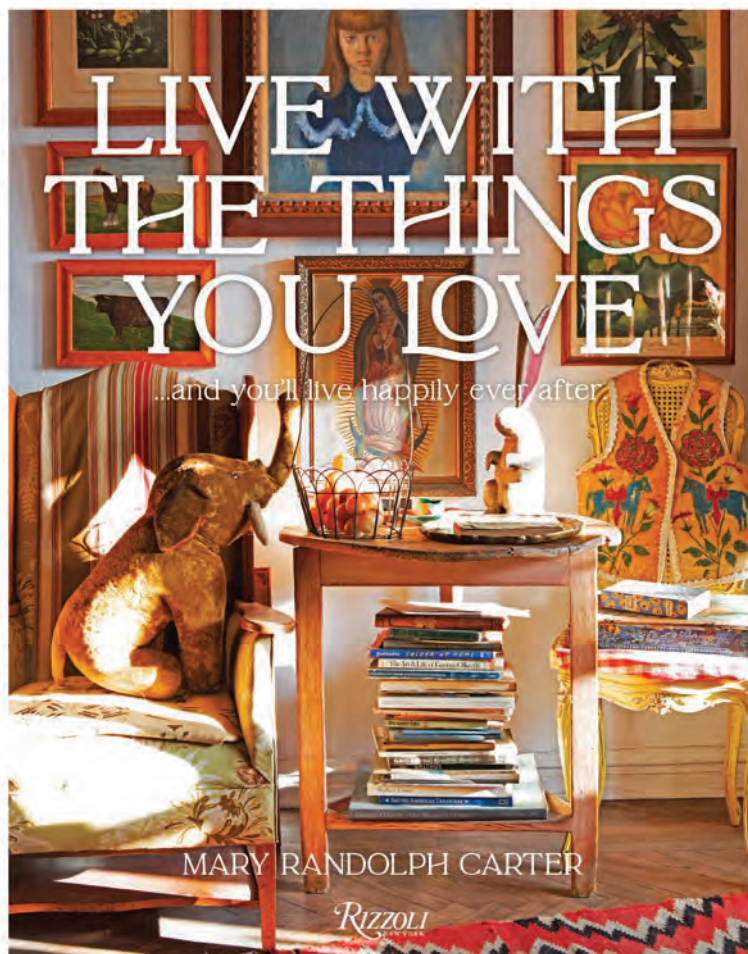
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PUBLISHER PROFILE

Matt Miller



Generations of Gems

Barrington's M.J. Miller & Co. continues its 56-year legacy of fine jewelry.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MONICA KASS ROGERS**

Emerald and diamond bracelet

“If we are able to see far into the distance, it is because we stand on the shoulders of giants.” This famous aphorism—first attributed to 12th-century scholars, was among the many wise sayings Michael J. Miller’s father, Milo, liked to quote. Decades later, with Mike’s son Matt now serving as president of the M.J. Miller & Co. jewelry business, the phrase seems especially significant.

M.J. Miller’s unwavering commitment to quality, customer care, and creativity are part of a family credo that runs three generations deep. Beginning with Milo, an expert watchmaker who opened the family’s first business in Leeds, North Dakota, on to Mike who established the jewelry store in Barrington, and now with Matt, each generation has never swayed in the pursuit of excellence as they look forward to the future.

“Making sure each customer is met with expert care and courtesy, maintaining a collection of jewels that is the best in the Midwest, and offering creative new designs—this is what we are and have been about for the last 50 years,” says Matt.

Centrally located on Main Street in Barrington, M.J. Miller’s collections include jewelry from designers that run the gamut from J.B. Star, Robert Procop and Bellarri, to Picchiotti, Verragio, and Victor Velyan, plus one-of-a-kind pieces by Mike and Matt Miller. The store also offers a selection of fine timepieces, including watches from Seiko. Fine gift shop items include David Oscarson folding knives and writing instruments among the display, as well as items from Jay Strongwater, Mackenzie-Childs, Olivia Riegel, and more.

“Custom design is at the heart of what we do,” says Matt. “With each consultation, we guide clients through the design process, combining their favorite elements into a one-of-a-kind piece and ensuring—from concept to creation that our expert craftsmanship brings each design to life with precision and care.”

Beyond these “forever pieces,” Matt says items from M.J. Miller’s luxury collections of pendants, rings, necklaces and earrings are still a massive draw. “When he was just 15 years old, my father was given a piece of advice by the top jeweler in the world: a man named Harry Winston,” says Matt. “Winston said, ‘You can’t own everything, so what you own must be the best. Go for quality.’”

Adhering to that advice, M.J. Miller has cultivated one of the best collections of colored gemstones in the Midwest and now has clients in all 50 states and 15 foreign countries.



Each generation at M.J. Miller has honed their expertise by learning from industry leaders, embracing creativity, and refining their natural talent for design. Mike and Matt took to gemstones at a young age. Mike sold his first diamond when he was 11; Matt when he was 17. And while Mike’s passion for gemstones led him to visit gem mines and dealers all over the globe, world travels for Matt came in connection to his skills as an artist. Matt has toured and exhibited his paintings in France, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, and throughout the United States.

Matt’s skills as a painter relate well to his work designing jewelry. “There is my perception and understanding of color ... how to mix, match, style and pair different stones ... even utilizing the color of different metals,” he says. “Being able to visualize all of this and draw designs so that customers can then see the possibilities really helps.”

As well, Matt says people have been looking to create vintage looks both with the styles they are buying, and with redesigning jewelry they have inherited. Through it all, “I would definitely say it’s trust over trend every day,” sums Matt. “Open for a half century, we have cultivated relationships with so many families in our community, the trust is there. It means a lot to me as the next generation in leadership at M.J. Miller to keep the cycle of care, quality, and service going forward.”

Please visit mjmillerjewels.com for more information.

Triple Threat

Educator/artist/musician Kamila Glowacki thrives in her trio of fields.

WORDS BY **BILL MCLEAN**

ILLUSTRATION BY **TOM BACHTELL**

How Kamila Glowacki found the time to field questions from *Country*, we'll never know.

The super-busy, impossibly industrious, 33-year-old serves the Krannert Art Museum (KAM) in Champaign as its assistant curator of community learning and engagement; creates all kinds of artwork (drawings, paintings, posters, prints, sculptures, comics, album covers); and performs as a singer/guitarist for the indie punk band Nectar.

She educates; she crafts; she warbles.

A graduate of John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, Glowacki was a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign when her parents, Kai and Lidia, moved to Barrington.

We asked her to navigate us through a day in her life as she tackles each profession.

6 a.m.: Sometimes 6:30 a.m. Kamila wakes up and comes face to whiskers with long-haired cats Addy and Marnie. "They let me know it's time for breakfast. Addy is white with brownish-gray spots and is the sweetest cat, almost puppy-like. Loves to be held. Marnie is tiny, black, puffy. She hides around strangers and loves to hunt for toys."

7-7:30 a.m.: Kamila mounts her exercise bike and obeys instructions from an encouraging guide via an app.

8:45 a.m.: Kamila's commute to KAM takes 10 minutes. "Unless it's nice outside and I ride by bike."

10 a.m.-2 p.m.: Kamila welcomes 50 fifth-graders at the museum and co-spearheads a field trip. "Most think a curator is a designer of exhibitions. My assistant curator position is a flexible one in that I design learning programs and form outreach partnerships. After each field trip, I decompress with my co-workers and look back at the day, going over the 'roses' (positives), the 'thorns' (negatives), and the 'buds' (future opportunities)."

Mid-to-late afternoon: Kamila whips out her iPad and



sketches and/or works on projects (designing album covers and T-shirts) for her friends in the music industry. Her artwork has been shown at the Polish Museum of America in Chicago. "I've been expressing myself through visual arts for as long as I can remember. When I was 3, I'd draw dogs, and my mom would put those drawings and others in a binder."

6:30 p.m.: Time to gear up for the night's band gig, one of 25 or so annually in the U.S. and Canada. Nectar has dropped two albums, the latest, *No Shadow*, in 2022. "My favorite place to eat dinner, if we're performing locally, is at Esquire in Champaign. They serve the best vegan dumplings."

11 p.m.: Back home, finally. Her cats' meows holler, "It's about time!" Kamila decompresses again, this time by disconnecting from screens and reflecting. "What I love most is my work with children, because it's rewarding. I'm motivated to teach them, to inspire them. I'm finding more ways to educate kids at the museum through my interests in art and music. But my successes and milestones aren't just about me; they're all about collaborations with teachers and band members. I also appreciate the ongoing support I've received from my family and friends. Community is so important to me. That's why my dream is to open an all-age music venue where community is valued."

For more on Glowacki and her art and music, visit kamilaglowacki.com.

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