

December 2024

OMAHA  
AREA BOARD OF  
REALTORS®  
REALTOR®

# REVIEW

Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## SEASON'S GREETINGS!

The holidays are upon us again; every year, it shows up sooner than I think it should. The season's beauty is magical: lively banter at holiday gatherings, reflecting on the year, and the glow of the seasons' lights illuminating the dreary winter sky.

Every first Friday in December rings in **REALTOR® Ring Day**, when REALTORS® across the nation ring bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle drive. It is a worthy cause that raises money for those in need. Speaking from experience ringing bells for REALTOR® Ring Day, I have felt like I received more than the givers. We all have our collected stories that bring us various sizes of donations that day. It's pretty cool that we get to be a part of this as REALTORS®

The spirit of giving kicked off with the **OABR Turkey Bowl** in November. The annual event always brings members together to collect toys and raise money for Toys-for-Tots. Every year, boxes and boxes of toys are collected, toys that will go to children in need. It proves how much the real estate community truly cares.

The end of the year takes our OABR Leadership to the **National Association of REALTORS® conference**; while the weather could have been warmer in Boston, we learned great things from the sessions. This conference is an experience that you should consider as a REALTOR®. Coming home with new ideas to implement because of a class or a conversation you had with a colleague from a different state is a gift. Do yourself and your business a favor and see what a National level meeting can do for your hopes and dreams.

Many people are rushing around, rounding up last-minute gifts. One that keeps on giving is the gift of education. There's one last chance to fulfill your **Ethics and Fair Housing requirements** before the year draws to a close. Check out the OABR calendar ([OmahaRealtors.com/calendar](http://OmahaRealtors.com/calendar)) to view currently available classes, or visit [nar.realtor](http://nar.realtor) to view other online classes.

The **Nebraska REALTORS® Association Political Action Days** are right around the corner, January 27 - 29. It's an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest policies that will impact our industry; this year has been a memorable one for policies – right?

Make 2025 the year you attend a committee meeting at the OABR office. The meetings are a prime chance for you to learn the latest that is going on locally and network with peers that one day might be on the opposite side of a contract you are working on.

And don't miss REcharge! At **REcharge 2025**, NAR's Deputy Chief Economist and VP of Research, Dr. Jessica Lautz, kicks off the day as one of the keynote speakers. She will help you understand what is going on with the market today. There's also a host of timely breakout sessions. Tickets are on sale now for the February 5 event.

As December draws to a close, I like to look back at the year. My best tip is to go back through the pictures on your phone, where a lot of fun is documented. In the lyrics of country artist Cody Johnson, "If you got a dream, chase it, 'cause a dream won't chase you back." It's time to set new goals and visions for the upcoming year. I hope you take time to do this and then look back next year to see your accomplishments.

Happy Holidays and may you always walk in sunshine, my friend!

**Jessica Sawyer,**  
2025 OABR President



# REVIEW

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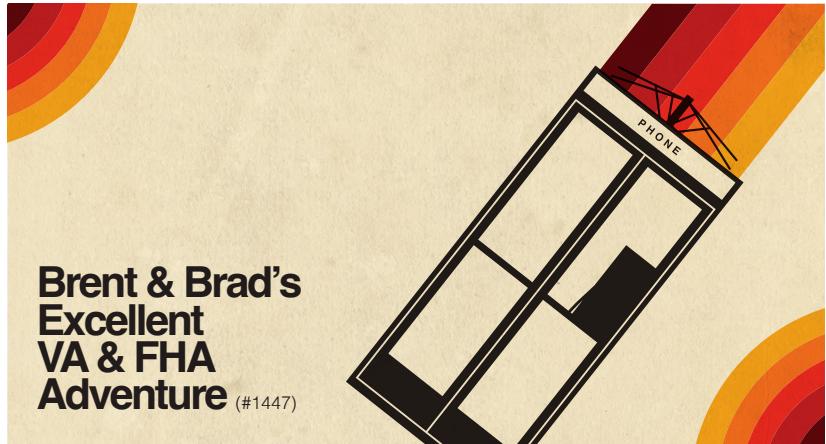


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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## TWO TECH TOPICS

Written by  
Melissa  
McElroy

Learning how to make technology work for you, not against you, is critical to protecting your business and taking it to the next level. Tech-savvy real estate pro John Mayfield explored the best ways to navigate that sometimes treacherous terrain in two RPAC-sponsored CE courses in October at the OABR Education Center.

common passwords, if one account is compromised, all the accounts are vulnerable. Don't respond to mystery messages, whether in an email or text. Don't open emails or click on links if you don't know the sender. Many email phishing scams look very convincing and even have your electronic signature and a very similar email address.

Communicate with clients about potential phishing scams and encourage them to reach out if they have questions or suspect they were sent something questionable.

Using encrypted emails for sensitive information and secure portals are necessary safety measures. It's essential to stay informed about current scams and communicate that with colleagues and clients. Using a VPN (Virtual Private Network) can provide an additional level of security, as well as two-factor authentication. Keep your phone's software and security settings updated, and avoid storing sensitive information on apps or enabling auto-login.

Wire Fraud in real estate is prevalent because of the high dollar transactions. Prevent criminals from gaining access to funds by cautioning clients to verify information and confirm that they are sending the funds to the correct recipient. Look for red flags in emails. Be proactive, not reactive. Vishing is a form of phishing that uses text messages to gain access to potential victims. Wi-Fi sniffing is a technique cybercriminals use to hack into an unsuspecting user's laptop while on the

### TECHNOLOGY RISK MANAGEMENT

The early class explored potential security threats that can arise when safety precautions are not followed. Specific case studies examined everything from wire fraud, using unsecured Wi-Fi, weak passwords, data breaches, and the potential pitfalls of AI-generated phishing emails to the increasing use of deepfakes and voice mimicry.

Failing to employ security measures can cause lost time, money, and reputation – even resulting in legal issues. Measures should be taken to protect yourself, your business, your reputation, and your clients. Using strong passwords can help safeguard email security. Strong passwords should be long, complex, and include upper- and lower-case letters.

Passwords should be changed frequently, and the same password should not be used for multiple accounts. With

same unsecured Wi-Fi network – like the coffee shop. If the user uses the same passwords for different accounts, the hacker could gain access to all those accounts, including email, store accounts, bank accounts, and confidential documents. And they could gain access without you knowing it until it's too late. Neglecting to secure client information properly could cost you.

Thoroughly evaluate any third-party technology before adopting it into your real estate business. Be sure they comply with data protection laws like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), and in the event of a security breach, you must inform clients.

AI is a powerful, highly efficient tool, but can have an algorithmic bias and undervalue properties in specific locations. If the neighborhoods are in predominantly minority communities, AI analysis could lead to accusations of discrimination, which isn't good for you, your company, or the industry. AI can't replace human observation. It's essential that you provide human oversight to avoid unintended errors and prevent ethical or legal ramifications.

## COMMUNICATING WITH TODAY'S TECH SAVVY CONSUMER

In the afternoon, the class focused on developing a strong online presence through social media marketing. According to Mayfield, there are important data points to ponder when considering social media platforms.

He believes Facebook is best for long-form content, videos, and community-building. Video content gets 59 percent more engagement than other types of posts on Facebook. Posts with images see more than twice the engagement of those without. Facebook Live videos are watched three times longer than pre-recorded ones.

Instagram is best for visual storytelling, short videos, and personal branding. Instagram Reels get 67% more engagement than standard Instagram videos. Over 500 million people use Instagram Stories daily, an ideal setup for consistent, short-form content. Posts with faces get 38% more likes than those without.

LinkedIn is best for professional insights, thought leadership, and networking. Long-form content on LinkedIn creates higher engagement from a professional audience. Articles typically get more visibility. Posts with images receive twice the comments than text-only posts. LinkedIn video posts are five times more likely to start a conversation than other types of content.

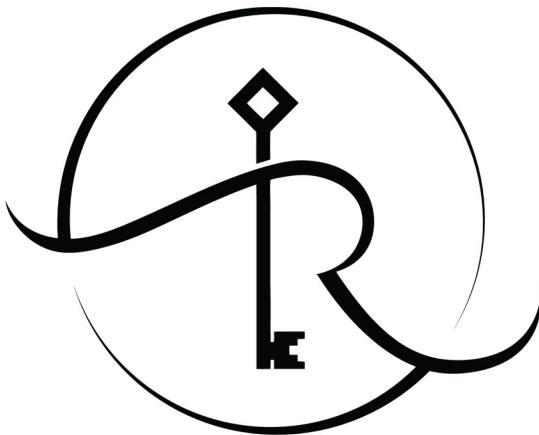
The instructor covered many ways AI can help you achieve more significant results with your social media and marketing campaigns. The following tips were provided in the course:

- **Automated content creation and scheduling** keep your social media channels active. He cautioned that consistency was key. This approach can help busy professionals create more efficiently and consistently.
- **Targeted ads and audience segmentation** create focused advertising campaigns for potential buyers and sellers.
- **Content personalization** tailors posts and ads based on audience behavior and preferences.
- **Predictive analytics for market insights:** analyzes market trends to inform your marketing strategy.
- **AI-generated visuals and video content** create professional-looking graphics and videos for listings and social media.



JOHN MAYFIELD

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OMAHA AREA REALTORS®

# GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

**H**oliday cards displayed on the mantle depict an array of charming images: woodland creatures gathered around a magnificent evergreen, dancing snowmen, and cherub-cheeked children playing in the snow. Freshly baked goodies fill homes with an inviting aroma. It's the perfect time to drink hot cocoa nestled near a roaring fire while watching holiday classics.

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® Foundation embraces the spirit of the season by supporting the community throughout the year. Charitable donations to the OABR Foundation help fund critical housing-related needs and educational scholarships. It is a separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization that enables year-end tax-deductible contributions that benefit the community.

OABR Foundation 2025 President Denise Poppen said, "I support the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® Foundation because it embodies the real estate industry's commitment to our community and offers a meaningful charitable outlet. The Foundation ensures that every dollar donated goes directly to impactful initiatives, from scholarships for aspiring real estate professionals to vital support for trades programs."

Poppen added, "After the recent tornadoes, I witnessed firsthand how the OABR Foundation stepped up to help those affected, including members of our real estate community. It's heartening to know that, through tax-deductible contributions, we're not just working in real estate but also actively making a difference in the lives of our neighbors. Supporting the OABR Foundation is a way to give back and contribute to a stronger, more resilient Omaha community, and I believe that together, we can create lasting positive change."

Among other worthy investments, the OABR Foundation supports students at Metropolitan Community College's Construction and Building Sciences Program and the Builders of the Future high school program in Nebraska. Both programs are wise investments that benefit the community by developing needed workers for skilled construction trades. The Foundation also provides scholarships for UNO students pursuing a career in real estate.

Current OABR President Jessica Sawyer said, "I enjoy how the OABR Foundation keeps their eyes and ears open on how to be impactful for our greater Omaha community, like the support given to Builders of the Future. The people involved in that program are people we don't meet every day as REALTORS®, but they are leading in every avenue of the construction of a house and doing the ground-up work by encouraging the next generation of contractors that our world desperately needs."



Voluntary donations to the Foundation provide funding. The OABR Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Nine local REALTORS® serve as its Directors. OABR absorbs all administrative and overhead expenses, which allows 100% of donations to go directly toward:

1. Critical needs for shelter, including local disasters and emergencies, the REALTOR® Relief Foundation, and the Nebraska Home Buyer's Assistance Foundation.
2. Educational scholarships for UNO students and other post-secondary students working toward a career in real estate.
3. Newer members who are pursuing a REALTOR® Designation or Certification.
4. The Metro Community College's Construction and Building Science program and the Nebraska Builders of the Future High School program for individuals drawn toward the construction trades.
5. Financial support for other special needs and local charitable organizations in the greater Omaha community.

Learn more at: [omaharealtors.com/foundation](http://omaharealtors.com/foundation)



# REMEMBERING MICKEY SODORO

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

A winter storm ravaged the region on that bleak day on December 29, 2020. People across the Omaha metro tried to unbury driveways as the unrelenting snow blanketed the city. Cars slid off icy roads into embankments. The day started out as a typical Midwestern winter morning.

Little did the beleaguered city know that a different storm was brewing, one that would rock the community to its core. It was the day that beloved REALTOR® Mickey Sodoro would be found brutally murdered at his rental property. The shocking news made national headlines. Family and friends tried to make sense of a senseless act.

His daughter, REALTOR® Michelle Sodoro, said, "My dad always said you should behave in a way that if anyone reported back about you to your kids, your kids would light up. Someday, your stories will be all that's left of you." Michelle reflected on the gravity of his memory. "He left so much."

She tearfully lamented the fact that her daughters would never get the chance to go fishing with their grandfather. Her father loved children.

"My dad was the kind of person who made everyone feel like they were the only person in the room," she said, tearing up, "everyone was welcome at his table." Her father was generous to a fault and always gave more than was necessary. He genuinely cared about other people.

She remembered doing charity work with him, where they delivered baskets to people in need. "He was slipping cash into the baskets he was delivering," she said with a laugh. "We had to tell him to stop doing that. People were getting confused why some people were getting cash in their baskets, and some were not."

"He wanted to help," Michelle explained. "He would find a way to fix any problem." She described him as someone who was humble and quiet but had strong energy and a commanding presence. "He was the boss."

She smiled and said that her father was a kind man, but he didn't put up with any bull.

"My father always called me his little Italian. I would always stand up for people." He loved to tell the story of baby Michelle, when she was about 18 months, still in her diapers, yelling at the neighbor kids who were bullying her sister, "Leave my sissy alone!"

Mickey was a simple man who loved making chili in his Goodwill crockpot. He loved pizza. He loved a good bargain. The coat that he always wore, the one he was wearing in his final moments, was one he bought on clearance at Walmart. "Despite all his success, he'd always get the cheapest things for himself but wanted the best for everyone else," his daughter said. "He bought himself a cheap crockpot from Goodwill but bought a fancy Williams Sonoma crockpot for me. He was so proud of that crockpot," she said with a grin.

Michelle's eyes lit up when she was reminiscing about her father, and she started laughing. "I shouldn't tell you this. He'd kill me. He was such a private person. But this story has to be told. It has to be memorialized. One time on the Fourth of July,

we were in the backyard by the pool. My dad, who was not a chemist, was mixing pool chemicals together in a plastic, gas station cup. All of a sudden, we heard this loud explosion. We didn't know if it was fireworks or what, until my dad started running and screamed, 'Run for your lives!' She was laughing with tears in her eyes. "We were all laughing so hard that we couldn't run. Nobody got hurt," she said with a laugh. "My dad bought premixed pool chemicals after that."

Mickey loved football. His daughter said he'd get depressed after the Super Bowl and then pep up in August when football was starting up again. Michelle was born five minutes before Monday Night Football. He won money betting on the Jets that night. She was like his little good luck charm and ended up sharing her father's love for the sport. He died briefly before Monday Night Football, she tearfully recalled. She won her Fantasy Football League because of the game that night. It seemed like a nod from her father. He is always with her. She drives his truck to this day and feels his presence, "He loved that truck."

A friend and former colleague, Linda Kawacz, described Mickey as "a genuinely good guy who would go out of his way to help anyone."

They developed a strong bond over the 26 years that they worked together. Her office was next to his. She was intimidated by him the first time that she met him. His direct, take no b.s. approach earned him the respect of everyone. Underneath that sometimes blunt demeanor was a heart of gold.

"Mickey was the kind of person you could always rely on. If you were ever in a position where you were allowed to make only one phone call, he'd be the one you'd call. He'd save you," she said about her longtime friend.

Linda remembers when her kids were younger, she had a car that would always break down. One day, it broke down, and she didn't have a way to pick up her kids from school. "Mickey said, 'I'll pick them up.'" And he did, at the drop of a hat.

She recalls her mother's funeral; she looked up and saw Mickey there. As busy as he was, he was the kind of person who would show up to pay his respects at a friend's mother's funeral.

Linda remembered him as humble and hardworking. He'd usually be the first one in the office and the last one to leave, dressed in a neatly pressed, sharp suit. She said that Mickey was very smart. He knew real estate and shared his wealth of knowledge with the younger agents in the office. They all looked up to him and respected his advice. He also



guided many clients to make wise decisions. "He really just had this ability to read people," she said.

Before Covid, their broker asked Mickey to be a speaker at the next office meeting to share advice with the other agents about what made him successful. He gave an amazing speech to a packed room.

## "WHEN MICKEY TALKED, PEOPLE LISTENED."

"Mickey had a really great sense of humor," she said, "and an infectious laugh." The thing that stands out the most to her is how much he loved his family, and his friends were also his family. The father and grandfather adored his kids and his grandkids.

"He was always willing to give someone the benefit of the doubt. He believed in giving people second chances and that people could turn their lives around. He was a remarkable man," Linda said finally.

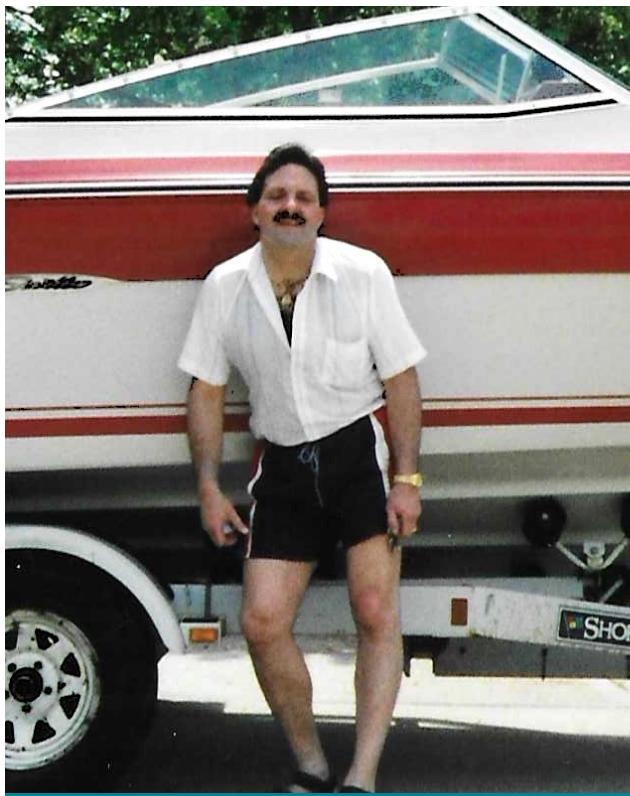
Mickey's death serves as a sobering reminder about the dangers that REALTORS® face on the job and the importance of thoroughly vetting prospective clients and following safety procedures.

Michelle Sodoro said, "There needs to be awareness about safety. It affects everyone, despite your gender or age." She said, "My father was such a big believer in safety. The precautions he took are the reason why a suspect was taken into custody so quickly." She said that her dad would want everyone to stay safe on the job. "Use your Forewarn app. It's a resourceful tool."

Michelle explained why it was important for people to follow safety protocol, why you should take down any prospective client's information and share who you're meeting and your location with loved ones. "So, if you don't make it home, your loved ones have peace."

As the anniversary of his passing approaches, we pay tribute to a great man by celebrating the life he fiercely lived and the many lives he touched. He built a legacy on love, hard work, grit, and a reverence for real estate.

**Rest in peace, Mickey Sodoro.**



**Mickey Sodoro with family and colleagues.**  
Photos provided by Michelle Sodoro.



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# TRAC BURKHARDT

## WCR 2025 PRESIDENT

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

2025 WCR President Trac Burkhardt is no stranger to leadership. The former West Corporation VP commands a room. She also has had a long love affair with real estate. She and her husband have been investors and owned properties long before she embarked on her career as a REALTOR®. After working for a corporation for years, she was ready to make a life change and decided to take the plunge.

"Coming out of corporate America was life-changing," the real estate pro said. "I was able to be home more."

It was only a matter of time before she discovered the WCR organization, which helped her grow personally and professionally. "Getting involved with WCR was key," she said matter-of-factly. "It provided an opportunity to network with the best, to meet great agents and affiliates and build a network." She also credits her brokerage, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, The Good Life Group, for cultivating a supportive environment.

One of the first people she recalls meeting at a WCR event was Denise Poppen, someone Trac described as a positive and uplifting person who was always encouraging. Sarina McNeil was another person who has influenced her over the years. "Sarina and I go back 30 years. We work at the

same brokerage. We think a lot alike in many ways but have different strengths." Following Sarina over the past year has set up an excellent framework for the coming year.

Burkhardt wants to build on that legacy. The WCR Omaha 2025 President has a vision for when she takes the reigns. "I want to increase membership and participation, provide value, provide valuable content in meetings, and increase community involvement." When she reflects on what she hopes for each member of the organization, she said, "I want every member to feel like they're getting something from WCR and that they're an important part of it."

She hopes to raise awareness about the opportunities out there for members to get more involved without a huge commitment. "They can contribute as much or as little as they want," she said, explaining that volunteering doesn't require a massive amount of time.



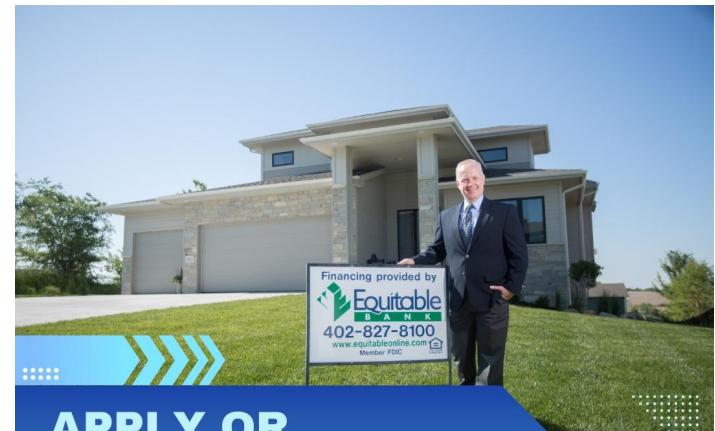
TRAC BURKHARDT, KERRI HARTNETT,  
AND SARINA MCNEEL

# Women's Council of REALTORS® Omaha

As Burkhardt shadowed WCR 2024 President Sarina McNeel over the last year, she focused on who was coming to board meetings and what they contributed to the conversation. With such a diverse assortment of personalities and styles, each individual brought something unique to the table.

"WCR allows members the opportunity to step out of the day-to-day and mingle with people outside of a transaction," she explained. "It has opened so many doors."

Burkhardt extolled the generosity of the WCR members. Whether it's the golf outing, the spring extravaganza, or wrapping Christmas gifts for Abide, the entire organization loves giving back to the community, strengthening the members' bond while banding together to serve the greater good.



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# 2024 NAR NXT BOSTON

Written by Melissa McElroy

Every November, ushers in NAR NXT, the largest real estate conference in the country. Boston, Mass., home of the Red Sox and the Boston Marathon, provided the backdrop for NAR NXT 2024.

According to NAR, 15,000 attendees worldwide converged upon the home of the Boston Tea Party to get the latest tea on the real estate industry. Attending governance meetings and breakout sessions and listening to powerhouse speakers were prime opportunities. In addition to bolstering industry knowledge, it provided a chance to converse with thought leaders about the most pressing topics that impact the industry and network with colleagues from around the country.

The conference, in early November, boasted an impressive roster of speakers. MLB Hall of Famer David Ortiz, aka "Big Papi," headlined the closing session. He inspired attendees with his story about his childhood in the Dominican Republic to become a World Series Champion with the Boston Red Sox. Renowned ChatGPT wiz and national speaker Marki Lemons Ryhal graced the

conference with her AI expertise.

NAR's Chief Economist, Dr. Lawrence Yun, discussed how recent developments in the U.S. economy impacted the housing market. NAR's Deputy Chief Economist and Vice President of Research, Dr. Jessica Lautz, shared highlights on the 2024 housing market. **Lautz is a keynote speaker at REcharge 2025 on February 5. Tickets are now available!**

Omaha-based REALTOR® **Andrea Marzullo-Lane**, a featured speaker at NAR NXT 2024, shared her secret sauce about navigating the world of real estate and business in the aftermath of the NAR lawsuits. She taught the course, "VA: Everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask!" where she broke down the fundamentals of providing exceptional service to those who have served our country.

Lane received questions from the audience to help combat common myths. She described her experience teaching at the NAR conference as "an adventure from the start." She added, "You're always nervous when you teach a class." She found this especially true, trying to cram so

much into her 20-minute, question-driven session. Much of her class focused on new compensation rules and how those rules impact VA loans. Now, compensation can be rolled into a home loan, but there are still qualifications. "It's not a cut-and-dry solution," Marzullo-Lane said.

NAR NXT presented an opportunity for the REALTOR® not only to teach but also learn, with a plethora of available classes to choose from and networking opportunities with thousands of colleagues from around the world.

"As an educator, it's all about learning how people do things in their part of the country."

She learned from Marki Lemons Ryhal and made an Instagram reel using the information learned from her class. She then showed Lemons Ryhal the reel. Perhaps the biggest compliment to an educator is demonstrating how you could apply their teachings in real-time.

OABR Director **Mike McGlynn** trekked to NAR NXT 2024 for his first NAR convention. He said it was well worth the trip. The sheer number of other REALTORS® was impressive. He met people from around the world: Spain, Germany, Mexico, Portugal, and the Philippines. It was an amazing opportunity to cultivate contacts and network, as well as learn how professionals from other regions conduct business.

McGlynn said he continually works to build his referral network. Attending a conference of this magnitude bolsters his network exponentially.

He was impressed with NAR NXT's lineup of classes. The Bias Override course and a class on Branding stood out to him. He is in the process of applying what he learned at the convention to his business.

"One of the perks of being involved in the REALTOR® organization is the opportunities you are exposed to," McGlynn said. "That, plus the local networking and professional development, are great incentives to get involved."

After all that, there's some fun too! NAR NXT is an action-packed week with different events every night. The RPAC Major Investors and the Nebraska REALTORS® both had gatherings. On Friday night, REALTORS® got to experience Lansdowne Street behind Fenway Park, with exclusive access to the Green Monster, the famous left-field wall. Homes.com also sponsored an event at View Boston, topping off the week with a 360-degree view from the 52nd Floor.



MLB Hall of Fame member, David Ortiz with NAR President, Kevin Sears



NAR Chief Economist, Dr. Lawrence Yun

# GOING GREEN SAVES SOME GREEN

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

OABR President-elect and continuing education instructor Brad Fricke is one of a handful of REALTORS® in Nebraska with a NAR Green Designation. According to Fricke, the designation teaches agents how to properly represent energy-efficient homes and ensure they're appraised fairly.

When considering energy efficiency, Fricke said that many wrongly assume solar panels are the best way to achieve a green home. Fricke said that many other options will provide a better return on investment, such as energy-efficient windows, insulation, heating and air conditioning units, appliances, and even lightbulbs. "Solar is not always the best option to invest money." He said that energy-efficient appliances are a worthwhile investment. "Induction cooking is the way of the future; it's not only more energy efficient but also safer since there is no open flame."



He pointed out that people will drop all kinds of money into things like new carpeting that will deteriorate and need to be replaced over time but resist investing in energy-efficient appliances or better insulation. "Even if that investment in energy efficiency saves you \$20 a month, it's money back in your pocket for the entire time you own your home." He added, "Plus, the cost of energy will likely increase in the future. That green investment will save you even more over time."

When going green, knowing the Home Energy Rating System rating or HERS rating, a score that measures a home's

energy efficiency, is an excellent first step. A certified HERS rater will review a home's construction plans, perform an energy analysis of the home's design, and conduct onsite inspections, including a blower door test and duct test. A Net Zero Energy Home, or a home with a HERS rating of 0, generates as much energy as it consumes. A typical new home has a HERS rating of 100 that meets average energy code compliance, while an older home has an average HERS rating of 140 or above and higher energy costs. A negative HERS rating is a home that generates more energy through renewable sources than it uses.

There are multiple ways to go green besides investing in solar panels. Proper insulation and air sealing can save on heating and cooling costs. Insulated foundations can save on energy bills. Sustainable building materials containing recycled content can save on building costs. Smart lighting systems use occupancy sensors and daylight harvesting to reduce energy consumption. Another way to save money is by investing in energy-efficient upgrades, which can be found with state tax credits. Several programs are available:

#### Energy Conservation / Healthy Homes Program (ECP/HH)

The City of Omaha's Energy Conservation / Healthy Homes Program (ECP/HH) identifies and makes minor repairs up to \$5,000. This program helps low- and moderate-income households east of 72nd Street with small repairs that improve energy efficiency. For more information, contact Wyatt Tuell at (402) 444-5150 ext. 2022 or [wyatt.tuell@cityofomaha.org](mailto:wyatt.tuell@cityofomaha.org).

#### Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

This financing tool helps commercial property owners reduce operating costs by improving energy efficiency and water conservation. The cost of improvements is financed over the life of the improvements through a special property assessment. Omaha passed the first PACE-enabling ordinance in the state in 2017.

#### Utility Efficiency Programs

Metropolitan Utilities District (M.U.D.) and Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) are partnering with the City of Omaha to develop the Omaha Climate Action and Resilience Plan to implement over the next 30 years. Visit [mudomaha.com](http://mudomaha.com), [oppdcommunityconnect.com](http://oppdcommunityconnect.com), and [omacap.org](http://omacap.org) for more information.



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Working in real estate is, in some ways, like surviving the holidays. There's a bunch of chaos and running around, trying to complete every last task, hopefully with your sanity still intact. You dream about having a silent night while dashing through the snow.

#### **Do You Hear What I Hear?**

Little kids dream about Christmas morning for months, excitedly awaiting that magical moment when they rush down the stairs to see what was left under the tree by Santa.

A buyer looking for the perfect home is like a kid on Christmas morning. They eagerly wait for that day when their dreams come true. However, sometimes, there are some not-so-delightful surprises in store while hunting for that dream house.

REALTOR® Mark Leaders remembers showing a client a beautiful home in the heart of the city. Unfortunately, there was an inhabitant already living there who didn't want to surrender his home. They walked the entire property until they finally made their way to the basement. It was dark, almost threatening, in the bowels of the home. Suddenly, they heard something. They looked around in the darkness, trying to locate the source of the noise. That's when they saw it, the grotesque creature hidden in the shadows. Just then, a large snake slithered across the floor.

Mark's client screamed bloody murder, bolted up the stairs, and sprinted outside in a comical, almost cartoon-like fashion. Needless to say, he didn't make an offer on the home as he wasn't about to share his dream home with a reptilian roommate.

#### **Spirit of the Season**

REALTOR® Bill Swanson has been at it a while but remembers this listing well. The house gave you an eerie feeling when you looked at it. He recalls dropping his then-teenage son off to mow the yard. His son said the whole time he was mowing, it felt like someone was watching him. He also heard strange clanking and banging sounds coming from the house, which was vacant.

Bill decided to investigate. He thought maybe a squatter broke into the empty home. He recalled locking the screen door but leaving the front door partly ajar as he went into the small house, checking every nook and cranny. He finally went down to the unfinished basement, where he could see the whole basement from the bottom of the steps. No one was there. There was nowhere to hide.

Just when he reached the bottom of the steps, he heard the front door slam shut. He then heard what sounded like a very large man in work boots stomping across the living room. Bill bolted up the stairs in seconds. There was nobody there. There wasn't enough time for a person to hide or get out of the house. The windows were all locked, as was the screen door. Bill felt a cold chill go up his spine as he had the distinct feeling someone was watching him. He slowly turned towards the back door, expecting to see someone. He only saw the backdoor, which was still secured with a deadbolt.

Perhaps it was the ghost of Christmas past? Bill didn't hang around to find out.

Surviving the odd and sometimes terrifying is all in a day's work when you're a REALTOR® toiling away in the trenches.



Ericka Heidvogel



Shelley Hourigan



Don Igo



Brooke Johnson



Monica Lang



David Lee



Luke Lofgren



Seth Mielke



Kurt Pfeffer



Gary Price



Brian Schamp



Karen Stansberry



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## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

October Activity	MO	YTD
New REALTOR® Members	23	237
Resignations	20	406
<b>Membership (As of November 1)</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Designated REALTORS®	201	214
REALTOR®	2978	3062
REALTOR® Emeritus	94	89
<b>TOTAL REALTORS®</b>	<b>3273</b>	<b>3365</b>
Institute Affiliate	78	74
Affiliate Members	126	137
Key-Only Affiliates	119	124

Full membership report at [OmahaREALTORS.com/membership-report](http://OmahaREALTORS.com/membership-report)

## DESIGNATIONS

### Accredited Buyer Representative (ABR®)

- Christopher Jamison, Nebraska Realty
- Kristie Kuo, BHHS Ambassador R.E
- Lisa Allard, NP Dodge RE Sales
- Lisa Jansen-Bartholow, NP Dodge RE Sales
- Margaret VonTersch, BHHS Ambassador R.E

### Seniors Real Estate Specialists® (SRES®)

- Elizabeth Hagestad, BHHS Ambassador R.E
- Lisa Allard, NP Dodge RE Sales

## CERTIFICATIONS

### Real Estate Negotiation Expert (RENE)

- Derek Colwell, Nebraska Realty
- Kristie Kuo, BHHS Ambassador R.E

### Real Estate Negotiation Expert (RENE)

- Jacqueline Szatko, BHHS Ambassador R.E

## ENDORSEMENTS

### Commitment to Excellence (C2EX)

- Angel Starks, Nebraska Realty

## PERSONALS

### Our Condolences

- To Rusty and Dalton Hike, Hike Real Estate on the loss of their father-in-law and grandfather



## OABR CHECK PRESENTATION TO FOOD BANK FOR THE HEARTLAND

Erin Burke from Food Bank For The Heartland was presented with a check for \$3000 from the Social Events Committee; the funds were collected from the OABR Chili Cook-off donations.

**From Left to Right:** OABR President-elect, Brad Fricke; Affiliate Debbie Williams of Farm Bureau; Affiliate Erin Trescott of Guild Mortgage; Erin Burke of Food Bank for the Heartland; REALTORS® Mandi Lackas, Todd Gould, both with Nebraska Realty.

# REFLECTIONS ON AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY WITH THE WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF REALTORS® OMAHA

As my term as President of the Women's Council of REALTORS® Omaha comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on a journey that began in 2018. What started as a decision to get involved quickly became a transformative experience, shaping me both personally and professionally.

Serving on the board over the past four years has been nothing short of dynamic. From stepping into the role of First Vice President in 2021, Events Director in 2022, President-Elect in 2023, to President in 2024, each position brought its own challenges and rewards. Along the way, I had the privilege of contributing to numerous project teams and serving as Golf Chair, roles that taught me the value of collaboration and perseverance.

This journey has opened doors I never imagined and provided a seat at tables I never expected to be at. It has stretched me in ways that were, at times, challenging but always rewarding. The friendships I've formed will last a lifetime, and the professional relationships I've built are both inspiring and invaluable. These connections remind me daily why I chose to serve and how vital our work is in empowering others within our industry.

As I step away from the Women's Council board, I'm filled with gratitude for the opportunities, lessons, and relationships this chapter has provided. But this is not an end—it's a new beginning.

I'm excited to continue serving in leadership roles, including my 2024-2026 term as a Director for the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® and my upcoming responsibilities with RPAC as Co-Chair in 2024-2025 and Chair in 2026. These new roles represent the next chapter in my journey, and I look forward to bringing the skills and perspective I've gained from the Women's Council to these positions.

I can't imagine my real estate business or my professional growth without the experiences and support I've gained through the Women's Council of REALTORS® Omaha. To my colleagues, friends, and mentors who have walked alongside me during this journey: thank you. Your encouragement and belief in our shared mission have been my greatest motivators.

Here's to embracing what's next while cherishing everything this chapter has given me!

**SARINA MCNEEL**  
2024 President

## OMAHA CHAPTER WCR

## 2024 Board of Directors



**SARINA MCNEEL**  
President



**TRAC BURKHARDT**  
President-Elect



**CALI RETHWISCH**  
First Vice President



**SAM HAMRICK**  
Treasurer



**AMY DRITLEY**  
Membership Director



**ANGIE THIEL**  
Events Director

# REALTORS® Make the Market

## Omaha Area Residential Snapshot

OCTOBER 31	2024	2023	%
NUMBER ON MARKET	2,561	2,101	21.9% ▲
NUMBER UNDER CONTRACT (MONTHS)	962	901	+6.8% ▲
NUMBER OF SALES CLOSED (YEAR TO DATE)	9,991	9,995	-0.0% ▼
EXISTING SALE PRICE (MEDIAN YEAR TO DATE)	\$294,000	\$280,000	5.0% ▲
NEW SALES PRICE (MEDIAN YEAR TO DATE)	\$421,143	\$435,499	-3.3% ▼

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# PAST PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## PERRY DAWES 1995 PRESIDENT

Perry Dawes didn't initially set out to become a REALTOR®. He discovered a new career path after being a teacher for years. While he was in between teaching jobs, an old friend encouraged him to take a real estate class, and the rest was history.

At first, he taught full-time and sold real estate part-time while living in rural Nebraska. Then, in 1985, the agriculture economy tanked, and he moved to Omaha and worked for CBS Real Estate. He enjoyed real estate for the same reason he loved teaching. He enjoyed helping people and got a high when they achieved their homeownership goals.

While he was the OABR President, he fondly remembers traveling to national conventions with the executive team. His tenure with OABR was busy, implementing a new MLS system and hiring a new executive officer.

He went on to work in finance as a loan officer after working in real estate for decades, then circled back to real estate. Real estate is a different animal than when he first started his career in the late 1970s, but some things remain the same.

His advice to anyone starting out in the industry? Continually stay in touch with the people in your life and work your sphere of influence. The nitty gritty, day-to-day things add up, according to the seasoned real estate veteran. He said if you get one appointment every day, five times a week, that will amount to a sale or a listing every week. He said in today's

age of technology, leads come from social media, often at a cost, but "you can't substitute anything for face-to-face time." Perry said getting out in the community, meeting people, and following up is critical, but persistence is the most important trait for a successful career in real estate.



**Tim Krof**  
Certified Inspector

When it comes to the shingles on your roof, weather plays a huge role in the lifespan of that shingle. Of course, hail is the most common weather condition that can bring about the need for shingle replacement. But wind and sun can also play a big part in wearing down a shingle.

Yes, every composition shingle gets exposed to the sun and is manufactured to resist the heat damage from that exposure for a certain period.

## Weather & Roofs

However, if the shingles have a manufactured defect, sun exposure can reduce that expected lifespan and can show evidence of possible defects when the shingles are just a few years old. I was on an inspection recently with a 4-8 yr old roof that had severe stair-step and horizontal cracks through the entire shingle on most of the south side and some of the north. This was a 20-year shingle that was already experiencing failure less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  its expected life span. The owner tried to caulk these cracks, but many more appeared shortly after! (The sun shows no mercy)

We all know the straight-line winds that occasionally blow through the Midwest can blow composition shingles off roofs, but it can also cause damage to the vinyl/composite (DaVinci) shingles as well. The wind can get underneath these types of shingles and lift them up off the roof. One eyewitness on a recent storm stated it was like the 'shingles were floating on air, waving up & down'. During a recent home inspection, one of our inspectors noticed a crack along the locking clip at the bottom corner of many of the shingles on this type of roof. This damage was located on both sides of the house. These roofs are very expensive, and marketed as lifetime



shingles, but Mother Nature somehow always finds a way to change the rules. So, after a big storm, and you see downed tree branches lining the streets across town, you should always be thankful everyone is OK.. then you can start to wonder if my house is OK? Your home can't speak for itself, you have to speak for it!



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# REVIEW

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