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Tammy Jo
Budzynski

*Event
Recap
Inside*

AGENT SPOTLIGHT: Chris Hughes

AGENT SPOTLIGHT: Dan Steffee

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Tammy Jo Budzynski

A Compassionate Approach to Real Estate

Tammy Jo Budzynski had already laid the foundation for becoming a real estate agent long before she obtained her salesperson license. She grew up in a family of entrepreneurs, and through her grandfather and father — who were both builders — she was introduced to the world of real estate. “You could say that ‘homes’ were in our blood,” Tammy Jo said.

While Tammy Jo was in college and still living with her parents, she began to take on her own renovation projects around the house. A few of her projects entailed learning how to use a circular saw to make an artificial fireplace, hanging drapes from the ceiling to create a makeshift wall, and even installing trim molding to a table. “My parents weren’t worried about me partying; they were worried about what I was going to make or build when they got home,” Tammy Jo said, smiling. Through her renovations, she began to understand how to solve a house’s flaws, and she loved explaining to others how to truly tap into a house’s potential.

When Tammy Jo graduated from Aquinas College in 2001 with a degree in business administration, she was unsure about her next steps in life. It didn’t take long for her to realize that she could combine her passion for people and her affinity for homes

to become her own boss as a real estate agent. She then attended a week-long class, took her license test, and anxiously waited for her results to arrive by mail. “It took weeks, and when it finally came in, I put it on my wall — unopened,” she recalled. “It sat there for a few days before my friend pushed me to get it opened.” Tammy Jo didn’t have anything to worry about, though, because she had passed.

Twenty-three years later, Tammy Jo has found great success in helping people achieve their real estate dreams. She is currently the broker of TJ Homes with Keller Williams - Grand Rapids North, where she and her team closed over \$32 million in sales in 2023. Tammy Jo was also featured on the cover of Top Agent Magazine twice — once in 2017 and another in 2021.



▶▶ top producer

By Amanda Matkowski
Photos by Jacob Harr with
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LIFE ISN'T ABOUT REAL ESTATE.

LIFE IS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE. ”

Despite her personal successes, Tammy Jo is more focused nowadays on growing her team of like-minded people. TJ Homes is comprised of three other licensed agents and two support staff, and everyone is devoted to providing the best possible experience for a customer. “It isn’t about a sale: It is about the family we serve,” Tammy Jo explained. “We give straight talk with no fluff, and we are respected for that. That is what has earned our customers’ trust year after year.”

According to Tammy Jo, one of the benefits of being an agent is the ability to have a flexible schedule. “I can choose when I work, when I take vacations, and when I attend my kids’ school functions,” she said. “I don’t have to ‘wait’ for permission to be granted from someone in a company.”

When it comes to her team, Tammy Jo incorporates the same family-first philosophy and work-life balance. “Love being on the phone or showing houses but don’t like negotiating? We can help,” she explained. “By growing in the areas you love and handing off what you don’t



love, you can find balance in your life between work and family.”

For Tammy Jo, her family consists of her husband, Max, and their two daughters — Addison, 10, and Natalie, 7. They enjoy going to the beach together, taking walks and bike rides, and having game nights. “The girls like watching Mom lose at the memory games,” Tammy Jo said, laughing. The family also loves caring for their aquariums, with Addison and Natalie even having tanks in their bedrooms.

Other than spending time with her family, Tammy Jo likes to read, garden and paint. “People who know me know that I don’t sit still,” she said. Tae Kwon Do is also a large part of Tammy Jo’s life and

has been since she was a teenager. She is currently a third-degree black belt and is hoping to test for her fourth-degree belt in 2024. She even met her husband — who is a third-degree black belt as well — through Tae Kwon Do. “Our grand master always told me that I had to find a ‘good TKD man.’ I just never thought that it was actually in the cards,” Tammy Jo said.

Besides Tae Kwon Do, Tammy Jo and her husband spend their free time restoring a historic house on Plainfield Avenue in Grand Rapids called The Vander Jagt. The couple bought the mansion three years ago, and the 6,000-square-foot house sits on 1.7 acres. “I was the listing agent, and the home was on the market for two and a half weeks before

we purchased it,” Tammy Jo shared. They upload behind-the-scenes footage of the house on Facebook @thevanderjagt and on TikTok @SavingtheVanderJagt.

Tammy Jo is grateful that her career has allowed her to blend many of her passions into something that can make a positive impact on someone else’s life. For new agents in the industry, she recommends that they figure out what motivates them and find ways to incorporate that into their businesses. Most of all, she encourages agents to show compassion toward clients and genuinely take time to help them. “Life isn’t about real estate,” Tammy Jo stated. “Life is about taking care of people.”