

# REVIEW

Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and are off to a great start with your business and New Year's resolutions for 2024.

Now that the holiday chaos is over and you have wiped the slate clean let's focus on new beginnings and relationships while nurturing your past client relationships for referrals and repeat business. It's time to end the negative rumblings on the real estate market and show the Omaha Metro that real estate is happening, and REALTORS® are essential for sound decision-making in our current market.

December was a busy month. Our local association participated in another rewarding Salvation Army **REALTOR® Ring Day**, collecting over \$10,000! Thank you to all the members who participated! Your assistance with this national effort demonstrates that we do more than sell houses.

Thank you also for your 2023 RPAC investment! RPAC plays a critical role in support of our mission to advance the real estate industry, defend private property rights, and advocate homeownership for all. RPAC opens doors for the REALTOR® viewpoint!

Finally, congratulations to the 2024 leadership of the Women's Council of REALTORS® Omaha Chapter on their December installation! More on page 14.

I encourage you to enlarge your professional network by getting involved with an OABR committee. We have events in the planning stage for 2024. Go to [omaharealtors.com/calendar](http://omaharealtors.com/calendar) – there's always something for everyone!

Have you registered for the Nebraska REALTORS® Association **Political Action Days** in Lincoln? There's leadership training on Monday, January 29; committee meetings on Tuesday, January 30; and REALTOR® Capitol Day on Wednesday morning, January 31. Check out the schedule at [NebraskaREALTORS.com](http://NebraskaREALTORS.com).

**REcharge 2024** is our big event on February 21. I don't want you to miss it. Enjoy a day packed with education, networking, and new energy for the New Year! Your ticket includes three awesome keynote speakers, 12 breakout sessions to choose from, plus there's prize drawings and they feed you breakfast and lunch. [REchargeNebraska.com](http://REchargeNebraska.com) for more information.

I want to wrap up with a little fun to get through January, and hopefully, it's not too brutally cold! Are you aware of these January National Days? I surely was not!

**January 8** – Clean off Your Desk Day. It's not too late to do this if you haven't tackled it already!

**January 13** – Vision Board Day. I love this project! It's good for your personal and business mindset and goals. I recommend it!

**January 14** – Dress Up Your Pet Day. If you don't have a Pet, borrow one, or maybe it's time to get a new friend!

**January 24** – National Backwards Day. Do things in reverse or in unconventional ways. Let creativity flow and embrace the unexpected. If you know Bill Swanson, OABR's 2021 President, I'm guessing he already does this!

I like this one for 2024! National Get to Know Your Client Day happens on the third day of each quarter, so January, April, July, and October. This day fits us all, so join in with me!

I look forward to everything 2024 holds – including a more robust Omaha real estate market! In the meantime, may you and your loved ones stay warm and healthy!

Denise Poppen,  
OABR 2024 President



### ON THE COVER

December Sunset Over West Omaha  
Omaha, NE

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHUTTERSTOCK

# REVIEW

## OMAHA AREA BOARD OF REALTORS® 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# 2024 RECHARGE

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## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



ELLIOT EISENBERG,  
BOWTIE ECONOMIST



BETH ZIESENIS,  
YOUR NERDY BFF



TERRY WATSON,  
THE AHA GUY

## 12 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

"EVERYTHING YOU'RE NOT TAKING  
ADVANTAGE OF WITH REALTOR.COM"

"BRANDING YOURSELF AS A  
REAL ESTATE EXPERT"

"FINDING AN EXTRA HOUR EVERY DAY:  
TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS & TRICKS"

"EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO  
KNOW ABOUT CHATGPT"

"ASK THE PSYCHIATRIST  
ANONYMOUSLY"

"EMERGING TECHNOLOGY  
FROM NAR"

"THE POWER OF CANVA"

"USING OUTLOOK TO MANAGE  
YOUR TIME AND PROJECTS"

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# SARPY'S ENORMOUS SEWER PROJECT: ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

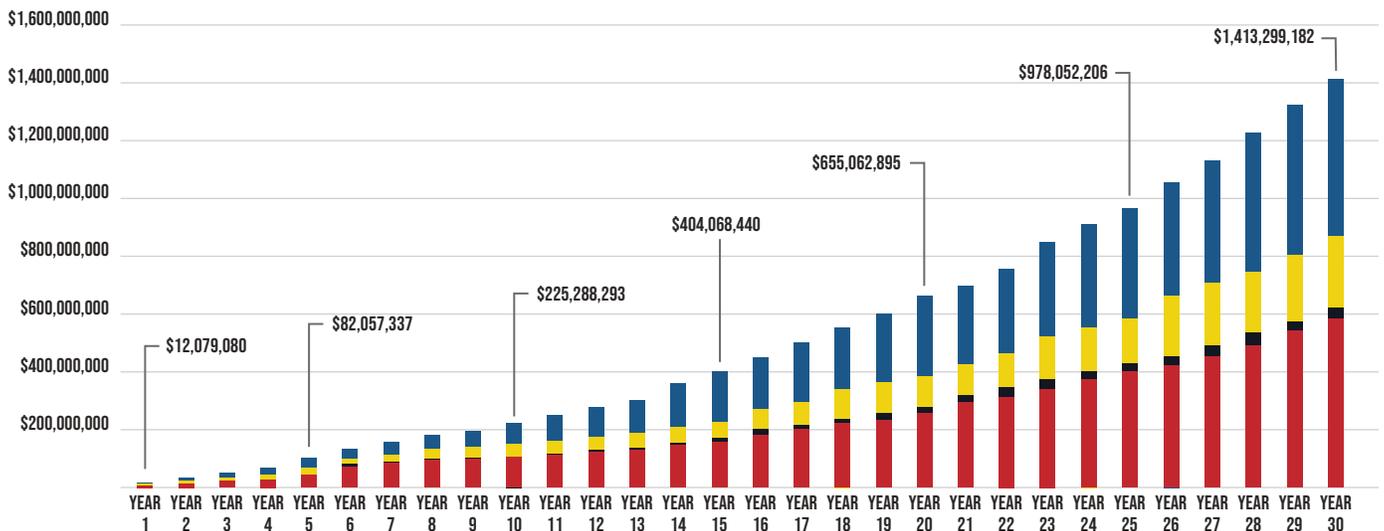
The Sarpy County landscape is changing. A large land mass that runs through Sarpy County sits south of an enormous ridge that has impeded growth and prohibited the development of sufficient sewer infrastructure.

A massive, multi-city sewer extension project would clear that hurdle, priming land south of the ridge for development. The wastewater initiative, as planned, will make over 10,000 acres of rural land available for residential and commercial development. A low-interest, \$45.3 million federal loan will help fund the first phase of a more extensive sewer plan. The entire project is estimated to cost upward of \$250 million.

The Sarpy County and Cities Wastewater Agency (SCCWA) was established in 2017 to build the Unified Southern Sarpy Wastewater System to serve the southern portion of Sarpy County, consisting of Bellevue, Gretna, La Vista, Papillon, and Springfield.

The project's first phase began building two lines in 2022 and is nearly complete. It extends one line to Springfield and the other through Bellevue. The \$45.3 million loan will help fund the construction of an additional sewer line that connects the first two lines. According to a Sarpy County press release, the project's first phase includes 19 miles of sewer line, will open up 12,000

## STATE TAXES RECEIVED FROM THE SEWER EXPANSION PROJECT



acres for development, and is expected to be complete in December 2024.

The complete sewer system will be built in phases over the next 20 to 50 years as funding becomes available. The development area will create thousands of jobs, grow the tax base, and generate billions in revenue for the State of Nebraska. Commercial, residential, and industrial development are expected to produce more than \$37 billion in net new spending, \$24 billion in net new earnings, and approximately 4,740 new full-time jobs over the next 30 years. SCCWA said it won't use property tax dollars to pay for the project. Instead, it will rely on connection fees and user rates, combined with a \$69.8 million interest-free state loan and \$3.4 million in federal infrastructure funding to cover costs.

When the SCCWA contracted Hunden Strategic Partners to conduct an economic impact study, it assessed potential opportunities for residential development in Sarpy County from the sewer extension project. It noted tremendous growth in Sarpy County in the multifamily and for-sale residential sector. The study also stated, "The combination of strong population growth, the influx of employers to the area, and developable land opportunities have led to the development of many new housing units in the county. Gretna is seeing a lot of new construction in the multifamily sector." The study stated that "residential growth typically proceeds the development of retail and office development."

In a Wastewater Agency Board Meeting in December, Gretna Mayor Mike Evans pressed the Board to approve funding for infrastructure that concerned 100 acres of land that he said would deliver over \$100 million in economic development.

"Western Sarpy County is seeing a tremendous amount of growth, and it's in part due to our schools, our quality of life, our amenities. People across the Midwest are really starting to take notice, and a lot of people really want to be part of that growth and part of what everybody here is building. So, it's really exciting, but it's created this problem where everyone wants to be here. We're all trying to deliver infrastructure. So, we, Gretna, are for some type of a larger solution."

He said the agenda item was development-led, because of imminent opportunities, stating that the process took a lot longer than the Board or the developers expected. According to Mayor



Photo credit: <https://www.sccwwa.org/progress>



Photo credit: <https://www.sccwwa.org/progress>

Evans, voting to table it would jeopardize developments that are in the works. The discussion underscored the extensive, sometimes arduous process of getting smaller measures passed within the framework of larger, ongoing infrastructure development.

Evans pressed on. "It really is the intent of the agency for economic development. I also think it makes a statement to our residents, development community, and the state that we work together, and then this agency can deliver economic development."

When discussing that agenda item, Sarpy County Board Chair Don Kelly said, "The growth is coming, and we can't stop it. So, we better figure out over the next couple of years how we're going to pay for it, because this is a once in a generation. If we don't have the whole county sewer in the next five years, I'll count that a failure on our part."

Sources: [www.sccwwa.org](http://www.sccwwa.org),  
[www.sarpy.gov](http://www.sarpy.gov), [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

# DOES YOUR GOAL HAVE A PLAN?

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

**E**very year after the ball has dropped and the confetti has descended, millions gleefully welcome the year ahead, vowing to make THIS the best one yet, wistfully resolving to tackle some lofty resolution.

Then, sometime after New Year's Day, that dream of perfectly chiseled washboard abs seems as elusive as ever.

If you were to ask the motivational speaker and success coach Van Deeb, goal setting is the first step toward achieving anything worthwhile. Each person is unique and will have personalized plans, but it is essential to have a master plan broken down into smaller, attainable goals.

According to Deeb, the first problem people encounter when making a goal is that they don't have a plan. They spend more time planning their summer vacation than their career. They need a business plan.

Whether it's professional accomplishments, a personal milestone, or fitness goals, it's wise to draw up a plan of action and write down specific goals with precise steps. Making simple adjustments to your daily schedule can yield real results. Having a plan is a great start. You will need to roll up your sleeves, put in the work, and hold yourself accountable.

"The most successful people I know set goals." The motivational speaker carefully contemplates and writes down his objectives during December for the following year. Come January, he's ready to begin executing the battle plan. Deeb said that you can't just say it; you need to write it down somewhere where you will see it every day.

"Don't make all your goals about business goals. Like how many houses you want to sell or how much money you want to make. Make it about personal improvement."

He said that he finds it satisfying to discover things about himself that he thinks need improvement and then devise a strategy to better himself.

"One of my goals is to be more understanding and love people where they're at. Accept people and their differences. Be someone's miracle. Find out something someone could use. Sometimes, people need words of encouragement. That could be someone's miracle. When you give people your time, attention, and love, it's amazing what they can accomplish." Another concept he embraces is accepting that others have different viewpoints, and they don't always have to agree. "I don't always have to be right. It's very liberating."

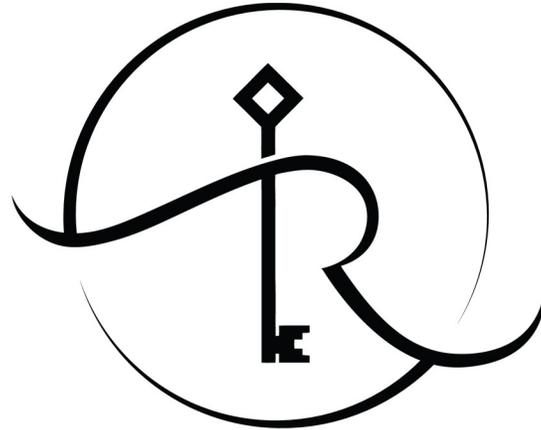
Teaching real estate professionals how to brand themselves properly is something Deeb is passionate about. "Anyone can fulfill their real estate goals if they know how to brand themselves." His overall message is crystal clear. "If you put your mind to something, you can accomplish anything."

Besides goal setting, Deeb also promotes "the seven habits of top producers," which he will share at REcharge 2024 on February 21st. REcharge also has an impressive lineup of other speakers, including three keynotes and eleven additional breakout sessions. Register today at **REchargeNebraska.com**.

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REALTOR® RING DAY 2023

# MERRY BELLS KEEP RINGING

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

The chiming of bells pierced the chilly December air as volunteers from the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® participated in REALTOR® Ring Day across the Omaha Metro and the nation. Every year, on the first Friday of December, REALTORS® team up with the Salvation Army for the Red Kettle Drive to provide food and clothing to more than six million people in need during the holidays.

“We are extremely grateful to the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® for a wonderful REALTOR® Ring Day event this year,” said Major Scott Shelbourn, divisional commander of the Salvation Army Western Division. “The funds raised will go a long way toward putting food on the table, keeping the lights and heat on, and putting presents under the tree for local families in need. REALTOR® Ring Day is an annual tradition we look forward to every year, and we salute OABR for its commitment to serving the community in this unique way. On behalf of the people we serve, we want to tell the REALTORS®, ‘Thank you!’”

This year, the Red Kettles flowed over with generous donations. OABR members ringing bells raised over \$10,200 this year and over \$130,000 since 2010! A round of applause to all the member volunteers who made it possible! Proving once again that people in the real estate community have the biggest hearts!









RPAC HONORS



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BILL BLACK



CODY BOUSEMA



CHARLES CHADWICK



SUSAN CLARK



BRAD FRICKE



CAMILLA KNAPP



LINDSEY KRENK



JUSTIN LORIMER

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2023



LORETTA MCNALLY



SARINA MCNEEL



ANGELA PETERS



LISA RICHARDSON



KYLE SCHULZE



ANGEL STARKS



FRED TICHAUER

2023 INDUCTEES NOT PICTURED

Katie Adams, Crystal Archer, Ryan Basye, Jennifer Bixby, Gene Graves, Sherri Griggs, Sue Henson, Mindy Kidney, Trudy Meyer, Laura Osborn, Tom Simmons, Gary Stoneburg, Joe Valenti, Brian Wilson

CURRENT RPAC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Jerry Ahlvers, Andy Alloway, Jill Anderson, Darla Bengtson, Joni Craighead, Nate Dodge, Doug Dohse, Brandon Frans, Tracy Frans, Joe Gehrki, Jack Harvey, Dionne Housley, Karen Jennings, Henry Kammandel Jr, Peter Katt, Kellie Konz Wiczorek, Harold Johnson, Monica Lang, Mark Leaders, Vince Leisey, Pat Lichter, Ralph Marasco, David Matney, Deda Myhre, Perre Neilan, Jeanne Patrick, Denise Poppen, Brent Rasmussen, Matt Rasmussen, Susan Rauth, Mike Riedmann, Dennis Ritter, Lisa Ritter, Doug Rotthaus, Becky Sandiland, Jessica Sawyer, Kyle Schulze, Bill Swanson, Julie Tartaglia, Dixie TenEyck, Mark Wehner



# WCR OMAHA CHAPTER INSTALLATION

Written by **Melissa McElroy**



The room was atwitter with palpable excitement that befalls a crowd right before a royal court enters. The royal court of the local Women’s Council was about to grace the stage. New leadership would be sworn in. Queens behind the scenes would be recognized, and Champions Run would runneth over with WCR champions.

The 2023 Omaha Chapter WCR President, Liz Otto, opened the ceremony and reflected on 2023 before turning it over to Darla Bengston and Denise Poppen, who emceed the event and introduced the 2024 Omaha Chapter WCR President Sarina McNeel, who claimed Darla, the 2017 WCR Omaha Chapter President, as “her wingwoman for life.” According to Sarina, the 2024 OABR President, Denise Poppen, showed her what an authentic leader looks like, and together, they make a great team.

Being such an unapologetically authentic person, Sarina admires others who dare to be themselves unabashed. Liz, Darla, and Denise showed her that strong leaders not only lead but also encourage others on their paths – and they do it with style and grace while staying true to themselves.

Sarina took the stage without a prepared speech, opting to speak from the heart. She wasted no time thanking her predecessor, Liz Otto, who was at the outset a “wallflower” and very quiet in meetings but someone Sarina described as “an amazing human being who earned every bit of respect.”

The 2024 WCR leader said she initially thought the Women’s Council structure was a sorority for grown-ups, something that really didn’t interest her. When she returned to a career in real estate in 2018, it was Angel Starks who urged her to get involved in the organization. Once she finally relented and took Angel’s advice, she met some amazing



people. In Sarina's classic, straightforward style, she playfully cautioned that if Darla and Denise ever invite you out for a glass of wine, watch out. That's how she agreed to take on a leadership role.

A number of people were recognized for their dedication to the organization and awards were presented. In a moving speech, Sarina thanked everyone who helped her on her leadership journey, specifically Ashley Livengood and Deda Meyer. She's proud that the people of WCR genuinely support each other. They help make each other and the industry stronger, and it's the reason why she is so passionate about member involvement. Members getting involved and helping each other makes the organization what it is. She believes in leading with her heart and lives up to the Women's Council mantra: Leaders are made here.

## WCR OMAHA CHAPTER

### 2024 WCR Leadership

**President**  
Sarina McNeel

**Vice President**  
Trac Burkhardt

**Treasurer**  
Sam Hamrick

**Membership Director**  
Amy Dritley

**Events Director**  
Angie Thiel

**First Vice President**  
Cali Rethwisch

### 2023 Outstanding Service Awards

Kristina Boehmer,  
Strategic Partner

Trac Burkhardt,  
REALTOR®

### 2023 Strategic Partner of the Year

Jeanne Lamoureux

### 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year

Laura Osborn

### 2023 REALTOR® of the Year

Jen Monjaras



# Happy New Year

*And Best Wishes for a Successful Year to Come!*



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We are excited to announce

# JABIN MOORE

**As Diversity Scholarship Committee's Scholarship Recipient!**

**Where did you grow up (if not from the Omaha, what were the circumstances that brought you to Omaha and how long have you lived here)?**

I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. I graduated from Sacred Heart Elementary School in 2014, I am a 2017 graduate of Omaha North High Magnet School, and I went on to get my bachelor's degree from UNO in 2021.

**What Brokerage do you work for and are you a member of any other organizations in your community or networking groups?**

I chose to hang my license with eXp Realty, where it is believed that eXp is the prefix of real estate. I feel it aligned most with my personal brand. If you expect experience, exposure, and expediency, explore eXp realty. The big X in eXp marks the spot where you will find a real estate company that celebrates innovation with a business model of revenue sharing, stock awards, and generous commissions. It's a bit corny in true realtor fashion to drive the point across and make it stick, and that is just one aspect of what made eXp stand out for me. As a new agent, I value networking and staying connected in the community. I am a 2021 graduate of the UNO College of Business, and I serve as a member of the Recent Alumni Advisory Board. I am a 2017 grad of Omaha North High Magnet school, and I currently serve on the Omaha North High Foundation Board, I serve as a Mentor for the 100 Black Men of Omaha, I am a part of the Omaha Municipal Land Bank Ambassadors program, I am a member of the Black and Brown Real Estate Professionals group and I serve on the Omaha Area Board of Realtors Diversity Committee.

**What did you do before you became a REALTOR®?**

I am a recent graduate of UNO. I received my bachelor's degree in business administration with concentrations in Entrepreneurship and Real Estate and Land Use Economics. Upon graduating I began working in Financial Operations with Carson Group, and I got my real estate license a year later.

**When did you get your real estate license and what inspired you to become a REALTOR®?**

I got licensed in real estate in October 2022, so I've been licensed just over a year. Throughout college I was always interested in being involved in the community and learning about how systems work in society. In my involvement, I observed disparities that exist and can be recognized through the layout of our city. I developed an understanding of the correlation between wealth disparity and home ownership and entrepreneurship, and

the historical impact on our current reality. I interned for Seventy-Five North Revitalization Corp. for about two years, and I went on to intern at the State Department of Economic Development which gave me more insight into the communities I am passionate about serving. Becoming a Realtor was important for me to become a part of the change that I want to see and to join in the efforts of serving families and individuals in what is likely the biggest purchase they will make.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job as a REALTOR®?**

The most rewarding part of my job so far is being a problem solver for those seeking direction in a crazy market. I think the value that I bring clients is helping buyers understand the process and helping them to see how homeownership is not only achievable for them, but an undeniable right and attainable for anyone who has the will.

**What else would you like us to know about you?**

My motto is "don't limit your challenges, challenge your limits," I like to challenge myself to discover and maximize my potential to get out of life all that I can. I like cooking – I have about a year of culinary school under my belt, I have ran a few marathons, I also like reading, and traveling as much as possible.



Learn more about the Diversity Scholarship Committee at [omharealtors.com/diversity](http://omharealtors.com/diversity).

# SENATOR VON GILLERN: AN ADVOCATE FOR REAL ESTATE

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

A boardroom full of REALTORS® intently focused on the Senator in front of them as he shared his plan of attack to address pressing political concerns.

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® welcomed Nebraska State Senator Brad von Gillern to the November Government Affairs Committee meeting, where the Senator discussed some hot topics: everything from school bonds and special elections to the five members of the Nebraska federal delegation all up for re-election in 2024. He said every vote counts, particularly MUD and OPPD elected officials since utility companies' policies directly impact real estate. Inflation, property taxes, and education also remain top concerns for constituents.

Von Gillern talked about the importance of property tax relief and his support for LB243 and various tax bills to reduce individual and business income taxes. LB243 is part of a tax cuts package Governor Pillen signed in May.

The package increased the amount of relief granted under the Property Tax Credit Act; established a three percent annual cap on how much school districts can increase property tax requests (with some exceptions); eliminated the five percent cap on the school district tax credit's allowable growth percentage under the Nebraska Property Tax Act; curtailed levying authority and provided state aid to community colleges.

(<https://governor.nebraska.gov>)

Some additional Tax Bills covered in the meeting:

**LB28** – Fixed Tax Equalization and Review Commissions Act to create a better process for the taxpayer.

**LB242** – Increased the funding of the Nebraska Property Tax Incentive Act, removing the five percent allowable growth cap.

**LB309** – Changed interest on property tax refunds, making the rate equal to the penalty percentage.

**LB589** – Created a three percent cap on school district budget growth, with exceptions and the ability to override it with a supermajority.

**LB783** – Eliminates the levy authority of community colleges and, beginning in 2025-2026, shifts community college funding to the state budget, removing that burden from local property taxes.

RPAC Chair Charles Chadwick said, "Having an elected official like Senator von Gillern come speak with the Governmental Affairs Committee is the perfect example of what RPAC does. It opens communication with our elected officials. Our voice is heard, and we can advocate for preserving private property rights and supporting the real estate industry."

He added, "This communication and open-door policy provides us with direct insight into what's being discussed at this level, the rationale of specific bills, and how it can, or will, impact us. At the same time, it allows us to provide expertise, insight, and opinions on specific topics. In addition, what we're seeing first hand in our industry, and how consumers are reacting or responding."

Chadwick explained why the Senator was a REALTOR® champion. "Senator von Gillern has been in construction, and his spouse is a former real estate agent; he has knowledge others may not and can understand our point of view a bit differently than others."

He expounded on the importance of developing strong relationships with policymakers. "Having him come to us and

ask our opinions about specific property tax bills that will be proposed and what impact we see them having is crucial for Nebraskans and our industry. Allowing us to provide first-hand knowledge to those who may not understand the impact bills may have is what we are working to do here."

OABR Governmental Affairs Director and Founder of Neilan Strategy Group, a top lobbying firm, Perre Neilan, said, "There is no substitute for making friends before you need them. REALTOR® issues are complicated, but achieving success doesn't have to be."



Sen. Brad Von Gillern  
District 04

The ability to have open, ongoing dialogue with policymakers creates the optimal environment to advocate for common sense laws. Neilan succinctly sums up RPAC's objective: "We are clear and consistent in our relentless pursuit of advocating for private property rights."



Steve Vacha  
President

## The Starfish Effect

Beginning in 2024, alongside our detailed home inspection reports, we now offer a valuable resource for homeowners and home-buyers - a free checklist guide to identifying and addressing energy-wasting issues in your property.

This checklist includes potential problems and when possible provides practical solutions to help you:

- Save money on your home energy bills.
- Boost your home's overall efficiency.
- Reduce your carbon footprint.

We believe that empowering our clients with knowledge is key. By helping them make informed decisions about their homes, we're not just inspecting properties; we're building a more sustainable future, one home at a time.

### Ever heard the "Starfish Effect" Story?

On a beach scattered with starfish left by a storm, a young girl worked tirelessly, throwing them back into the sea. An older man passing by paused to question her efforts, pointing out the futility in trying to save so many. But, with a starfish gently cupped in her hands, she simply smiled and replied as she released it into the waves, "It makes a difference to this one!"

The old man, touched by the girl's simple conviction, found a new sense of purpose. From then on, whenever he walked the beach, he joined in, helping her save the starfish, one by one. Their small acts of kindness rippled across the vast ocean, proving that even the smallest deeds could make a world of difference.

Like the young girl who saved



one starfish at a time, our efforts, however small, can have a ripple effect. Every homeowner who takes action to improve their energy efficiency is contributing to a greener planet.

It doesn't matter if you're a seasoned eco-warrior or just starting your journey towards sustainability. At Home Standards, we believe that everyone can make a difference.

Note that this Energy Checklist will be at the end of our home inspection reports for those who want this information.

As young men, my friends and I drove gas-guzzling muscle cars that often belched foul-smelling exhaust when we pushed them hard. My '69 GTO was a blast to drive, but as I matured I came to understand the need for more sustainable solutions, both for my wallet and our planet.

Just like those powerful cars, homes can be energy-hungry beasts. At Home Standards, we believe that every little bit counts, and that's why we're taking a proactive approach to energy efficiency.

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# IN THE TRENCHES

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

The dreary winter months seem to stretch on for an eternity. Shortened days devoid of light drudge on as people brace for the bitter cold. In some ways, surviving winter is like enduring the trenches of real estate. The savvy agent learns to withstand cold spells while longing for sunnier days.

## THE PATRON'S SAINT

REALTOR® Travis Saint knows a thing or two about survival. Years ago, while helping a client, he found himself in a terrifying situation.

He pulled up to a quaint neighborhood with his client in tow. She was a first-time homebuyer excited to look at a cute bungalow full of character. The home had a long, narrow driveway that led to a small, one-car garage. Travis parked on the street in front of the house.

As the REALTOR® and his client made their way to the home's front steps, a man pulled into the driveway, hopped out of his car, and sauntered over to where they were standing. He looked dirty and disheveled. The man claimed to be the homeowner as he made his way ahead of them and rushed through the front door. The "homeowner" was babbling a mile a minute.

Travis scanned his surroundings as the man walked ahead of them into the kitchen. A feeling of unease started to set in. The place was trashed. Crumpled-up fast food wrappers were haphazardly strewn about. There was a dirty mattress on the floor of the living room. That's when Travis saw it. The stock of a rifle was casually lying on top of the dirty mattress, partially covered up by a blanket. Travis kept his composure, but internally, alarm bells were going off.

"Come this way. I'll show you two the bedrooms," the disheveled man said, smiling as he gestured towards an unlit hallway.

"Yeah, sure," the unnerved REALTOR® said as convincingly as he could muster. He stepped one foot forward, pretending like he was about to follow the man. Once the man went around the corner, Travis grabbed his client's arm and pointed at the gun. She gasped. He quickly ushered her out of the house, and they made a break for the car.

A sense of relief poured over him as they drove away. Once they were at a safe distance, he called the listing agent and told him what happened. Was that actually the homeowner? Or was it a dangerous individual squatting in a vacant home, waiting for a victim? Travis never found out.

"I'm really glad that I didn't park in that narrow driveway. I would have been blocked in," he said. It's something that he thinks about every time he goes to a showing now. Now, he always parks on the street.

Despite his martial arts training, he knows better than to try and be a "tough guy" in a situation like he encountered. In his words, "It doesn't matter how tough you think you are. You're not tougher than a bullet." Remaining calm and listening to his gut may have saved his life and the life of his client.

It's an important reminder to all agents to always be aware of your surroundings and to always listen to your gut if something feels off. Always have an exit strategy, and never block yourself in the driveway. The situation could have taken a tragic turn. Instead, he made a client for life. To this day, she calls him "the REALTOR® who saved her life." In her eyes, he lives up to his name: Saint.

Whether you're surviving a slow spell or a sketchy occupant, it's essential to keep your wits about you if you want to come out unscathed while tirelessly toiling away in the trenches of real estate. For more great safety tips, visit: <https://www.nar.realtor/safety>.



Ericka Heidvogel



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# 2024

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## CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS AND GROWTH AND LOOKING FORWARD TO A YEAR OF ENGAGEMENT

December 14th marked a special day for The Women's Council of REALTORS®. It ushered in the annual WCR Installation and Awards ceremony to bid farewell to the outgoing 2023 board members and welcome the new leaders with gratitude. Led by 2017 WCR President, Darla Bengtson, and 2019 WCR President, Denise Poppen, the baton was officially passed to the dynamic 2024 board. Congratulations to President Sarina McNeel, President-Elect Trac Burkhardt, First Vice President Cali Rethwisch, Membership Director Amy Dritley, Event Director Angie Thiel, and Treasurer Sam Hamrick.

At the heart of our network is a commitment to fostering leadership among women in the real estate industry. One of our cherished member perks involves supporting professional development through reimbursement for continuing education and designation courses. Kudos to members Danie Duffy, Ashley Livengood, Angie Podoll, Monica Lang, Terri Pruitt, Lisa Richardson, and Angie Thiel for seizing this opportunity to enhance their skills.

The event also provided an opportunity to spotlight outstanding members who went above and beyond in their service to the Women's Council. A round of applause for REALTOR® of the Year Jen Monjaras from PJ Morgan; Strategic Partner of the Year Jeanne Lamoureux from Centris FCU; and recipients of the Outstanding Service Awards, REALTOR® Trac Burkhardt from BHGRE; and Strategic Partner Kristina Boehmer from MyInsurance. Additionally, a special mention goes to Laura Osborn, recognized as Entrepreneur of the Year for her remarkable professional growth in the industry.

The Annual Women's Council of REALTORS® Installation and Awards was not just an event; it was a celebration of achievements, growth, and the collective spirit of women in the real estate realm.

Looking ahead to this year, engagement is our theme! Our Women's Council will focus on continuing the spirit of collaboration by forming dynamic project teams. Our goal is to create sustainable systems and ensure a seamless process throughout the year and during transitions with incoming boards. These teams, comprised of members with diverse talents and perspectives, will be instrumental in planning and executing a fantastic schedule of valuable events for our members and industry partners. By harnessing the power of varied experiences and skills, we hope to not only enhance the quality of our programs but also foster opportunities to reach our goal of 25% member participation in project teams. Our Kick-Off Event is literally an "Engagement Party" and will be focused on bringing in new members and truly engaging everyone in the experience of Women's Council membership.

We will also strive to more actively identify and nurture leadership skills within our membership. We've embarked on a journey of recognizing the unique strengths of individuals and providing them with tailored opportunities for growth. Through this process we will develop a plan to help our members not only discover their leadership potential, but also to find clear pathways for their professional and personal advancement.

We look forward to a year of empowerment and transformation as we invest in the leadership journey of each remarkable member within our Women's Council community.

**-Sarina McNeel, President**

Please join us for our upcoming events:

**What:** Member Engagement Party  
**When:** Thursday, January 18th, 5-8pm  
**Where:** Alice (Lower Level of Jams-Legacy)  
17070 Wright Plaza Suite 10

**What:** Take the Leap Into RPAC Investment  
**When:** Thursday, February 29th, 9-11am  
**Where:** Champions Run  
13800 Eagle Run Dr

### OMAHA CHAPTER WCR

## 2024 Board of Directors



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President



**TRAC BURKHARDT**  
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**CALI RETHWISCH**  
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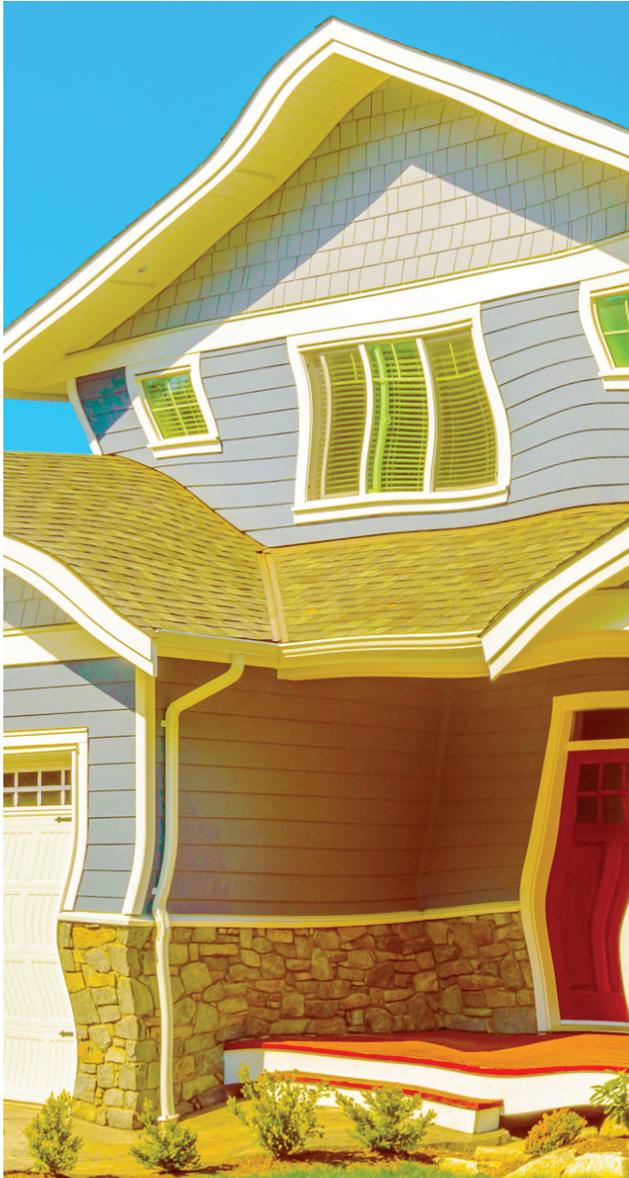


**ANGIE THIEL**  
Events Director

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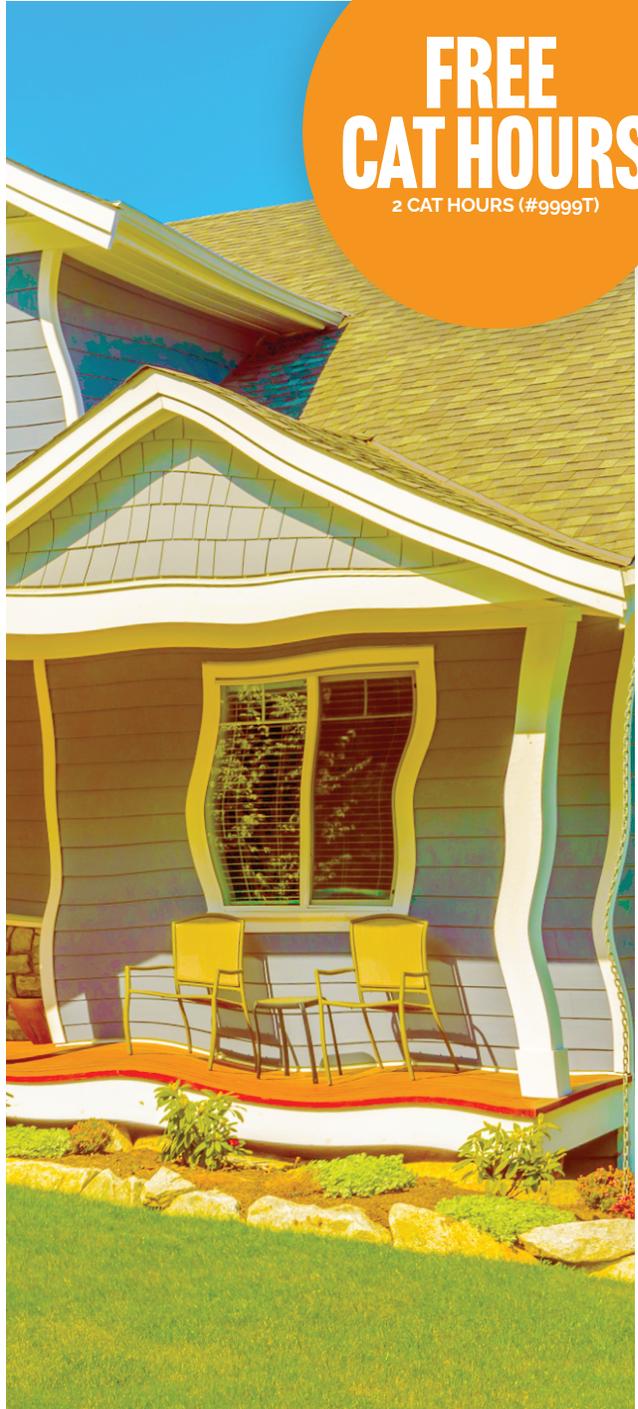
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# IS YOUR HOME HURTING YOU?

Calling all real estate professionals! Elevate your expertise at our class, 'Is Your Home Hurting You?' Explore vital topics like lead, carbon monoxide, smoke detectors, mold, radon, and egress windows with industry experts. Be the agent with the answers when your clients ask about creating safer living spaces. Many homeowners only consider these factors when buying or selling, so ensure you have the knowledge to guide them. Don't miss this chance to gain insights that set you apart in the market. Secure your spot now for a concise and impactful session!

Joined by Daniel May, Quality Control Technician for the City of Omaha and Ben Kenney, Construction Specialist for the Housing and Community Development Omaha Planning Department.



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Register at: [omaharealtors.com/is-your-home-hurting-you](http://omaharealtors.com/is-your-home-hurting-you)

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

November Activity	MO	YTD
New REALTOR® Members	13	271
Resignations	12	312
Membership (As of October 30)	2023	2022
Designated REALTORS®	210	194
REALTOR®	3068	3002
REALTOR® Emeritus	87	66
TOTAL REALTORS®	3365	3262
Institute Affiliate	74	73
Affiliate Members	137	157
Key-Only Affiliates	125	137

See the full membership report at: [OmahaREALTORS.com/membership-report](http://OmahaREALTORS.com/membership-report)

## DESIGNATIONS

### Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®)

- Mike McGlynn, The Gallery of Homes

### Certified Residential Specialist (CRS)

- Kellie Konz Wieczorek, Nebraska Realty

## CERTIFICATIONS

### Certified Real Estate Team Specialist (C-RETS)

- Jennifer Weikel, Nebraska Realty

### Pricing Strategy Advisor (PSA)

- Mike McGlynn, The Gallery of Homes

### Real Estate Negotiation Expert (RENE)

- Deda Myhre, Nebraska Realty

## PERSONALS

### Our Condolences

- To Laura Singleton, Nebraska Title Company on the passing of her grandfather.
- To the family and friends of Kathryn "Kit" Barrett, BHHS Ambassador R.E, who passed away



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## AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT PRESENTS

# RADON EXPOSURE: A PREVENTABLE HEALTH RISK

January is National Radon Action Month! That means it's the perfect time for you to take action to confirm the status of radon in your home to protect the health and safety of your family.

Health risks related to radon:

- Radon exposure can have serious health implications for you and your family.
- According to EPA Estimates, radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.
- Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year.
- Your risk of getting lung cancer from radon depends mostly on:
  - How much radon is in your home
  - The amount of time you spend in your home
  - Whether you are a smoker or have ever smoked

Despite the prevailing scientific evidence and consensus regarding the risks of radon exposure, many people are still not convinced due to having heard any number of the "myths" that have existed about radon. The following list (excerpted from the EPA's "A Citizen's Guide to Radon") addresses some of the most common ones:

**MYTH:** Scientists aren't sure radon really is a problem.

**FACT:** Scientists are more certain about radon risks than risks from most other cancer-causing substances. Although some scientists dispute the precise number of deaths due to radon, all major health organizations (like the Centers for Disease Control, the American Lung Association, and the American Medical Association) agree with estimates that radon causes thousands of preventable lung cancer deaths every year.

**MYTH:** Radon only affects certain kinds of homes.

**FACT:** House construction can affect radon levels. However, radon can be a problem in homes of all types: old homes, new homes, drafty homes, insulated homes, homes with

basements, and homes without basements. Local geology, construction materials, and how the home was built are among the factors that can affect radon levels in homes.

**MYTH:** Radon is only a problem in certain parts of the country.

**FACT:** High radon levels have been found in every state. Radon problems do vary from area to area, but the only way to know your radon level is to test. Relatively high concentrations are commonly found in the midwestern states, including Nebraska and Iowa.

**MYTH:** A neighbor's test result is a good indication of whether your home has a problem.

**FACT:** It's not. Radon levels can vary greatly from home to home. The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to test it.

**MYTH:** Radon testing is difficult, inaccurate, time-consuming, and expensive.

**FACT:** Radon testing is easy. A professionally conducted 48-hour Continuous Radon Test provides an accurate report radon test for an economical cost.

**MYTH:** Homes with radon problems can't be fixed.

**FACT:** There are simple solutions to radon problems in homes. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners have already fixed radon problems in their homes. The cost of radon mitigation by a Certified Mitigation Company will depend on the size and design of the home.

For more helpful information, go to <https://www.epa.gov/radon>.

**Al Stephens**  
Acuity Property Inspections



# THIS MONTH IN HISTORY JANUARY



President Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, leading to the end of slavery in the United States.

## 1863



John F. Kennedy took the oath of office as the 35th President of the United States.

## 1961



The Space Shuttle Challenger explodes killing all seven crewmembers.

## 1986

President George Washington delivered the first State of the Union address.

## 1790



Charles Curtis of Kansas became the first person of Native American ancestry to serve in the U.S Senate. He later served as vice president under President Herbert Hoover.

## 1907



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# PAST PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## CATHY BLACKMAN PAST PRESIDENT

In 2007, when Cathy Blackman became President of the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®, new housing starts were at a 30-year historical high, and the housing bubble was about to burst. Her background helped her weather the storm that followed.

Cathy's first foray into real estate nearly three decades ago began as a part-time gig as a real estate assistant. She had previously left her career in hospital administration to be a stay-at-home mom. Eventually, she considered returning to the workforce once her children were older, but her old job was no longer a good fit. The mother of three needed something more flexible.

Within six months of working as a real estate assistant, Cathy got her salesperson's license. "My father told me I would make a

great REALTOR® because it involved two things that I'm good at – driving around in a car and talking."

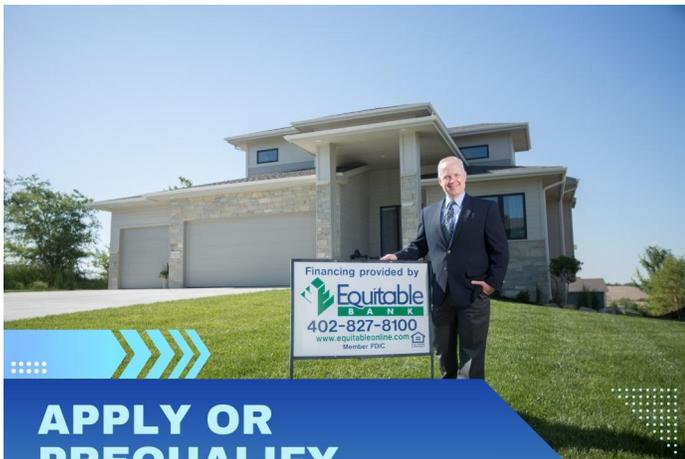
It doesn't hurt that she fell in love with all things real estate. The natural leader thrived doing volunteer work – the local opera and symphony, River City Roundup, and the Junior League. Her family firmly believed in volunteering and giving back to the community.

Cathy credits Carol Leisey for mentoring her and being "an amazing example of leadership." After Carol Leisey passed, her son Vince stepped into the leadership role. Cathy remembers everyone was a little nervous and unsure of what to expect from the new boss. Fortunately, Vince inherited his mother's leadership skills. "He does an amazing job." The Leiseys greatly impacted her; she believes having good mentors is essential.

"Real estate classes give you specific knowledge that you need, but they don't teach you how to sell." She recommends for new agents to surround themselves with successful agents who are willing to mentor

them. A good mentor will help you learn how to be a good salesperson.

What is Cathy's word of advice to new agents? Don't take things personally if a client doesn't hire you. It's not you. "There's no limit to what you can make and the impact you can have." The seasoned professional believes having a solid work ethic and good business ethics will serve you well.



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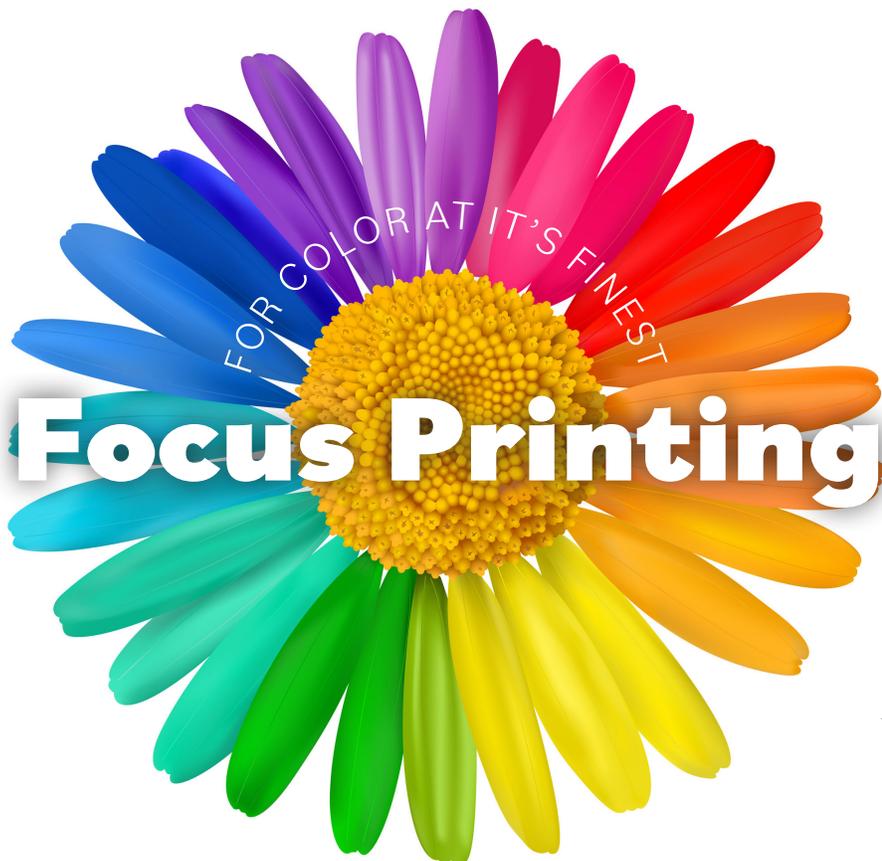


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