

# WALT BURRELL

▶ REALTOR®  
feature

By Lauren Young  
Photos by Katherin Frankovic



## The Visible Strength of Experience and Great Relationships

**W**hen you meet Walt Burrell, REALTOR® and co-founder of the Ville Team at Coldwell Banker in Naperville, it likely comes as no surprise that he's spent all of his adult life in sales. His love for good conversation and warm, personal relationships is obvious, and it's something that he inherited from his socially active, salesperson father.

"I have always admired my father. He was in sales his whole career, and I marveled at his stories about the variety of people he met through his job," says Walt. "Our house was always a social environment. From him, I learned the importance of building relationships, and I have emulated his sociable personality."

Walt grew up in Northbrook before moving to Naperville, where he has lived for 28 years. He graduated from Southern Illinois University with a double major in business and photography before jumping into sales. Shortly out of college, he started a California Closets franchise with a childhood friend.

"I was owner of the Chicagoland franchise for 22 years," says Walt. "Constantly working in homes helped me learn a lot about the housing market. When I decided to make a career change, it was a natural transition to real estate."

Walt became a REALTOR® in December 2014 after selling his franchise. An instant success, he

earned the Rookie of the Year award in 2015. Over the next few years, he developed a vision for an ideal real estate office he would either run by himself or with a partner. The lessons he learned as an owner-operator, especially during the tough times of a down economy, shaped that vision.

"In the early 2000s, I had 49 employees when homeowners' discretionary income dropped," says Walt. "I stopped taking a salary so I could keep as many employees as possible. In reflection, that time was the crucible that shaped the way I run a business today. It taught me how to manage effectively, how to creatively cultivate sales, and it crystallized the meaning of loyalty as well as the importance of supporting one another." ●●●

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His past also taught him the importance of appreciating a client's experience during a potentially trying process. "Having seen how stressful it can be to buy or sell a home, I wanted to develop a total real estate experience so as to make the transition for the buyer or seller less difficult, even enjoyable," he says.

Walt found the perfect partner with his family friend and neighbor of 17 years, Bridget Salela. Like Walt, Bridget had decided to switch careers and share his desire for creating a better buying and selling experiences for clients. In 2018, the two joined forces to form the Ville Team. With Walt's background and valuable access to a variety of properties, the two were able to grow their new career together. Their shared expertise in luxury homes gave them the foundation to understand and sell to that market.

Four years later, the Ville Team has a total revenue of \$131 million, with Walt alone topping \$53 million. In 2019 and 2020, they were awarded the President's Circle Award. The office has grown to a team of seven agents, serving customers in a broad area throughout Naperville and beyond.

When Walt is not managing his real estate business, he enjoys family



Walt with his family.

“ I strive to be a person of **INTEGRITY,** and I believe in the importance of building and maintaining healthy **RELATIONSHIPS.** ”

dinners with his wife, Angelique, and their daughter, Hadyn, and their son, Chase—especially when both children return from their college studies. Together, they regularly visit Lake Tahoe for skiing, hiking, and paddleboarding. You'll also find Walt on the riverwalk in downtown Naperville with his dog, or on his front porch, chatting with family and neighbors.

As Walt reflects on the events over the past year, he offers this advice to other professionals in the industry: "Never slow down. Real estate is full of peaks and valleys, and you need to work hard through the peaks to keep the valleys at bay."

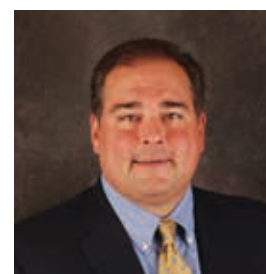
Through surviving the housing crash of the 2000s, building and selling a successful company, and launching his own new business in a new field, Walt has seen it all. But like his father before him, his enduring relationships stand out.

"The most rewarding aspect of real estate comes from creating a positive experience for the people we work with," says Walt. "I strive to be a person of integrity, and I believe in the importance of building and maintaining healthy relationships."



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