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{ NOVEMBER | TWO THOUSAND & FOURTEEN | VOLUME THIRTEEN | NUMBER SIX }

Year in Review

Upon conclusion as your President of Michigan Realtors®, I reflect with great pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Let me begin with the assurance that Michigan Realtors® are active and thriving. We have found shared purpose and worked together to make a difference not only within our profession and our associations but just as importantly our communities. Collectively we are a strong R.

The following is an eleven-month snap shot of staying engaged and empowered as an association:

- **Membership:** Increased
- **Dues:** Remain unchanged
- **Financial footings:** Solid ground
- **Invests in the future:** Purchase of real estate adjoining the Michigan Realtors® office
- **The "voice of reason and respect:"** Continues under the dome in Lansing
- **Legislative endorsed change:** Continuing Education and self-reporting
- **Commitment to elevate our State image:** Logo redesign
- **Website redesign:** Ease of navigation for its members and associates
- **Convention:** Record attendance includes 1st time attendees.
- **Board of Director's Meetings:** Summary podcasting for membership updates
- **RPAC:** Election year support & advancement of candidates reflecting our association values
- **Core Standards:** Implementation assistance to our local associations
- **Engaged membership:** exceptional leadership roles & participation with NAR
- **Visioning for the future:** mobilizing with strength yet nimble to shift when necessary
- **Directors and Officers:** Empowered leaders communicating our message effectively
- **Staff:** Professional, forward thinking, effective and efficient to all they serve

The year has been filled with personal pride and accomplishment to have had the privilege of representing and working alongside all of you. When I took the oath of office, I asked you to be engaged; reaching out to our associations and communities...and you have. I asked you to elevate the image of the R and you have... professionalism has become a priority. I asked you to practice Realtor® etiquette and adhere to the Code of Ethics...and you have. I asked you to break out of your comfort zone and participate with a new committee and assist someone in need—you did. I asked you to make an investment in RPAC either monetarily or with an investment of time...many of you committed to both.

It's been a memorable year for me to have had the opportunity to work with the best Michigan Realtors® Staff, Officers, Board of Directors and Realtor® friends. I thank all of you for your support. I encourage you to take the lead and make a difference! I know 2015, the 100th year of our State Association, will be one of great leadership, advancement and the continuation of longevity for a remarkable profession. 2014 has been pure pleasure serving as your President! ♦

“The year has been filled with personal pride and accomplishment to have had the privilege of representing and working alongside all of you.”

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November 7-10, 2014
REALTORS® Conference & Expo
New Orleans, LA

March 4, 2015
Centennial Celebration & Capitol Day
Lansing Center & State Capitol Building

June 7-9, 2015
Michigan Realtors® at Grand Hotel
Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island

September 30 – October 2, 2015
Convention & Expo
Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center

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POSTAL STATEMENTS

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The lame duck flies through Lansing

The end of 2014 will mark the end of the 97th legislature in Michigan. When the legislature returns to session after the November 4th election, we could be in for some interesting political decisions depending on whether or not political power will be changing either in the Governor's office, or one of the chambers of the Michigan Legislature. That space between the November election and the end of a legislative session is what pundits and the press refer to as a "lame duck" session.

Although, (as I'm told) the term is derived from a stockbroker that can't pay his debts, and traditionally referred to the actions of outgoing Presidents and Congress, it has been applied to our state legislature for quite some time. It is a time when big political issues can be decided as legislators that are not returning because of term-limits, or a lost election, are a little freer from the scrutiny of their constituents, political parties, and interest groups. As always, a political party that finds itself in the legislative minority at the time will find many of the bills passed partisan in nature.

The 2012 lame duck session of the Michigan House brought about some significant changes to Michigan law such as – Right to Work, the elimination of the Personal Property Tax (PPT), and the revamping of the Emergency Financial Manager law. These are all key pieces in Michigan's current economic comeback, and were supported by the Michigan REALTORS®. The current election will ultimately determine whether or not these proposals will be a continued success and whether other big issues will see the light of day this November and December.

Looking ahead to this year's lame duck session, there is no shortage of issues that are still open for discussion. With a fair amount of discussion in the legislature on tackling road funding and investment, expanding the Elliot Larson Civil Rights Act and reforming the tax increment financing system, any of these issues could become bargaining chips to address some present or future legislative initiative. Nine out of 38 State Senators, and 41 out of 110 House members, will not be returning to their current seats, so the road ahead for the aforementioned issues may be a lot smoother without an impending election. Although, as of publication, there are no concrete plans to move on any of these issues. Such is the mysterious and compelling nature of the "lame duck" session.

Your Michigan REALTORS® Public Policy Committee has already weighed in on keeping a sales tax on services off the table in the road funding discussions. How our state finances repairs to its roads and physical infrastructure is the billion dollar question in Lansing, and the Michigan REALTORS® is working hard to help find a solution while protecting our industry from an overreaching service tax. Additionally, the Michigan REALTORS® policy committee voted to support the expansion of the Elliot Larsen Civil Rights act for sexual preference, a move we made as an organization a few years ago in the National Association of REALTORS® Code of Ethics. We will continue to keep you apprised of these big-ticket items as the legislative session continues after the election.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to do in a lame duck session is to try and finish off those smaller, though no less important, issues that aren't on everyone's radar. I'm fond of comparing it to maneuvering a patrol boat through a fleet of battleships and destroyers. For the Michigan REALTORS® Public Policy staff, this boils down to three very important pieces of legislation: capping the purchase price of electronic property tax records, amending our current appraisal licensing law to reflect the current version of the Appraiser Qualifications Board criteria and completing some administrative rules clean-up for brokers and salespersons.

The first bill, House Bill 5822, amends the Transcripts and Abstracts of Records Act from 1895 governing the purchase of property tax information from the county treasurer. Currently, the most egregious situation is one county applying the 1895 statute's \$0.25 per page to electronic records. In this instance, one of our local associations went from paying approximately \$2,300 a year for a county wide electronic pull, to \$23,000 for the same records. It is the intent of your Public Policy Committee to rein in these outrageous costs with a cap on bulk record purchases of \$500. After all, these are public records, unreasonable costs only limit the public's access to them. HB 5822 received a hearing in the House Local Government Committee before the October session break so it should be good to go come November.

The second bill, House Bill 5860, updates the current definition of Appraisal Qualifications Board (AQB) under Article 26 of the Michigan Occupational Code, licensing real estate ap-

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CAPITOL REPORT | NOVEMBER 2014



by Brad Ward

Vice President of Public Policy and Legal Affairs

praisers. Under federal guidelines, Michigan must keep our appraiser licensing standards in line with the AQB in order for our appraisers to continue to do work for federally related transactions (i.e. Fannie, Freddie, Ginnie, FHA). Current law references an older version of the AQB report, therefore putting us out of compliance. State Representative, and REALTOR®, Margaret O'Brien (R- Portage), introduced this bill that will amend the current definition to incorporate the latest and all future versions of the AQB. This bill is a top priority to finalize before the end of the year to avoid federal government interference with our licensing department.

Lastly, we are working on the introduction of a bill that will clean up and clarify some of the current administrative rules with regard to real estate brokers and salespersons. Upon taking office, Governor Snyder created the Office of Regulatory Reform (ORR) to simplify Michigan's regulatory environment and eliminate obsolete, unnecessary and burdensome regulation to encourage job and economic growth. Since that time, ORR has eliminated over 1800 rules. This bill will eliminate a number of du-

plicative and outdated rules and while moving a handful of current administrative rules into statute, giving the Department proper authority to enforce them to the best of their ability.

These bills may not grab the same headlines as an overhaul to the state's road funding system, but they will play an important role in shaping the future of our industry. It is my goal, and that of your talented public policy staff, to maneuver our "patrol boat" swiftly through the fleet in the short amount of time we have remaining. We are hard at work meeting with key legislators to make sure that our issues are on their list of priorities for the upcoming lame duck session, and the support of the legislative leadership is proof of your RPAC dollars at work.

Which brings me to my final point; I hope you voted on November 4th. If you are a reader of this column on a regular basis, I have every confidence in the world that you did. You understand that government influences and shapes the real estate industry and it is important that we have representatives in office that understand our business and our issues. Now, we have to wait and see just how "lame" this duck really is. ●



**Looking ahead to
this year's lame duck
session, there is no
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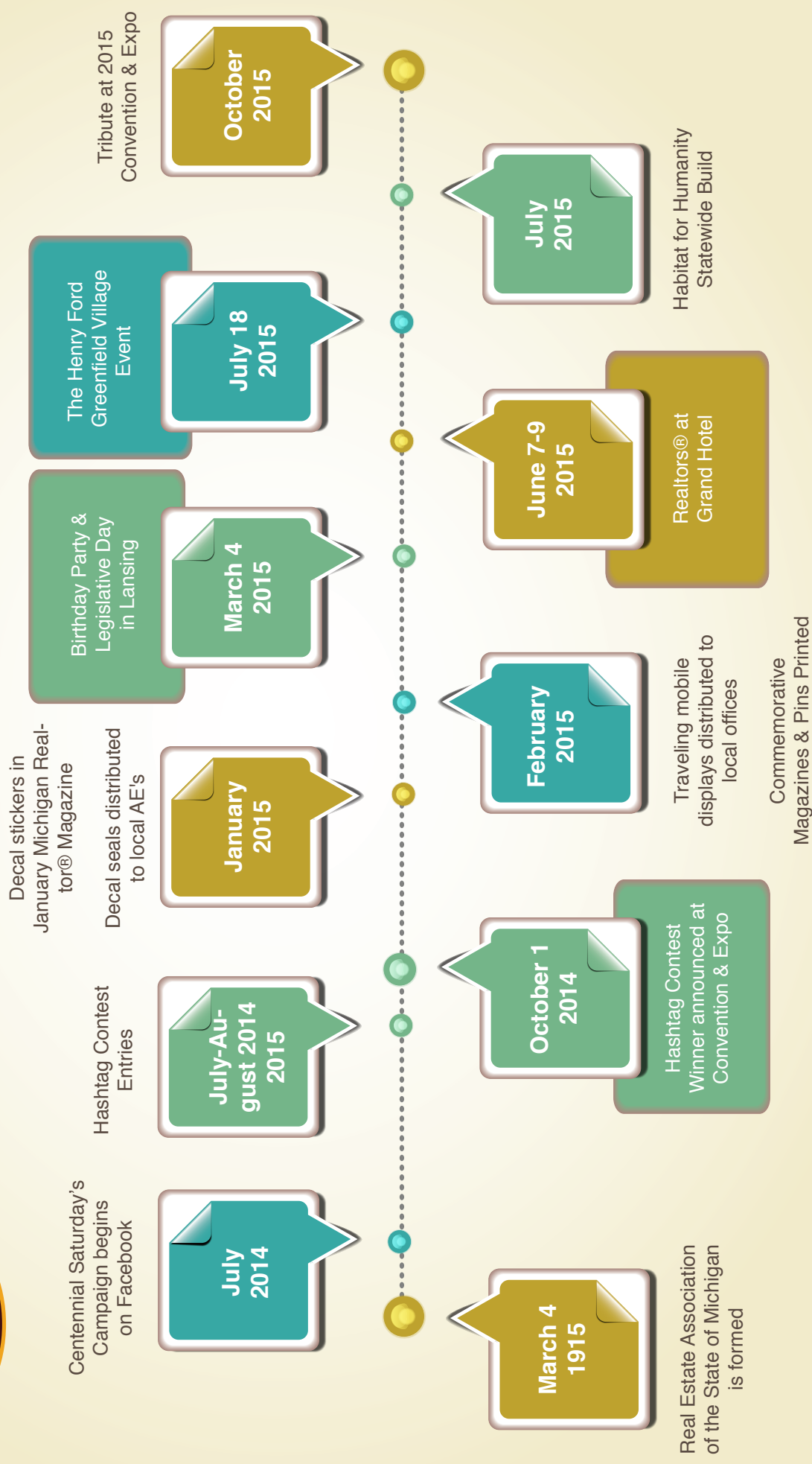


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Play it Again...



Good Neighbor Awards Honorable Mention, Jill Dover has found a universal prescription for those with memory loss, physical challenges, and sometimes no hope.

BY BARBARA BALLINGER

When depression creeps in and hopeless thoughts take over, it can be hard to find the light.

Add to that dementia and the inability to live independently, and the sufferer can feel truly lost. While no one is immune to these afflictions, seniors and veterans are surely the most vulnerable.

Jill Dover (Sherwood Realty, Grand Rapids, Mich.) has found a seemingly magic and deceptively simple elixir: music. Whether playing a familiar patriotic song, a swing tune, or a hymn, Dover recognizes that music can be powerfully rejuvenating for those accustomed to existing in dead silence or with the monotonous background noise of a TV.

Dover founded Senior Sing A-Long 10 years ago to bring music into the lives of seniors, veterans, and the disabled, some living out their days in nursing homes and assisted-care facilities. Her efforts are helping 8,000 people a month in Grand Rapids and eight surrounding counties to benefit mentally and physically through regularly scheduled musical programs.

Dover first witnessed the power of music when her late grandmother, Katherine Van Haaften, moved into a nursing home after showing signs of dementia

and breaking her hip. The facility offered quality care, but that wasn't sufficient to lessen her feelings of hopelessness.

"She had always been so spunky and never considered herself old. She would point to peers who weren't as active and whom she delivered meals-on-wheels to and say, 'Look; they're not doing what I'm doing!'" recalls Dover. When her mental and physical capabilities dramatically declined, Van Haaften sank into a depression. "She didn't want to live," says Dover.

Then, one day, Van Haaften attended a piano performance, and it was as though it flipped a switch. "She had always loved music, and began singing, tapping her toes, and swaying to the songs from her wheelchair. She became the grandmother I knew," Dover says. Other residents reacted similarly—clapping, moving their bodies, recalling tunes from the past, and in some cases dancing. "I realized that even if parts of people's brains are destroyed, there are other parts that remain and connect them with music. These people should feel joy in their lives rather than think they're in a place to die," she says.

When Dover's mother inquired how often the pianist came, she was told the facility couldn't afford it more than once

a month. Brainstorming with her parents and the family pastor, Dover decided she would start an organization to fund more performances at a greater number of facilities. Dover reached out to other nursing homes and inquired if they'd be interested in having musicians perform there for a nominal fee. Everyone responded enthusiastically, so Dover went to work to line up an ensemble willing to be paid lower than union scale. One day while at a donut shop, she heard an accordionist play, and asked if he'd be interested. He agreed, and before long, she had signed on five of his colleagues.

Boosting the number of musicians on board and the frequency of performances has made a huge impact on the residents' lives. One sixty-something veteran hadn't spoken in three years and the staff assumed he was mute. But after a guitar player started strumming and singing "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. . .," the man uttered three words from the song. Jaws dropped. "A staff member called the man's wife, and we thought she was unhappy since the call was met with silence. But she quickly asked when the musician was returning so she could attend," Dover says. "She did, and bawled as her husband

and Again

spoke again. Music has the ability to stimulate memories other senses can't."

When Dover incorporated her organization as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, she had 20 musicians, and 15 facilities. Ten years later, she now has 125 musicians, including her broker, Paul Sherwood, GRI, who plays the drums in his band, BigBandBeat, plus a man who makes music with spoons, and singers skilled in hymns, iconic wartime songs such as "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," and classics like "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

The musicians perform at 67 facilities, earning an average of \$75 per group for a performance. "The money is almost secondary," says Sherwood, whose group of 10 typically receives \$120 for a nursing-home gig versus its customary \$2,500. "It's very rewarding. You see how people come alive when they hear us play," he says.

And, with grants from the Fremont Community and Keller Foundations, Dover hired her first paid staff member, board-certified musical therapist Libby Norris, last year. Norris has worked to expand programming and give seniors iPods with personalized playlists and

noise-cancelling headphones. "Because the residents' challenges are all different, their needs vary," Norris says. For some, certain songs jog their memory. For others, they thrive by shaking a tambourine or simply by staying awake and interacting with a group.

Proof of success is that the performances often are the best-attended events at each facility. "They reach the broadest number of our residents," says Susan Lamos, Life Engagement Director at Vista Springs in Wyoming, Mich., who adds, "Music helps those who are lonely or agitated. It gets them to smile and be involved."

Such stories are sweet music to Dover. "I hope that the best life is available for everybody until their end. Music definitely helps to do that," she says.

Contact Dover at jdover@grar.com. Find more information at seniorsingalong.org. •



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ABOUT THE GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARDS

REALTOR® Magazine's Good Neighbor Awards recognize REALTORS® who have made an extraordinary impact on their community, or on the national or world stage, through volunteer work. Five winners are announced each fall in REALTOR® Magazine. Winners are recognized annually at the REALTORS® Conference & Expo, and receive \$10,000 grants for their charities. Winners also receive travel expenses to the conference and national and local media exposure for their community cause. In addition to the winners, five honorable mentions each receive a \$2,500 grant.

REALTOR® Magazine's Good Neighbor Awards was launched in 2000 and has since recognized more than 130 REALTORS® for their service to their communities. Through Good Neighbor Award grants and associated programs, Good Neighbor charities have received more than \$900,000 in donations. In addition, each winner receives national and local publicity, which generates additional donations and inspires new volunteers to get involved. Many REALTORS® are also recognized for their community service through state and local real estate associations.

REALTORS® UNITE

IN GRAND RAPIDS FOR THE 100TH CONVENTION & EXPO



On October 1-3, nearly 1,100 Realtors®, including a record 150+ first-time attendees, gained Superhero status when they descended upon the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel & DeVos Place in Grand Rapids for the 2014 Michigan Realtors® Convention & Expo. This year's event was second to none and featured incredible speakers, fascinating sessions and daily networking and social events.

Right from the start, the Grand Assembly keynote speaker, retired US Navy Captain, NASA astronaut and author, Captain Jerry Linenger, exemplified what real estate professionals strive for every day; meeting the challenges of the work at hand. In his case, Captain Linenger met his responsibilities head on during a challenging space mission that included low oxygen, the worst fire ever to occur in space and fellow crewmembers who spoke only Russian. In recognition of more than 100 trips around the moon, Jerry received NASA's highest honor, The Distinguished Service Medal.

Convention attendees also welcomed 2014 National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) President-Elect, Chris Polychron, who swore in Michigan REALTORS®, 2015 President Gene Szpeinski. Gene's real estate career spans almost four decades, beginning in 1976, and includes serving on almost all committees and task forces with the Grand Rapids Association of REALTORS®, (GRAR), as Director from 2003-2005 and recipient of the GRAR REALTOR® of the Year in 2001. As a commercial REALTOR®, Gene is a member of both the Commercial Alliance of REALTORS® (CAR) and the Commercial Board of REALTORS® (CBOR), having served on the Board of Directors for CBOR since 2012. He also served on the RPAC Trustees from 2002-07, the Public Policy Committee in 2012-13, the Finance Committee 2012-13, the Convention Task Force in 2013 and the Board of Directors from 2008 to 2011. He was elected in 2012 as the Michigan REALTORS® Treasurer for 2013, is a member of the NAR Land Use, Property Rights and Environment Committee from 2004-14 and was appointed to the Commercial Committee for 2014.

Graciously accepting the position, Gene said, "We have come together as Realtors® in a variety of ways and at different times in our lives. When you put on the big blue or red R you pledge to collaborate with your cooperating competitors for the betterment of our clients, our communities and our members. It is a tremendous honor and privilege to serve

as Michigan Realtors® President for 2015. It will be a year filled with challenge and blessed with a celebration of our 100 years of commitment to the growth of our communities and service to our members."

Following Gene's induction, was the presentation of the 2014 Michigan REALTOR® of The Year award presented to Mark Baker of the Lenawee County Association of REALTORS®. Mark is a broker/owner of Foundation Realty, LLC and an owner of Dan Baker & Sons Construction.

He specializes in new construction and is a recipient of the State of Michigan's Five Star Energy Design Award. Mark currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Lenawee County Association of REALTORS® and the Lenawee County Association of Home Builders, and is a RPAC Hall of Fame member and Trustee. Mark, who is a resident of Adrian and actively involved in his community, accepted the prestigious award among many of his colleagues.

The RPAC Appreciation Breakfast was another high point of the Convention with special guest, Lt. Governor Brian Calley, opening the event with the latest on Michigan's political scene. Following his talk was the presentation of the 2014 Realtor® Active in Politics Award, which this year was awarded to Teri Spiro from the Greater Metropolitan Association of REALTORS®. Teri is a 23-year real estate industry veteran with many accolades to her credit including 2001 Realtor® of the Year for the Western Wayne Oakland County Association of Realtors®, 2007 Realtor® Active in Politics for the Metropolitan Con-



solidated Association of Realtors® and induction in NAR's RPAC Hall of Fame in 2008.

In acceptance of the award, Teri said, "I am thrilled to be the 2014 REALTOR® Active in Politics for Michigan Realtors®! Our association has tremendous impact on public policy and government leadership through our organized efforts to educate and influence elected officials. We are a well-respected professional organization, and RPAC has been the strong voice to protect home ownership and property rights. Our support of critical issues and leadership through the non-partisan Realtor® Party has made us a credible and powerful force. It is my privilege to be politically active and an advocate for all Realtors® and property owners in Michigan."

Teri also currently serves as Federal Political Coordinator for Congressional District 9 and is an RPAC Trustee. In the past she served on the Michigan Realtors® Board of Directors, was state chair of public policy and the Realtor® political action committee and a member of NAR's Board of Directors. Teri is an Associate Broker with Coldwell Banker Weir Manuel in Birmingham.

In addition to the exciting award events, the Convention offered plenty of other special events perfect for networking, meeting new members and enjoying great entertainment. Among these were the Grand Gathering with an insightful presentation by Peter Kageyama about the benefits of falling in love with your city, the always popular and "super" fun Realtor® Royale, the Young Professionals Network (YPN) Social Meet Up and RPAC's Annual Auctions - both silent and live - which this year raised more than \$20,000!

This year's outstanding knowledge sessions offered attendees many great opportunities to update their knowledge base and earn essential continuing education credits. These top-notch sessions, given by extremely knowledgeable experts, covered a broad range of important topics from ways to maximize marketing to understanding and using technology to financing and lending strategies. The sessions spanned the entire Convention, and several were repeated to allow all interested members the opportunity to attend.

The sold out 2014

Expo was again a huge success with 73 exhibitors representing businesses, non-profits and government agencies essential to the real estate industry. Attendees also enjoyed

plenty of social activities during the Expo including the Welcome Reception, luncheons and the always-anticipated prize-winner drawings.

Closing out the Convention & Expo was Josh Schneider, founder of Prime3Consulting, who gave the inspiring talk NEXTLEVEL: Define your Purpose. Create Your Future, a simple but powerful way to take control and make change happen.

Michigan Realtors® would also like to thank each of our Convention sponsors for their continued loyalty and support of Michigan's real estate industry. You are our Superheroes! ●

