

REAL ESTATE AGENT MAGAZINE™



REAL ESTATE AGENT OF THE MONTH



Two kids, two careers and too much fun on the lake. For Berkshire Hathaway real estate agent Jeff Young and his family, life seems darn near perfect.

A native Minnesotan, Young grew up on the shores of Prior Lake where he, wife Jessica and their children Kendall and Brecken make their home today. It's a lively and busy household juggling Jessica's thriving dental career, the myriad activities both children are involved with and Young's own expanding business, yet they always find time for family. For the Young family, that typically involves something in the wide-open spaces.

"I'm pretty outdoorsy," says Young. "I was fortunate enough to grow up on Prior Lake enjoying all the benefits."

My sister and I had a great childhood. Now, my wife and I hope to offer our kids that same great experience. We love anything to do with the lake – waterskiing, tubing, jet skiing and more recently surfing.

"Yeah," he adds with a smile, "we've figured out a way to surf behind boats so that we don't need an ocean."

As life-long lake resident whose obvious passion he now shares with the next generation, it's not surprising that Young has earned a reputation as a lakefront property authority.

JEFF YOUNG

Good to Know

WRITTEN BY SUSAN CUSHING
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SHERMAN KHO

"There's so much more to lakefront property than just the obvious beauty and recreational access," he says. "Having grown up here, I'm familiar with the ins and outs, the day-to-day living experience. Whether it's maintenance, privacy issues, concerns about water quality or even questions relating to docks, I can help my buyers with first-hand knowledge because I have lived here virtually all my life."

"I can also help them when various issues arise by providing the names of trusted companies I've worked with in the past."

SHORE LEAVE

Young did leave his beloved lake for a short time while attending the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in kinesiology while minor-ing in coaching. He frequently has the opportunity to apply those coaching skills for many of his son and daughter's sports teams. After completing college Young established a very successful career as a personal trainer.

"It was something I enjoyed very much," he says, "and I believe the people skills I developed have been helpful in my real estate career. As a personal trainer it's essential to really get to know each person; to understand their goals and to a great extent get to know about their lives in general. The same holds true when I'm trying to help someone find the perfect home or prepare their home to sell."

As much as he enjoyed working with people to improve their physical health, Young's future would offer a way to help many more people in an equally significant way.

"Buying, or even selling a home, is not a simple business transaction," notes Young. "I watched my father and how he interacted with his clients and how, with great patience and his vast knowledge, he was able to calmly guide them through the whole process. It can be a very emotional time, and there's a lot at stake. If you don't really understand and empathize with the people you're working with, it can be difficult to really help them."

TRAINING TO TITLES

Real estate seemed to be a natural transition for Young, whose father Jerry was a successful broker for more than 30 years. Initially Young was spurred on by the numerous referrals he was able to pass along to his dad through his contacts as a personal trainer. But, the more he observed his father's career and what it entailed the more interested he became.



"I started to think, 'Hey, why am I sending all these clients to him when I could be building my own business?'" Young says with a smile in his voice. "Once I decided to get my license my dad was an invaluable resource. He not only passed along his philosophy about the importance of honesty and integrity, he basically showed me the ropes; taught me the day-to-day intricacies of the job that they can't teach in real estate school."

"He was the best mentor anyone could ask for," he adds. "Dad is still active in the business, in fact he's right here at Berkshire Hathaway in a management position."

Now with nearly two decades of real estate experience himself, Young has built an impressive clientele and thriving business, employing virtually no marketing or advertising.

"There is no advertising or marketing that is a valuable as a personal referral," he says. "Buying a home is a very personal and emotional experience. I appreciate that my clients trust me with what will undoubtedly be one of the biggest and most important purchases in their lives."

"I get to know my buyers and sellers and they get to know me. As a result, my business has grown primarily by word of mouth. I would say my business is probably at least 90 percent referrals," adds Young. "Early on, my father taught me that in addition to honesty and integrity, the most important thing in this business is how you treat people and I've

"As much as I love real estate and enjoy working with my clients, my family will always come first. Real estate offers a lot of flexibility, but I'm still firm about determining when I'm 'on call' and when it's family time. My children are growing up fast, and neither I nor Jessica want to miss any of it."



■ BRECKEN, JESSICA, JEFF AND KENDALL

never forgotten how important those relationships are.

"It can be a very stressful, even traumatic experience. It's my job to smooth the way, diffuse any situations and make the experience as comfortable and pleasant as possible for my clients. You can't cut corners, and every client receives my full attention and effort."

Judging by his burgeoning business, Young has been quite successful in intuitively knowing what each client needs. Furthermore, he doesn't stop caring once the transaction is complete.

"It's important to maintain those relationships long after the transaction is completed," he says. "Many people simply forget about their clients once the deal is done. I genuinely like my clients so it's not difficult for me to maintain a relationship, but I also make a conscious effort to stay in touch whether that's making phone calls, sending quick notes or whatever."

NEW COMPANY, NEW HORIZONS

Late last year Young made an important career decision when he joined Berkshire Hathaway. According to Young, business has never been better.

"The future has never looked brighter," he says. "As a member of the new Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices real estate brokerage network, I benefit from their stellar, worldwide reputation as an internationally renowned and visionary company. Since joining in October, my business has grown exponentially. In fact, for the first time in nearly 20 years I'm considering hiring an assistant!"

So, how does this successful real estate entrepreneur maintain a healthy balance between work and family?

"It's really about setting priorities," says Young. "My wife and I have been able to work opposite hours, kind of like a tag-team, so one of us is always home with our children. We're very fortunate that we've never had to use daycare for our kids. We made parenting a priority and then went from there."

"The same is true when it comes to carving out family time," he adds. "As much as I love real estate and enjoy working with my clients, my family will always come first. Real estate offers a lot of flexibility, but I'm still firm about determining when I'm 'on call' and when it's family time. My children are growing up fast, and neither I nor Jessica want to miss any of it."



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REAL ESTATE AGENT OF THE MONTH

TONIA DETWEILER

*A Little Bit
Country,
A Little
Bit Rockin'
REALTOR®*

WRITTEN BY SUSAN CUSHING

From the peaceful farmlands of Ohio to the fast-paced, high-pressure world of high finance Fortune 500 companies, Tonia Detweiler owner and branch manager of The Realty Lab, a Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices North Properties Brand, has seen it all. But at heart she's still a country girl. With down-home values and a solid middle-America work ethic, this mother of four is as versatile as she is resourceful.

"I pride myself on the things I have learned over the years from Midwestern farm work ethics to my role as a supportive wife and cheerleader for more than 30 years, showering others with a mother's love and the need to consistently learn about my business," she says.



ON THE MOVE

After marrying the "love of her life" in 1990, Detweiler spent the next several years packing and unpacking as her husband, Rudy, was transferred from one locale to another. While moving from Ohio to Michigan back to Ohio to Illinois and then back again to Ohio before finally settling down in Delano, Minnesota, the couple grew their close-knit family one son at a time.

"After our first son was born, I decided to be a stay-at-home mom," says Detweiler. Yet even then she balanced family life with a part-time bookkeeping job. "Needless to say, there was a lot going on. My life as a mom was very full and demanding as my husband's job required quite a bit of traveling."

After settling into their "forever home" in Delano, Detweiler was ready for a new challenge. "By that time, our oldest was a freshman in high school and our youngest was a kindergarten," she says. "I started working at the school helping with the Special Ed area. After a couple years of that, I decided I wanted to get my real estate license."

Real estate was not a spur-of-the-moment idea for Detweiler. Not surprisingly, given all her years of relocating and house-hunting for an expanding family, this was a career she had considered for a long time. Moreover, her interests, talent and skillset also seemed to be an ideal fit.

"What real estate did for me was take everything that I love to do and put in all in one box," she says. "I love to work with people. I love numbers and I originally was planning on going to school for interior design so real estate allows me to combine and enjoy all of these facets of my life."

NEW HORIZONS

After getting her license in 2012 the energetic mom began interviewing with various brokerages. "I decided to go with one of the smaller companies when I first started out," says Detweiler. "I was with another big brand in Delano for about five years. In 2017, I tried

another big brand, however, neither were just right. It was soon after that, I determined I needed my own office and team, so that I could create my own culture and do things the way I believed they should be done."

A thorough and intensive search eventually led her to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices North Properties. "I interviewed with every company that I could and that's how I ended up, quite happily, with BHHS and building my team The Realty Lab. It's a really great fit!"

Staying close to home, Detweiler found a perfect location in Delano for her new office. "We set up initially in a model home for about a month while we began renovating the new office," she says. "My vision was boutique style. It's an old, historical building with a lot of character and we receive so many compliments. Our location and interests keep us very involved in the community, we hold many events here."

"We've hosted several after-hours events for the Delano Chamber of Commerce where we provide music and catering," she adds. "Also, we open up our back rooms for smaller gatherings such as bible study and book club groups."

Being involved in her community wasn't anything new for this busy mom/entrepreneur, as soon as the young family settled in Delano in 2007, Detweiler and her family quickly made this new community their home, becoming involved with their church, school

and sports. Detweiler has also found a way to return to her roots by purchasing a sprawling hobby farm where she and the family enjoy time together.

HOME SWEET HOME

"We all just love it here," she says. "Everyone settled right in and it truly became our home."

Like everything else she's ever taken on Detweiler seemed to thrive as a real estate agent virtually from the start, but that doesn't mean there weren't challenges.

"When I first started, the real estate world was just starting to pick up again," she says.



"There was not an overwhelming number of new agents. You didn't have so much competition. They seemed to shy away during the recession and as the market started coming back, a new surge of new licensees began coming on board."

"One thing I always remembered was what my mentor told me when I was just starting out," she adds. "She said to give it three years and that was something that just stuck in my head. So, I worked really hard for three years focusing on learning as much as I could and building my business. It was slow at first, but I stayed focused and it gradually started to come together."

All agents have their own way of gauging the success of their business, but Detweiler's barometer was rather unique.

"My files are color-coded," she says. "At the outset I decided that my buyer files would be blue, and my listing files would be green. I keep them right on top of my desk where I can always see them, and they are top of mind. As a new agent, all my files were blue. That's pretty standard, as a new agent typically all your clients are buyers and you're just running around like crazy."



"So, my goal was to have a listing. I just wanted to see my name on a For Sale sign," she continues with a small chuckle. "Of course, as time went by, I got the first listing and the next and the next. At about the three-year mark I looked up at my files and realized they were mostly green! It hit me that I had turned the corner. That's when I believed I was doing things right."

WHITE GLOVE SERVICE

While she's enjoying undeniable success today, Detweiler is not one to rest on her laurels but continues to set the bar higher. Now she says her focus is on, "What can we do better? What can we offer our clients that other agents might not?"

The answer lies in her unique brand of service forged from her keen aptitude for business, deep-seated work ethic and inherent compassion. This translates to superior service to her clients.

"We provide what I like to call, White Glove Service to every client," she says. "When I list a home, I take my time and do things right. I know what buyers are looking for so if they are going to come in and expect a discount then we haven't done our job. If we can circumvent that by spending a couple hundred dollars, then let's do that."

"That's the first part of it," Detweiler continues. "We show them our whole marketing program with a goal of

getting top dollar in the shortest amount of time. I'm always very cost aware, and never expect sellers to put a lot of money into prepping, but some of the least expensive small fixes can result in a substantially higher sale."

Blessed with an artistic eye and a natural inclination for design, Detweiler also can influence a home's curb appeal and initial impression on buyers by offering sellers tips on how to stage or present their home in the best possible light.

"Ultimately, my clients become good friends, almost like family," she says. "Since I'm a transplant myself, I understand how it feels to start over and I make sure to invite them to events and stay in touch long after the sale. I truly value those relationships. I tell new agents, it's not about



the money it's about the people and if you're only in it for the money you're in real estate for the wrong reason."

EDUCATE. ENCOURAGE. DEVELOP. SUPPORT

Prioritizing customer service means little if your entire team isn't on board, but Detweiler has successfully built a team of highly qualified and industrious agents whose vision matches her own. Committed to creating a team that's knowledgeable, creative and service-oriented since the day she launched her own office, Detweiler ensures their and her clients' success by imparting the insights and wisdom gleaned over years of experience. Bringing together talented, dedicated and enthusiastic agents has always been a priority, but beyond that she provides them the environment and guidance that will not only help them grow and develop their own careers but enhance every client experience.

"When I started this office, it was with the idea of creating a special culture and environment where everyone thrives," says Detweiler. "I had a vision of how people could work in concert with one another using the best of technology and other tools. As we've grown we've been able to attract several other professionals who each bring their own special talents and specialization, and while everyone is unique and skilled in their own way we all share the same common goals and philosophy when it comes



to standards of professionalism, ethics and customer service."

A cornerstone of Detweiler's vision for her team has always been an open-door policy wherein she provides an atmosphere of camaraderie and an open forum for the exchange and sharing of ideas.

"I always treat people the way I want to be treated," she says, "that applies to my clients, my team members as well as other agents. This is a tough business and things are not always easy, but we make sure that we're always up-front with other agents. You know, part of being professional

Inside The Realty Lab

It's easy for the broker/owner of any real estate firm to claim they have a great system or team atmosphere, but the real proof comes from the team members themselves. Speaking with several of The Realty Lab agents, we discovered a consistent and positive attitude. Their responses coincide with the picture she paints.

Echo Le Christopherson probably knows Detweiler the best, having been by her side, serving as a right-hand administrator and personal assistant both prior to her opening of the Delano office and in the two years since.

"I personally have been in the industry for more than 15 years," she says. "I've worked for and observed many different brokers, offices and teams over the years. What I've noticed is that there are many who talk a good game about how they support each other and cover for each other when they're gone, but I've also seen that for one reason or another the reality doesn't match the hype. Things seem to slip through the cracks or competition becomes unhealthy and aggressive within a team."

"Tonia has taken it upon herself to consciously create an environment here that not only encourages mutual support and cooperation but a genuine team spirit where even though technically agents are independent contractors, they act and think 'we' rather than 'me.' Tonia knows how to bring the right people together; solid professionals who share the same goals and work ethic and who complement one another. And, perhaps most importantly, she makes sure everyone has the support, mentorship and tools they need to succeed."

Nancy Rowbotham, has been by Detweiler's side since the inception of the Delano office. "The collaborative atmosphere, willingness to help whenever or wherever is needed, and the welcoming office is unique in our business," she says. "This team strives to help me be a better agent whether it is through support services, marketing assistance, training, or brainstorming about the best way to approach a particular situation. The partnership in our office is far beyond what is offered in any other office I have experienced."

Chad Hoppke says, "I joined because of Tonia. Her professionalism, attitude, and success make her an awesome leader. This team is unique because of Tonia and our cohesiveness, communication, positivity, drive, training and overall atmosphere."

Patrick Kelly discusses his choice to join The Realty Lab. "What helped me decide to come to work for this office was meeting Tonia and Nancy," he says. "After speaking with them it was very clear that we shared the same values. Also, I researched The Realty Lab and read the reviews. The reviews were very positive."

"I have been in the business as a solo agent for over 18 years," offers long-time agent **Stephanie Boegeman**. "As an experienced agent, the traditional team structure with a team lead and a group of other agents working only buyer-internet generated leads do not work for me. The Realty Lab at BHHS allows me to be a part of a team of supportive agents who help each other grow their own individual businesses. I was looking for a place that would allow me to continue to build my current business within an environment of supportive like-minded agents who want to support, encourage, and challenge each other to be the best."

And as **Alisa Storlie** concisely notes, "I joined the office because of the team. Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."

and a trustworthy agent, is to make those tough phone calls and be honest and direct."

Part innovator, part leader and part, as she puts it "mama dog" Detweiler continues to build, encourage and support her team from one success to another.

"We've had a very good year as a team," she says with pride, "and we look forward to growing and reaching new benchmarks together."

BACK TO HER ROOTS

Finding balance is always a challenge particularly when you're leading a team of industrious professionals while maintaining your own thriving business, yet the indefatigable Detweiler has seemingly mastered this as well. Never losing sight of her country origins she and Rudy find respite at their charming hobby farm which they have named The Crow River Cottage Farm.

"Our youngest son just entered college so as of a few weeks ago we became empty nesters," she says. "We've been working on the hobby farm getting things up to par so that I can start getting the animals that I want."

"It's something I've been dreaming of for a very long time," Detweiler adds with a wistful smile. "It's just a way of getting back to my roots."

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES NORTH PROPERTIES

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