



While it's quite common for a 13-year-old to spend hours glued to a computer screen, it's not often they spend that time researching local real estate listings. For REALTOR® Melissa Dondalski however, that wasn't unusual at all. "My parents were always talking about moving, and I was the one who would be on realtor.com looking at listings and asking to go to the design center," she recalls. "I grew up loving houses and real estate." But when she graduated from Notre Dame years later, she didn't immediately gravitate toward real estate as a career. "I tried a few different things, and found out what I didn't want to do," she explains. "Then my mom suggested getting back to doing what I loved as a kid. I decided to take the plunge and haven't looked back. I absolutely love what I do!"

That love for her chosen career shows through in all aspects of Melissa's business, which is ruled by putting her clients' needs before her own. "I was born and raised in Chicago, and know it very well," she says. "Most of my transactions are in the city, but I'll go pretty much wherever my clients need me, provided I can find the right

partners to work with to meet their needs." A self-described "numbers junkie," Melissa isn't just knowledgeable about the city and its many neighborhoods. She also spends time studying the market and the economy as a whole, to get a feel for how things like interest rates and consumer spending will affect inventory and pricing. "My goal is to advise clients on a property, not sell them on a property," Melissa adds.

Yet, as much as she loves crunching the numbers and putting together the deals, Melissa makes sure to always put people first. "For me, it's about the relationship, not the transaction," she says. "I always make sure that everyone, from traditional home buyers to investors, feels they are being heard and understood, that our goals are in line and that ultimately, their goals are met."

As Melissa continues to build her team, she's quick to tell new agents that real estate isn't quite as glamorous as it appears on all the popular HGTV home shows. "Because your hours revolve around your clients, you really have to love it — the business itself and the people," she says. "I firmly believe that real estate is not just a job, it's a lifestyle."

For Melissa Dondalski Real Estate Partners, that lifestyle includes giving back to the communities they serve. Melissa was proud to be asked to be the chair of Notre Dame's alumni real estate group. "That was quite an honor because there are a lot of very accomplished and senior people involved in the group," she says. The team also participates in activities sponsored by the Chicago Notre Dame Alumni Club, including homebuilding events with Habitat for Humanity.

Melissa has been named a Top Producer by both the Chicago Association of REALTORS® and @properties. With 90% of her business coming from repeat clients and referrals, it's not surprising that Melissa says she's always networking. "As a result of that, I've become quite the foodie," she says. "I love exploring new restaurants throughout Chicago's 77 different neighborhoods." Looking ahead, Melissa is focused on one central goal. "I plan to conquer the Chicago real estate market, one happy client at a time."

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