

# Community MOMENTS



**Steve Walz**

*Market Leader*

RealManage Colorado

February 2020



THANK YOU

# MAKE KINDNESS THE NORM

This February help us make kindness the norm with Random Acts of Kindness. RealManage wants to encourage all of our friends and family to join us as we celebrate National Random Acts of Kindness Day on February 17th.

As a company, RealManage has always placed a high value on our guiding principles which include: Integrity, Respect, Selflessness, Personal Relationships, and Improvement. These are some of the same themes that the Random Acts of Kindness organization seeks to encourage with their kindness calendar initiatives.

## THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS

According to Brenè Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston, allowing ourselves to feel vulnerable at work (and be mindful of those feelings) can lead to love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. "What most of us fail to understand... is that vulnerability is also the cradle of the emotions and experiences that we crave," says Dr. Brown. "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity."

**KINDNESS IN WORDS  
CREATES CONFIDENCE.  
KINDNESS IN THINKING  
CREATES PROFOUNDNESS.  
KINDNESS IN GIVING  
CREATES LOVE.**

LAO TZU

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
FOUNDATION

## FEBRUARY 2020

"WHEN LOVE AND SKILL WORK TOGETHER, EXPECT A MASTERPIECE." —JOHANNES VERMEE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 JANUARY	2 JANUARY	3 JANUARY	4 JANUARY	5 JANUARY	6 JANUARY	7 JANUARY
8 JANUARY	9 JANUARY	10 JANUARY	11 JANUARY	12 JANUARY	13 JANUARY	14 JANUARY
15 JANUARY	16 JANUARY	17 JANUARY	18 JANUARY	19 JANUARY	20 JANUARY	21 JANUARY
22 JANUARY	23 JANUARY	24 JANUARY	25 JANUARY	26 JANUARY	27 JANUARY	28 JANUARY
29 JANUARY	30 JANUARY	31 JANUARY				

[LINK TO CALENDAR](#)

4

### Employee Spotlight: Steve Walz

Market Leader- RealManage Colorado

6

### Board Spotlight: Jennifer McCrea

Villages at Willow Bay - Frisco, TX

8

### Reducing Property Risk

7 Cost-Effective Ways to Reduce Property Risk

10

### Preventing Board Burnout

How to Keep Volunteers Happy and Engaged

12

### Board Portal Training

Training with Kara Cermak

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# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## Steve Walz



MARKET LEADER  
REALMANAGE COLORADO



I grew up on the corner of my Grandparent's farm two miles north of Hershey, NE, population 550. In the sixth grade, my father went into business on his own as an electrician. My summers and some weekends were spent helping my dad with his business, running wires through attics and crawl spaces of all sorts of homes and farm buildings. It was through these experiences that I began to understand how buildings worked. Little did I know at the time that these lessons would be far more useful to my career than my degrees I earned.

I graduated from Hershey High School and attended the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where I earned a BFA in Vocal Performance. I then moved to Kansas City, MO, and attended the Conservatory of Music at University of Missouri-Kansas City, where I graduated with a master's degree in Vocal Performance. It was during graduate school that I visited an apartment locator service and left with a job offer. This led to my first property management job in Kansas City, where I leased apartments in the Country Club Plaza area.

Fresh with two degrees, a load of student loan debt, and unsure what I wanted to be when I grew up, I moved back to Nebraska, where I was fortunate to care for my Grandmother who was suffering from dementia until her needs were more than my family or I could provide. I then worked for the local newspaper as a copy editor and was promoted to news editor in less than a year. This was my first experience in managing people and in an instant, my I became a supervisor to my once co-workers. It was certainly shaky at first, but I lead the only way I

knew how, and that was by example and asking for collaboration in getting a newspaper out every evening. I moved to Colorado in August 2003, intending to become a professional opera singer. I did a year of post-graduate study at CU-Boulder and moved to Denver in May 2005. I worked in the apartment industry for nearly 10 years and switched to Association management in 2014. I was fortunate enough to join RealManage on February 28 of this year.

I'm very proud of the team we've assembled in Denver and am ready to take on the challenges of the industry, serve the clients we are fortunate enough to do business with, and cultivate new partnerships in the Denver Metro Area. I'm beyond excited at the potential of my team and look forward to providing the best service and support to our client communities for 2020 and beyond.

Oh, in case you were wondering, I did succeed in my goal of being a professional opera singer and have been fortunate to sing with Central City Opera, Opera Colorado, Tulsa Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Opera Theatre of the Rockies, to name a few.



# BOARD SPOTLIGHT

## *Villages at Willow Bay* **Frisco, TX**



*Jennifer McCrea*

Jennifer McCrea moved to the Villages at Willow Bay in 2014. After attending a few board meetings, seeing minimal community support, she volunteered for the board in 2017 to fulfill the open Secretary role for 2017 and 2018, then elected President for 2019-2020. She has lived in HOA communities in three states over the years and recognizes the importance of contributing to support this important volunteer organization. Our home is one of the most important investments we make in our lifetime, where we raise our children, welcome family and friends, and create memorable experiences - this makes the care and management of the community so important.

As the community has grown to nearly full build-out of 1,277 homes (19 to go) and aged beyond ten years the focus on ongoing maintenance, continual improvements and homeowner compliance is a priority. The board of five members has worked on countless projects to support, repair and enhance the community appearance, maintenance and amenities throughout the community. The community offers two community pools, one spray park, a neighborhood play park and several green space open areas for walking, biking and playing.

Key themes for 2020 include; vendor partnership and management, budget utilization, board member education and succession planning, and homeowner education and awareness.

Important partnership with RealManage to include; nearly daily communication, ongoing project and policy review, city coordination, monthly meetings, community communications, active participation expectations, and focus on homeowner experience with a move to local ACC and more.

Jennifer is originally from Chicago but has lived in Colorado, South Africa, Arizona, and a return to Chicago before landing in Texas. She is still a Chicago sports fan and shares a busy home with her husband, their teenagers, an excitable golden retriever and the newest addition of a kitten. In her professional life, Jennifer is a People Experience Program Manager at McAfee. In that role she implements the inclusion, diversity and culture efforts in support of 7,000 global employees as an inclusion and diversity champion, passionate people partner, connection and culture builder.



# 7 Cost-Effective Ways to Reduce Property Risk

Amenities like clubhouses, tennis courts, basketball courts, and recreation centers bring value to your neighborhood. Since each HOA member chips in, everyone gets to enjoy these perks without breaking the bank. However, such perks are not without their risks.

When your Homeowners Association provides such amenities, it's open to a lot of liability. By taking the right steps to reduce property risk, you'll make sure your HOA members stay happy and safe, saving you lots of money down the road.

## *Identify exact risks*

You must learn what risks your board has to manage. Figure out what risks and hazards are associated with each amenity. For instance:

**Clubhouses** — If you have a stove, oven, grill, or a faulty appliance at the clubhouse, there's a potential fire risk there.

**Playgrounds/Gyms** — Unsupervised children spell danger. Someone can always get hurt while using the gym equipment. The risk of injury is greater if the equipment is not properly maintained.

**Swimming Pools** — Falls and trips can happen on the pool deck. The water might get contaminated. The diving board is a place where accidents can happen.

**Basketball/Tennis courts** — Cracked, buckled, and uneven surfaces are accidents in the making.

## *Study all relevant laws, bylaws and codes*

Check local laws, regulations, codes, as well as your HOA's bylaws that pertain to the amenities you have. Carefully studying these tedious scrolls can be time-consuming, but it will give you a great guidance on how to manage and maintain your property to reduce risk. Comply with every relevant law or code and keep your property up to scratch.

Never let them slip your mind. If you ever decide to make changes, you will need to make sure your plans comply with city and state laws. Make sure you have the necessary approval before you carry out your plans.

## *Take care of risky features*

If there is something that creates room for trouble, just getting rid of it may be the best course of action. Not every HOA member will be thrilled, but every HOA member will be safer and the HOA board will have peace of mind.

For instance, the grill at the clubhouse, the monkey bars on the playground, and the diving board at the pool are some things that amp the risk. HOA members can manage without all of those features. The simple solution is to get rid of them.

As for everything else, make sure it works properly. Check whether the fire duct system

at the clubhouse kitchen is up to par. If it's not, it may increase the risk of fire. Make sure all gas or electrical systems are installed by certified contractors.

When it comes to portable appliances, establish controls on their use. This can also be an insurance requirement. Make sure good housekeeping standards are in place.

## *Establish rules*

Each neighborhood amenity should have its own set of rules. Write them out clearly - you don't want to have multiple schools of thought in the neighborhood revolving around the same rule. Make sure there's no chance of people interpreting the rules differently.

To minimize the liability of your Homeowner's Association, it's best to hire a legal professional to check your rules and make improvements where needed. Here are a few things to consider:

Are the facilities for members? Are they allowed to bring guests?

When can members use the amenities? Each facility should have set hours. You may need to install locks and gates to enforce such rules.

Do members engage in risky activities? Banning smoking and alcohol use might be the right step.

## *Educate members on the rules*

Once the rules are in place, everyone should know them and abide by them. To layout the rules once again, place proper signage where everyone will see it. Deliver a printed copy to every member. The wording should be clear cut. If you plan on making changes, notify everyone in advance.

## *Inspect the amenities regularly*

Keeping up with maintenance is the key to reducing risk. The property manager or board members should inspect all shared areas. Brainstorming sessions on potential risks is important, but not enough.

You need to get out there and give yourself the opportunity to notice potential dangers. Consider keeping a log on all the inspections. Using a clear method to keep track will help you avoid confusion. Hire experts to inspect windows, locks, shutters, etc.

## *Keep an eye on everything, always*

The easiest way to do that is by installing security lights, intruder alarms, and CCTV systems. Install screens and barriers. Improve perimeter security. Consider hiring security personnel. It's an extra cost, but can help you prevent property damage.

## *Conclusion*

The best way to save money is by developing good, meticulous practices that revolve around caution. However, setting aside funds for maintenance, prevention, inspections, and proper management can prove to be the most cost-efficient strategy in the long run. As a board, it would be best if you never lost sight of the worst-case scenario, no matter how improbably it seems at the moment.



# Preventing Board Burnout: How to Keep Volunteers Happy and Engaged

Serving on an HOA board comes with a lot of responsibility. Board members must balance their time with their home and work obligations. Many board members willingly volunteer for the task and they are eager to contribute to the good of the cause. That enthusiasm and passion can quickly disappear when they start to feel overwhelmed and unappreciated. Watching for signs of board burnout and implementing strategies to prevent it is crucial for board success.

## WARNING SIGNS OF BOARD BURNOUT

There are signs that a board volunteer is on the verge of burnout. Staying alert to the warning signs can help you to address the problem as soon as possible. Quick action is best for avoiding the burnout from spreading to the other board members. Here are a few examples of signs a board member feels tired and uncommitted to the cause:

They seem detached. Once actively engaged, the board member no longer contributes to meeting discussions or begins missing meetings.

They are negative. Some board members may develop negative attitudes due to a lack of progress. They begin to have a defeatist attitude about everyone and everything.

They appear overwhelmed. There's so much to do that they don't do any of it, choosing instead to push their assignments off onto others.

Recognizing and addressing volunteer burnout is essential to keep a board thriving and successful. By catching the warning signs early, you can develop strategies for turning morale around. Address the issues early so that you can find the right solution for improving their morale before it rubs off on others.

## TIPS FOR AVOIDING BOARD BURNOUT

HOA board members serve an important role in the governance of your community. Simply finding people willing to serve and to share their expertise is often challenging. Once you do secure a great board, you want the board members to thrive by putting the tools in place to avoid burnout. A few ideas for doing so include:

### *Be upfront about what's expected*

Sometimes a board member may burnout because they didn't know how much work the position entailed. By providing advice for serving on your board, community members who volunteer will know what expect before they commit.

### *Listen to their needs*

Communication is key when working with volunteers. Letting board members know that you are willing to listen to their concerns can help alleviate any feelings of frustration.

### *Incorporate awards and recognition*

Most board members serve without expecting any formal recognition. Recognizing a board member for their contribution to a particular project can result in just the right amount of positivity they need to continue serving.

### *Form committees*

Spreading work projects out over several committees can benefit everyone. It not only makes projects more manageable but it can better utilize the talents of board members by assigning them to specific tasks.



# Board Portal Training

## CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

It is the singular goal of RealManage to be the very best community management firm. There is so much to excel at:

### Communication | Organization | Follow Up

To that end, our platform supports our goals in transparency and education, so we'd like to be sure you are fully aware of all of the features, as well as being comfortable with the information that you are able to access.

**Choices** - We are offering two different webinars for board members. One of the webinars will focus on the basics of CiraNet, and the other will focus on those of you that are a bit more comfortable.

**Availability** - We are ALWAYS available to answer questions that you might have, but we also want to offer specific webinars, tailored to board members, so that we can hone in on what matters to you.

### OPTION ONE

GoToMeeting I will be conducting a webinar through GoToMeeting. You can simply click on the link I'm providing as Option One and you may join the webinar: **February 20, 2020 7:00pm - 8:00pm** cst. If you would like a calendar invite for either option, so that you will have automatic reminders within your calendar, please email me at Kara.Cermak@RealManage.com. Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/376426477>

### OPTION TWO

Board workshop I will conduct a LIVE webinar of a volunteer community. If YOU volunteer your community, then the interactive webinar will be especially helpful to you. This workshop assumes that you know the basics of CiraNet. The pace of this webinar will be determined by the questions that I receive. There will be an area where you can put your questions and I will show you how to answer them, in real time. You can simply click on the link I'm providing as Option Two and you may join this webinar: **February 27, 2020 7:00pm - 8:00pm** cst. Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/771891181>

Remember! If you'd like an invite from my calendar, please email me directly and you will receive an invite, with the link for the chosen webinar, and reminders before the webinar begins, automatically.

**Kara Cermak**, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®

Community Manager Success Group — Learning and Development

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