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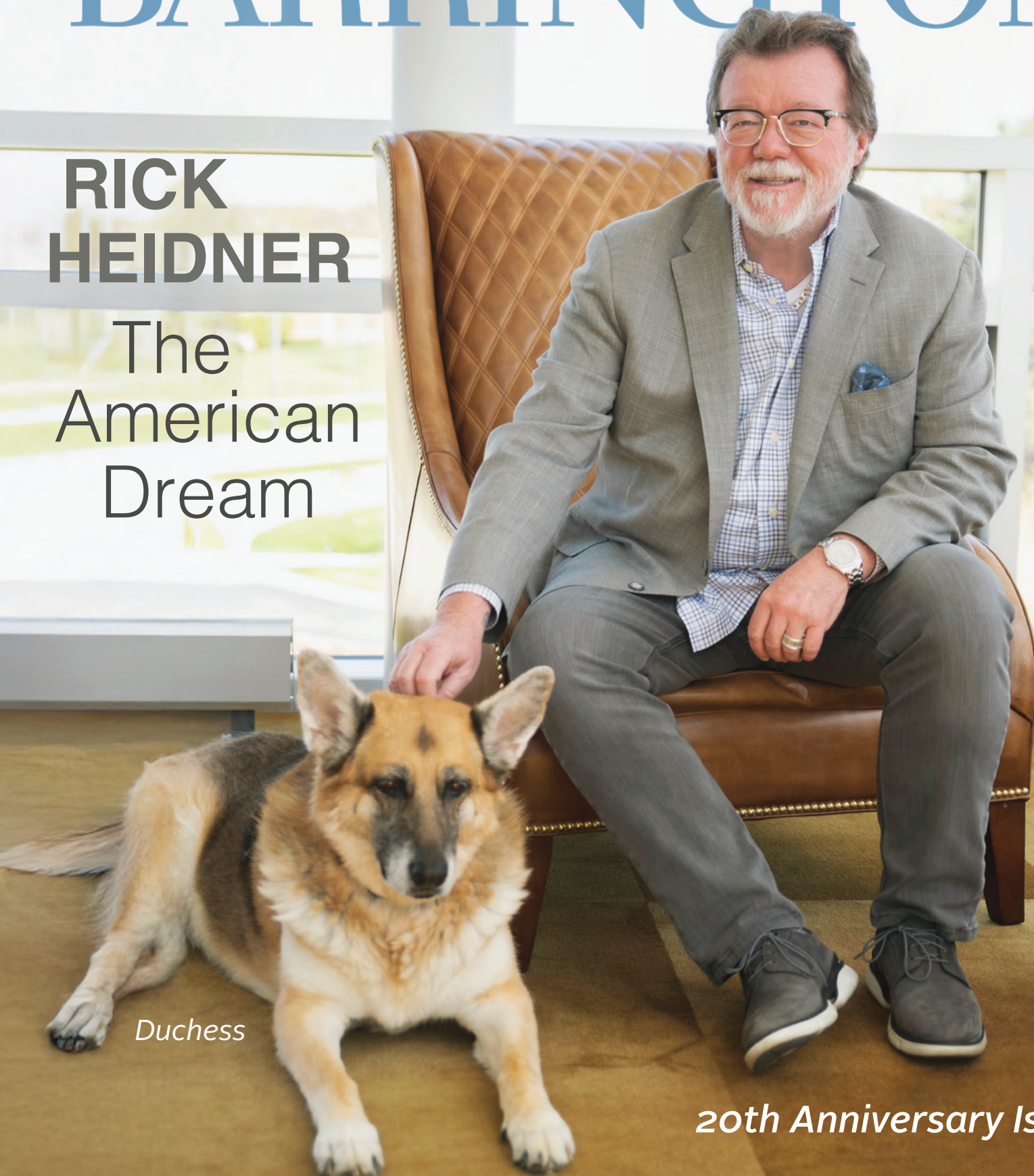
QUINTESSENTIAL

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BARRINGTON®

**RICK
HEIDNER**

The
American
Dream



Duchess

20th Anniversary Issue



RICK HEIDNER'S **AMERICAN DREAM**

For the successful businessman, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and devoted husband and father, the conversation begins and ends with gratitude



The Heidner Family Office in Hoffman Estates, Illinois.

Visionary commercial real estate and business development entrepreneur Rick Heidner calls Barrington Hills home. You might see him at a local grocery store, or at The Arboretum for one of its highly successful concert events. He and Alisa first teamed up 34 years ago as husband and wife, and then through the formation of Heidner Properties, their family business, which today includes four of their five children as partners who each run businesses. The family stays true to its values that they believe is the foundation of their success—honesty, integrity, and ethical business practices.

The growing Heidner portfolio of more than 280 commercial properties across 12 states leases to over 800 tenants. Familiar brands owned and run by the family include The Arboretum of South Barrington, Ricky Rockets Fuel Centers, Prairie State Energy, and Gold Rush Amusements which operates in more than 740 locations in Illinois. The Heidner team aims to set new standards of excellence and customer service in each sector, driving opportunities for others, including the 800 jobs their businesses create.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

The American Dream is our collective belief that through hard work and determination, and maybe a little luck, anyone can achieve success and upward mobility in the United States, regardless of their background. While traditionally associated with the success of material wealth, the American Dream can also include personal fulfillment, social mobility, and achieving one's full potential. For many, the reality is that pursuing this ambitious



Rick Heidner with Duchess. (Photo: Erika Dely)

dream is hindered by a formidable obstacle course of systematic barriers. This is Rick Heidner's story. Yet a childhood of barriers and mishaps did not stop him. Starting at a very young age, hard work, determination—driven by the overwhelming fear of having nothing and seeing his mom struggle and suffer—and being painfully aware that he was at a disadvantage as a child became lifelong motivators. And once he achieved a level of success some only dream of, those barriers came from people who have tried to block or reverse his success.



Left: Rick Heidner at the Heidner Family Office. Right: The Ricky Rockets Fuel Center and Rocket Wash in Buffalo Grove. Alisa Heidner inspired these family friendly fuel and convenience centers to be safe, well-lit, and welcoming.

A HARDCRABBLE CHILDHOOD

Heidner and his one sibling, brother David, were born in Chicago to Ruth Heidner, who was married to John Heidner, a widower, who had three children from a previous marriage. Ruth was a beautiful woman inside and out who never made more than one hundred dollars a week while working several jobs as a housekeeper, maid, and hostess at a Peter Pan restaurant on Harlem Avenue. She raised her sons and his children, for several years, until the couple split up. Permanently losing his stepsiblings due to his father's departure is counted as a significant loss to Heidner.

The Heidner family lived in an apartment building in Melrose Park on the third floor. To help make ends meet for their mom, the two boys started working at ages 6 and 7, with paper routes covering six city blocks, both in the morning and after school. Their goal was to save \$100 to buy their mom a pink dress she wanted. Breakfast was oatmeal, and TV dinners were the norm except on Tuesdays, when they went to the Hasty Grill for open-faced beef sandwiches.

Some of Heidner's childhood memories are of difficult living conditions in small apartments with water and mold and having no presents for holidays except a few new clothes from relatives and the couple next door, the Hogans. At age 11, the family moved to the King Arthur Apartments in Northlake where the Heidner boys shoveled snow, swept, painted, and cut grass, juggling the job hours before and after school well into their teens.

Heidner recalls "that we were the poor boys" and that humiliating comments were hurled at them from kids. Yet one moment stands out from that time. Heidner's uncle had small pieces of gold that his nephew was given to sell at school. "The kids made fun of me," he said. "But the teacher stated to the class that 'I absolutely guarantee that Rick Heidner will be the most successful person from this class.'"

BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR

During his high school years, Heidner pumped gas at a local station where "the rich people from Elmwood Park" would stop. "There were two boys just a few years older who were always kind," he said. "To this day, we are friends. Both went into regional politics and did very well."

Heidner's uncles bought a store of furniture in a liquidation sale, and opened a shop at Ogden, Oakley, and Roosevelt. Heidner delivered furniture in the city, and found himself at the infamous project buildings that were notoriously rough in the 1970s. "I was 17 years old and one day, I finished my morning delivery and decided to go back and fill the truck for an afternoon delivery. My family thought I did not return from the early shift, because I was out again on the road, and they thought I was dead," he said. Heidner's mom and aunt told the guys to sell the store.

Another early venture was selling hotdogs at the Hot Spot. "I hated the food business," said Heidner of his 18-year-old experience. "I lost everything

on that effort.” The next venture laid the groundwork for what would become Gold Rush Amusements. He befriended a couple who owned a 711 store and proposed that if he bought video game consoles for their customers, they could split the proceeds 50/50. They agreed. So, Heidner needed a loan, and a local bank offered up \$10,000 to the 18-year-old. The young entrepreneur personally delivered each monthly payment to the lady who trusted him at the bank. She told him he could just mail it in, but Heidner wanted to show his commitment and build trust, a trait central to his character.

The small video gaming business expanded and soon Heidner was borrowing \$100,000 to finance more games, such as *Astroids* and *Pac-Man*, and eventually, he bought 711 stores, beginning his ventures into commercial real estate. Video tapes were also popular, and so he created rentals in the stores. At age 24, Heidner and a friend and his brother started JJ Peppers food stores and began a franchise of 24 locations, which he eventually sold. But the framework and passion for commercial real estate was set.

CARING FOR OTHERS

At age 30, Heidner married Alisa, 21, who he had met a few years earlier at a West Coast Video store in one of his properties. She has been his steadfast wife, business partner, and a wonderful, devoted mother to their five children. Like the deep compassion he felt for his mother, Ruth, Heidner’s focus in life is taking care of his wife and family. And in return, Alisa Heidner has encouraged her husband to seek work-life balance and to keep the family central in their lives.

The couple shares a passion for helping others, especially those who are most vulnerable. They have supported Shelter Youth & Family Services and the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation. In downtown Barrington is the H.O.P.E. House Project, which the Heidner family has largely made possible with the donation of the house they operate in. And there are numerous other organizations they help quietly.

Heidner is adamant about recognizing and thanking nearly every person who has helped him along this often-difficult journey to becoming a highly successful businessman. “You have to have balance, or the price for success is too high,” he said. “There is a better way to do this than what I did.” That honesty is Heidner’s signature style.

RAPID FIRE WITH RICK HEIDNER

Early bird or night owl? Early bird. **First thing when you wake up?** Pray. **Coffee or tea?** Coffee. **Do you cook?** I like to grill. **Introvert or extrovert?** Extrovert. **Leftie or rightie?** Left-handed. I was right-handed, but I copied my brother David who is left-handed. **Favorite movie?** *Stan & Ollie*. **Favorite thing to do at The Arboretum?** I love Christmas decorations and driving the children’s holiday train. **Decisions by instinct or data?** Both. **In your 20s, you knew you’d made it when?** To own a Walgreens. I thought that was the path to retirement. **Most underrated quality in a leader?** Kindness and compassion. **Favorite way to de-stress?** Still looking for that. **Something you are still learning?** How to prioritize my family. **Android or iPhone?** Both. **Place you want to visit?** Italy. Haven’t been there yet. **One word to describe your success?** Family. **What are your superpowers?** I have a gift with numbers. If I believe in a deal, I’m never afraid of it. And I’ve been blessed with God’s patience, as I know I’ve used up all my lives. I’ve pushed my limits and I’m sure, His.



2025 COMMUNITY INVESTOR OF THE YEAR, CITY OF KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

Heidner Properties along with Ricky Rockets was honored in July at the third annual Kankakee Economic & Community Development Agency Luncheon as the 2025 Community Investor of the Year. Chase Heidner is pictured here with Kankakee Mayor Christopher W. Curtis who shared the following: “The City of Kankakee is proud to recognize the Ricky Rockets Travel Center for its pivotal role in revitalizing our East Court Street corridor. This property was chosen for its impact on both economic growth and community pride. As a cornerstone of redevelopment at our I-57 gateway, it symbolizes progress, sustainability, and the future we envision for Kankakee. We are grateful to Rick Heidner and his team for their investment and partnership in bringing this transformative project to life.”



“Rick Heidner’s generosity has been a cornerstone of the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation’s mission. From opening his family’s doors for hosting events, to sending families to Disney World, to simply always being there when needed, Rick has touched countless lives with his kindness. Over the years, he has become part of our family, and his unwavering support has brought joy, comfort, and hope to so many, leaving a lasting legacy of compassion.”



Ruth and Rick Heidner

Rick, Ruth, and David Heidner

"No man could ask for a more beautiful companion. We will miss you Duchess, always love you, and never forget you." (2012–2025)

ARTICLES OF APPRECIATION

BY RICK HEIDNER

Reflecting on where I started and how far I've come reminds me of the power of resilience and belief in oneself. I truly hope my story can serve as inspiration for anyone who may be facing similar challenges. Hard work, dedication, and honesty are not just ideals, they are the foundations of real success. It was hard getting here, and I didn't do it alone. I'd like to recognize the people who helped me along the way.

My mother Ruthie raised my brother David and me by herself from when I was 1, and David was 2. She never abandoned us, and she suffered for us. My grandmother and grandfather helped my mother, brother, and me even though they had so little. My uncles and aunts who helped us; my mother never wanted to take, but they pushed and tried. Jim and Bee Hogan, our next-door neighbors, who showed us love and tried to give us a feeling of holiday when we could not afford it. Two high school teachers, Carl Gebhardt and Pete Ventrelli, gave me such encouragement and lifted me while kids could be so cruel. Toni Suspenzi is the lady who gave me my first \$10,000 loan at Parkway Bank when I was 18 years old. Parkway Bank is where I went on to become their largest individual customer and second largest overall customer over the next 47 years after that first loan

of \$10,000. Florian Barbi, First Nations Bank, who trusted me, and lent to me in hard times when other banks wouldn't or couldn't. All the people and friends who invested with me, and trusted me, over the years. My friend, Fred Hoffmann, who I would go to for advice when I struggled or felt I was going too fast; he would ground me. My only brother, David, who always protected me and helped me when I was in trouble. Patrick Collins became my dear friend as he protected me when people tried to destroy me. My German Shepherd Duchess, my beautiful girl, who I just lost at age 13, calmed me and loved me unconditionally and for whom my heart breaks. My intelligent and beautiful wife, Alisa, who has given me love and patience and has tolerated my work drive, and who took the time to teach me to try to concentrate more on family. My five beautiful children who had to put up with and miss their dad because of my crazy work ethic.

And last, but first and foremost, I thank God, who put me here. Who has saved me so many times as I kept pushing forward. Who has protected me as people tried to destroy me, my family, and everything I have ever worked for. I only got here and am still standing because of Him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DAD

Alisa and Rick Heidner's children share their unique insights and deep appreciation for their father.

ZACHARY HEIDNER

From a young age my father has taught me about hard work and responsibilities, and how sticking with things through hard times pays off. Watching my father grow his ideas and passions into the thriving businesses they are today has inspired me to want more from my life. Without his example growing up, I don't think I'd fully understand the sacrifices that must be made to be successful—not just in business, but also in life. He is truly an inspiration to everyone who knows him.

NATHAN HEIDNER

Throughout the years of being with my father, he has instilled core principles in me. One of them is the importance of family and to always being

there for one another. My father has always put our family first, whether it was attending our baseball games as children, or being there for significant milestones with us growing up and still today.

One great memory I have with my father, and all my siblings, is that every year for our birthdays, our father would spend the entire day with us and do whatever we wanted that day. I look forward to doing the same thing with my children one day.

I have had the privilege of working with my father for over seven years now. One thing I have learned is to have a strong work ethic, but to balance it with your personal life. Although work is important and necessary, you also need time for yourself, family, and your interests.

CHASE HEIDNER

One of the many traits I inherited from my father is a deep love for animals. And because of this we grew up in a house that many called a “zoo.” From hamsters to guinea pigs, to turtles, frogs, lizards, dogs, and horses, neither of us could ever resist taking home an animal to love. Every time we went to the pet store, and an animal was placed in my arms, I couldn’t help but to tear up, and he couldn’t help but to take that animal home with us.

My father has always been one to see the bigger picture—one that encompasses business, family, and the lasting impact on those around him. His visions often stretch to five or 10 years, and beyond, and yet he never loses sight of what matters in the present moment. I’ve watched him create opportunities where others only saw risk. He doesn’t waver when he believes in something, or someone. But the greatest thing I have learned from watching my father is to do everything in life with pure intentions. He never had to say it aloud, he simply lives it. Every decision he makes, every relationship he nurtures, is rooted in kindness, sincerity, and an unwavering commitment to doing good. He carries the kind of authenticity that cannot be taught, only felt.

Whenever I meet someone who knows my dad, I always hear the same sentiment— what a wonderful person my father is and gratitude for the things he has helped with. His impact is personal, and it carries through individuals, families, and entire communities. I always get the chills when I look out at a crowd of people gathered for a concert at The Arboretum and think to myself, my father made this happen. He brought a whole community together to laugh, sing, dance, eat great food, and enjoy each other’s company the way communities were meant to do.

Above all, my father cares about making a lasting, meaningful impact on the world around him—and making sure his family is loved and supported not just for today, but for a lifetime. He cares deeply, often silently, and with a strength that’s difficult to describe. He carries this weight with grace and humility. It seems like there is not enough time in the world to care for as many people as he does, but he makes it happen. Because that’s who he is.

COLLIN HEIDNER

My father has been an incredible role model throughout my life. Growing up and watching the way he carries himself, the values he lives by, and the strength he shows through every challenge has been a true blessing. His perspective on life and the unwavering principles he holds have shaped the person I am today and the person I am becoming. He’s taught me that no matter what life throws our way, we must keep moving forward, stay resilient, and never lose our kindness.

I’ve learned from him that being caring and respectful of others can take you far. He’s shown me the importance of fighting for what you believe in and, above all, putting family first.

Because of my father’s determination and success, I’ve had opportunities to experience unforgettable moments and create lifelong memories with him. One tradition that means the world to me is attending the Super Bowl together. For nearly a decade, it’s been our tradition to make a weekend out of it, originally just the two of us, and now often joined by my brother Nathan, my uncle, and other family and loved ones. From exploring the host city and trying new foods to simply enjoying each other’s company, those weekends have become some of my most cherished memories.



Rick Heidner keeps an eye on the horizon through his office windows.

Watching my father’s journey has taught me that anything is possible with dedication, integrity, and heart. He is not only a fearless leader but also someone who genuinely cares for those around him. I’m proud to carry his lessons with me and strive to live by the example he has set every day.

ALEEA HEIDNER

One of the most important lessons taught by my dad is never to be greedy and always be humble, kind, and accepting. With my father coming from a less fortunate background, he has always shared his stories and struggles with me from a young age. This taught me to be grateful for what I have in the present time and always strive and reach for goals like he did. My dad has built me up into a kind person and has demonstrated how to push through the downsides of life, whether it be unkind people or challenging tasks at hand.

My dad has a great sense of humor; so great that you can’t tell when he’s joking. Oftentimes my friends will ask me, “Is he joking, or is he really being serious?” to something so absurdly funny.

I’ve learned from my father that family will always push through it all. When I’m down in the dumps, my parents and older siblings help me because that’s what we’re all here for. My dad has established this throughout our lives through all his conversations about business or simply by helping as a parent.

Some of the earliest memories I have in my life are charity events. I can’t recall a time when my father wasn’t donating or assisting a charity. Even when my dad was down on money, he always found a way to help. What he cares most about is family, family, family. I cannot say it enough. U