

**2017 Inaugural Gala**  
Illinois REALTORS  
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Barkstall

Good evening!

Welcome to the 101<sup>st</sup> Gala inaugural of Illinois REALTORS®. I'm Jeffrey Barkstall, 2015 President of the Champaign County Association of REALTORS®, and I am so glad you joined us for what I think will be a very special evening.

Tonight is a celebration of a new leadership year.

It's also a celebration of the people – all the people – who make up Illinois REALTORS®.

Before we begin, I want to introduce Isabelle Difanis, daughter of 2018 President Matt Difanis and his wife, Angelle, will read a poem entitled, "Human Family."

<ISABELLE READS POEM FROM PODIUM>

Isabelle Difanis

I note the obvious differences  
in the human family.

Some of us are serious,  
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived  
as true profundity,  
and others claim they really live  
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones  
can confuse, bemuse, delight,  
brown and pink and beige and purple,  
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas  
and stopped in every land,  
I've seen the wonders of the world  
not yet one common man.

Isabelle Difanis

I know ten thousand women  
called Jane and Mary Jane,  
but I've not seen any two  
who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different  
although their features jibe,  
and lovers think quite different thoughts  
while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,  
we weep on England's moors,  
and laugh and moan in Guinea,  
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,  
are born and die in Maine.  
In minor ways we differ,  
in major we're the same.

Isabelle Difanis

I note the obvious differences  
between each sort and type,  
but we are more alike,  
my friends, than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unalike.

Barkstall

And now, please rise as Matt and Angelle's son, Gabriel Difanis, plays the Star Spangled Banner.

Please remain standing afterward for the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Gaspar Flores Jr., president of the Chicago Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals.

<GABE PLAYS NATIONAL ANTHEM>

<GASPAR TO PODIUM AT END>

Flores

Thank you, Gabriel. Now, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

*I pledge allegiance  
to the Flag  
of the United States of America,  
and to the Republic for which it stands,  
one Nation under God,  
indivisible,  
with liberty and justice for all.*

Barkstall

Thank you, Gaspar.

And now, we are honored to have Courtney Jones, president of the Dearborn REALTISTS Board of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers Chicago Chapter here tonight to lead us in prayer.

<JONES TO PODIUM>

<JONES PRAYS>

Barkstall

Thank you, Courtney.

In recent years the incoming Illinois REALTORS® president has selected a charity to support in lieu of gifts.

To tell us about this year's choice is Sarah Ware.

<SARAH WARE TO PODIUM>

<WARE MAKES REMARKS/ANNOUCNEMENT>

Barkstall

Thank you, Sarah.

**Barkstall**

There are a number of important sponsors who have made this evening possible, and I want to make sure and recognize them.

First, our Diamond sponsors:

Mainstreet Organization of REALTORS® and the North Shore-Barrington Association of REALTORS®. Thank you so much for your support.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Our Gold sponsors for the evening are the Champaign County Association of REALTORS® and our friends at Midwest Real Estate Data.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Our Silver sponsors are:

- PrimeLending
- RE/MAX Realty Associates
- And the Three Rivers Association of REALTORS®

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Barkstall

Our Bronze sponsors are:

- The Bloomington-Normal Association of REALTORS®
- The Chicago Association of REALTORS®
- Our friends at the Dearborn REALTIST Board
- Greater Gateway Association of REALTORS®
- Heartland REALTOR® Organization
- The Inland Real Estate Group
- Peoria Area Association of REALTORS®
- Rockford Area REALTORS®
- REALTOR® Association of the Fox Valley
- REALTOR® Association of Southwestern Illinois

Thank you again for your continued support.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Barkstall

You can see all of our sponsors, including the Gala Level sponsors, in the program.

There are a number of special guests we'd like to recognize tonight.

Elizabeth Mendenhall, the 2018 president of the National Association of REALTORS® is here. We are honored that in a few minutes she will install our officers.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Our Region 7 Vice President is with us tonight. Please welcome Illinois REALTORS®' own Pat Dalessandro.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

We're also pleased to have Kreg Allison join us. Kreg is director of the Real Estate Division of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Gary Clayton, celebrating his 30th year as CEO this year is here with his wife, Marsha.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Barkstall

Please welcome Luke Bell, Illinois REALTORS® Executive Vice President.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Just a few hours ago Ed Neaves was formally named as the association's treasurer. He's here tonight, and I should note he's a new dad.

He and his wife, Amanda, recently had a baby boy, named Edwin.

Welcome, Ed.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Our 2018 President-elect Dan Wagner, joins us tonight with his (wife/Sister) Lisa.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

You've already met his children, Gabriel and Isabelle. Now let's give a warm welcome to your 2018 President of Illinois REALTORS®, Matt Difanis and his wife, Angelle.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

Barkstall

Finally, I want to recognize Doug Carpenter, your 2017 President and ask him to share a few remarks.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

<DOUG CARPENTER TO PODIUM>

<CARPENTER>

Thank you, Jeffrey.

This year ends as it began for me last October: With my REALTOR® family.

I would have it no other way.

The people in this room – and so many others who could not be here tonight – have played a huge role in making the association's 101st year a significant one.

Together, we met and exceeded our key RPAC fundraising goals.

Together, we crafted a strategic plan to guide the association into the future.

<CARPENTER>

And together we helped make the value of a REALTOR® known in Illinois.

In Washington, D.C.

And even in Europe and Asia.

I urged everyone in my inaugural speech last year to always ask “What’s next?”

Together, we did just that.

Hundreds of our members helped craft a strategic plan for the next three years.

They helped ask “What’s Next,” and the results will ensure that Illinois REALTORS® has a laser-like focus on what is most important to our members.

There are so many of my REALTOR® family to thank this year.

Matt Difanis, Mike Drews and Dan Wagner; thank you for your friendship and your passion for making this organization the best it can be.

<CARPENTER>

Matt, in a few minutes you'll be sworn in as our next president, and I can safely say that with Dan and the addition of Ed Neaves, you are well positioned for success.

Gary Clayton; thank you for sharing with me just one of your 30 years of leadership.

I am sure at times this one year felt like all 30 rolled into one.

Gary's knowledge of the industry and the REALTOR® organization is without peer. We are so fortunate to be able to draw on his wisdom.

Marsha Clayton: No matter what the circumstance, your grace and wisdom has made a huge difference for this organization, and for me personally.

Luke Bell: It was a joy to work with you this year. You're the future of Illinois REALTORS®, and I am excited to see what you'll do in the years ahead.

<CARPENTER>

To my dear friends Lynn Madison, Pam Krieter and Debbie Prodehl; You have been there for me from the moment I began this leadership journey.

Your friendship and advice has meant so much over the years.

We've laughed. We've cried. But mostly we've laughed.

I couldn't do it without you.

To Illinois REALTORS® staff --- thank you.

I am not sure until you become president anyone can truly understand just how well respected and talented these folks are.

I knew throughout the year no matter how busy the schedule was and no matter the task, our association staff would always deliver, not just for me but for all of our 47,000-plus members.

Family, as we all know, is there in the good times.

Family is there in the not-so-good times.

<CARPENTER>

As many of you know, this was a year of significant personal challenge.

It was no surprise that my REALTOR® family was there every step of the way.

So, from the bottom of my heart, I say “Thank you.”

Thank you for being there when I needed it.

And thank you for allowing me the singular honor of giving back at least a fraction that this profession – and the people in it – have given me through my career.

And now I'd like to ask Vicky Silvano to come forward.

Vicky is 2016 National Chair for the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA). Earlier this year she was announced as NAR's Liaison of Global Business Alliances by Elizabeth Mendenhall.

Vicky will be installing our board of directors. Welcome Vicky.

<VICKY MAKES BRIEF REMARKS>

It is my honor to swear in the 2018 Illinois REALTORS® Board of Directors. There are five new members:

- **Nicholas Apostal**, managing broker with Keller Williams Chicago-Lincoln Park and founder/principal broker for The Apostal Group.
- **Jeffrey Barkstall**, who you have already met, a broker with Century 21 Heartland Real Estate in Champaign.
- **Ayn Bartok**, <EYE-n Bar-TOK> broker/owner of All in One Real Estate in Harrisburg.
- **Michael Gobber**, managing broker/partner, Century 21 Affiliated in Westchester.
- And finally, **Karen Stailey-Lander** a broker with Berkshire Hathaway Homeservices Snyder Real Estate in Bloomington.
- **Matt Silver**, broker and partner at Urban Real Estate in Chicago will also serve on the board, but was unable to join us tonight.

At this time I'd ask the new board members and all the returning board members to come forward.

<BOARD MEMBERS COME TO FRONT>

Raise your right hands, please.

*...Do you solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that you will administer the office to which you have been elected to the best of your ability and judgment.....*

*.... in conformity with the bylaws and constitution of the Illinois REALTORS®...*

*....That you will in all acts be governed by the principles of honesty, justice and fair play, and in every manner possible endeavor to promote and safeguard the best interest of our association and the welfare of its membership...*

*If you so promise, answer by saying "I Do."*

You may lower your hands.

Silvano

By virtue of the authority conferred on me, I do hereby proclaim each of you as duly elected and officially installed to the office to which you are elected.

Congratulations, and thank you for letting me play a special role in your association's history.

Barkstall

Thank you, Vicky.

And thank you to the Board of Directors who have agreed to take on the challenge of helping shape this association's future.

Barkstall

I'd now like to introduce Elizabeth Mendenhall. As I mentioned, she is 2018 NAR president, and she has a long history of working with REALTOR® organizations.

We were fortunate to lure Elizabeth over the border from her home in Columbia, Missouri, where she has been a REALTOR® for two decades and is the current CEO of RE/MAX Boone Realty in Columbia.

You could say being a REALTOR® is in her blood. She is, after all, the sixth generation in her family to be a REALTOR®.

Barkstall

She's served as president of the Missouri Association of REALTORS®, the Missouri Womens Council of REALTORS®, and has held numerous committee and official positions with her local, state and national REALTOR® associations.

We are so honored to have you here tonight.

Please join me in welcoming Elizabeth Mendenhall.

<MENDENHALL TO PODIUM>

<MENDENHALL MAKES REMARKS>

Mendenhall

Now, I'd like to ask your 2018 officers to join me.

Ed Neaves, treasurer.

Dan Wagner, president-elect.

And finally, Matt Difanis, president.

Mendenhall

Please raise your right hands.

*...Do you solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that you will administer the office to which you have been elected to the best of your ability and judgment.....*

*.... in conformity with the bylaws and constitution of the Illinois REALTORS®...*

*....That you will in all acts be governed by the principles of honesty, justice and fair play, and in every manner possible endeavor to promote and safeguard the best interest of our association and the welfare of its membership...*

*If you so promise, answer by saying “I Do.”*

Mendenhall

Thank you, Matt, Dan and Ed. It was wonderful to be a part of this event.

Matt, I have the pin and the gavel for you as tokens of your office.

<GETS PIN AND AFFIXES TO LAPEL, PRESENTS GAVEL>

<MATT GIVES REMARKS>

Barkstall

Elizabeth, thank you so much for being here.

And congratulations to our new board and officers. Let's give them another round of applause.

<LEAD APPLAUSE>

What a night!

There's more, though.

There's music and dancing to come, brought to you by "Love Signs".

Good night everybody.

Congratulations Matt!

<CUE BAND>