



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016



Ron Benson

Ron Benson and his wife, Linda McDonald, formed the McDonald Group at Keller Williams Avenues Realty in Wheat Ridge in 2012. Prior to becoming a real estate broker, Ron had a 40-year career in the public sector parks and recreation profession. Until his retirement in 2008, Ron spent the last 20 years in the profession as the Director of Parks, Trails and Open Space in Douglas County.

Ron and Linda have lived in Wheat Ridge for 18 years. Ron has one daughter, and two granddaughters. Ron is active in the Wheat Ridge Business Association, Applewood Business Association and the Wheat Ridge Optimists.



Karen Berry

Karen Berry has a background in natural resources conservation, engineering, geology, and planning. A lifelong resident of Wheat Ridge, Berry graduated from Jefferson High School and the Colorado School of Mines.

After college, Berry worked as an engineer and geologist for petroleum, mining, and engineering firms. She left private industry to work on community-based conservation close to home. For over ten years, Berry worked as a natural resources planner for Jefferson County.

Berry is a program manager for the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, where she works closely with cities and counties across the state on a variety of land use and natural resource issues. She is a certified planner, a professional geologist, and a water quality

expert.

Berry served on the Wheat Ridge City Council, Planning Commission and on the Liquor Licensing Authority. She also served on the boards of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Colorado Municipal League Policy Committee, the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership and the first board and planning committee of Wheat Ridge 2020 now Localworks.

She currently serves on the boards of the Jefferson Conservation District, the Coalition of the Upper South Platte and the policy committee of the National Association of Conservation Districts.



Kelly Brooks

Kelly Brooks currently serves as an Assistant Chief with the Wheat Ridge Fire Protection District overseeing the Division of Fire Prevention. In his capacity, Kelly is the primary liaison between the Fire Department, business owners, and the community in general. Prior to his position with the Fire Department, Kelly was an architect working for various firms in both the Seattle and Denver area's as well as for himself in private practice. Kelly has been a member of Wheat Ridge 2020 and active with the Wheat Ridge 2020 Encourage Development Committee since 2010. Kelly has a bachelor's degree from CU and a master's degree in Architecture from the University of Washington. Kelly has been a resident of Wheat Ridge since 2003 and is married with two boys and a girl.



Joe DeAguero

Joe DeAguero has been a resident of Wheat Ridge since 2012. He, his wife Mary, and daughter Karen moved here from Eastern Oregon. Karen currently attends Colorado School of mines. A native of Santa Fe, New Mexico, Joe earned his Bachelor of Science Degree from New Mexico State University and Master of Business Administration from Marylhurst University.

Joe's diverse experience includes work in the fields of Horticulture Education, Mine Reclamation & Permitting, Residential Real Estate Sales and Executive Director of the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce amongst other endeavors. He served and was Honorably Discharged from the New Mexico Army National Guard. Joe

published his first novel, “Blanket of Deception” in May of 2012.

In partnership with New York Life Insurance Company, Joe is owner of his Financial Services practice and office in Arvada and has built a strong business in the greater Denver area. He is an active volunteer with Localworks and currently serves as Chair of the Communications Advisors Team. He is a 2015 graduate of the Wheaties Academy. Joe is also a member of the Wheat Ridge Business Association and a Member and Ambassador of the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



Kristine Disney

Kristine's background includes board experience serving cultural and youth organizations and she currently serves as Board President. She has served on the Oklahoma City Arts Council, the Associate Board for the Oklahoma City Art Museum, as board president for Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park, and Women in Design. She was also a grant writer for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver and participated in the planning and execution of several fund raising events during her tenure there. Kristine has lived in Wheat Ridge for 17 years, and is excited to see the changes that are coming, and to be part of that process. She graduated from Wheat Ridge Civic Academy and is a 2016 Wheaties Academy participant.



Mike Gauthier

Born in Southwestern Iowa, Mike moved to Arvada in 1960 and has been here ever since. He attended High School at Regis Jesuit and studied Marketing and Economics here at Regis University.

Mike purchased Wheat Ridge Liquor, located between North Harlan and Fenton Street on 38th Avenue in 2005 and is an involved business owner in the community of Wheat Ridge.

Mike believes it is important to be active in your local community and likes to give back and show his commitment to the neighborhood. In addition to being on the board, Mike is also involved on the Ridge at 38 Leadership Committee and Chair of the Marketing Committee.



Joseph Giordano

Joseph is a Certified Internal Auditor and accounting lecturer at Metropolitan State University of Denver where he serves as the faculty sponsor of the student run internal audit program. Prior to becoming a professor he spent twelve years at AT&T, Qwest, and Wells Fargo, most recently spending four years performing anti-money laundering audits.

In his spare time Joseph mentors at-risk teenagers through the nonprofit Colorado Youth at Risk and is an avid cyclist. He has two Master's degrees from the University of Colorado at Denver, and a Bachelor's from the University of Florida. Joseph moved to the Denver area in 1997 and has been a resident of Wheat Ridge since January 2011.

As a fifth generation Coloradoan, with ancestral ties in Wheat Ridge dating back to the 1800's where his great-great grandfather homesteaded near 42nd and Jay, Michael takes pride in Wheat Ridge's community focused agricultural past.



Michael Kolesar

Professionally Michael is a real estate attorney where he advises developers, lenders, and investors on all aspects of commercial real estate. Prior to being an attorney, Michael was a licensed professional engineer focused on owner's representation, property due diligence, and forensic engineering.

Michael holds a B.S. in Architectural Engineering with an emphasis in both Construction Engineering and Structural Engineering from University of Colorado Boulder, a M.S. in Real Estate Development from University of Denver, and a J.D. from the University of Denver.

With his passion, education, and profession focused on the built environment, along with his deep roots in the Wheat Ridge community, Michael is at home serving as a director on the Wheat Ridge 2020 board guiding Wheat Ridge towards the inclusive, community-centric, modern environment that Wheat Ridge is becoming.



Jerry Nealon

Jerry was raised in Wheat Ridge, attended Saints Peter & Paul through the 8th grade, spent one year, 9th grade, at the old Wheat Ridge Junior High School at 38th & High Ct. and graduated from Jefferson High School. He continued his education at Red Rocks College for many years with night classes in math and business.

In January of 1976 Jerry started working for his father, Jack, at Cress Tile & Linoleum Co. My Grandfather, Charlie Cress who started the company in 1948 was already retired, but still came in to work every day to stay active. Shortly after, we changed the name to Cress Carpet & Tile, and later to Cress Kitchen & Bath as our business model changed throughout the years.

He never strayed too far from Wheat Ridge. At the age of 20, he purchased a condominium in Lakewood, and then spent the next 21 years in a 1939 English Tudor in North West Denver. The original owner had left the home exactly as it was 50 years ago. He enjoyed bringing it in to the next century but leaving it with its original charm.

He has a daughter Gianna and son Liam.

He said, "My heart will always remain in Wheat Ridge, and my goal is to do my part to make Wheat Ridge a great city, especially revitalizing 38th Avenue.



Joy Opp

Joy is a Colorado native and grew up in downtown Colorado Springs. She headed for the flat lands to go to the University of Kansas in Lawrence, and after graduating was drawn into the telecom industry with Sprint. After a few years in Kansas City, Joy decided it was time to get back to the mountains and was easily transferred home.

The suburbs just west of downtown felt safe for the young and single city newbie, and even after getting married and having a daughter, the west side is still where she calls home. Joy lives in the completely awesome and often overlooked neighborhood of Applewood nestled between Golden and Wheat Ridge. It's the large lots and mid-century modern homes that are the big draw!

Joy entered real estate in 2004 and has become passionate about helping families find their perfect home. Joy has incredible design instinct and can stage a house like nobody's business. In fact her

atomic ranch home was featured in the Wheat Ridge Modern home tour in 2010. Joy is an avid hiker and spends many mornings a month on the trails with the hiking club she founded in 2003, Colorado Mountain Mamas, for moms with new born babies and toddlers.



Kelsey Robb

A fourth generation Colorado native, Kelsey understands the importance of community roots. Raised in the heart of Wheat Ridge (Sts. Peter & Paul Gradeschool/WRHS), Kelsey soon returned to the city she loves after earning a degree in International Business and Marketing from top-ranked Washington University in St. Louis. Kelsey currently works for an oil and gas company where she is responsible for large-data analysis and working with various stakeholder groups to protect and retain company assets.

Kelsey is passionate about contributing in a positive way to the world around us and strongly believes in the power of community involvement. She serves on multiple boards as an officer, including the Mile Hi Optimists, an organization dedicated to bringing out the best in kids. Her dedication to continuous leadership development led her to Toastmasters, where she has earned numerous leadership and speaking awards including earning a spot in the World Championships of Public Speaking this past August.

When not working or volunteering, Kelsey enjoys outdoor activities-particularly hiking and competing in snowshoe races, reading on her front porch with a cup of tea, and learning the harmonica.



David Schafer

David grew up in Ottawa, IL. He attended a junior college in IL and graduated from the University of Iowa. After graduating college he moved to Colorado Springs and began a retail management career with Sears. That career eventually moved him to Denver. In 2006 he switched careers to banking with FirstBank where he has been ever since. While in Denver he has become involved with several non-profits including Lakewood on Parade, Tennyson Center for Children, Assisted Cycling Tours, and Localworks. He has a beautiful wife named Jeni and a son Andrew and daughter Hannah.