Speaker 1 ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/2jzBOjBpIc4vw45cxionJNg2hzKxI1LwdNEtuYiIKOAqe4t_kHjbeTnEKBHJhaZ211BoqJkE0rWnmruFxUEJdYpbjwk?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.48)):

You are watching Drive With NAR, the REALTOR® to REALTOR® series, powered by REALTOR® Magazine. Tune in as real estate professionals talk tools of the trade and share stories of inspiration. Get ready to step up your business. I'm your host, Marki Lemons Ryhal. It's a crazy, unpredictable world out there. We must intentionally focus on the positive stories around us, and we can find that inspiration in the real estate community. NAR members volunteer three times more than the general public, and are doing extraordinary things, both big and small, to help their neighbors in need, which NAR shares through the REALTORS® Are Good Neighbors program. How can you start to make an impact where you live? And what effect might your community service have on your business? Let's hear from two members who have different perspectives to share. Meet Antje Gehrkin, president and designated managing broker at A.R.E. Partners in Chicago and northwest Indiana. And Ed Gardner, broker-owner of Gardner Real Estate in Portland, Maine, and a 2024 NAR Good Neighbor Awards winner. Welcome to you both.

Speaker 2 ([01:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/gDwIP84AWKBECuRYLLZD5vDw0Ykrlz7JMqlv8DPey-Y6frB03Au0rkEVJZ6Aj2I5_Wd121cHi24vhqIJXeyeBWtLqug?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=77.97)):

Thanks, Marki.

Speaker 3:

Thank you, Marki, for having us.

Speaker 1 ([01:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/1s4SN1w0VY3qmbc8ZR-AmW_bWZX-4fk131ubeg9ROwQD1q4fa34jg_Uv0Rk783GXZ3zLELG-_QPuj94XQqZr6edL2-g?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=81.12)):

Antje, let me start with you. You've become known in your community for a gesture you make to everyone you meet, and it's having a particularly profound effect right now. Tell us about that.

Speaker 3 ([01:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ClgpavenJjhDWPPyKOa6mLGx9YEjrHJv47vtx0cH4liyhjQEdJQKXESJtbaI0GcFcuj-AEPM3cXikxR6DkiAOxzB-Is?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=93.48)):

Thank you, Marki. It's having a profound effect, but that was not the original intention. You're talking about me giving eggs, eggs to my clients, eggs to other real estate professionals that I have relationships with, and essentially it really was something that evolved over time. I got chickens during COVID. I live on a 20-acre property with stables and so forth, and so I needed a distraction. My family needed a distraction, and so we got chickens and ducks and they were super cute and they swam in my bathtub when they were little. And then eventually they moved outside, and they started laying eggs, and now all of a sudden, I have all of these eggs and I'm not going to eat all those eggs. And so, as things started opening back up and I was moving into becoming the president of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, I went out into the communities to give eggs to the leadership team. The directors on the board, yourself included, I'd show up, mask on my face, carton of eggs in my hands. And it was a great way to reconnect with people, and the joy that it brought to people was so unexpected. And then I started giving them to my clients at closings and taking pictures and creating a hashtag who got the eggs. And it just evolved organically into something that just became a moment of sunshine and gave me something back that I did not anticipate at all.

Speaker 1 ([03:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/uEXvdbiTNGlGMLlAGb1F39or5_LhSTdsl8tW4YD6XpTv5vLakbhBCLVEVYiLCtA59HkfU9NSfJA01_wH-1bl_-XD8JY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=190.63)):

Well, my household is a recipient of your eggs and my husband and son both love to cook, so they were fighting over who had the opportunity to use the duck eggs, right? Because not only do they cook, they bake. And so we are thankful to have your eggs and of course would always be more appreciative since the cost of eggs have gone up. And last night we made an egg run and it was an expensive grocery store run to go pick up eggs.

Speaker 3 ([03:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/5cS4gZyK8Cj2HF_Srfqbyr1V9uGndPUXQUC9-Pa775t52UMouRyvHhRKtN4ladSnSHZScjGpBG1iI59J8lXluvMWcVs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=221.35)):

Well, Marki, I'm standing on your doorstep right now with a carton of eggs for you.

Speaker 1 ([03:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/vh4SHGrII00uGjhSD4ptW-PUjJ-1S1tNigBWBxE-WIO7iwNg_qXH4WzBJmGMhD54Kq-1iMNIrVDCWMkYQqsGilqf5Dg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=226.69)):

Thank you very much.

Speaker 3 ([03:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/wIM4GDmezcsPcTc6A6ouxH3VR6DpPYCERpzMlrq_HZM_h8aEqPfynZO7THreMEJcXM45Yxxf6JnapTr2JBqdwx6gdKY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=226.99)):

You’re welcome.

Speaker 1 ([03:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/pG3n0TPSqYMQ7OXsHqK6UVdTSUeJ4X5srdOH9fdDo3KNuDXy1cnWug3MJCLEri3WNajL0KT538zgcY16xc540HThOwM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=227.77)):

Ed, you've done some unique things to empower local nonprofits in your area that serve the LGBTQ+ community. Tell us about that, and how did you get started?

Speaker 2 ([04:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/mYuFlSnZUURcm8gkqpN8nXs9aNlC1tJjl1dGXUL7HL98UP4BwV9zlLDB3tSBbYcSKabln6Rs1fyHrJBNmOFH7Q3rHsE?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=240.58)):

Well, the organization is called the Equality Community Center located downtown Portland, Maine. So, this journey started a long time ago when I was 15 years old and came out to my friends and family that I was gay. Back in the seventies, there was no resources to be able to go to when you came out, no support groups or so on. I felt a little out of sorts. So, I, at 16, quit high school and moved to a large city to just kind of lose myself or find myself. Shortly after that, I missed home, came back home, bought an apartment building, and then 50 properties later here I am. But it was about maybe 10 years ago, I bought a large office building downtown Portland, and I had a 3,000-square-foot vacant space in it and a big supporter of Equality Maine and other LGBTQ+ organizations.

([05:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/s1tk04BENjGHwlnJ7qvR3sOSVWcndep9qBxwDDmoDfmNfOloFsPv7r3uDKuZxR1L0iwW0WgSt4SA2zxCvoGzTwVU3uQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=300.64)):

I thought, let's help them build more community around these organizations so that they could help themselves with lower rents and shared spaces and so on. So, I helped co-found what we call the Equality Community Center and brought in six of these organizations to start. They all gathered around the table with blue tape on the floor. We planned out their spaces, their common rooms, their meeting rooms and so on, and it started there. Shortly after that, we assessed the organization to say, how's this working? And it was working great. We then put together a board of directors of 15 people to say, “Alright, there's other marginalized communities out there that we need to pay attention to. Let's expand this.” And we did. We were able to, next door to my current office building, buy a 20,000-square-foot bank and turn that into a three-level community center. Now, with 18 different organizations enjoying that space now, that's where we are, basically, right now today.

Speaker 1 ([06:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/_3vIPZp6HGCr8nTU1XuChgrMlxxEfGkJIy74Mkwy1kSDReMdyo1olPJpToofKjMR70DwzyobE8TNxYrbs5RsrirXWWU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=372.32)):

Wow, congratulations. I see why you won the award. Getting the word out about your charitable efforts is a big part of raising awareness of your cause, but those who do good often don't seek the spotlight. Ed, can you talk about the process you've gone through since your Good Neighbor Award win, which has brought attention to you and your cause? And what have you learned about effectively communicating your efforts?

Speaker 2 ([06:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/GEnpLyrLN0_Fo3tI0ObmDi7Jta9uO-ffpVVEkH7uH8Ep2tJjvL5gCa1we9ky7ewAxnc060H6YAN_XsAEP4pcOuuSDgk?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=405.62)):

I was always behind the scenes trying to create good things, but never wanted that limelight. When I was nominated for the Good Neighbor Award, that brought so much recognition, if you will, other real estate agents wanting to partner with the Center, we were able to then grasp the attention of other real estate agents in our community in the greater Portland area, some in Northern Maine area, that would come down and support. We had a fundraiser that raised $100,000 early on in our capital campaign, and it was all about saying, “Yeah, we're real estate agents, but we really want to help build community.” So, the Good Neighbor Award program is something that I've been, almost 25 years now, going to every conference and just have tears in my eyes to see the good work that the Good Neighbor Awards program has done for communities around the world. And knowing that we could do something here in little Portland, Maine, that was a challenge, but also a gift. NAR has really promoted this quite well around the country. So now I'm getting calls and text messages and letters from people to say, “How did you do that? We need diversity in our area. How can we get started?” So it's been a nice seed program, if you will, for other communities to learn how to do this themselves.

Speaker 1 ([08:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/RnZib423sW6KZVb9XHBlK7GUtyVoxWZPKvD4JkaNvfvy4FichtZQADM7VI1dpzTi8T9QVJQ2oYUVRNQ08uoW91AxnRU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=498.71)):

And what I would love to do is to encourage REALTORS® to check out the different grants that are available not only through the National Association of REALTORS®, but also through their state and through their local association. As a member of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, we provide numerous grants that are available for people to come back and be able to do good in the communities in which they serve. We are just encouraging people to get started with doing good and being able to provide back to the communities in which we serve. Antje, you've had some fun incorporating a giveaways into your real estate brand. In what ways have you done that, and how has it impacted your business?

Speaker 3 ([09:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/qYHOwps7G0fpQKI7gAY-z3OdFUYLVUMwKRP42OT_y2lTETO06NSsiFNJGxp19Xf6RdUZq1gnwOfJ45WdnF70fJa00Jg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=548.1)):

So yes, I have, and I like to have fun, and so it's just a natural part of what I do. But I just want to reference back to something Ed said. He started this amazing journey due to a personal experience, and I know other people who have done things in their communities and volunteer and do these things. They do them because they are personal to them. It's not to necessarily get recognition. It is not necessarily even to get business. I give the eggs and had started giving the eggs and will continue giving the eggs. I don't give the eggs to get business. Do I get business from it? I do. You know, I post a lot on social media. I post pictures of my clients with the eggs. We do fun memes and different stories with the eggs. I post pictures of people with the eggs on their birthdays and I just have so much fun with it.

([10:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/QSv3xc-uhqGVlh84r17e7kjIV5GWhzjlod2UWTEu1T1FXL_7C0cxevJ9TpAznCy6KTGauLCxpwm-G50-pOk0w3j9yuE?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=612.84)):

But again, I don't do it to get business—I do it because I enjoy doing it. And it does make an impact, and the joy of that impact is why I do it. So, you know, to come back to that, it's the same thing, like, and real estate agents do volunteer a lot. We do a lot in our communities. We're all about the communities. It's relationship building. And so, it's the same reason I volunteered for the Boys and Girls Club at their Back-to-School backpack event, their Back-to-School carnival painting faces. I'm a horrible visual artist, horrible, but all of these kids, what joy is thinking that I was trying to draw a butterfly on their face as they were also being treated to carnival rides and hot dogs, which I know you were making, and, you know, giving them those backpacks to go back to school. We do that for the joy and the business that we obtain because we are stewards for our communities. That is the second part of it. We don't do it for that reason.

Speaker 1 ([11:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Q2MdpfHA0g7SE_Pf9zpCqSpwL3KRscb4a68waQBhzT_h4J6dTNkDhDIh6oFN-r928GjGO8O6cxgSG2sbJDZ20oEwUiY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=678.06)):

What's kind of funny, you'll often find me on the grill or cooking on any occasion for an event, and that goes back to my culinary skills, but also thinking about the fact that my family recently received the James Beard Award and the classic category I was raised to give back to whom much is given, much is expected. And so, one of the joys that I have is leveraging my hospitality skills to organize cooking in an effortless manner. And most people just don't want to hop on the grill. And I also recall your presidency having the opportunity for The 77, which is the diversity committee of the Chicago REALTORS®, to do one Facebook live video that raised $88,000. And we are still holding onto that money to give back to the communities in which we serve. And so just having that heart for giving, but amazingly, I only have friends who are willing to give. If you're not a volunteer and you're not willing to give to others, you're not a person I'm spending a lot of time with. I like people who have a giving heart that we can always count on, and that's why I think that I'm so close to our REALTOR® family. My last question for both of you: Since real estate professionals are stewards of their community, tell us in your own words how community service makes you a better practitioner. Ed?

Speaker 2 ([12:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/H_fYDuhhiqTKHb5gFJY4gW3xj6QP2KhqCSyKPnRk_OnwtqZAvCWHqmj9y4AxL7j3rJLBD9a0_6E45cEdrWK4v0JJkIA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=767.53)):

Well, I have to reflect on the people that we serve in real estate. So, a lot of people will move into the community and say, “Well, where's this? Where's that? How can I get involved? How can I meet people?” And so on. So to direct them to the charities that I get to serve boards and committees and so on really kind of gives them a well-rounded life now in their community. I'll say, you know, The Good Neighbor Award program has shown me over the years different ways to get involved in your community, and certainly there's anything, like Boys and Girls Club, or helping feed the homeless, or making lunches for people in need. There's so many things out there to do, and we do it to strengthen our communities, you know to build better lives for the people that we're living with. Certainly, again, not to be on that spotlight, but it all comes back. Our communities are a bank: The more that you give to them, the more that they're going to give back to all of us.

Speaker 1 ([13:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/4IzcfMxZW33Rn-7PCy5ZBrh5Vdc_uLNSh684Y2OHh-Jlry6Uz44LBvK8HeZUKA3RayglSLqG4xbsOto9Crl29oiuo3A?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=833.56)):

Community is a bank. Antje, you?

Speaker 3 ([13:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/FQ56dr5bkCMCzxvSFF18dvZibekUOpNix9I0XtPDudX7hypL7SLcrCy7hO8yNEvxsXNX0sbTIzN3El7kLQKiQGJ_Tqc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=835.33)):

 That's a great way of saying it, Ed. Absolutely true. I mean, we are part of that community and serving such a broad area. I have sold help people buy, sell, invest in almost every community in Chicago and in northwest Indiana. And so, for me, I see a wide variety of people and needs. Their housing needs are different. Their wants are indifferent, and but, there's something that is the same for everybody and that they just want a safe place to live and raise families or retire or leave things for the generations to come. And that is constant, no matter if you live on the northwest side of Chicago or in Porter County, Indiana, it doesn't matter. That is a consistency and that is the need that we serve. And having served such a, such a broad range of people and such a diverse group of people, those experiences make me a better person. Those experiences enhance what I'm able to give back to other people. And I'm not just talking about an egg. I'm talking about hope and experiences and strengths. And so that is how we continue to feed ourselves and then feed each other. And I know that sounds sort of very cerebral and all of those things, but it is, again, very heartfelt and very personal. And that's why I'm a real estate agent. That's why I do what I do. I love it because I get so much back from it.

Speaker 1 ([15:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/6Yjebcn8x3SE-D5dYWUHiP4PpasYcZQUQQ3I4D0vGrWutalcvoBRj92t23iqYeWyVR85JThm144u0m3xF-mjo59Q4R4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=944.09)):

I know you love to give away eggs, and you are not measuring your online efforts from your hashtag your photos or your videos, but I've seen your photos and your videos. And every photo that you share is worth a thousand words. And every one minute video that you share is worth 1.8 million words. If a real estate agent wants to earn a six-figure income and their average minimum price point is $250,000, I encourage them to share 1,066 words of value every single day, whether that's words, a photo or a video. And so, keep sharing what it is that you're doing because it is definitely bringing you business, even though that is not your intention. Well, thank you both so much for being here and for what you do to help your neighbors. Doing good is good for the soul and for business. I'm your girl, Marki Lemons Ryhal. See you next time. Thank you for joining us at Drive With NAR, the REALTOR® to REALTOR® series. Tune in at magazine.realtor/drive or subscribe wherever you watch your podcast. Find more tips to boost your business at magazine.realtor.