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By Chris Menezes  
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From left to right: Robyn Lee Brooks, Christine Whims, and Keith

# KEITH GOAD

## A LIFELONG LEARNER

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself,” stated John Dewey. The education that John Dewey refers to in the above quote does not necessarily come with degrees or certificates;

it is the kind of education that has given Keith Goad reason to look back on his life with gratitude.

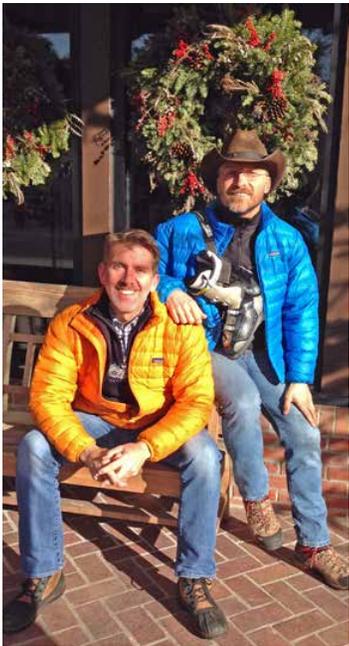
Gratitude for what he has learned about life, culture, history, architecture, and real estate—and all as a result of experiencing kindness from others.

Keith points to three different times in his life that helped to shape not only who he is, but the focus of his career.

“Life Education Lesson #1—Thank you, Mrs. Baker, and Mom,” lists Keith. When Keith was growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, his family had little money, and his parents put very little emphasis on education, culture, life experiences, and career goals. Keith had little direction up until the fourth grade, but then he met Mrs. Baker.

Mrs. Baker was the librarian at the local library who took a personal interest in little Keith. She knew his home life was challenging, so she took it upon herself to introduce him, through reading, to other cultures, places, art, architecture, and music. When he got older, she took him to concerts, the theatre, art galleries, and museums. He often went to her house for tea to listen to records and hear her talk about the different musicians, like Frank Sinatra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and Nina Simone. She helped spark in Keith a hunger for knowledge, he wanted to learn and experience everything the world had to offer.

While Keith’s mother was skeptical, and a little resentful of the relationship Mrs. Baker had with her son, she saw the positive influence that Mrs. Baker was having on Keith. “My relationship with Mrs. Baker has influenced my entire adult life. Mrs. Baker is gone, and my parents are gone. I wish I could talk about this with them now. “Thank you, Mrs. Baker, for taking an interest in me, and thank you, Mom, for letting her do it,” says Keith.



Keith and his second family, the Gerhards



Keith and Paul enjoying the Grand Canyon



Keith and Paul visiting Japan

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“Life Education Lesson #2—Thank you, Gerhard family,” Keith lists next. After Keith’s first year at Kent State University, when he was 19 years old, he realized that he needed a place to stay and live for a little while. He asked his best friend, Karyn Gerhard, if he could stay with her and her family for a short time. What was supposed to be a short stay, turned out to be so much more. Keith found himself with a loving, supportive, quirky, loud, and laughing family. “They accepted me into the fold and, to this day, I am so proud and fortunate to call them my mother, brothers, and sisters. I think they took over my life education where Mrs. Baker left off,” says Keith.

In 1997, a few years after moving to Chicago with his job at ESCADA, a German luxury women’s designer clothing company, Keith received a bachelor’s degree in marketing

from DePaul University and in 2015 received a master’s degree in historic preservation from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago.

Keith first took interest in historic buildings and neighborhoods when he moved to Chicago and learned about Daniel Burnham, an urban developer who laid out *The Plan of Chicago* in 1906, which was the first comprehensive plan for the controlled growth of an American City. Keith was fascinated by Burnham and thankful for his ambitious ideas not only about the placement of parks, but especially of the placement and incorporation of lakefront and river accesses—one of the things Keith has always loved about Chicago.

When Keith first got into real estate in 2000, after walking out of his previous job as senior merchandise manager for a major retailer because of a

corporate culture that Keith found disappointing, he worked for a developer that converted apartments into condos. As a lover of historic buildings though, Keith was distressed to see the loss of irreplaceable building materials—old growth wood, hand turned spindles, stained glass windows, etc.—that were removed during the housing boom.

This experience ultimately led Keith to focus on historic and vintage homes as a REALTOR®, choosing to advance the value of Chicago’s historic built environment. “The history of our built environment illustrates the stories of our culture, lifestyle, building materials, socioeconomic changes, rural shifts, urban planning, and so much more. Our historic building stock is a finite resource and, while every building may not be a high-style gem, they deserve respect,” says Keith.

In 2010, when the real estate market was still challenging, Keith moved back “home” to Cleveland while he was restoring a historic house there. He did much of the work long-distance, but would travel back-and-forth between Chicago and Cleveland to manage his real estate business in Chicago and en-



“We learn something new from everyone we encounter.”



Keith and his husband, Paul Grunwald, on their wedding day

sure all was going well with the restoration. Shortly before he left for “home,” however, he met his future husband, Paul Grunwald. And whenever Keith was living in Cleveland, Paul kept coming to visit. “All of a sudden, ‘home’ was where he was—Chicago,” says Keith. “I learned from Paul that home is not a place; it’s a feeling, which brings us to Life Education Lesson #3—Thank you, Paul Grunwald.”

Keith moved back to Chicago, and every year since 2012, he has been within the top 2 percent of all

Berkshire Hathaway HomeService’s agents. In 2018, he was named Chicago’s Most Influential Residential Real Estate Broker by Crain’s Custom Media, and inducted into KoenigRubloff’s Hall of Fame.

Keith and Paul both love to travel, ski, hike, and bike. They also love to explore art galleries, bohemian neighborhoods, and neighborhood festivals

with their dog, Floyd, in tow whenever possible; and they love going to see shows at storefront theaters. Keith performed in the Chicago Gay Men’s Chorus from 1996–2009, and he currently sings with the Fourth Presbyterian Choral Society.

“Relationships matter,” says Keith. He puts that belief into practice with his own real estate business as he partners with several talented individuals like Christine Whims, another historic preservation grad student, who works on his historic property portfolio and Robyn Lee Brooks, with whom he partners on some of his luxury inventory.

“We learn something new from everyone we encounter. Successful brokers have specific best-practice platforms, and if we can get something and give something to the professionals we work with, it benefits us all.”