

NORTH SHORE

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Michelle  
Gassensmith

## Community Care in Crystal Lake

### ► agent feature

By **Laura Zickert**  
Photos by **Joe Castello**

Michelle Gassensmith and her team, the Gassensmith Group at Compass in Crystal Lake, bring a combined 55 years of experience to the table. “Clients and real estate partners can trust our team to be an ethical, honest and hardworking team of agents,” says Michelle.

Michelle grew up in McHenry, IL, but has called Crystal Lake home for over 26 years. Like many, she didn’t start out in real estate. She worked at AT&T for 15 years, working in various levels of management. She eventually became an account executive for high-end clients both in the United States and abroad. She did not go to college but says, “AT&T was my college education. [There] I learned business skills that have guided me throughout my life and the choices I make in my business. I had some incredible mentors who took a very young lady under their wings and taught me how to be the best businessperson I could be. It was quite the gift to work there for 15 years.”

But when Michelle went on maternity leave with her second son, she found out she was eligible for an early retirement package. “[My husband, Steven, and I] made the decision to downsize our life — to sell our dream home and cut our expenses so that I could take the early retirement package and be a stay-at-home mom.”



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While being a stay-at-home mom, Michelle found it hard to sit still. She headed up committees at her son’s private school, sat on school boards, and did some consulting work with a previous VP at AT&T who started his own business. She also worked as an assistant for a friend who’d started his own commercial real estate business. And that was it. “It piqued my interest, and I decided to acquire my real estate license. I loved the idea of working with people to help them find their dream homes, empty nester homes, etc.,” states Michelle. Although in the years since Michelle decided to do more residential real estate than commercial, she says, “I still work in both arenas.”



Michelle and her team at Aroma, a local coffee shop (from the left: Lisa Anders, Erin Matthews, Mia Kramer, Michelle Gassensmith, Angel Collins, Logan Jones — missing new team member Zach Bellizzi)

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Michelle has built a successful career and a successful team. She says, “I truly believe that at this point, we have a great team of people that are on the same path of what they want from their lives and businesses.” One of those things is the importance of taking time off — a good work-life balance. “I believe that we [agents] work so hard that when we do take time off, we should take time off. So often through the years, most of us can’t do that — we go on vacation, but we are never truly fully on vacation,” she observes. “‘Family first’ is my motto. As is ‘Take time away to rejuvenate.’ Doing this allows us to better serve our community,” says Michelle.

And giving back to the community is important to Michelle and the team members of the Gassensmith Group. “Each team member has their own personal [favorite] charities and organizations that we try to assist in some way,” she explains. This year, the Gassensmith Group is supporting the historic Dole Mansion in Crystal Lake and is planning multiple events throughout the year in partnership with them.



Michelle with Garrett and Rachana in Chicago just after they got engaged

The Gassensmiths have two sons: Garrett and his girlfriend, Rachana, are engaged. Grant and his wife, Tressa, live in New Orleans. The family loves to spend time together and are self-proclaimed foodies. “We all enjoy cooking, creating dishes and sharing them with each other, friends and family,” she says. “We’ve been visiting the Chicago Michelin Bib Gourmand List with our oldest son for a few years, which has allowed us to experience a multitude of wonderful cuisines.”

Michelle and Steve love to travel, too, especially to Florida to visit friends and to New Orleans to visit Grant and Tressa. The couple takes a yearly trip to Mexico, too. Michelle also loves reading and taking walks.

Michelle is looking forward to growing her team as she continues to grow her business. She’s been a REALTOR® for over 17 years, but the magic hasn’t worn off at all. She says, “Helping sellers to prepare for the next step in their journey — whether that’s finding a larger house, downsizing, or moving to



Michelle and family while in Jamaica

another state ... It is rewarding to walk beside both sellers and buyers during one of the biggest purchases and transactions that most will ever make in their lives.”

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