

Auction couple wants to help shape future of industry

Husband and wife balance work, marriage

By Sarah Bahari

contributing writer

At age 10, Matt Backs got his start in auctions working in the concession stand for Western Auction in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

By 14, he sold at his first auction.

When he met Rose Morgan at age 19, the couple found a perfect fit in auctioneering. Married in 1998, they worked together selling a bit of everything — from real estate to estate sales.

Matt conducted auctions, and Rose provided support for the fledgling company, setting up auctions and working on contracts.

As the company grew and had to hire more Auctioneers, Rose decided to attend Reppert School of Auctioneering so she could help out on occasion.

Rose fell in love with bid calling. Just three years later, in 2006, the Backs became the first husband-wife team to ever make the finals of the International Auctioneer Championship the same year.

"I was always a shy, very timid person. I never would have seen myself on any sort of stage," Rose Backs, now 32, says. "But I found bid calling allowed me to come out of my shell. It gave me an avenue to become the person hidden inside I didn't even know was there."

For Matt, 34, auctioneering provides a fulfilling alternative to a stuffy office job.

"Auctioneering gets in your blood. It's like a performance," he says. "It's a true escape, an adrenaline rush. When you perform,

you're just in the moment, enjoying it."

The Backs now specialize in auctions for wholesale automobiles, classic cars and fundraisers.

Husband and wife have won Idaho state bid-calling contests and the Northwest Regional Championship, and both have served as Presidents of the Idaho Association of Professional Auctioneers.

Making it work

Being married to your business partner has benefits and drawbacks, Rose Backs says. On one hand, they relate easily to each other's work and stress.

"A Catholic school will spend all year preparing for this one auction. They have this one shot to raise money for the entire school year, and that falls on your shoulders," she says. "It's hard to express what that feels like to someone who has not been in the position."

On the other hand, she says, they are each other's biggest critics. Working together has taught them to respect each other's decisions and processes, even when they do not agree.

Both are committed to helping the industry navigate challenges in coming years. Among the biggest challenges will be finding ways to incorporate technology and online platforms into auctions without



Matt and Rose Backs say they want to help keep the auction industry strong for their daughter, Olivia Faye. Submitted photo

removing the bid-calling Auctioneer, Matt Backs says.

"At the end of the day, people really want and need that human element," he says. "Nothing can replace the live auction."

The couple recently found another reason to help steer the industry. In May, the Backs welcomed a daughter, Olivia Faye Backs.

"When Olivia is 18, I don't think the industry will look anything like it does today," Rose Backs says. "But we want to help make sure it's secure for our children and our children's children. I hope she will find the same passion and love for this business that we have." ❖