

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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Jim Baldonado's business, The Home Agency, was the elite sponsor and donated \$50,000 to the Team Jack Foundation at the Larry the Cable Guy event last Friday night at the Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln. Baldonado and his family presented a check to the Team Jack Foundation on stage before Larry the Cable Guy came out. Here, they pose with the check prior to the show. Pictured are (left to right) Kevin Ross, Sara Ross, Sharri Baldonado, Larry the Cable Guy, Jim Baldonado, Morgan Yardley, Kyle Yardley (in back), Megan Baldonado, Andy Hoffman, Jack Hoffman (front), and Andrew Bellamy. (Courtesy Photo)

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

Wauneta native Jim Baldonado believes in giving back. Last week, Baldonado, his family and his business, The Home Agency, gave back in a big way. The Home Agency served as the elite sponsor of the Larry the Cable Guy Team Jack Foundation event in Lincoln last Friday night, April 25, at the Pinnacle Bank Arena.

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In addition to sponsoring the event, the company gave a \$50,000 donation to the Team Jack Foundation, which works to fund relevant pediatric brain cancer research.

Giving back in such a way was made possible by the success Baldonado and his family have enjoyed over the years, something he credits to the work ethic and responsibility he learned from living in a small town such as Wauneta.



Baldonado graduated from Wauneta High School in 1975, where he was active in sports and a member of the W Club.

“Growing up in a small town teaches kids a work ethic that a lot of people don’t get in a city,” explains Baldonado. “They have responsibilities at a young age.”

After high school he attended McCook Junior College for a year and then moved to Lincoln for seven years. In Lincoln he became involved in the life insurance business, which allowed for his move to Elwood in 1983. However, Baldonado continues to be connected to Wauneta.

After moving to Elwood, Baldonado focused on life insurance for three years before moving into all lines of insurance in 1986.

When he started in Elwood, Baldonado managed an agency for two years before he became a partner in the business. Over the next 15 years he and his family bought out all other partners and became the sole owners of The Home Agency.

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Family is important to Baldonado. His entire family is actively involved in the business as owners. His family consists of wife, Sharri, and daughters Sara Ross, who serves as the company's marketing manager, Morgan Yardley, who is in charge of internet sales, and Megan Baldonado, who works as a court reporter for the district court in Omaha.

The Home Agency has grown significantly since its beginning in 1986. Based in Elwood, it now has 17 offices in Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and Iowa. "If we find an area we like, we will go to that area and start an agency," says Baldonado. He says their preference is to start new agencies from scratch, rather than purchase an existing agency.

The Home Agency has become one of the largest crop insurance writers in the nation, a designation Baldonado said it has held for the past 10-15 years.

Baldonado sees differences between his work ethic and those of his competitors, especially those in eastern Nebraska saying, "They have work hours, we don't." He explained that while others may take business calls between the hours of 8 and 5, he and his agents regularly take business calls until 8 or 9 at night. "We're service oriented."

Recently Baldonado and The Home Agency were honored for their commitment to customers as a Farmers Alliance Advantage Agent for 2014 by the Farmers Alliance Companies in McPherson, Kan. Farmers Alliance stated that in order to receive the designation a company must exhibit superior professionalism and profitability over five consecutive years. Farmers Alliance considers Advantage Agents as "the best of the best."

The Home Agency was also recently recognized by Farmers Mutual of Nebraska as a top agency.

Baldonado and The Home Agency have also been recognized nationally for their efforts. In 2002 Baldonado was one of three finalists for Hispanic Business Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year.

In 2009 the same magazine recognized The Home Agency as one of the 100 fastest growing

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Hispanic-owned companies in the nation, The Home Agency ranked 59th.

The Home Agency has also been on Hispanic Business magazine's top 500 largest Hispanic-owned company list since 2009. When the company first entered the list it was ranked 494 with a yearly revenue of \$4.98 million and 20 employees. Since then, The Home Agency has moved steadily up the list. As of 2013 the Home Agency holds the rank of 398 with a yearly revenue of \$4.44 million and 24 employees.



Jim Baldonado (left), Sharri Baldonado and their three daughters, Sara Ross, Megan Baldonado, and Morgan Yardley present the \$50,000 check to Jack, Bri, and Andy Hoffman on stage at Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln Friday, April 25 before Larry the Cable Guy came on stage. (Courtesy Photo)