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STORY

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BROKER FEATURE:
BRANDON CRAFT

RISING STAR:
CHELSEA SNYDER

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:
GULF COAST TITLE

JANUARY 2024

GET TO KNOW...

Katie Meiners

What made you decide to become a loan officer?

When I moved from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, I honestly had no idea what I was going to do. I wanted to be able to make an impact on peoples lives, and realized helping people achieve their dreams as homeowner's was a good place to start!

Favorite part about being a Mortgage Loan Officer?

It is hard to pick just one! One of my favorites is having my first time homebuyers become REPEAT homebuyers! It is a big deal to buy a home. By having my customers come back to me, it shows me that I did my job right. It confirms I put them at ease and made the homebuying process easy and seamless for them. I am so blessed to be able to help them navigate and pick the right program that NOLA Lending has to offer.

What has been your greatest work accomplishment while working at NOLA Lending?

My greatest work accomplishment would be that I am constantly learning. From day one in the mortgage industry to now, there has been such incredible growth! I have learned how important it is to have full knowledge of products, be organized and maintain communication throughout the entire process. To be able to make homebuyers feel comfortable and at ease when going through this process is one thing that I pride myself on!

How long have you lived in Baton Rouge?

I was born in New Orleans but moved to Baton Rouge in 2013 after I married my loving husband, Nathan.

What is an interesting fact about you that other people may not know?

I love going to the beach with my family and strawberry cheesecake snowballs with extra condensed milk! I also enjoy monogramming!



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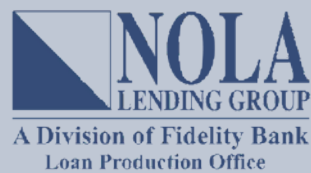


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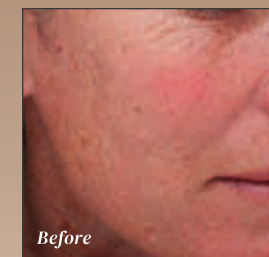
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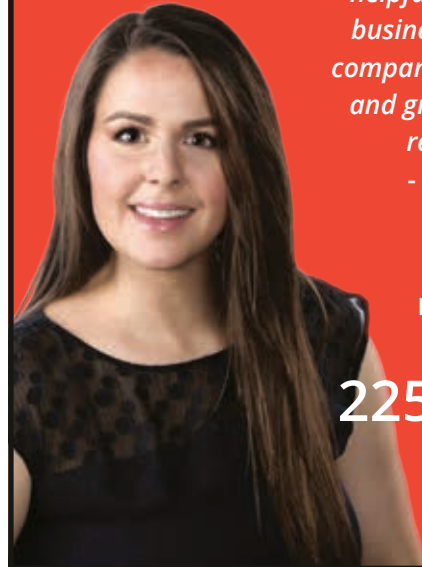
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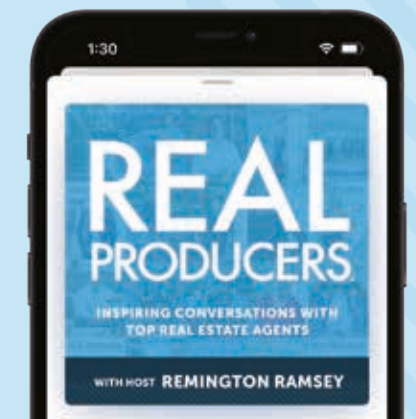
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► publisher's note

Hello 2024

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the January edition of *Baton Rouge Real Producers*. As we step into the new year, we are excited to bring you more coverage and stories about our local Realtors who've found success in the industry, along with their insights and invaluable information that will guide you through the ever-evolving landscape of this market.

We are kicking off the new year with stories on Jessica Huber, Brandon Craft, Chelsea Snyder and our friends

and Preferred Partners for almost 4 years, Gulf Coast Title. We love building connections in our community and providing a platform that affords you a way to get to know someone better.

Thank you for your continued encouragement, for reading our publication and for attending as many events as your schedule allows! Speaking of events... Don't forget to save your spot for our first event of 2024. The link to purchase your ticket is in the QR code found on this page.

Jan Hargrave is going to bring so much value to your business and I truly believe she is the boost of energy we need to begin this new year. *Fun fact:* She was my high school office education teacher. We were all enamored with Ms. Hargrave. She was the best dressed, classiest, wisest woman and still is! She taught us a few tips and tricks about body language and I became obsessed with the subject. To think, here she is, A LOT of years later serving as a special guest and presenter at an event hosted by a business I'm running! Do what?! Somebody pinch me!

During our event, we will also be recognizing our new 2024 TOP 300! It's always fun to see the new faces that have worked their booties off to join the ranks of these iconic individuals, as well as congratulate those who continue to maintain their businesses and remain in the Top 10% of license holders in our area. We are, and always will be, IMPRESSED.

Happy reading,
Gina Miller



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▶ partner spotlight

By Breanna Pizzolato
Photos by Kyle Rome

GULF COAST TITLE

THE LEGACY ENDURES

For 24 years, Baton Rouge area REALTORS, brokers and their clients have heralded Gulf Coast Title as a cornerstone of the real estate community. The small, close-knit team has continued the legacy of legal excellence, unmatched service and dedication to building lasting relationships that the company was founded on over two decades ago.

Founded in 2000 by Bill and Patty Adcock, Gulf Coast Title changed ownership in September 2020. However, the spirit and essence of the company remain unchanged. “We’re still the small, family-oriented title company everyone has come to know and love,” Title Attorney Corinne Schwartzberg said. “We’re the same Gulf Coast Title.”

Central to the success and continued reputation of Gulf Coast Title is the dynamic leadership duo of Managing Attorney Jim Beatty and Title Attorney Corinne Schwartzberg. With a

combined dedication to excellence and years of legal experience, they ensure that every client’s experience is marked by professionalism and efficiency.

Reflecting on the leadership, Melissa LeBlanc, the welcoming face of Gulf Coast Title for over 13 years, said, “We have great leadership in Jim and Corinne. Their leadership makes everything run as smoothly as it does for our clients and real estate partners.”

A native and lifelong resident of New Roads, Jim Beatty held a private law practice in his hometown before joining Gulf Coast Title. He practiced in different areas of law but was continually drawn to property and real estate. “In title law, a win is a win, and it’s satisfying,” he said. “Title law is the only place a lawyer can practice in a room full of happy people.” In family or criminal law, a win does

not always lead to a good night’s sleep. Jim takes a personal approach to his work, and he joked that he needs all the good rest he can get with four kids and countless sports practices to juggle.

After nearly 30 years in law, Jim can’t imagine doing anything else. But as a young LSU graduate, Jim had no idea he would be an attorney. With a degree in finance, he initially considered a career in banking or investment management. “I didn’t know I’d be a lawyer until the very last minute,” he shared with a laugh. Jim had graduated but wasn’t ready to be done with school. A friend shared that he was taking the LSAT to go to law school in Mississippi. A spur-of-the-moment decision to take the LSAT resulted in a score so high Jim humbly will not share it and a scholarship to law school at Mississippi College.





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Corinne Schwartzberg
 Attorney at Law

Jim Beatty
 Attorney at Law

Jene' Grand
 Marketing Director

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As a licensed attorney in Louisiana and Mississippi, Jim brings a wealth of experience and a unique ability to connect with people. “Most of the time, it’s a relief to sell and a joy to buy,” he said. Working alongside Corinne and the team of closing specialists and service professionals, the team at Gulf Coast Title finds fulfillment in solving problems and ensuring a seamless closing process for their clients.

“Because we work so well as a team, we’re efficient at meeting and anticipating the needs of our clients,” Jim said. “We all work together to make it happen.”

Gulf Coast Title prides itself on fostering a family atmosphere within its team. The collaborative effort of the staff ensures a premier closing experience in a relaxed atmosphere. “When you’re here, everything’s good,” Melissa said.

“Gulf Coast Title is a family atmosphere, with a team that works cohesively to provide a premier closing experience. Everyone gets along, and we feed off each other,” Corinne affirmed.

Walking into Gulf Coast Title, clients are not strangers; they are welcomed into a community that values trust, integrity, and a commitment to excellence. The legacy of Gulf Coast Title endures, carried forward by dedicated professionals like Jim Beatty and Corinne Schwartzberg. With their leadership, the company remains a trusted partner in the real estate journey of individuals and families in Baton Rouge, Prairieville, and beyond.



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BRANDON CRAFT

CRAFT REALTY

►► broker feature

Story by Breanna Pizzolato
Photos by Kyle Rome

As a fledgling broker 17 years ago, a Realtor told Brandon Craft about her personal journey as a foster parent. Before leaving the office that day, he printed a stack of papers and forms to bring home and show his wife, Cherith. He excitedly told Cherith about being a foster parent, but she didn't match his enthusiasm. She looked up from nursing their oldest daughter, Adlee, who was just two months old, and said, "We're a little busy here."

The couple abandoned the idea for over a decade as they raised their three girls, Adlee, now 17, Myla, 15 and Ciel, 11. But the big visions that come to Brandon and Cherith never go away, though they may lie dormant for years. The pair rely wholeheartedly on faith in God to open doors for them in His perfect timing. They dream big, work hard and walk step by step into the plans God has laid out for them.

As Brandon celebrates 20 years in the industry, he recalls hating real estate during that first summer he spent going door-to-door to talk to owners of properties for sale by owner.

"But little by little, I began to gain momentum," he said. The

seminary student bound for a life of missionary service overseas suddenly saw the mission right here at home. Two years later, he started Louisiana Dream Home and cut his teeth as a broker. That was 16 years, dozens of homes, and countless innovations ago.

What's in a Name?

Brandon and Cherith run three small businesses out of the sleek and spacious spec home on Jefferson Hwy. Craft Realty Interiors Homes houses a full-service real estate brokerage, a luxury construction company, and a furniture and design company that creates spaces that inspire peace and hospitality.

The elegant decor and open floor plan draw guests in, while the drink menu and kitchen island make you

feel at home. The showroom features a handpicked mix of classic and modern furniture pieces accented by ornate light fixtures that lead the eye straight to the gift table - a wishlist Pinterest board come to life. "We have our own line of candles and cocktail mixes, and last year, we developed a coffee table book that we put in each of the homes we build to tell our story and showcase our work," Brandon explained. "It's all part of our vision to create a crafted experience - no pun intended."

It started with Craft Homes, a business Brandon never intended to create. After selling his share of Louisiana Dream Home in 2008, Brandon and Cherith began building their forever home. "That was seven homes ago," Brandon laughed.

Soon after Myla was born, they completed a new build across the street that they moved into using little red wagons. When their original house didn't sell, they pulled their wagons right back across the street. Thus began a cycle of build, sell - if it doesn't sell, move - and repeat.

"These were big challenges to us at the time, and we look back on them now and realize it was the Lord providing a way for us to be in this business," he said. "I didn't intend to be a builder - I was just building a home for my family."

Craft Homes "clunked along" until 2012, when their bright and open home designs took off, and they built almost 30 homes in the Settlement at Willow Grove. Brandon, who had held on to his broker's license, enlisted the help of a Realtor who worked with Cherith on interior design projects. Other Realtors joined the team one by one, and at four, they thought they had plenty. Then came Jen Burns.

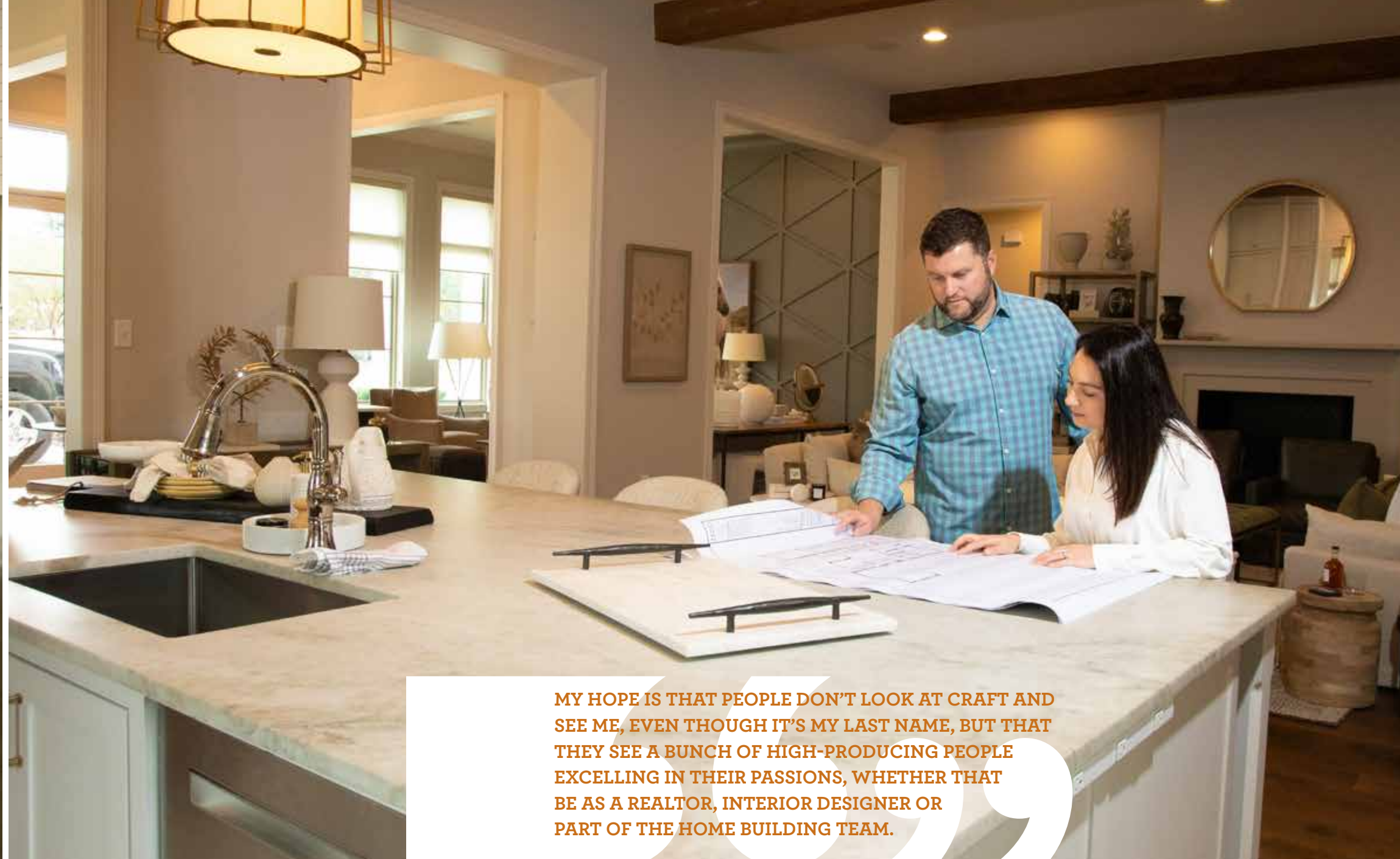
"Jen saw the opportunity to build something significant," Brandon said. "She is a force in this industry." Brandon's leadership style is to hire good people and get out of their way. And that strategy is the foundation of their iconic brand. Today, Craft Realty is home to 19 agents, with plans to welcome 20 more in the coming years.

"My hope is that people don't look at Craft and see me, even though it's my last name, but that they see a bunch of high-producing people excelling in their passions, whether that be as a Realtor, interior designer or part of the home building team."

Unreasonable Hospitality

Each expansion in their life and businesses has come naturally. It always starts with solving a problem or a way to extend unreasonable hospitality - a book that has been a source of inspiration to the whole Craft team.





MY HOPE IS THAT PEOPLE DON'T LOOK AT CRAFT AND SEE ME, EVEN THOUGH IT'S MY LAST NAME, BUT THAT THEY SEE A BUNCH OF HIGH-PRODUCING PEOPLE EXCELLING IN THEIR PASSIONS, WHETHER THAT BE AS A REALTOR, INTERIOR DESIGNER OR PART OF THE HOME BUILDING TEAM.

Their newest venture is their boldest yet. Craft Farms will be a luxurious equestrian community with a farm-to-table restaurant nestled in Mississippi but only 85 minutes from their Baton Rouge home. “The challenge is that we have a bigger vision than we have provision. It’s a huge undertaking that will take decades to be fully brought to light. But we are ready for it.”

The Crafts have started with 200 acres of land ripe for riding horses or dirt bikes and taking long walks

in the woods. “At first, we bought it to keep our kids off of iPads, and that’s worked, he said with a smile. “When I pull onto that long gravel drive, my blood pressure drops, and peace begins to fill me up.”

They originally purchased 100 acres. Then, the neighbor’s land went up for sale. When they went to take a look, Brandon envisioned aloud the farm-to-table restaurant he’s always dreamed

of with a little house next door. Instantly, they remembered a conversation they had the first year they were married.

Cherith had just earned her degree in animal sciences. Her final project focused on hippotherapy, a physical, occupational, and speech therapy that utilizes a horse’s natural gait and movement to provide motor and sensory input to improve neurologic functions and sensory processes for patients with physical and mental disorders.

The newlyweds dreamed of a sprawling subdivision with horses in the middle and

houses around it, with hippotherapy available. “We decided then that it would take about 1,000 acres. And at the time, we had maybe \$45 in the bank,” Brandon said, smiling.

“Buy it,” Cherith said as they looked at the sprawling acreage. And so they did. Yet another natural step into the next chapter God has already written for them.

It’s not the first time they have waited on God’s timing. Seven years ago, they officially became

foster parents. “At the time, we were struggling to find our place in the church and a way to serve as a family,” Brandon explained. “We went to a campaign fundraiser for a mayoral candidate, and as they discussed the challenges our city is facing, it came together for us. We realized that we can give back by welcoming children into our home because one of our gifts is hospitality. I love to cook, and we are always entertaining. Hospitality comes naturally to us.” Since quietly taking foster care classes seven

years ago, the Crafts have offered nine children solace, safety and stability while in their care.

“I hope that when my life is over, it is said of us that we ran our business with integrity. That we made time for rest. That I set my phone down during family time. That when I meet the Lord, I have lived the life that He laid out for me.”





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CHELSEA

▶▶ rising star

By Breanna Pizzolato
Photos by Ace Sylvester



S N Y D E R

ONE
THING
ABOUT
CHELSEA
– SHE'S
GOING
TO CALL.



During a late-night Facebook scroll, Chelsea Snyder saw a post asking for volunteers to coach tee ball at Live Oak Sports Complex. A friend tagged her, half joking because Chelsea grew up playing softball and watching her brothers excel at baseball. “Well, I’ll call just in case they still need someone,” Chelsea thought. “I was sure they would find a dad or someone with a bit more experience. But that’s how I became the first coach who doesn’t have a kid in the program,” she laughed.

One thing about Chelsea - she’s going to call.

In her two years in the industry, the 21-year-old said she’s had countless conversations with clients that have solidified her commitment to real estate. “Seeing that light bulb go off - it’s addicting.” Like many Realtors, Chelsea never envisioned herself in this career, but she always knew she would be different, do big things, and go far. She’s got rocket fuel in her soul.

Push Through

At just seven years old, Chelsea Snyder’s mom sat her down to explain that her father would likely spend the rest of his life in prison.

“Nobody else that I knew had something like that going on in their life, and I’ve become a lot more open with it as an adult, but throughout my childhood, I was not trying to offer up that information,” she said. “And while it’s something that has made me who I am, it doesn’t define me.”

She’s poured her all into building a solid foundation for her future. She signed up for a rigorous courseload while attending Baton Rouge High, played volleyball, and prides herself on being a good sister to her three brothers - one older and two younger. “I make sure they stay on track,” she said with a smile.

After graduation, college felt like a no-brainer for Chelsea. “I went to a prestigious school, and college was always the obvious next step,” she said. She enrolled in the pre-veterinary program at LSU and picked up several jobs to support herself. She waited tables, cleaned houses, and helped at the local animal shelter to make ends meet.

A paperwork fluke paused her tuition grants as she entered her sophomore year. Covering the \$9,000 tuition for the semester was out of the question.

“I took a step back and gave myself a year to work and save before returning to school,” she explained. During that time, she bought a house, became a licensed Realtor and completed her first transaction. “That was it. I was all in. I knew then that I wasn’t going back to school.”

While looking for a brokerage as a newly minted Realtor, she dialed up dozens of real estate offices. “I didn’t have friends or family in the industry,” she said. “So I Googled, called and set up interviews.” After weeks of searching and talking to brokers across Greater Baton Rouge, Chelsea chose Smart Move Real Estate with broker Brandon Richoux.

It’s Personal

Chelsea has made a home for herself with her boyfriend, three dogs and a hedgehog in Denham Springs. While she’s traded her days at the animal shelter for showing homes, she’ll always be an animal lover.

She's a dedicated dog mom to three fur babies - Fergie, the pug; Chunk, the French bulldog; and Mogli, the American bully pit mix. When she has a moment to spare, she's either playing with them in the backyard or finding solace in the hunt for the perfect antique in Denham Springs' Antique Village.

Chelsea depends on a robust set of routines, systems, reminders and to-do lists to keep moving the needle forward. "There's never not a reminder on my phone," she laughed. Showings, lead generation, and, of course, tee ball practice are all set in her reminder system.

When she learned that the tee ball program did not offer photos, she booked a photographer to come before practice. "We had to have team pictures," she said.

She stands proudly in the back of the photo with her assistant coach, her 16-year-old brother. Pouring into the team of young boys feels like her way of paying it forward for everyone who cheers her on along her journey.

"I want to build a career for myself, and I've realized in the past year that I can thrive and scale in this industry," Chelsea said. "And I'm not saying it's easy by any means. But it's possible."

Chelsea points to her mom, dad, brothers and boyfriend as her biggest supporters. "My mom is my biggest cheerleader and has been since day one," she said.

"My dad and I are also very close. He's more of a father to me from prison than many people have who are out and free to be there with them."

While many Rising Stars begin to strive for a broker's license, Chelsea is taking the journey one step at a time. "I like being hands-on, personal and taking care of people," she said. "I always want to grow and improve, but I don't need to be a millionaire by 25. That's not me - and it's cool for others to strive for that, but I'm focused on showing people how much I care about them and how real estate can change their lives."

“ I can thrive and scale in this industry. ”



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JESSICA HUBER

Rolling With It

Doors off. Music up. That's how Jessica Huber rolls, whether through winding country roads or down the coast to Long Beach, Mississippi, for a weekend getaway with her husband, Duke and their four pups.

Despite twists, turns, and even roadblocks along the journey, Jessica embodies the mantra "life is good." But her journey hasn't been without its unique hurdles. Diagnosed with severe hearing loss in eighth grade, she remained largely untreated until her senior year of high school, when her aunt informed her about disability services that would provide her with hearing aids and tuition assistance for college.

"Disability services helped put me through college, so if it hadn't been for being hearing impaired, I never would have become a teacher," she said. "That taught me early on that there's a blessing in every challenge we face."

God Moves

After dedicating 13 years to teaching middle school math in public and private schools, Jessica felt the need for a career change. "The kids would talk and whisper, and I couldn't understand what they were saying, so towards the end, it was difficult," she said.

While buying a home with her husband, Duke, and working with real estate agent Juli Jenkins, Jessica casually mentioned her decision to transition out of teaching during a phone conversation. "I told her I was going to work with computers or find an IT job because that's what I enjoy," she recalled.

Jessica's affinity for computers has been a constant throughout her life, dating back to her MySpace days when she crafted custom layouts for her profile.



Interestingly, on MySpace in 2007, she first connected with her now-husband, Duke. They married in 2009, and the Morgan City native moved to Greater Baton Rouge.

But Jessica never even applied for one of those jobs. Juli asked if she had considered real estate, sent her a personality assessment, and started praying.

After weeks of prayerful consideration, Jessica decided the school year would be her last as a middle school math teacher. It was time to embark on a new adventure, and while it was a leap of faith, she took it with conviction.

"I prayed about it really hard, and I waited for God to give me signs that it was the right move," she said. "Towards the end of the school year, I was so happy and excited, and I wasn't afraid. I knew that real estate is what God wanted me to do."

Real estate also offered the opportunity for Jessica and Duke to explore interventions in their journey with infertility.

After being married for just one year, Jessica received a life-changing call from her doctor. They found aggressive precancerous cells that required immediate surgery. Doctors successfully removed the cells and did everything they could to avoid a complete hysterectomy, but there was no guarantee she would be able to get pregnant.

"We tried for eight years with no luck," Jessica said. "Then I started real estate and thought this could be it. This could be the answer to the extra money and time to explore more options and make it happen. And then real estate became my baby. I became addicted to selling houses and put off having kids. We always said if we didn't have any by 40, we would just travel, and it would be what it is. So, I'm 43 now, and my husband's 44. And life is what it is."

Finding Blessings

Being hearing impaired as a Realtor has presented unique challenges. Jessica's hearing aids connect to Bluetooth so that she can take calls, but she prefers texts and FaceTime over phone calls because she relies on reading lips - a skill she honed in middle and high school.

When many people masked up during the COVID-19 pandemic, between the muffled voices and lack of lips, communication felt more challenging than ever. Instead of giving up, she innovated by offering clients transparent masks so she could easily read their lips.

Continuing education and networking conferences are hit or miss, as they often do not offer closed captioning or have audio systems that may be distorted through hearing aids. Speaking of audio systems - traveling alone in an airport, Jessica cannot hear announcements over the intercom system about important flight updates like delays, boarding processes and gate changes.

I knew that
real estate
was what
God wanted
me to do."



Nonetheless, Jessica continues her frequent travels to events, conferences and classes across the United States. Determined not to let being hearing impaired slow her down, Jessica has always relied on her ingenuity to find unique solutions.

She is working to become an advocate for the hearing-impaired community to bring awareness and create change, especially in making airports more easily navigable for the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

She also supports Maddie's Footprints Baton Rouge, a non-profit established in January 2010 in memory of Madeline Noelle McGrew. The vision of Maddie's Footprints is to help families who have experienced miscarriages, stillbirths or the loss of an infant by assisting with access to information, counseling and financial assistance for end-of-life and medical expenses.

Jessica makes life look easy as she rolls down the road in her beloved Jeep. "Mine is what you would call a Mall crawler," she laughed. "It's pretty and always clean." Life looking easy doesn't always mean things went your way. There's beauty in accepting what is, finding blessings in even the most challenging times, and rolling with it.



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