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Let's talk *Connecting!*

In an age characterized by rapid technological advancements and ever-evolving rules and procedures in the industry, the significance of staying connected has never been more apparent.

As industry professionals navigate through the new changes, maintaining strong, meaningful connections with others is crucial for both personal and professional growth.

Staying connected isn't just about exchanging information; it's about building relationships, fostering understanding, and creating networks of support. Whether it's through digital mediums or face-to-face interactions, each connection

we make enriches our lives and expands our perspectives. In professional realms, networking can open doors to new opportunities and collaborations, while in our personal lives, meaningful connections provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.

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- Oct. 20 Anna Kathryn Stewart
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- Oct. 25 Cindy Johnston
- Oct. 27 Stephanie Williams

*Central Mississippi Real Producers* recognizes the transformative power of *connection*. Our commitment is to facilitate these bonds through the content we provide and the events we host, aiming to spark conversations, inspire, and bridge gaps.

We look forward to continuing this journey of connection with you.



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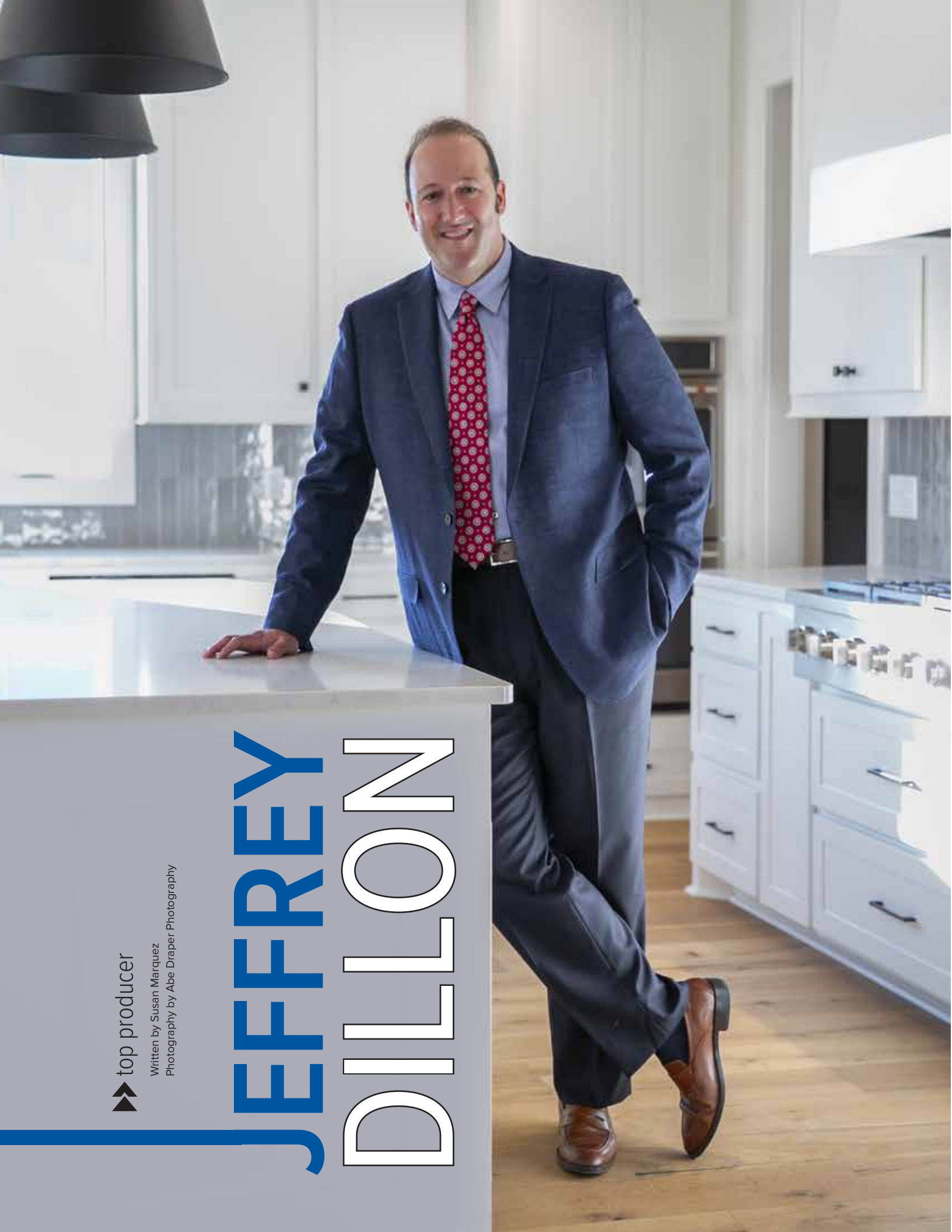
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▲ top producer

Written by Susan Marquez  
Photography by Abe Draper Photography

# JEFFREY DILLON



Life will sometimes throw you an unexpected curveball. How you respond to it determines your success. Thanks in part to his career in real estate, Jeffrey Dillon was able to turn a difficult situation into one that now works perfectly for him.

When his marriage ended, Jeffrey found himself living in Madison while his young daughter lived across the country in San Diego. “She is the biggest ‘why’ in my life,” says Jeffrey. After traveling to San Diego to visit her many times, he not only bought a home there, but Jeffrey also got his license to sell real estate in California.

Now Jeffrey has a foot firmly planted in Mississippi where he grew up, and a foot in California, and he is successfully working his business in both places.

A lifelong resident of Madison County, Jeffrey attended Canton Academy until his family moved to Madison the City where he attended public schools. “My father did a church plant in Madison in 1991 where he first served about seven people.” That church blossomed into Parkway Pentecostal Church, where Jeffrey’s brother, Jason Dillon, serves as pastor.

Through his parents, Jeffrey learned one of the biggest lessons of his life: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. That is something I carry with me daily in my career in real estate. It is woven into my moral compass.”

While he was a student at Madison Central High School, Jeffrey participated in a coop program that allowed him to attend school in the morning and work in the afternoon. His advisor suggested he work in a bank, and she helped him find



a position at Merchants and Farmers Bank. “Through that experience, I got to know a lot of local business owners, from large businesses to smaller mom-and-pop shops. Being from a pastor’s family, I learned about having discernment – knowing what to say and what not to say.” Jeffrey worked in banking throughout college, at Merchants and Farmers, then BankPlus.

Earning his degree from Mississippi College in business administration, Jeffrey thought he had his life mapped out. In 2005, he had a pivotal life moment in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. “Our church worked closely

with FEMA in New Orleans,” Jeffrey says. “I realized then I wanted to work with people, helping in any way I could.” He worked with the church for a while before deciding to pursue a career in real estate.

Real estate was something that appealed to Jeffrey, largely because of his background of helping people. “The church is a people business,” he says. “I have love and care for people, and seeing how I could help people get the home of their dreams appealed to me.” Jeffrey got his license in 2007 and is now an agent at Front Gate Realty.



Early on, Jeffrey got involved with the Central Mississippi REALTORS® Association. “Back then, it was called the Jackson Association of REALTORS®.” Jeffrey served as president of the organization in 2017. “I got involved in issues that affect home ownership,” he says. “I became a staunch advocate for the protection of homeowner rights.”

One of the things Jeffrey has learned in this business is that he has many roles. “When I work with clients, I wear many hats, including financial advisor. I learned growing up in a pastor’s home that integrity is so important. I enjoy helping people and being a trusted partner in their journey to home ownership.”

Over the years Jeffrey has been in real estate in different ways. In addition to being a REALTOR®, he is also a real estate investor. “I have six properties that I lease to purchase, five of those to Hispanic families. I’m helping them build equity while buying a home. It’s an amazing feeling to help people build their American dream. My first deed will be signed over in March 2026.”

Jeffery is a self-described extrovert. “I gain strength being around people, and I love to help people. The principles of helping people are universal. I feel like I’m doing a good thing when I work to get people into the home they are happy with.”

Never dreaming he’d be selling real estate in California, Jeffrey will soon



be closing on his first property there. It’s different from his experience in Mississippi, where he grew up and has many connections. “Most of my business in Mississippi is from past clients and referrals. People know when they call me they will be taken care of. They know I truly care for people.” Jeffrey took his same philosophy of caring for people to California. “People respond positively when they know you genuinely care. The biggest difference for me in California is there are more disclosures. They have wildfires and earthquakes there that we don’t have to worry about in Mississippi.”

The main reason Jeffrey flies back and forth from Mississippi to California a couple of times each month is four-year-old Rose Marie Elizabeth Dillon, who at four years old has stolen her daddy’s heart. “Rosie Beth is my world, so making this work has been important to me.”

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# April Smith

April Smith was born with a natural curiosity. “I’m interested in everything and everyone. I used to pepper my dad with questions because I had a burning desire to know things and I loved to talk. That was also my way of getting my reserved father to open up.”

The Carthage native may be talkative, but she was painfully shy growing up. “I chose a degree in communications at Mississippi College to challenge myself to break out of the shyness. I thought I was going to law school.”

But there were other plans for April’s life. Her last semester in college she

interned at WLBT-TV and fell in love with TV news. She was hired as the morning news producer. Later, she joined WAPT-TV where she produced the 5 pm, 6 pm, and 10 pm news and was promoted to executive producer. It was at WAPT that she met her husband, Spencer, a Chyron operator and director. “Spencer and I worked well together. We even won an award for a newscast we produced and directed.”

April and Spencer married and when she was expecting their first child, she began to look at her job differently.

“Television news is a hectic schedule for a new mom.” She went to work at Fox40 and helped start their internet news division, serving as the internet news director until 9/11. “The world changed that day - people stopped advertising and the station had to cut their news division.” April moved to public relations and marketing, mostly for state and federal government and non-profits.

While she loved working in PR, especially doing graphic design and web design, April felt the urge to teach communications. She got her teaching certificate and taught high school English for six months. “I quickly learned that it was not for me,” she



says. “I realized the calling to teach was homeschool, which I tried to ignore, but I finally gave it a shot.” By then, April and Spencer had three children.

April did freelance PR work and homeschooled her children. When her oldest son graduated from high school and her two younger boys were more independent, she decided to return to the workforce. “Growing up, my dad was a homebuilder and I used to pour through his plan books as a child. So I guess the desire to be in real estate was always there.”

Even though she had thought about a career in real estate before, it wasn’t until she was with friends one evening that the idea of becoming a REALTOR® became a serious possibility. “I mentioned I needed to find something to do and one of my friends said she always thought I’d be good at real estate.” Fortunately, April’s older sister, Renee Grimes, had been a REALTOR® for seven years and was doing well. With the seed planted, April called Renee, who was encouraging and offered her support. “I decided to get my license in 2020. I took classes through the Mississippi REALTORS® Institute, which I enjoyed, but I had to do them online because of Covid.” April wanted to be where





Renee was. “I knew she would be answering all my questions! She has been the best mentor – and working with her has brought us closer as sisters.” Ironically, the home where her friends encouraged her to pursue real estate was her first listing in the business. “A move wasn’t even on my friend’s radar that night, but God knew. I think that’s pretty neat how it worked out.”

April feels her decision to get into real estate was God-led. “I told the Lord from the beginning that I didn’t want to do anything that was not His will. It was a big leap of faith, but I have always had a ‘go big or go home’ mentality.” Thinking she would get her license and ease into real estate to earn some extra money, she was surprised when her business quickly took off. “The market at that time was wild,” she says. “God really blessed me. He has shown me time after time that becoming a REALTOR® was definitely His path for me.

“It’s really cool how the Lord has used my curiosity and my passion for marketing, communication, and public relations to help my clients now. So much of real estate has to do with the way you present information to your clients and customers and how you present the products--the homes--as you market them. My past work experience has helped me to have a unique perspective on that and I’m thankful to have all of those years of experience to pull from to help my clients.”

Six months into her real estate career, April and her sister joined Southern Homes Real Estate, where they work today. “I am surrounded by some of the best in the business. I love my fellow agents. We work well together and learn so much from each other.” April says she doesn’t feel that her approach to this business is typical. “I have never seen myself as just



a salesperson,” she says. “I also feel my role is to be an advocate for my clients. I want to help people reach their goals. One of my spiritual gifts is mercy. I think it helps me empathize with my clients. Not only is buying and selling a home a stressful and emotional experience at times, but life continues to happen during the process. I’ve been through some pretty big times with my clients – deaths, post-divorce, financial stress, and family issues. I hope I can make at least the real estate portion of their lives a bit easier.”

It is important to April to stay committed to being educated and informed. “I always want to learn as much as possible about whatever I am doing. This past year I got my Broker’s license. I also have three designations but not because the letters behind the name are important. I pursued them for the knowledge I would gain.

I just do it for the information. I regularly attend trainings, conferences, listen to podcasts, and stay current on real estate news and market trends. I’m a bit of an information nerd.”

April’s innate curiosity, along with a competitive streak, fuels an activity she enjoys outside of work – playing on two pub trivia teams two nights a week. “One of our teams, ‘How Much Bacon Could Kevin Bacon Bake if Kevin Bacon Could Bake Bacon,’ made it to the state championship this year.” You’ll have to ask April about the second team’s name, “Carpet Beatles.” She also enjoys puzzles and playing board games with her family. “Two of our sons have been on a world-class robotics team and we are very involved with that. We travel to competitions, including the world championship in Houston each year.”

Thrift shopping is also one of April’s favorite things to do. “It started as a way to earn a few extra dollars during our one income/homeschool years because I used to sell on eBay, but I found that I like to shop more than sell things. I love a bargain and I love to find unique things that I can repurpose and give new life to I decorate my home with my thrift finds, and often find items for staging.”

April’s husband, Spencer, is an instructional designer/videographer, producing training videos and courses for Entergy. Their oldest son, Mason (23), went to Delta State and has combined both his parents’ jobs into his career. “He works for a real estate company in Orlando where he produces training videos.” Son Sawyer (18) is a student at Holmes Community College, and Simon (15) is a sophomore in high school. The family attends Colonial Heights Baptist Church.

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# MARK E. POWER JR.

## COMMUNITY BANK MORTGAGE DIVISION



### ▶ partner spotlight

Written by Susan Marquez  
Photography by Abe Draper Photography

As President of Community Bank's Mortgage Division, Mark E. Power Jr. has a wealth of knowledge in the real estate business. "Everything I've done in my career has led me to this position." He is very experienced with legal matters, business negotiations, brokering of deals, investing, construction, and mortgage lending.

A graduate of Forest Hill High School in Jackson, Mississippi, Power attended Mississippi State University where he earned a degree in Accounting and an MBA. While at MSU, he played baseball for four years under the legendary Coach Ron Polk. He continued his education at Mississippi College where he earned a law degree. "I enjoy learning and make it my goal to learn something new each day."

Power grew up exposed to the world of real estate. "My father has been a broker and residential appraiser in the real estate business for over 50 years," says Power. "I've been in the real estate business in one way or another for over 25 years. I have had a broker's license in five states and closed transactions in most states nationwide. Most of the deals I've touched have been land transactions that resulted in developing higher and better use property into residential developments."

Power joined Community Bank in June 2018 and took on the role of President of the Mortgage Division in January 2020. "It's been a blessing for me to be here. Community Bank has a track record that speaks for itself, most importantly with our name, reputation, and our connection to the community. We have a great team that works across the entire





footprint of our company. We have nine mortgage loan originators in the Central Mississippi region with over 85 combined years of Community Bank service. Our management and underwriting teams are unmatched. Operations is led by Senior Vice President Sandra Cagle, and Vice President Samantha Singletary leads our processing and underwriting teams. Together they have over 65 combined years of mortgage experience. The team's work ethic is second to none – anyone can quote a rate, but no one else will roll up their sleeves and work as hard as we will.”

Community Bank has offices in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Tennessee. As one of the South's leading residential lenders, Community Bank has helped countless families finance their homes. Their mortgage loan originators have the experience and knowledge to help make accurate, informed decisions, and they have the best products guaranteed to meet all mortgage needs. “We handle all secondary market loans including Conventional, FHA, VA, and USDA,” says Power. “We also offer other portfolio products.”

Whether dealing with first-time homebuyers, a seasoned pro, or someone refinancing a home, the professionals at Community Bank work to meet and exceed expectations. “From an efficiency standpoint, we have streamlined the process, starting with our online application,” says Power. “Our team talks consumers through each step of the process so there won't be any surprises at closing. We offer local in-house underwriting and expertise from contract to close.”

Having strong relationships with REALTORS® in the area is important to Power. “We understand what their needs are, and the needs of their clients. We also make it a point to be involved with the state and local REALTORS® associations, Homebuilder Associations, and Mortgage Banker Associations. It's those things that set us apart.”

While they have all the latest mortgage technology tools, Community Bank offers something more – mortgage loan originators who visit with clients face-to-face. “Our team lives in the communities they serve,” says Power. “Knowing that the person handling your loan goes to the same church, or has kids in the same schools as yours,

is comforting for both homebuyers and their real estate agents. There is a level of trust that comes from knowing you are working with someone from your own community.”

A resident of Brandon, Mississippi for over 20 years, Power and his wife, Jeana (25 years with Rankin County School District), have two children, Tripp (19) and Avery (17), who both attended Brandon High School. They are members of Brandon Baptist Church. “We have family here in this area, and this is where I want to live and work.”



Knowing that the person handling your loan goes to the same church, or has kids in the same school as yours, is comforting for both homebuyers and their real estate agents.

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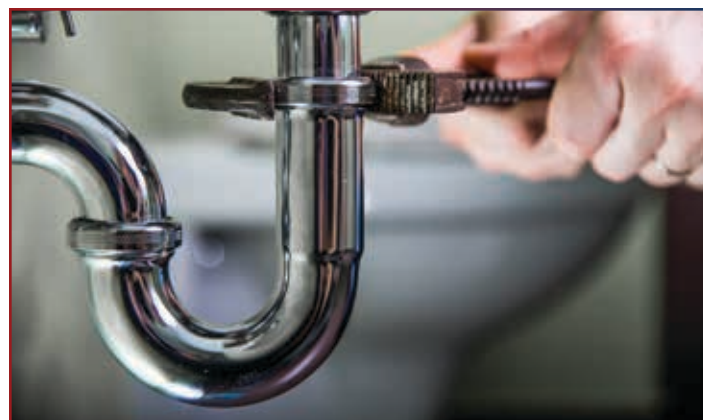
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where are they now?

# LEE GARLAND



Lee Garland  
August 2019 Issue

Lee Garland was our featured Top Producer in the August 2019 issue. He has made some pivotal changes in his career in the last five years and his success continues to grow. He also offers some great advice!

## WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR CAREER SINCE YOU WERE FEATURED?

Since being featured 5 years ago, I first sold my RE/MAX franchise in an effort to expand my business and influence across the nation. As a result, I am now the Area Leader for EPIQUE Realty within the Jackson Metro area, serve on their Agent Advisory Board and have approximately 300 agent/partners in 16 states. I have since reduced the size of my personal sales team and taken more interest in agent growth both locally and nationally. In addition to that, I started agent coaching where I have helped hundreds of agents increase their yearly production with 7 of them going over 350 transactions a year. I held my first stand alone national conference just a month ago and am pumped for what the future holds.

## WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE SINCE YOU WERE FEATURED?

Within my personal life Amy and I have become grandparents and bought our Happy Place in Bay St. Louis, MS where we spend most every weekend with family and friends.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS CHANGED THE MOST IN THE INDUSTRY IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?

Obviously the New Way. With this I encourage everyone to remember, (where there is chaos, there is opportunity). Embrace the change and adapt.

## WHAT ARE YOUR REAL ESTATE GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?

Goal 1. For years my goal was to hit 1,000 transactions a year. I capped at 554. Since then, I have adjusted my goals to not personally do 1,000 transactions a year but to help a collective group of agents which I have personal influence in to do over 10,000 transactions a year. Goal 2, to acquire 50 additional rental properties within the next 5 years.

## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR SECRET IN YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS?

My secret weapon is being open to change. Not just being open but willing. Close minded agents/business owners often miss opportunities in life. "There is no such thing as a missed opportunity. It just went to someone else." Never be afraid to explore and stretch yourself.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW OR ASPIRING REALTORS®?

1st Don't believe the naysayers. If someone tells you that it will take 6 months for you to find your first sale, move on from them. 2nd, surround yourself with people who are doing more and or have been where you want to go. This is critical. 3rd. Remember the 3 C's. Consistency, Calendar, Collaboration, Those are the 3 keys to a successful business.



## WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY AND WHY?

I love that this industry is a tool that creates opportunities. There is so much more to real estate than selling houses.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY TODAY AND WHY?

The fact that many brokerages and or teams don't stress one of the most important things about this business and that is INVESTING IN IT. Your lifestyle, retirement, leverage and ability to help others is greatly impacted by it.

## HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE A WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

Work/Life balance is achieved through your calendar and being intentional. God has not gifted us with the ability to know when our last day is so don't put off the ones you love.

## IF YOU WERE NOT IN THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR CHOSEN CAREER AND WHY?

LOL, Entrepreneurship. I don't think I could ever hold a 9 to 5 job.



## DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW HOBBIES?

Un-Official fishing guide along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## WHAT IS THE BEST VACATION YOU HAVE BEEN ON IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?

So many come to mind and it's hard to say what was the best overall. Route 66 from Phoenix AZ to Las Vegas on slingshots and motorcycles with a bunch of friends came to mind first.

## IF YOU COULD HELP ANY CELEBRITY BUY A HOME, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Tony Robbins. Tony has either been a life coach or in the room with some of the most influential people in the world. To be able to pick his brain on an intimate level like that would be incredible.



▶▶ where are they now?



# Christi Chandler

## The Chandler Group

Christi Chandler was featured as a Rising Star in the July 2019 issue of *Central Mississippi Real Producers*. Dees sat down with Christi recently and here is how her success has grown and changed in the last 5 years!

**WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR CAREER SINCE YOU WERE FEATURED?**

I became a Broker and opened by own Brokerage.

**WHAT CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE SINCE YOU WERE FEATURED?**

Gosh, my kids grew up! Phen is now a Junior and Bayli Ballard is a Senior in High School!

**WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS CHANGED THE MOST IN THE INDUSTRY IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?**

Easy - The new way.

**WHAT ARE YOUR REAL ESTATE GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?**

To continue to nurture and grow my clientele and brokerage.

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR SECRET IN YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS?**

I become personally invested in my clients and the transactions. Don't tell me there isn't a way - there is always a way!

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW OR ASPIRING REALTORS®?**

Stick with it!



**WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY AND WHY?**

Relationships! I have SO many relationships thanks to real estate.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY TODAY AND WHY?**

Not much to be honest. Real estate is tough, but it is so worth it!

**HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE A WORK/LIFE BALANCE?**

Prioritizing those I love above work.

**IF YOU WERE NOT IN THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR CHOSEN CAREER AND WHY?**

Hmmm, not sure. I'm kind of living my dream job!

**DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW HOBBIES?**

Compliance (Kidding!!)

**WHAT IS THE BEST VACATION YOU HAVE BEEN ON IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?**

Alaska with my mom, kids and nephew. And Hawaii with my crew. I love exploring the world with my family.

**IF YOU COULD HELP ANY CELEBRITY BUY A HOME, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

Bono of U2 because he is my favorite musician. I would allow him to actually ride along with me and we could do mini concerts between showings!



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