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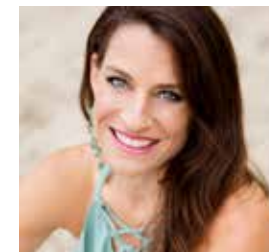
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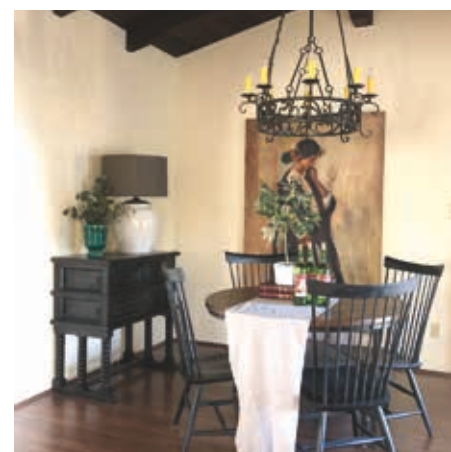


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FAQ

About the Magazine

We realize that Real Producers is a new concept here in South Orange County, and some of you may be wondering what it's all about. That is why we have created a "FAQ's About This Magazine" page. Here we will answer the most commonly asked questions around the country regarding our program. My door is always open to discuss anything regarding this community – this publication is 100 percent designed to be your voice!

Q: WHO RECEIVES THIS MAGAZINE?

A: The top 500 agents in South Orange County. We pulled the MLS numbers (by volume) from August 1, 2018–August 1, 2019, in the South OC area. We cut the list off at #500, and the distribution was born. For this year's list, the minimum production level for our group is on pace for over \$7 million in 2019. The list will reset in August 2020 for next year and continue to update annually.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BEING FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: It's really simple – every feature you see has first been nominated. You can nominate other REALTORS®, affiliates, brokers, owners, or even yourself! Office leaders can also nominate REALTORS®. We will consider anyone brought to our attention, because we don't know everyone's story, so we need your help to learn about them. A nom-

ination currently looks like this: you email us at michele.kader@realproducersmag.com with the subject line, "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)," and explain why you are nominating them to be featured. It could be they have an amazing story that needs to be told – perhaps they overcame extreme obstacles, they are an exceptional leader, have the best customer service, or they give back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with us to ensure it's a good fit. If it all works out, then we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and for our photographers to schedule a photoshoot.

Q: WHAT DOES IT COST A REALTOR®/TEAM TO BE FEATURED?

A: Zero, zilch, zippo, nada, nil. It costs nothing, my friends, so nominate away! We are not a pay-to-play model. We share real stories of real producers.

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS?

A: Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our quarterly events, and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred

partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval," in a sense. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best agents in the area, but the best affiliates, as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A PREFERRED PARTNER?

A: If you have a recommendation for a local business that works with top REALTORS®, please let us know! Send an email to michele.kader@realproducersmag.com.

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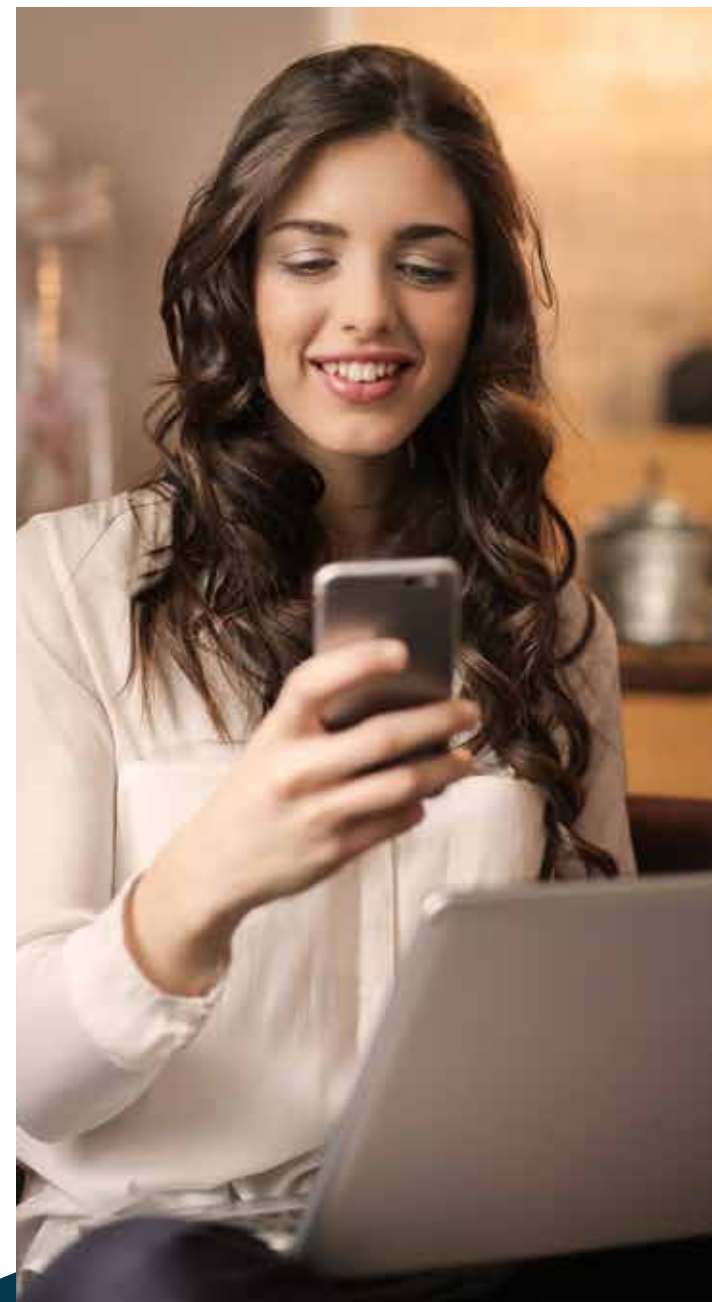
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»» veteran broker spotlight

MICHELE

HARRINGTON: COO of First Team Real Estate

MARINE STRONG

By Chris Menezes
Photos by Andrew Bramasco





• • •

Michele Harrington is one badass woman. A New Jersey, hard-charging fighter who doesn't sugar coat things, she constantly gives her all, never backs down, and exudes the American spirit. She has always been very grateful for our country and has felt an extreme amount of patriotism, even as a child, which led her to enlisting in the Marine Corps at 19 years old.

"I always believed that the military was a great way to serve your country and that the Marine Corps was the best of the military. So, if I was going to do it, I was going to do it with the best," says Michele.

Michele spent four years in the Marine Corps as a C-130 Aircraft mechanic and deployed to Kuwait during Operation Southern Watch. As the only woman in her squad, she felt like she had a lot to prove. She took it upon herself to uphold the perception of women Marines to her male colleagues. She trained constantly to make sure her run times were as good as theirs (even though she was not a runner and hated it), made sure her Physical Fitness Tests scores were higher than theirs, and never fell out of a formation run.



The Marine Corps made Michele very thick-skinned, extremely disciplined and gave her a new appreciation for freedom and democracy, mainly because she had no freedom in the military. After graduating from Chapman University in 1997, she decided to not re-enlist. As she considered her next steps, she knew she didn't want to work for anyone else, but didn't have much money to start a business. She thought, "What could I do to be my own boss with no money?" Then it struck her—real estate.

"Real estate is the best industry in the world, besides the military. It is the quintessential example of American Capitalism. It doesn't matter where you are born, what degree you have, anyone can enter for very little money, and become extremely successful, if they work hard," says Michele.

Michele had saved up three months of leave to get her real estate license and earned her first paycheck. She immediately found her experience in the Marines—the discipline and grit it required—to be a boon for her business. She did everything she could to get business and saw instant success.

"It was easy success for me compared to what I did in the Marine Corps, which was way more difficult than door knocking and cold calling," she says.

As Michele's success grew, so did her ambition. At 24 years old, she started purchasing investment properties, did a lot creative financing and was very aggressive in getting owners to sell to her. She started with a 15-unit apartment building that was yellow-tagged for code violations, behind on the mortgage and in a



bad area of Long Beach, turned it around, and purchased another 50-units. At one time, she had 75-units of apartment buildings in Long Beach. She managed them for about two years, but began to lose interest in the venture and decided to sell them and start her own real estate company instead.

Charging headfirst with her new company, Michele moved into a 5,000sqft office in Aliso Viejo without any agents to support it. She built it out, began recruiting and hiring agents and did really well. She bought an ERA franchise, and after they saw how aggressive she was with the business, they helped her buy additional companies. So she purchased two in San Diego—Ranch and Sea Real Estate and Sterling Real Estate—and then expanded her company in Orange County. She had about 400 agents and things were looking really good. There was only one problem: she purchased all these companies in 2007.

"2008 killed me. The market demolished me and my franchisor sued me for a lot of money. It was scary, but I took everything one day at a time. I had a spreadsheet of everything I owed, all my overhead, all my salaries, all my offices, looked over where I could cut, where I could negotiate with landlords, and just took everything one day at a time," says Michele.

As Michele tried to dig herself out of the debris, she sold off all of her San Diego operations, lost all of her Orange County operations, except for Aliso Viejo, which she was able to salvage after the landlord cut it back for her. Starting from scratch in 2009, she built her business back up again to a successful operation, but paid more attention to profitability instead of size, something she did not do the first time.



Michele built her business up to about 130 agents and then sold it in 2018 to First Team Real Estate, becoming the COO and Broker of Record under Cameron Merahe. "Cameron Merahe is an incredible leader," says Michele. "I never had a mentor before, but I finally have someone who has done more than I have, who I can look up to and emulate and that's really exciting for me."

Michele feels like she's finally made it in life now. She loves her job and loves her family. She and her husband, Dave, have three kids from previous marriages and adopted two kids from Ethiopia together. "We have such a cool family. We have so much fun hanging out, going on trips, paddle boarding and going out on the ocean in our boat," she says. "I feel like life couldn't get any better."



TAYLOR

WILSON

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Insurance is in Taylor Wilson's blood. His father started in the business over 40 years ago, and as Taylor watched him build a successful business over the years, he was inspired to do the same. After graduating from Arizona State University, that's exactly what he did.

"It's a tough business to crack. Building the right team around you is key. Also, my father taught me very early on that honesty and integrity in both your personal and professional life is essential," says Taylor.

Taylor decided to open his business with NFP. As the 4th largest insurance brokerage in the nation, NFP is licensed to write business in all 50 states, offering personal insurance (home, auto, umbrella, collections, vacation homes, course of construction, rentals, watercraft, etc.), small/large commercial insurance and individual/group benefits.

Taylor knew that if he was going to start an insurance business, then he needed a niche. Since he always loved real estate, when he got his license, he found the top 10 REALTORS® in Orange County selling multi-million dollar homes and began building relationships. As Taylor continued to provide excellent service and the best resources available to his clients and partners, his business took off.

...

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“All insurance agents/brokers are selling the same thing. It’s finding the right agent that has the best resources to provide the best coverage possible. Representing over 30+ of the top carriers in the industry, there is nothing we can’t insure,” says Taylor.

Having the right resources has also enabled Taylor to close deals quickly. “All real estate agents have been in that situation on a Friday at 4:30pm where they are closing escrow and the ‘home insurance’ is holding up the deal. Call me and we’ll get that policy issued and bound before close of business at 5pm. Nothing better than getting that call of relief from the agent knowing the deal closed because of the resources we have,” he says.

Taylor prides himself in his ability to find a solution for anything that comes his way. He understands that clients are depending on him to make that happen. “Solid relationships with the carrier underwriters are key right now to solving problems,” he says.

Taylor finds immense fulfillment out of developing relationships with his clients, and helping them protect their most important purchase in life. To better protect his clients, especially within the current climate, Taylor

is putting together a detailed insurance plan for “disasters.”

“Believe me, from actual loss experience, you want your agent to help facilitate a claim with restoration and adjusters. I have all the resources and contacts to ensure that clients’ claims experiences are top-notch,” he says. “The 2017 and 2018 wildfires have crippled the homeowner’s insurance market all over Southern California. Having solid relationships with our insurance carriers is a key factor right now. A lot of companies have just shut down and are not writing new business in ‘high’ brush areas. It’s a major concern. We are constantly looking for different ways to write business.”

When Taylor isn’t working, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Tamra, and daughters, Irelynn and Preslie. He is very involved with the girls’ sports, which takes up most his time after hours. However, he still makes sneaking in a date night with Tamra a priority as well.

“Every day is a new day and I am blessed to have the opportunities that I do,” he says.

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ASHLEY ROSENHAIN RHONDA RUSSELL KELLI HAAKENSEN COMPASS REAL ESTATE WE'RE NOT A TEAM, WE'RE A COLLABORATION

Rhonda Russell, Kelli Haakenson, Ashley Rosenhain, and Tracy Weintraub are not a typical real estate “team.” In fact, they are not a team at all. Rather, they relate themselves to more of a “Girl Gang.” While there is no hazing involved in this gang, there is a great deal of collaboration, support, and fun.

“We collaborate in regards to business, helping each other out on showings, open houses, inspections, etc., as we are all mothers, wives, daughters, caregivers and grandmas. Family time is important to us, and by collaborating, we can achieve a greater balance,” says Rhonda.

“We support each other, we engage in cohesive marketing, we give each other advice, and we have fun, all the while focusing on our own individual real estate businesses and providing extra value for our clients,” says Kelli. “We love our girl gang!”

While the “Girl Gang” (which also includes Tracy Weintraub, see Making a Difference article) officially formed this past January, they have known each other for quite some time. Rhonda, Kelli and Tracy all previously worked together at Surterre Properties within The LaMott Group for several years and enjoyed the camaraderie and the collaboration that went on. Ashley worked at Surterre Properties as well, but was not on the team. As each of them grew busier with their respective businesses, they all began to leave Surterre at separate times, only to find each other again at Compass.

Once at Compass, Tracy and Rhonda reached out to Ashley, as they had heard she was doing well and also liked the idea of not forming a team, but rather collaborating with like-minded agents. Ashley didn’t hesitate. “Compass has a motto of collaborating without ego and I felt





**KELLI
HAAKENSEN**



**RHONDA
RUSSELL**



**ASHLEY
ROSENHAIN**

“We support each other, we engage in cohesive marketing, we give each other advice, and we have fun, all the while focusing on our own individual real estate businesses and providing extra value for our clients,” says Kelli.

“We love our girl gang!”

...

these ladies would be a perfect fit with keeping that spirit alive,” says Ashley.

While Ashley has only been in the business for two years, she has doubled her production each year. She grew up working on a horse ranch in Southern California, learning the value of a hard days work and a strong work ethic from a young age. She got her first job at 14 years old, and put herself through UCLA waiting tables.

Before getting into real estate, Ashley was a stay-at-home mom, competed as an equestrian, was involved in many philanthropic organizations, and also managed the design and build of several homes and personal real estate investments. “I honestly love helping people find a place to call home, love design and build, seeing the potential of spaces and being a real estate matchmaker,” she says.

Kelli was born and raised in Loma Linda, CA. Her father was the Chairman of the Board of Oral Surgery for Loma Linda University Dental School, where Kelli received her degree in Science. However, the second she graduated, she moved

to Newport Beach and has been in Orange County ever since. Before becoming a REALTOR®, she did a little bit of everything. She was an Account Executive for FedEx, program manager for the “Show Your Card and Save” benefit at the auto club, sold commercial print, was a surgical endodontic dental assistant, and worked at a vegetarian drive-thru.

Kelli became a REALTOR® in 2011 to help pay for her son, Matt’s, college education. She was newly married at the time and didn’t want to burden her husband with half of her child’s tuition to UCSD. After he graduated and got a job, she decided to keep moving forward with real estate. “Each year I become better, learn more, gain more experience and appreciate this career choice very much. Being a REALTOR® is a vehicle to serve others, and a wonderful career. I’ll probably work until I’m 70,” she says.

Rhonda has always been involved in real estate in one way or another, even as a child. She grew up in El Segundo with a single mom, who managed apartment buildings for a living. It was just Rhonda and her mom, handling a lot of the maintenance for the apartments. “I learned early on how to do things that many adults still don’t know how to do, like light a water heater and set a toilet on a wax ring. I also collected rents, gave out eviction notices, did all that stuff at the age of 10,” she says.

Rhonda went straight into working for a real estate investment firm as an adult. When she moved to Orange County, she became an assistant to Jerry LaMott for a few years before being licensed in 1997. “He was a great mentor. I guess you could say I learned from the best. I have always strived to follow the principles that he instilled in me, having a strong work ethic, integrity, and above all, honesty,” she says.

As Rhonda, Kelli, and Ashley continue to support and collaborate with each other, they hope that their Girl Gang can influence the way agents work together, to perhaps ease the stringency of staunch competition pervading many in the industry, and come together to not only better serve clients, but to have even more fun while doing so.

“I think I can speak for all of us in that we want to provide the best possible service for our clients and grow our business, while enjoying the process and supporting each other,” says Kelli.

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» making a difference

By Chris Menezes
Photos by Andrew Bramasco

TRACY

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LIGHTING THE WAY FOR FAMILIES AT THE NEW LEONARD CANCER INSTITUTE WRITTEN

Tracy Weintraub has a long history with Mission Hospital, in both volunteering care and receiving it. Before becoming an empty nester, entering the real estate industry, and collaborating with Kelli Haakenson, Rhonda Russell, and Ashley Rosenhain, she was a fulltime volunteer. Starting with Mission Hospital's Spiritual Care Center, and moving into a licensed health care counselor position at the local senior center, Tracy helped many seniors with both their spiritual needs and their Medicare issues.

What initially drew Tracy to volunteering at Mission Hospital was fear. "I felt that the hospital was the scariest place you could ever be. And many people who are there don't have relatives there to help see them through. I wanted to be there for people in a non-medical way, and I loved Mission Hospital's philosophy of taking care of every patient in all areas of health, not just physical," says Tracy.

Tracy spent about four years comforting patients through Mission's Spiritual Care Center before finding herself on the other side of care. Well, not her, at first, but her husband, Marc. When Marc was diagnosed with colon cancer at the age of 38, Tracy had spent enough time at Mission to know which oncologist they needed to get in front of—Dr. Lloyd S. Nagasawa. However, at the time, his practice was full.

However, that didn't stop Tracy from calling every day until she was able to secure a consultation for Marc. "Dr. Nagasawa knew where the latest trials were being conducted, always answered my questions on new research, and even referred me to cancer conferences I could attend. He truly went above and beyond," says Tracy.

After enduring the most aggressive treatments of chemotherapy that

he could stand, Marc was cancer-free. Tracy and Marc's daughter, Zoe, was 10-years-old at the time, so they decided to do gene testing on Marc to see if Zoe could be at risk later in life. Although it came back negative, when Zoe turned 21, they called to see if she should have a colonoscopy, just in case, and they said yes. Sure enough, they found cancer. Dr. Nagasawa saw the Weintraub's all the way through this scary time as well.

Then, just a few years ago, Tracy herself was diagnosed with breast cancer. Tracy credits Dr. Nagasawa with saving her husband's life, her daughter's life, and her own. "There are no words to express the heartfelt gratitude and admiration my family and I have for Dr. Nagasawa. He will continue to be in my daily prayers for the rest of my life," says Tracy.

Today, the Weintraub's are working alongside medical director, Dr. Nagasawa in the battle against cancer by helping with the creation of the new Judi and Bill Leonard Institute for Cancer Prevention, Treatment and Wellness at Mission Hospital, the first comprehensive cancer institute in South Orange County, which just opened.

Supported by Medical Director, Dr. Nagasawa, The Leonard Cancer Institute offers a myriad of multidisciplinary cancer treatments, personalized to individual patient's specific tumor, cancer type and genetics, based on the latest research and evidence. The comprehensive cancer center will bring together specialists, clinical research, and cutting-edge technology to compassionately care for the body, mind and spirit of patients and family members.

"We still need more donations, so if you would like to donate, come to our event in honor of Dr. Nagasawa on November 11th at the new cancer institute," says Tracy.

Donations to the cancer institute can also be made at:
<https://www.providence.org/donate/mission-hospital-foundation/fundraising-priorities/give-to-cancer-institute>.

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