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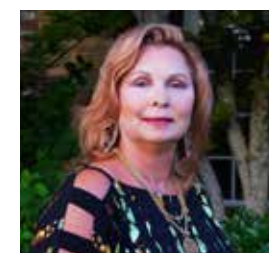
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What movement am I referring to? Real Producers started three years ago and is now in over eighty markets across the nation. Our Mississippi Real Estate professionals and industry partners will now get to enjoy some opportunities previously not available.

This magazine has been successful because of its ability to connect top producing agents with preferred partners and with each other. There are many other reasons that make it successful but at its core, that is what this is all about.

The vision is simple, we want to be the one-stop-shop for top producing agents in every market across the nation. How do we do that? In my opinion, there are three main groups of people that stand to benefit from this monthly publication: the REALTORS® featured, the Partners that advertise and the Publishers who produce the magazine.

What's in it for the REALTOR®? It is truly a badge of honor to receive the magazine. Being one of the top real estate agents is an accomplishment in itself. There are countless perks to being featured in the magazine but one of my favorites is the element of humanizing a local legend in real estate.

What's in it for our Partners? The struggle is real. How do we connect with influential, top producing agents in our market?

How do we cultivate relationships with this group? Our Partners get constant exposure through the monthly magazine and the quarterly events. The hard work is done. Partners just need to show up!

What's in it for the Publisher? Our Publishers have the unique ability to connect with a group of people that is otherwise pretty difficult to get in front of. We are all busy building our own businesses. Our Publishers are entrusted with featuring top agents, connecting our Partners and producing content on a regular basis.

Where do you fit in all of this? It's simple. Connect us with people. Who should be on the next cover? What business is catering to the top REALTORS® at a high level. What REALTOR® has a special 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.

Join the movement.

meet
PAUL HOPPER

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS THROUGH GRASSROOTS EFFORTS



Life has changed drastically in the past month for Paul and Gina Hopper. A four-week-old newborn son, Hayes, now determines how alert they are each morning. That will soon pass, but for now, they are enjoying getting used to having their first child – a child who was born to successful parents.

Paul was born in Meridian, but his dad, who works for the United States Post Office, was transferred to Jackson when Paul was five years old. Paul has always had an entrepreneurial spirit. “When I was nine years old, I would get up on Saturdays at 5am and go to garage sales with my mom. I would buy random items with the money I made from doing chores and sell them for a profit on eBay. My best employee was my dad, who would handle shipping all my orders since he worked at the Post Office and I couldn’t drive!”

Paul grew up in Ridgeland, graduating from Ridgeland High School before studying Management of Construction

& Land Development at Mississippi State. “It seemed like the only appealing option to me. I had no idea what I really wanted to do, and real estate was something that never even crossed my mind at the time.”

Paul graduated from MSU in 2009, “a terrible time given the state of the economy.” He quickly obtained his Builder’s license through the Mississippi Board of Contractors, but construction had slowed drastically and finding a job in his field was difficult. “When I went to the career fair with very few vendors present, I knew it was going to be uphill from there.” He was able to find a job as a water damage and mold remediation technician for a restoration company. “It was a low-paying start and physically demanding work, but I stuck it out for five years. I was able to work my way up and ultimately earn ownership in the company. Some weeks I worked 100 hours, others I may work ten. The work was dependent on other people’s emergencies. Some weeks I had a lot of spare time on my hands and I just couldn’t sit still.”

One thing Paul did was to start Hopper Construction, LLC in 2009. “The jobs we were doing in the water damage and mold remediation company were homeowner insurance claims such as busted water heaters, slab leaks, sewage backups, etc. Our job was

to clean it up and dry the structure out. Once we finished, the homeowners still had to reconstruct what we had torn out. I saw a turn-key opportunity, so I started handling the claims from start to finish, which gave me a lot of insight into home construction.”

Realizing he had enough course work from his time at MSU to sit for his Real Estate Broker’s license, Paul took the exam and started working part-time with Waddell Realty in 2011 as a Broker’s Associate. “I filled the gaps of my down time building my real estate snowball. One day I was on a water damage job and telling the homeowner that I was also in real estate. She mentioned wanting to buy her neighbor’s land, but he wouldn’t sell it to her. I went home that night and looked up the landowner’s contact information and called him. Turns out, he was in need of selling the property and I put a deal together with a sales price of \$1,000,000. At

top producer ◀

written by Susan Marquez
photography by Abe Draper Photography



that moment, I knew I needed to pour the gas on my real estate business.”

In February 2014, Paul walked away from an \$80k salary, company truck and health insurance to pursue his new passion. “It was one of the toughest decisions I have ever been faced with. I felt ungrateful for leaving such a great job that I was very blessed to have, especially at only 27 years old.” He took a 45-day sabbatical and traveled 9,000 miles across the country before starting Hopper Properties in July.

Gina was working at Southern Farm Bureau in Jackson when the couple married in 2016. Paul began trying to convince her to quit her job and help him with his business. “She has a master’s degree in finance from Delta State, and I knew she could be very instrumental in our company. The only problem was Gina doesn’t like change, so I basically had to pry her out of the corporate world.” Gina left Southern Farm Bureau in 2017 and joined Paul at

Hopper Properties as both a sales associate and bookkeeper. A year later she obtained her broker’s license.

“My original goal when starting Hopper Properties was to be a land broker. That’s where my heart is. I love dealing with land. But friends began asking me to sell their homes, and I thought it would be crazy to be in the best place in the state for home sales and turn my back on it, so my business model changed right away.” Slowly and steadily, Hopper Properties has expanded into new markets. The company now has over 50 agents and offices in Madison, Brandon, Starkville, and Monroe, Louisiana. “We sell land all over, but we try to keep our residential business within an hour’s drive of each market. My thought process on growth is that I don’t want to spin out of control. I prefer controlled and steady growth. We wait for the opportunity to come to us, we don’t go looking for new markets.”

Paul says he has a great team working with him. “We don’t headhunt or directly recruit out of respect for other brokers. I’ve had it happen to me numerous times over the years, but if you stay focused on your agents and take good care of them, you won’t have to resort to that type of recruiting. Instead, all our agents have reached out to us and asked if we were

hiring. It may sound cliché, but we really are a down-home agency, and we’re like a big family. Right now we have three generations of the same family in our firm. We grow because of our reputation. It was a lot of sweat equity and grassroots effort from the beginning, but with the agents’ sphere of influences and their family and friends, we have continued to grow year after year. I could not do what I do without the team I am blessed with. Nobody works for me; they only work with me. And you are only as good as the folks you have working with you.”

Being involved in the community is important to Paul. He and Gina attend Pinelake Baptist Church in Madison, and Paul serves on the Board of Directors for both Madison County Chamber of Commerce and Central Mississippi MLS. During their spare time, Paul and Gina enjoy hunting and fishing together, traveling the Rocky Mountains, or just relaxing with friends at their farm in Yazoo County.

rising star ◀◀
written by Susan Marquez
photography by Abe Draper Photography

MEET

RENEA GREENE

Renea Greene is the kind of person who decides what she wants and goes after it with all she's got. Like getting stronger and healthier. She recently started going to CrossFit 601 in Ridgeland along with her youngest son, Kyle. Renea also has that same determination with her work as a REALTOR® at Nix-Tann & Associates in Jackson.

A series of fortuitous career choices led the determined woman to the world of residential real estate, and she couldn't be happier. Originally from Canton, Renea moved to Winnfield, Louisiana when she was twelve years old, but returned to Mississippi after high school. Eventually she and her family moved to the Pisgah area in Rankin County, where the children attended

school. Renea worked in early child development at First Baptist Church in Madison as her first job. The desire to help mold young minds and healthy bodies led Renea to volunteer at Pisgah Elementary where she led physical education classes for kindergarten through fourth grade. She eventually went to work for the school, which gave her the opportunity to have more time with her sons.

The family moved to Brandon in 2001, and in September 2004 Renea went to work for Gary Smith Real Estate as an administrative assistant "A REALTOR® friend encouraged me to apply for the position and that helped me get my foot in the door." While there, Renea got an unintentional education in real estate. She worked on Gary Smith's magazines, putting together ads. She entered agents' listings, created flyers, and even took photos for the magazine. "I learned so much about how the real estate business works simply by being on the job, but I knew there was much more to learn, and I was eager to learn, and hungry for knowledge.

After taking classes at the Mississippi REALTOR® Institute, Renea was ready to take the exam. "I didn't tell anyone of my plans, due to the fear of failure". With her nerves on edge she said a prayer, she went in and passed both the state and national exams. "The first person I called was my dad. He didn't seem surprised at all, he just asked if I had doubted myself, which I had." But passing the exam gave Renea a new-found confidence. Unfortunately, she was not in the place she wanted to be financially before jumping into real estate with both feet. "I left my license inactive for a couple of years before going to work for a broker as an office manager. He

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“I’m so thankful that I ended up going into real estate. I get to help others, and that makes life great. It’s a pleasure to work in this industry alongside other great REALTORS®.”



needed assistance as a leasing agent, and that required a real estate license. She activated her license in October 2016 and worked part-time until June 2017, when she began her career as a full-time Real Estate Agent. During that time, she made her first home sale. She happened to sell it to a first-time home buyer, her son, Kyle. “He had wanted to buy his first home but

couldn’t find what he was looking for. He was just about to give up when I found what seemed like the perfect home for him. It had only been on the market for one day and two offers were already on the table. Since his purchase, he has truly put his stamp on his home.”

By 2018, Renea was in line to be Top Producer of the year. “It was a goal I really wanted to meet. Once I achieved that, I was ready to move on to better things.” Renea wanted to work for a company with a strong reputation of integrity, and says she was led to Nix-Tann. “It is an established company with high integrity. I felt that Nix-Tann was where the Lord wanted me to be.” She started with the company this year on January 10. “Everyone told me I’d love it here, and they were right. A closing attorney that I often use, told me that I would be surprised at how many times I’d sit across the table from another Nix-Tann Agent. They have a great team.”

Treating clients like family is one of the reasons for Renea’s success. “I will work with someone for as long as it takes. I worked with a couple for 13 months before finding the right home. I tell my clients that until they are happy pulling up in a home’s driveway, I won’t be happy. I am, by nature, a nurturer, I truly want what’s best for my clients.” My passion is working with first-time home buyers; it’s

so rewarding when they take possession of the keys to their first home. It takes more time, work, and patience to educate them in the home buying process, but it’s nice to be a part of that milestone in their lives.”

Outside of work, Renea stays busy with her family. All three sons live within 20 minutes of her. She has three grandchildren, Bailey, Holden, and Charlee Grace. “I finally have a girl-baby, actually two!” she laughs. She enjoys spending time with her large family, traveling and making memories with her sister and best friend Jay Jay, catching ball games with her son, Chad and grandchildren, and playing golf. When she’s at home, Renea and her husband are constantly amused by their dogs, Paisley (the prim and proper diva) and Olivia (a tomboy who enjoys the outdoors). “I’m happy,” says Renea. “I’m so thankful that I ended up going into real estate. I get to help others, and that makes life great. It’s a pleasure to work in this industry alongside other great REALTORS®.”

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JEFF ZACHARY

STATE FARM INSURANCE

Following a Winding Path to the Right Career

▶ partner spotlight

written by **Susan Marquez**
photography by **Abe Draper Photography**

Jeff Zachary grew up thinking he'd go to medical school one day. Instead, he earned a degree in Petroleum Engineering from Mississippi State University. Yet for the past thirty years, he's run his own State Farm insurance agency in Flowood. The road to becoming a successful insurance agent was a winding one, but Jeff feels he ended up right where God intended him to be. ...



Born in Meridian, Jeff's family moved to Vicksburg when he was two years old. His family moved again when he was in the fifth grade, this time to Brandon. "I've been in Brandon ever since, except for a short stint in Houston, Texas." Jeff graduated from Brandon Academy, where he played a variety of sports, including football, baseball and golf. Despite his longtime plan of going to medical school, when Jeff entered college at Mississippi State in 1980, the oil boom was in full swing. "I was good in math and science, so I opted for an engineering major." Jeff recalls that when he started college, oil was \$40 a barrel. By the time he graduated in 1985, it was down to \$9 a barrel. "Trying to secure a job as a petroleum engineer during the downturn in the oil business proved nearly impossible."

Jeff decided to move to Houston, Texas upon graduation to begin the interview process with all the oil companies. "In all of the interviews, there would normally be 14 or 15 other candidates, and most of them with 10-15 years of experience. I was the new guy, right out of college." He finally interviewed with the company he had co-op internship with during college, Rowan International, and was

offered a position. After working two years with Rowan International, he decided that was not what he wanted to do. "I decided to take another route, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I thought about going back to school to get a second major in chemical engineering.

But Jeff's dad had another plan for Jeff. "My dad was a State Farm insurance agent. It was a later-in-life career for him. I was in junior high when he left Lederle Laboratories to begin State Farm agency career. My dad invited me to work for him. Being in the insurance business was probably the last thing on my mind, but I ended up working for him for a couple of years." It was during those two years that Jeff realized his dad was on to something. "I loved how I was able to create relationships and help people protect against risk so they could realize their dreams. The

insurance business was perfectly suited for me."

In 1989, State Farm hired Jeff, who started his own agency in Jackson. "I started from scratch and I had to grow a book of business in the same town with my dad. Most new agents start their careers trying to earn the business of their family members and friends but my dad already had all of them insured. As a result, I had to get out there and knock on doors to survive."

Jeff says that God has blessed him beyond measure with a business he has loved. "State Farm has been very good to me and my family. I am thankful to be in a position to serve people by taking care of their needs with our products and services. We offer auto, home, life and health insurance, but State Farm also has a full line bank offering checking and savings accounts, car finance, mortgages, second mort-



gages, and home equity products. In addition, our agency can also help our customers with a wide variety of retirement planning needs."

Everything Jeff's agency does is based on the needs of their customers. "Our agency focuses on helping our customers protect against risk so they can invest in realizing their dreams. By asking "What is Most Important



mentor others to obtain the career God has blessed me with."

Jeff says he enjoys working with REALTORS®, especially when dealing with first-time home buyers. Buying a home can be overwhelming at times and our job is to assist both the customer and the REALTOR® with everything needed for the closing. Our agency recognizes that the buyer is a mutual customer of ours and the REALTOR® and take all the necessary steps to make sure we handle the process with professional, timely, and accurate service. Referrals are our best source of new business and making the process as easy as possible for all involved is a priority."

to You," we can provide targeted options for all their insurance and financial needs. Our success is built on quality service and relationships, mutual trust, integrity and financial strength. Knowing that our customer's needs have been taken care of by providing the right options guides our path. Our values in our agency are validated every time a customer refers us to their family and friends due to the products and services our agency provided them."

The most challenging aspect of Jeff's job is recruiting new team members. "We do have a little bit of turnover, but that's because we hire, train, and develop our team members to become agents in the future." About 15 years ago, Jeff, along with several other State Farm agents, began hiring team members who wanted to become State Farm agents. "The company adopted the idea several years ago and now called the Agent Aspirant Program. I have had the opportunity to mentor 6 team members that are now running their own agencies. Currently, I have three agent aspirants on my team, and eventually they'll leave us to start their own career. My legacy is to hire, train, and

Outside of work, Jeff loves traveling and spending time with his family. He married his wife, Diann, in 1986, and together they have two daughters, Jordan and McKenzie. Both girls are pediatric nurses, and both are married. "We even have our first grandbaby. I had no idea how much I'd love being a grandfather until she came into the world. It's the best!"

The Zachary's have been members of First Baptist Church in Jackson since 1986. "We are very involved with the church," Jeff says. "I am a deacon and have served in several roles including missions chairman and evangelism chairman. God has also provided us several opportunities to serve on the mission field in Peru and Haiti. Over the last ten years, Diann and I have served in the college ministry currently teaching a young 20s Sunday School class. Investing in these young people's lives has been incredibly rewarding."

"In my life, it's God first, family second and my career a distant third. I'm grateful to have found my way to the insurance business, because my career has allowed me the freedom to do what God intended me to do – to make His name known and serve others."

ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE

We realize that Real Producers is a new concept here in Mississippi, 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 performing real estate producers in the local market.

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 nomination currently looks like this: you email us at dees.hinton@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 REALTORS® 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 dees.hinton@realproducersmag.com.



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