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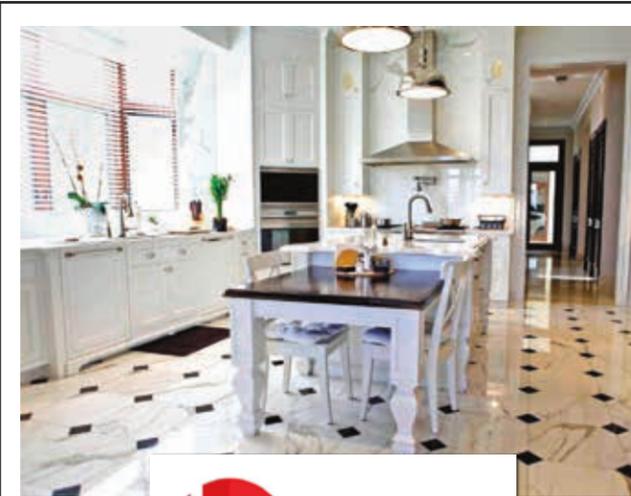
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REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



Dees Hinton
 Owner/Publisher



Dusty Hinton
 Publishing Assistant /
 Ad Manager



Susan Marquez
 Writer



Kayland Partee
 Videographer /
 Photographer



Abe Draper
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▶ publisher's note

HAPPY New Year!



2019 is in the books. It marked the premiere of *Central Mississippi Real Producers*. I have to admit, this is so much more than I thought it could be. I say that because of the people that I have crossed paths with...my staff, REALTORS®, brokers, agents and industry leaders. I am honored to have worked with and featured some great people! I am excited to see what is possible in 2020.

I want to remind each of you that we don't charge REALTORS® for anything we do. Nada. Zilch. Both the monthly publications and quarterly networking events are paid for by the industry partners that we work with and they all come from referrals from REALTORS®. *It is vital to the success of Real Producers that REALTORS® consider working with our advertising partners. There is a Preferred Partner page in every magazine.* REALTORS® support our ad partners. Ad partners support *Real Producers*. *Real Producers* supports the REALTORS®. That's the circle of our life!

The vision for Real Producers is simple, we want to be the one-stop-shop for top producing agents.

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

What's in it for our Partners? Our partners get constant exposure through our monthly magazine and the quarterly events. It allows them to cultivate relationships with the REALTOR® that otherwise is difficult to do.

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 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.

I would love to hear from you!

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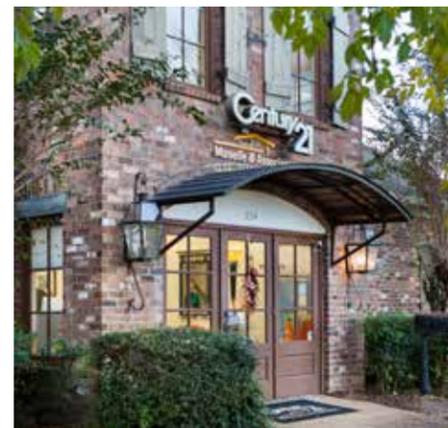
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Century 21

Maselle and Associates, Madison

Open House and Food Drive for Crossroad Ministries and Stewpot Community Services

Central Mississippi Real Producers had the opportunity to be a part of the Thanksgiving Open House and Food Drive benefiting Crossroad Ministries and Stewpot Community Services. Century 21, Maselle and Associates hosted the event in their Madison office. There was lots of good food and fellowship both at the event and collected for the ministries. Thank you, Century 21, Maselle and Associates, for giving back to help people in need.




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▶▶ top producer

written by Susan Marquez
photography by
Abe Draper Photography



Teresa RENKENBERGER

Definition of Success: **Happiness**

Spend enough time with Teresa Renkenberger and you'll wish you had eaten another bowl of Wheaties that morning. She has enough energy to power a fleet of Energizer bunnies. And while she is certainly a top producer in real estate, money is not her motivation. "A lot of people equate success with money. For me, success is happiness. I have been blessed in the world of real estate since I first started. I'm not the most talented, and I'm certainly not the smartest, but I draw strength from most anything, especially pleasing other people and making them happy. It gives me pleasure to know I helped somebody."

Teresa grew up in Flowood and attended Northwest Rankin High School. She majored in business and marketing at Belhaven. "I've worked since I was old enough to work," she laughs. Her first job out of college was with Ernst & Young, where she was the receptionist and "everythinger." She stayed there for five years. "I hate change," she admits.

But change she did, and Teresa's next job was as an assistant manager at an apartment complex in Ridgeland. She then moved to Indianapolis, where she sold Yellow Pages ads for a couple of years before moving back home to Mississippi and going to work at Z106 radio, where she sold radio ads.

From there she moved to LoveCom and sold cable TV ads for three years.

When Teresa had her second child, she stayed home "for a minute," but her growing family needed a second income. "I wanted to do something where I could spend some time with my children, but still earn an income. One day an ad came on TV while my children were watching cartoons. It said, 'Be a REALTOR®!'" Teresa recalled meeting Chris and Carl Merck while they were doing a television commercial at LoveCom back in her ad sales days. They asked Teresa at that time if she wanted to be a REALTOR®. "That ad reminded me about that conversation."

She attended classes at the Mississippi REALTORS® Institute and went to work for the Merck team right away. "I failed my first exam, but I was thankful for that. It kicked me into gear. I studied harder and passed the exam." As it turns out, her varied career path had taught her skills she would use in her real estate career. It also provided strong connections. "On the day I found out that I passed my exam, I went riding around and found a *For Sale by Owner* sign. The owners were out of state, but they called me the next day and I got the listing. It sold seven days later. I was a dual agent on my

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first-ever sale! That one sale resulted in several referrals over the years.”

Positivity oozes from Teresa. “I’ve always believed in God, and I truly know how it feels to have a relationship with him. It’s freeing! I was poor all my life, but I was so happy. I have true joy embedded in my soul! I work to take the negativity out of my space. I have to in order to keep my light on! Someone told me once that a light is much brighter when it shines in the dark, so I work to help people in dark places. I try to get them out of a pit. I wasn’t born with an easy path. I think I sometimes see the world from a different perspective. I’m not a follower, but I’m not a leader. It just gives me great joy to sell a house! In the end, I realize there’s so much more to it. We all need to use our God-given gifts to bless others.”



Teresa is the mother to Carley (18), Carter (16) and a stepson, Ashton (16). She is married to Wells Richards, who is very supportive of Teresa’s professional and philanthropic work. She started a non-profit shower ministry for homeless people that finally kicked off in late November. She credits her mother, Kath-

erine Byrd, for “turning out like I did. We had a unique closeness, and she taught me that the key to life is to love unconditionally, even when it’s not deserved. She always found the best in everybody, and she taught me to share and to not judge anybody. That inspired me to be the best I can be to everyone I meet each day. In real estate, I form relationships with people that turn into friendships. It’s funny how the true person will come out during a real estate deal. It is a very vulnerable time, and sometimes it takes a little handholding. I laughingly call some of my clients my ‘patients’ because I feel like a therapist at times. Because of that, I get to know folks really well, and most of my clients become my friends.”



•••



“A lot of people equate success with money. For me, success is happiness. I have been blessed in the world of real estate since I first started. I’m not the most talented, and I’m certainly not the smartest, but I draw strength from most anything, especially pleasing other people and making them happy. It gives me pleasure to know I helped somebody.”





▶ rising star

written by Susan Marquez,
photography by Abe Draper Photography

DWIGHT BARNES

**“The Door Knocker”
Setting High Goals**

Since the time he was in middle school at Rowan in the inner city of Jackson, Dwight Barnes thought about his future. Growing up in a single-parent home, and not knowing his father – or ever meeting him – until the age of 27, there was something deep down inside that made him feel the world had a lot more to offer. As he got older and started high school, Dwight became very goal-oriented. He had a list of things he thought he might like to try someday, and real estate was on that list. “I didn’t know anything about real estate,” he laughs. “I guess I thought it sounded fancy or important.”

During a break from college at Ole Miss, Dwight spent time talking with a long-time family friend who sold real estate through Keller-Williams. “He said that with my personality, I’d do well in real estate. I remembered my list from high school and thought that was a good sign that maybe I should give real estate a try.”

Dwight graduated from the school of business at Ole Miss, with a minor in entrepreneurship. His first job out of college was in commissioned retail sales. He worked long hours and odd hours to do whatever it took to make a sale, and his hard work paid off. When he finally left the retail sales arena, he was the number one sales associate for the company for which he worked. But in the three years he spent in retail sales, Dwight knew that wasn’t where he was supposed to be.

He began forming his exit strategy, which included attending the Mississippi REALTORS® Institute. “I thought I’d start out selling real estate on the side,” Dwight recalls. “Once I got into the classes and began learning more and more, I gave myself a time frame to become a full-time agent.” Choosing to go with Keller-Williams, Dwight had seven deals as a part-time agent, and he knew he wanted way more than that. “I jumped out in faith and went full time within a couple of months of getting my license in October 2017.”

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In his first year working in real estate, Dwight did twenty deals, and in the first week of December, he was closing on house number 39 of his 2019 goal of 40 houses, on track to exceed the goal he set for himself for 2019.

When he was transitioning from part-time to full-time in real estate, Dwight had a couple of agents he looked up to. "I watched how they worked their business. They worked hard, and they were intentional. In our training at Keller-Williams, they taught us how many calls it typically takes to generate a good lead, so I would do twice that many."

Dwight says that for many on the outside looking in, real estate may look like an easy business. "I think some people think we just put on a name tag, show a few houses, and people will automatically call us! The reality is that it takes a lot of effort to get a client. I don't buy leads, nor do I look down on any agent that does, but for me, it's all about personal contact."

Dwight differentiated himself as a REALTOR® right off the bat by knocking on doors. "I became known as 'The Door Knocker' at Keller-Williams." At first, he was knocking on doors to introduce himself, letting people know he was a hard-working REALTOR®; but as time passed, he was able to say that he had just closed on a house in the neighbor-

I don't buy leads, nor do I look down on any agent that does, but for me, it's all about personal contact.

...



hood. “I’ve made it my business to know all about the area I’m working in and going from simply contributing to adding value to potential buyers and sellers.”

With a target market of central Mississippi, Dwight has cast a wide net in Mississippi. “Most any part of the tri-county area is within 20 to 40 minutes of our office. He can manage his time in such a way that he has the ability to spend more family time with his wife, Jasmine, and their son, Kingston. “At Keller-Williams, there is a saying: *Living Life by Design*. The life I want to live includes spending as much time as I can with my family. My first job out of college made that difficult, and I didn’t feel my work there was meaningful. What I’ve learned about real estate is how valuable it is to all aspects of life. The work I do has a major impact on my clients. And when the day is done, I can be there for my family. One of the principles I want to teach my son is the importance of family. We all have monetary goals, but if your family doesn’t know who you are, then it’s all for nothing. When my son grows up, I want him to be able to say he really knew his dad, and that we had a strong bond together.”



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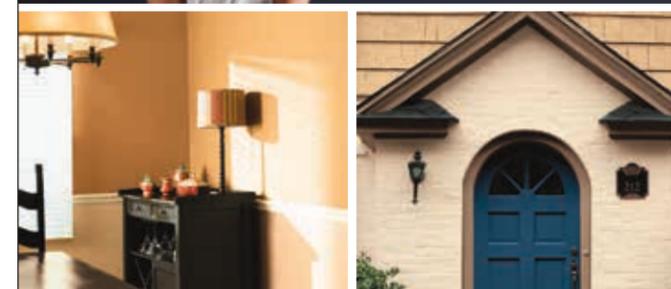
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Mary Allen Bennett

First American Home Warranty

Working Hard to Provide Peace of Mind

When Mary Allen Bennett pulls up in her Warranty Wagon, customers know they are in for a treat. “It’s my office on wheels,” she says. Inside, she explains the value provided by First American Home Warranty. Mary Allen is an area manager for the company, a position she’s held for three years. “I was in the food and beverage industry for a long time, and I was ready to make a change. This was a whole new career and a new challenge, but one that I’ve loved! What I’m really selling is peace of mind.”





Mary Allen took to the job like a duck to water, and she has the awards to show for it. She has reached the President's Club as well as the company's Circle of Excellence. That's no surprise, as Mary Allen has been in leadership roles, including selection for the 2012 Leadership Madison County class, the 2013 Leadership Rankin class and she was named one of the 50 Leading Business Women by the *Mississippi Business Journal* in 2013.



"First American has been around since the early 1900s," says Mary Allen. "The Home Warranty division started in 1984. We have a financial responsibility to our clients to protect them and their appliances due to normal wear and tear. We spent over \$170 million last year on claims to repair or replace systems and appliances, depending on what was needed." Mary Allen explains that First American offers service, value and integrity. "We want to serve REALTORS® by keeping homeowners happy. We serve our clients by helping them save money and offering them peace of mind. And our integrity means we care for our clients. We always do the right thing."





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Mary Allen supports all the REALTORS® organizations and is a member of the Central Mississippi REALTORS® and the Women's Council of REALTORS®. She also teaches continuing education classes on home warranty and all the money she makes doing so goes to a charity. "I match the funds at the end of the year and make a donation to Bikes for Tykes through the Salvation Army Angel Tree. It's my personal give-back because I feel that I've been so blessed."



When she's not working at First American, Mary Allen serves on the homeowner's board in her neighborhood, and she's also on the board of the Mississippi Farmer's Market. The Carrollton, Mississippi, native loves to read Southern literature, listen to live music and attend music and arts festivals. A good example of "work hard, play hard," Mary Allen is a member of the Jackson Green Ladies, a marching group that participates each year in the Mal's St. Paddy's Day Parade in Jackson. "We raise money for the Blair Batson Children's Hospital. We also have a lot of fun!" She is also a big New Orleans Saints fan.

Sometimes the smallest things can remind Mary Allen that there's something bigger than herself watching over her. "I love to find coins on the ground. When you pick them up, printed right on the coin it says, 'In God We Trust.' I look at that as a hint that even though I may be having a bad day, God's got me."

Mary Allen can be reached at MBennett@firstam.com, and her hashtag is [#yourmississippiwarrantygirl](https://www.instagram.com/yourmississippiwarrantygirl).



Real Men Wear PINK

MICHAEL DIER BELIEVES IN THE POWER
OF PINK TO KICK CANCER



▶▶ making a difference

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

Breast cancer affects everyone in some way or another. Whether a patient or family member, the effects of breast cancer can be devastating, yet there is real hope for those who are struggling. The Real Men Wear Pink campaign was developed by the American Cancer Society to give men nationwide a leadership role in the fight against breast cancer.

Michael Dier, owner of Watkins Construction and Roofing, was in the Real Men Wear Pink of Central Mississippi class of 2019. "I was nominated by Cora Beth Hartfield," says Michael. Anyone can nominate someone to serve as a "Real Man" by going to the American Cancer Society's Real Men Wear Pink website. Each class is composed of a group of 24 to 25 distinguished community leaders who are determined to raise awareness and money to support the American Cancer Society's mission to save more lives than ever from breast cancer.

Community leaders around the nation use the power of pink to raise awareness and money for the American Cancer Society's breast cancer initiatives, including innovative research, patient services, and education around screenings and risk reduction. It's one important way the American Cancer Society is attacking cancer from every angle.

The campaign ramped up in early September to prepare for the month of October, which is the official breast cancer aware-





Michael enjoyed the competitive aspect of the campaign, and he said it also pulled employees in his company together towards a common goal. “We enjoyed it so much that we have decided to incorporate the Real Men Wear Pink into our company’s culture. We want to have a Watkins Construction employee in a Real Men Wear Pink class each year. The more we do it, the better we’ll be.”

...
ness month. “I ordered pink Under Armour shirts and pink rubberized bracelets with the hashtags #RMWP and #WatkinsWay, which we sold,” explains Michael. “We utilized social media and we did a silent auction. We had hoped to do a big raffle, but we didn’t have time to do it all.”

Michael wore pink every day in October, and he says most everyone in the company did the same. “Some only had on that pink bracelet, but it counted!”

In the end, Michael raised \$10,010, which was enough to put him in fourth place overall in his class. “This was our first year to do it, and we learned a lot. We did all kinds of fun things to raise money, including parking cars for the state fair in our lot on High Street. All the proceeds from the parking went to our Real Men Wear Pink campaign. Also, Watkins Construction and Roofing donated \$5,000 towards the effort.”

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