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▶ publisher's note

# Grateful by Choice.



## THANKFUL.

It's November and November is Thanksgiving and Veterans Day and my middle daughter Laken's birthday. November is National Pickle Day and a good time for you to try Wickles. You're welcome. November 1, we set our clocks back one whole hour and get an extra hour...or we get the hour back we lost back in March. Whichever, whatever. Oh...and we have an election! We GET to vote. November is a reason to pause and be grateful and thankful.

A thankful heart can do WONDERS for you.

This is why I keep a Gratitude Dump journal and I highly recommend others do the same. Nothing fancy, just some paper and something to write with. For several years now I've been picking up these saddle brown notebooks found at TJ Maxx and HomeGoods. I love the color and they make me happy. In a basket in my office, you'll find a stack of notebooks with scribbles where I've poured into them all the things that remind me just how blessed I am no matter

how crazy things can get sometimes. This exercise keeps my mindset where it needs to be on even the worst days...and it's awesome and you should totally try it. If you can jettison some negative energy by simply switching your brain into a frame of appreciation, why not?!

Within the pages of my happy little brown notebooks, you will find the redundancy of words sure to one day be found in my eulogy...

*"Gina really loved coffee, clean sheets, and candles."*

Add to that my husband, my baby loves, my sweet parents, my big loud Texas family, all things autumn, pizza, pumpernickel toast, jalapeno margaritas with extra cilantro, my Spotify playlists, a good documentary, a good sermon, my Bible that is falling apart, uncontrollable laughter, friends that provide uncontrollable laughter, my back porch with him and a glass of wine, watching hummingbirds zip around and get excited over the new batch of syrupy goodness we put in their feeder, animal crackers, elderly couples that hold hands in public, love that lasts, friends that still make phone calls, books.

## SO THANKFUL.

This time last year I had blank pages, zero content, no Partners to call our own and today we are sending our

seventh edition to print, containing 32 pages of content brought to you with the support of 27 incredible partners.

Each publication from May until this November edition currently in your hands, has had so much love and attention poured into it and I can only hope that as you find the time to read through each one, you feel like you know the agents featured a little better, and relationships are strengthened based on that.

I love that what I consider to be my "calling" is simply listening, learning and sharing the stories of our top-producing REALTORS® in the area and creating connections based on those stories.

*Real Producers* was created and established to connect, elevate and inspire. I hope that is what you are experiencing.

If not, let's do what we can to aim for that.

## AND EVEN MORE THANKFUL.

We are hosting our first event in just a few

short weeks. So much work has gone into providing this exclusive event for our Top 300 REALTORS® and our Preferred Partners to get together and have a drink, some yummy food and just BE TOGETHER. Even an introvert like myself is craving togetherness!

I hope to see you there. We canceled the first one with good reason and caution, but it's on now. IT'S TIME TO PARTY.

Make sure you RSVP and reserve your spot!

All the specifics and details have been texted, emailed and shared on our private Facebook Group Page: BRRP TOP 300 & PARTNERS. If you're not already connected there, find us and request to join!

Let's Choose Gratitude,

Gina



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# Key Lending Solutions

▶ partner spotlight

By Breanna Smith  
Photos by Aaron Cox

∴ Skip Shows & Greg Foy



While working together at a large subprime mortgage company, Auber “Skip” Shows, III and John “Greg” Foy knew they could do a better job and charge clients less if they went out on their own. So they did.

The two began Key Lending Solutions in 2001. During their time at the larger company, the two moved departments every five years or so, gaining valuable knowledge on the ins and outs of every aspect of mortgage lending. With nearly 60 years of experience in the business between them, it’s hard to think of something they haven’t done.

“It’s what we know,” Foy said.

#### Small By Design

Foy and Shows vowed that micro-managing and pushing for quotas would have no place in their business, but neither would a lack of experience. Everyone in the Key Lending Solutions office has at least 10 years of mortgage lending experience for a combined total of over 150 years.

The small business and family atmosphere is by design.

They’ve watched their coworkers grow, and their children.

Foy and Shows spend weekends together boating on the Diversion Canal or in Madisonville. The golf tournament trophies on Shows’ office window sill are a testament to the time they’ve spent with each other and their friends in the business – both in and out of the office.

Without question, Shows is the better golfer of the two, Foy admits. But Foy plays an essential role as the life of the party, Shows said.



It’s the flexibility that we have with pricing and with programs that really gives us an advantage.



Pictured left to right: Christian Inchausty, Skip Shows, Traci Adams, Cathi Hoffpaur, Nicole Johnson, Shara Caballero, Leighane Haydel, Keith Covington, Greg Foy

“Any time we plan something, people ask if Greg is coming,” Shows said.

The Key Lending Solutions office has a unique, family-like atmosphere centered around one goal – get the best deal possible for the client. Everyone treats the business like their own, bringing ideas to the table.

“If it makes sense, we do it,” Shows said.

Key Lending Solutions operates on the principle that people do business with people they like and trust.

“When a client comes in...I don’t work for anyone but the person sitting across from my desk,” Shows said.

Their growth has been intentional. It provides the benefits of a small business with the buying power of a large corporation.

Key Lending Solutions is a hybrid of lender and mortgage broker with the ability to work deals with other lenders. That means the best deal for their clients every time.

“It’s the flexibility that we have with pricing and with programs that really gives us an advantage,” Shows said. “That’s a really big deal for us.”

#### Lessons Learned

After 36 years in the business, Foy says the lesson that comes up over and over is that real estate is the best investment a person can make. Playing their part in securing a person’s investment is a reward in itself.

The road hasn’t always been smooth but they have always stuck to their motto: under-promise and over-deliver.

The week the two opened Key Lending Solutions, tragedy struck on American soil – 9/11. The future of lending was filled with uncertainty, but they forged ahead.

In 2008, following the nation’s housing bubble bust, again uncertainty loomed like a dark cloud. The government imposed new requirements and even earning restrictions.

“We had to change a lot of what we did, and none of it was easy,” Foy said.

After a year of adjustment, taking tests and developing newly required plans, they continued their march forward.

“In spite of ourselves, we meandered through,” Foy said with a big laugh.

The two have learned valuable lessons in the decades they have spent in the business. And while mistakes happen, they are most valuable when you learn from them.

“Every mistake you make in our business costs you money,” Shows said. “So we make it one time, learn from it and then we don’t make it again.”



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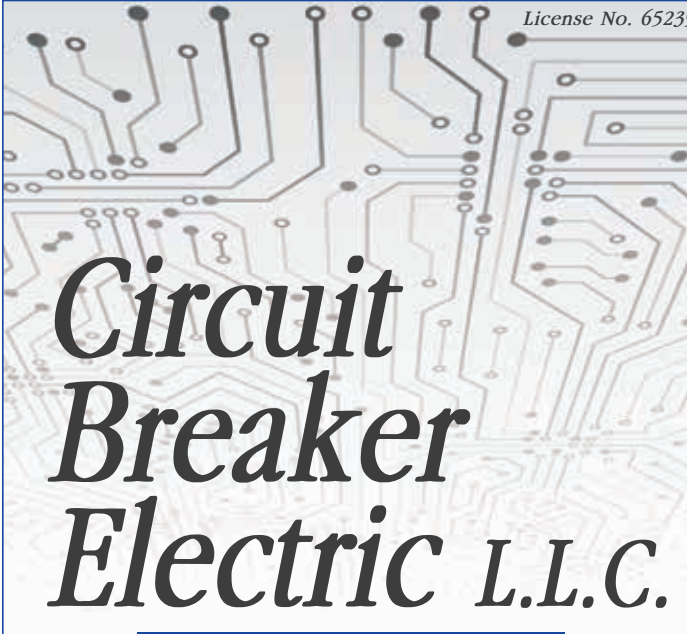
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▶▶ cover story

# CARRIE GODBOLD

## *Her Happy Place*

Looking for Carrie Godbold's office? Okay...take a left off of Main Street in Zachary after passing the police station and look for the Victorian home with a llama mailbox.

### *Found it!*

Welcome to Whimsical Alley, the brainchild of Godbold and Kristen Caccavo, her friend, neighbor and now business partner. Inside holds everything fun and zany – even those jelly beans with atrocious flavors.

What started as a daydream, the two quickly turned into a fantastic wonderland. The process from idea to open doors took about a month, thanks to their persistence in their vision for an over-the-top, Willy Wonka-style toy store, a stroke of luck and a pair of hardworking husbands. It's where dreams come true, and work gets done.

"This is also my real estate office because who would not be happy here?" Godbold says, laughing while swinging on the front porch of Whimsical Alley.

By Breanna Smith  
Photos by Aaron Cox

### **PAYMENT IN SMILES**

Godbold grew up giggling at her grandpa Jack's antics and trinkets. As a professional circus clown, he knew just what to do to get a great big smile out of anyone. His house was full of weird, silly trinkets – similar to many of those now sold in Godbold's toy, candy and everything fun store.

Even as a data engineer with Bellsouth (which became AT&T), Godbold knew that making people smile was her true calling.

"I love to volunteer. It truly makes me so happy," Godbold said. "I am always searching for a way for our family to give back and make an impact."

She co-founded and now serves as the President of the Zachary Charity League – but her volunteering hardly stops there. She's also the Chairman of the Board at the YMCA Americana, board member of her PTO and board member of Must Luv Dogs – a local foster rescue program.

"I like people, and I also don't know how to say no to anything! I'm always saying 'Yes! I'll do that!' and I enjoy it," Godbold said. "I really thrive on seeing how it touches people."

Godbold's mother, Jeannine Gaster, began selling real estate around the Slidell area in 2005 following a successful career as a professional dancer. It didn't take long for Godbold to notice the smiles that came with her mom's job.

...





“

**I LOVE TO VOLUNTEER.**

*It truly makes me so happy. I am always searching for a way for our family to give back and make an impact.*

”

...

After leaving AT&T for a job as a data engineer with the government, she began to dabble in real estate. Twelve years ago, Godbold joined Magnolia Real Estate Group and hasn't looked back since.

“I got my real estate license as a hobby – you know how people do – and here we are,” she said, laughing.

Gaster served as her daughter's mentor as she dove into real estate and still loves to answer questions as they pop up along the journey. Godbold's ability to work relentlessly with a heaping dose of spunk comes directly from her mother.

After 15 years, and with Godbold carrying the real estate torch, Gaster retired earlier this year.

**ENERGIZED AND REVITALIZED**

The spunk doesn't stop at the toy store OR with real estate clients.

Carrie and Jamie Godbold were those parents – the ones who had three kids under three and never seemed to run out of energy or love for life.

...





...

The Ohio native moved here to attend Louisiana State University after falling in love with the campus. Then, she fell in love with her co-worker at The Backpacker in Baton Rouge.

“We’re The Backpacker Love Story,” Carrie chuckled.

The two moved to Zachary and have been there ever since. Despite nearly 25 years in the Louisiana heat, Godbold has yet to acclimate – or so she said, swinging on the front porch of Whimsical Alley sipping a hot CC’s coffee on a humid afternoon with highs in the ‘90s.

When she’s not volunteering, spending time with her family, maintaining

the fun of Whimsical Alley or working on a deal for her clients, Godbold is most likely sleeping. She does not stop until her head hits the pillow!

“I don’t do downtime well,” she said. “I’ve always said I don’t understand what relaxing is – I relax when I sleep.”

The three under 3 are now two teenagers and a preteen: 14-year-old Ed, Eva, 13, and Ellie, 11. For the Godbolds, that meant a lot of birthday parties.

“We had to drive to Baton Rouge every time we needed to buy a birthday present, so we thought, ‘Zachary needs a toy store.’”

“

**I LIKE PEOPLE,**  
*and I also don’t know how to say no to anything! I’m always saying ‘Yes! I’ll do that!’ and I enjoy it. I really thrive on seeing how it touches people.*

”

Kristen Caccavo and Godbold looked at available spaces in local strip malls, but none of them were big, bold and well...whimsical enough for what they had in mind – until Carrie listed a Victorian home just off of Main Street.

“Kristen called and said that house you just posted on Facebook – it’s perfect!”

About a month later, the two opened the doors to Whimsical Alley, a place sure to put a smile on anyone’s face.

The shop has spurred revitalization efforts throughout the neighborhood. Several other of the early 1900-era homes on the street are being revamped, including the train depot, which is slated to become a BBQ restaurant.

“It was totally unintentional,” Godbold said. “We didn’t have a master plan. We just knew this is what we wanted to do.”

Zachary welcomed Godbold with open arms more than two decades ago and time and time again the city has supported her dreams and ideas – whether that be to sell real estate or giant squishy avocados.

“Zachary has embraced me, and I am forever grateful,” she said. “A girl from Ohio can come to small-town Louisiana and be successful.”

**YES. SHE. CAN.**



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## Call Answered

Everything you do today impacts your successes tomorrow.

It's a lesson Stephen Couvillion learned as a collegiate athlete that has helped him earn a spot amongst *Baton Rouge Real Producers* with just three years as a REALTOR® under his belt. He's a natural competitor, but his focus isn't on being better than someone else. "It's all about being better than I was the day before."

Couvillion spent his college basketball career with North Greenville University in Tigerville, South Carolina, and Lourdes University in Sylvania, Ohio. After this, he returned to Baton Rouge and began his career as a personal trainer. He taught his clients many of the principles he learned on the court – every move you make, and bite you take, will show up later.

He brought his competitive athlete mindset to real estate sales – work hard, keep working hard and build up your team.

### DIVINE INTERVENTION

In 2016, while serving alongside his wife Cara as the youth leader for Encounter Church, he attended a retreat in Florida. During a message to the 300 youth group leaders, the speaker began prophesying over a few leaders in the audience.

"She spoke to six people in the audience," he said. "I was one of those six."

She told Stephen God had plans for him to bring funds into the kingdom.

"She kept bringing up real estate, and at the time, I didn't even know what a REALTOR® was to be honest," he said. "That wasn't necessarily the reason I got into real estate, but that has always been in the back of my head. There were little, subtle things that kept pulling me to try it and get my license."

No one in Couvillion's family was in real estate. None of his friends were either. But he did know one person whose brain he could pick.

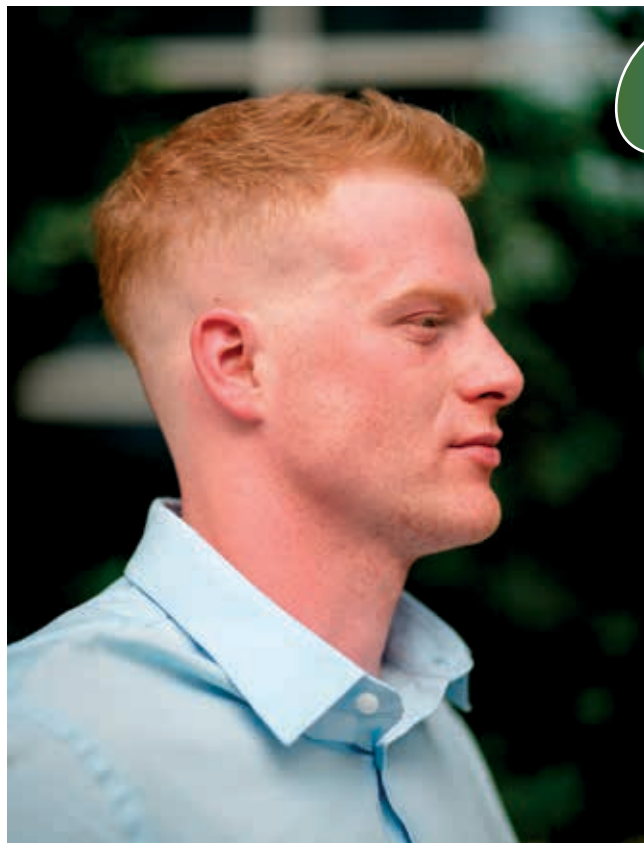
Sterling Hall, one of his personal training clients and fellow church members, was more than happy to talk real estate.

It didn't take long for Couvillion to get his real estate license and sign on with Emerge Properties of LA, where Hall is the broker.

"[Hall] definitely showed me the ropes and taught me how to separate myself from the rest," he said.



Stephen with his wife Cara and their daughter Ruby Rose



**GOD HAS MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF SPEAKING TO US.**  
 How He chooses to speak doesn't really matter, what matters is **THAT YOU'RE CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIM TO HEAR IT, AND THAT YOU LISTEN TO HIM.**

For the first year, Couvillion split his time between personal training and real estate, selling about 10 properties.

Then, all of the calls and Instagram posts started paying off, and there wasn't time for half and half anymore. Couvillion decided it was time to give full attention to real estate.

**THE COUVILLION COMPOUND METHOD**

Whether it's as an athlete, youth pastor, husband, father or REALTOR®, Couvillion wants to be the best he can be.

When he began his real estate journey, he posted on social media every time he showed a house, closed a deal or just wanted to share his journey.

"My Instagram stories are like mini-blogs," he said.

Even when only 10 people were watching and no one commented, he kept posting. It took a little while for people to get used to his flip from personal training posts to real estate posts. His social media presence yielded no business for him that first year and a half. When he wasn't posting, he was calling. It was difficult to hear the "no's" and "not now's," but he kept dialing.

"When you have a wife and a kid, there isn't any motivation missing," Couvillion said laughing.

Then, the calls and messages came.

He made more from real estate in February 2019 than he had made in his entire life.

"And a lot of it was from calls I had made in 2018," he said.

For Couvillion, success lies in the daily details.

"I set goals for myself daily and work on attacking them each day," Couvillion said. "I'm big on writing down goals. Typically they're massive goals that seem unrealistic at the time."

Couvillion also knows the value of a team and a coach. He has surrounded himself with seasoned REALTORS because "iron sharpens iron."

In 2019, he hired Scott Gibson as a business coach to steer him in the right direction and foster his entrepreneurial spirit. In January 2020, he hired Necole Weaver as a transaction coordinator.

It's good to have dedicated teammates at the office, but it's great to have them at home.

A typical weekend is the same as a typical weekday for Couvillion - he's showing houses, answering calls and replying to a mountain of emails. While there are some days Cara would be glad to throw his phone out of the window, her trust and understanding have propelled him further than he could have ever dreamed, he said. She's a full-time mom to their 14-month-old, Ruby Rose, and full-time support of Stephen's sometimes crazy goals.

"She's a supermom," Couvillion said. "She definitely takes the bulk of that on, which allows me to build this business. We both know what we want, and we know that for me, right now, it's building this business. It pushes me a lot that she fully trusts me. Without that motivation, I wouldn't always make the next call or go the extra mile."



*Always be grateful.*  
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