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Ad Manager



# Something About the Water ▶▶ publisher's note

**K**urt and I took a quick getaway to Orange Beach to join my oldest daughter, her husband and two kids for some sun, sand and waves. It is every bit of lovely to hop in the car and find all of this just a short drive from Baton Rouge. Yes. Three hours is a SHORT drive. When you are originally from Texas...Way Out West Texas...you know what it's like to have to pack lunch AND dinner AND fill the car up twice before you reach a beach.

I love the ocean. I love the way it makes me feel small. I love the vastness of it all. The way it reminds me that it's been there...being an ocean...since time began. It doesn't have a political view, it doesn't argue rights or wrongs, it doesn't do anything more than roll in and roll out every day and people look forward to being near its unopinionated quiet roar.

I LOVE the beach. I LOVE to share photos on social media of time at the beach with my family doing fun things and being happy. I don't LOVE social media. It can get political, mean and opinionated real quick-like. I appreciate that I can utilize social media to connect with my audience and stay up to date with my friends and family, but lately I've had a grand aversion to the abuse of our right to say how we feel about this and that. I use platforms like Facebook and Instagram to celebrate new partners, offer some insight into all that is going on here at *Baton Rouge Real Producers*, and post my latest episode of *UNMUTED*, a weekly vlog I birthed out of this quarantine era where I interview a guest or ramble some thoughts about thoughts. I'm a sucker for a "like" and positive feedback. I live to put a word out there that brings a smile or better yet, a laugh. I selectively follow people that do the same and I like the heck out of their stuff.

It's a season of unknowns. This fact, without exception, will lead to strong opinions...or maybe I should say, people trying to figure things out without any facts. We have elections on the horizon and choices to make. Let's agree to be kind. If no one else but us makes an intentional effort to give others the space and freedom to walk around in their own grown-up decisions and live with it, that will be 350+ people choosing better. And when it all seems like too much...go find a beach and watch the waves. Works for me. Every time.

I know of four companies that chose better recently. MFB Title Solutions, Discount Plumbing, ABBA Movers and Louisiana Laserderm. Yep. They joined us here at BRRP and we are happy to have them and thankful for each and every recommended business that sees the value in what we are building here.



It's All Good, Y'all,  
**Gina**



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**JORDAN TROSCLAIR:** Personal Trainer

**SONDRA RICHARD:** Bar Owner

**LEIGH ADAMS:** Kindergarten Teacher

**BRITTINY HOWARD:** Co-owned a paint company. We were carried in all of the Stine Stores. I think it was 16 or so total including local stores.

**JUSTIN BREWER:** Restaurant Management

**AMY DUPLESSIS:** I owned four Merle Norman stores.

**PHIL DEBIN:** Waiter

**CLONISE STEWART:** Taught elementary students.

**AIMEE TERITO:** Operation Specialist for CC's Coffee House.

**DENISE THIBODEAUX:** Training Coordinator

**STEPHEN COUVILLION:** Personal Trainer

**STACEY BOUDREAUX:** Casino Table Games Floor Supervisor

**ASHLEY TERRELL FERRER:** Medical Device Sales in an operating room setting

**ERICKA QUEEN:** Project Management

**KELLY GABLE:** Advertising Sales at InRegister

**LACY CORCORAN:** Full-time wife/mom. I moved constantly for my hubby's baseball career so I deemed myself a professional moving and travel coordinator!

**BRITTANY KENNEY:** Paralegal

**JILL JAGGERS LEMOINE:** CPA

**DARREN JAMES:** Police Officer

**KAREN MOORE:** Mortgage Loans, 12 years

**NICOLE GAUDET:** Army Veteran

**CRYSTAL BONIN:** District Sales Manager, then full-time mommy for 13 years.

**KELLY MITCHELL:** Kindergarten Teacher

**RYN JONES:** I have had several careers! TV Sales, Pharmaceutical Sales and I owned a business that taught extracurricular creative movement/dance classes in preschools: Silly Goose Creative Dance, LLC.

**SUZANNE LANCASTER:** Telecom Sales, rented and sold heavy equipment, Southeast Manufacturing Rep-plastics, pharmaceutical sales, McDonald's, Athletic Trainer, Waitress, Admin.

**MEGHAN DUNNE:** College!

**KIRA BANKS:** Social Worker

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# Tim Houk » cover story

## *Serving Up Success*

By  
Breanna  
Smith  
Photos by  
Aaron Cox

*When Tim Houk cooks Sunday dinner, he makes everything down to the pasta from scratch. When he sends thank-you cards, they're handwritten and genuine. When Houk finds a good story of grit and triumph, he buys the books by the case and gives a copy to everyone who sits across from his desk.*

Houk's door only closes when he uses the in-office shower — the only adornment in his corner office besides a giant post-it with notes scrawled across it. He walks between the open cubicles in The Houk Group's new office on American Way and gestures to the wall of framed employee photos. There's a simple saying on top — the company motto:

*"Life by design, not by default."*

### **Ready. Set. Goal.**

As Tim Houk winds through the office Lyric Foret, Director of Operations, catches up to him holding a form completed by one of the new team members — a 4-1-1.

The form is box after box to detail goals for the year, what to do about it every month and steps to take each week to stay on track for annual targets.

"This is one of the most important things we do here," he says.

Houk sets a goal — whether it be to travel the world, make money or cultivate deep interpersonal relationships — lays out a plan and relentlessly pursues it. Then repeats.

He regularly fills out a 4-1-1, and so does everyone on his team.

"I'm a contradiction of terms — I like routines and schedules," he says, taking a pause, "But that's not my natural personality. I've had to learn to be that way to be effective."

He's a bit too good at flying by the seat of his pants, he admits. But the results that come from proper planning are hard to beat. He has a few favorite mottos, but among his top three is: fail to plan, plan to fail.

Houk loves a good plan for handling all of the irons he has in the fire — property management, real estate, investing, life with his wife Taylor, and three toddlers Tinley, Tatum and Tori — but he's learned to listen to his intuition when something is ignited.

### **Plan and Pivot**

Growing up Houk's life plan was simple. He'd either join the Navy or hop on a train and go wherever his money would take him, fully trusting his innate ability to figure things out on the fly.

...





“The best part of the business is growing opportunities for other people.”



...

“The world wasn’t a big place for a young Tim Houk,” he said, noting that his family worked hard to make ends meet and he was the first in his mother’s family to go to college.

He signed papers to join the Navy as one of two young men in Louisiana who passed the Navy’s INTEL test, a rigorous test written entirely in a fictitious language to determine those with an aptitude for working among the highest ranks in Naval Intelligence. Shortly before he was scheduled to leave, his family learned his father was terminally ill. Houk couldn’t bring himself to leave that May. In October, he signed the papers again. This time he was assigned to a different, less glorious position — a deckhand.

He learned a lot during his time in the service — mostly humility, and that he never wanted to stop traveling the world, but after six years in the Navy, Houk knew it was time to switch gears.

He worked on getting his real estate license from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. then went to his job at Cheesecake Bistro from 4 p.m. to midnight. Every day. Seven days a week. For 180 days.

“People tell me, ‘I’m working so hard, or I worked so hard,’ and I say, ‘Are you?’” he said, leaning onto his folded hands. “I believe when you want something bad enough, you’ll find a way to go do it.”

Half of the battle of a plan is sticking with it, or, when it isn’t working out anymore, getting unstuck. Houk has an innate wisdom for deciphering the best time for each. He’s learned to listen closely to his intuition after a lesson or two along the way.

Among the biggest lessons learned in letting go started with Salvation Station — a food truck the culinary connoisseur started in 2010, the same year he began The Houk Group. It was a bold move and one that worked for a while.

“It was an ambitious business strategy, and I did it for three main reasons: I thought it was cool, I love food and people told me I couldn’t do it.”

The gourmet wraps and salads made with a little Louisiana flair were a hit. “People still call and ask if I can make them a Number Six!”

But time spent was more valuable in the real estate office, and if you want something done right — *the wraps made perfectly, the truck maintained regularly* — often, you have to do it yourself. He made the decision to say so long to Salvation Station and keep his sights and planning focused on real estate.

Houk thrives on seeing a goal met — whether his own, team members or clients. “The best part of the business is growing opportunities for other people.”

The Houk Group has consistently ranked among the top 1% in the Greater Baton Rouge Area and the Top Five in the Gulf Coast region.

“I won’t sleep until we’re in that number one spot,” he said.

He finds it difficult to articulate just how good it feels when you see others’ dreams come true and know you made a difference somewhere along the way.

Houk loves a good story of a hard-fought triumph. He found one such tale in the pages of *The Boys in the Boat*, a book by Daniel James Brown recounting the journey of nine American rowers to their 1936 Olympic Gold Medal. He makes sure to keep a copy on him...just in case he meets someone and his intuition tells him they need it.





Q & A  
with  
**RICHARD SPEARS**  
*Keller Williams Realty  
First Choice*

*BRRP: How many years have you been in real estate?*

**RS:** Three years

*BRRP: What was your career prior to this one?*

**RS:** Prior to real estate, I was a Conductor at Union Pacific Railroad.

*BRRP: Tell us about your family.*

**RS:** I'm married to Angel Spears and we have two boys, Cameron, 9, and Dylan, 3.

*BRRP: What are your hobbies or what do you love to do in your free time?*

**RS:** Music and cooking have always been two of my favorite hobbies. I've always been a fan of the arts and creating music or cooking has always been my way of expressing that. I joined the band in middle school and since then I've learned to play four instruments, I even had my own recording studio once. I believe I picked up cooking from my grandparents. My mom's mother has always been an amazing cook and my dad's father

was a cook at The Ritz Carlton in Chicago. I spent a lot of time with them both. We would visit my dad's parents during the summer, and I was always fascinated by the different dishes he would prepare and the lessons he would teach on how different wines would pair with different dishes. During my free time I enjoy listening to music, drinking a cocktail, and cooking most!

*BRRP: Three things you are loving right now that we need to know about, too.*

**RS:** The podcast *How I Built This* with Guy Raz. Guy digs deep with his guest to discuss how their amazing companies or brands were built. I'm always fascinated with how leaders and business owners think. I'm reading *What it Takes: Lessons in the Pursuit of Excellence* – the autobiography of Stephen A. Schwarzman Chairman, CEO, and Founder of Blackstone, which is one of the leading investment firms globally. I always read with a purpose and lately, leadership books along with biographies of CEOs and world leaders have been a part of my personal growth plan. And we're loving *Morrrows* and *Neyows Creole Café*. Both restaurants are in New Orleans which happens to be one of our favorite cities. So much culture packed in that small city! We love *Morrrows* for brunch. The owner, Larry's mom, Lenora, makes the best pan-

cakes! I'm also a big fan of chargrilled oysters and so far, *Neyows* has been the best I've ever had!

*BRRP: How are you currently involved in the community?*

**RS:** I grew up in North Baton Rouge and that area will always have a warm spot in my heart! Through various partnerships, we've been able to create small impacts in that community. Even before I was able to see real profits from my real estate sales business, we took what little we had and partnered with four other small business owners from that community to create various opportunities for impact. A few of those opportunities have been providing kids with school supplies for the upcoming school year, we sponsor a large Easter Egg Hunt in North Baton Rouge every year, and we've also been able to feed families during Thanksgiving for the past two years. Three months ago, I took the time to become certified as a Keller Williams Quantum Leap Instructor for young adults. Quantum







Leap was a real game-changer for my mindset, personal life, and business. After taking that class for the second time, I wondered what my life would have looked like if I had learned these principles earlier in life. That question inspired me to become certified and teach these principles in that community as well as to the children of my past clients.

*BRRP: So, tell us...what is your favorite thing about being a REALTOR®?*

**RS:** What I love most about real estate is educating our clients on the many possibilities of how real estate can not only change their lives but the lives of their families. So many of our clients are not only first-time homeowners but also the first in their family to actually own a home. Just today as I'm writing this response, a young lady cried on the phone with me when I called to inform her that her offer had been accepted for this exact reason. We've also been able to continue educating our past clients on the importance of investing and as a result more than 10% of our transactions this year have been past clients purchasing their first investment property.

*BRRP: And would you mind sharing the most challenging thing about being a REALTOR®?*

**RS:** For me, the most challenging thing about being a REALTOR® has been managing my time. When you're so passionate about helping people, you will soon realize that there's only so many hours in the day and only so much that can be done by one person. I'm beyond grateful for my wife, the team, and even my dad that picks up and drops off signs for us now, because together we've been able to continue helping and serving without losing the level of customer service that everyone deserves!

*BRRP: Do you have a favorite client story?*

**RS:** My favorite client story comes from the sixth transaction of my career. A young lady reached out to me via Facebook and asked could I help her mom buy a home and I said of course! I scheduled to meet with them, and it turned out that they were in their 60s, the husband was still working and the rent was \$1,700 a month on a home that should have only rented for \$1,200 a month in that condition and area, in my opinion. The husband owned a home once, in his 30s, but lost it. The wife had never owned a home before, and because of circumstances and their age, they no longer believed homeownership was possible for them. I was still brand new and wasn't quite as passionate about this career as I am now. When that couple closed on their home and they were able to save \$600 a month through owning versus renting while still living in the same subdivision, it changed things for me! That transaction allowed me to see that I was creating a real impact and that the work we as REALTORS® do is significant. To date, that one transaction has been part of the fuel to my motivation. Knowing we're changing lives and creating a significant impact is what keeps me going!

*BRRP: What is one thing you think has made you a top producing agent in our area?*

**RS:** I believe being passionate about educating as many people as I can about real estate has been the biggest catalyst to my success. The largest percentage of our business is from referrals, repeat clients, and social media. I believe having a huge presence on social media has helped, and that following was created by providing an abundance of free education and content. Right now, the new series I created a few months ago called Lunch & Learn on Instagram has received the most positive feedback on content to date and it has allowed me to educate even more people on a weekly basis.



## “No one succeeds alone”

*- I never asked my wife to get a license and I'm also beyond grateful that she noticed I was burning out. With her help, it allowed me to go from good to great, and more importantly it allowed us to create a bigger impact in the communities we serve!*





# AUNDREA ALLEN

## SafeSource Insurance Group

### Always Add Value

SafeSource Insurance Group began as a small venture for two, and has now blossomed into a full-service agency of eight employees. While the company has grown four-fold since opening in 2009, the team still prides itself on providing the high-quality, personalized service you would expect from a boutique insurance agency. When Aundrea Allen, an independent agent and manager, joined SafeSource in 2011, she brought with her a laser focus on adding value to the real estate market.

### Get a Clue

Allen likes to figure things out — whether it be putting together a puzzle on her dining room table or the latest mystery in her favorite true-crime podcast, *Real Life Real Crime* by local Woody Overton. The mystery of insurance is no exception. During the course of her career, Allen has spent hours digging around for home elevation records from the 1990s. When it comes to getting things ready for the closing table, she doesn't mind putting in the extra phone calls, emails and document-hunting to make sure a policy transfers smoothly from one homeown-

er to the next. "I will leave no stone unturned when it comes to helping our insurance clients," Allen said. "I fully believe there is a solution to be found if you look hard enough."

Changing FEMA regulations and carrier guidelines are welcomed challenges for Allen.

"It's an ever-evolving, ever-changing industry," she said. "There's always something that changes. What makes this business challenging is exactly what makes it exciting."

...

“

I will leave no stone unturned when it comes to helping our insurance clients.

”

partner spotlight

By Breanna Smith  
Photos by Gina Miller







••• **Get it Together**

At the SafeSource office, there's always music in the background. As the mom of a 9-year-old and manager of a full-service insurance firm, it feels unnatural if there aren't two or three things going on at once.

Allen likes to have all of the details gathered and presented upfront. Insurance needs and rates can make or break a sale — having all of the information in the beginning of the process is always to the advantage of everyone involved in a real estate transaction. To help REALTORS® avoid a last-minute problem with insurance costs, Allen provides

listing insurance flyers complete with the anticipated cost of both flood and homeowners insurance.

The Baton Rouge native enjoys being part of a solution, especially when it means lending an ear to her close-knit group of friends. Allen doesn't just like to see things work, she wants to be the one that makes them work.

Her philosophy is simple: add value everywhere you go.



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