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LIFE AS A HIGH-END REALTOR

Following the strategies of Realtors Rupert and Karen Irby as they try to make their mark in the upscale market in Naples.
BY JUSTIN PAPROCKI

"There's opportunity here—you just have to see it. Put a little money into it—well, the Naples version of 'a little money'—and this could sell quickly."

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Cover photo courtesy of **John Paul Buchanan**.

RP

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publisher's note ◀◀

FALL IS HERE... AND OUR BIG EVENT IS HERE!

Dear SWFL Real Producers,

Here we are in October. Fall is the time of harvest — and of taking stock of the fruits of our year's labor. This year has been a blur... and challenging on so many levels for all of us. Personally, over the last many months, I've reflected on and prioritized what's truly important and have tried to stay focused on what winners do even when the chips are down. When nothing can be taken for granted, it seems everything comes into sharp focus. We always have a choice to feel reactive to things we have no control over or to proactively forge ahead and through. I've had amazingly more engaging and heartfelt times spent with my family, friends, and work colleagues in these months. I know many of you have seized the day and moved forward in surprisingly powerful ways as well. Silver linings have been everywhere.

Our current real estate market is an incredible silver lining. While the economy basically shut down, the real estate market exploded and there is so much opportunity out there. People in our industry have an abundance of work and so much to be encouraged about. The harvest basket is truly full.

I am so excited to announce that the wait is finally over, and *SWFL Real Producers'* in-person events are happening! It was a long wait! And for a platform that relies on community in the way that ours does, it was particularly challenging not being able to network and get together. We made the best of it with our incredible virtual and mini masterminds and are so grateful to everyone who connected and participated. But we were chomping at the bit to see everyone in person and are so pleased to announce that our amazing mixers and networking events are underway!

On October 7th, from 5 to 8 p.m., we will be hosting our Launch Party!

The event will take place at a brand-new custom home, built by Cintron Custom Builders, at 6435 Sable Ridge Lane, in Naples. It's located right off Livingston and Pine Ridge Road. The house is MASSIVE, totaling around 8,000 sq.ft. With the open floor plan and being unfurnished, it will be perfect for socializing and networking! We will have food, drinks, exotic cars, high-end art pieces, and a few more surprises. Professional photographers and videographers will be scattered throughout the venue. We will be having a few giveaways and raffles, and all proceeds will be going to charities/non-profits! Of course, safety is always a concern! At the door, we will be checking each person's temperature, providing a mask if need be, and practicing appropriate social distancing. If you aren't already registered for the Launch Party event and would like to attend, please reach out to us at kim.curry@realproducersmag.com.

I feel such a strong sense of gratitude for all of the challenges and opportunities of this year — and for each and every one of you. You inspire me! I hope you're taking stock of all of the accomplishments and gifts that have come your way this year too. Onward and upward!

Very respectfully,

Andrew Regenhard

Owner/Publisher
SWFL Real Producers
andrew.regenhard@realproducersmag.com



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Plan to join us at Cintron Custom Homes' beautiful, brand new construction listing at 6435 Sable Ridge Lane in Naples for an evening of beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres, music, and exciting raffles and giveaways. Valet parking will be provided. Please bring your face masks; we will be following all current guidelines on PPE and social distancing so we can assure a safe event for everyone. Thank you in advance to our wonderful event sponsors: Cintron Homes and Balanced Images!

If you haven't RSVP'd to your exclusive invitation by now, please do so right away! And if you didn't receive your invitation and would like to come, please email us at kim.curry@realproducersmag.com.

We look forward to seeing you at the launch party!

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For more information or questions about SWFL Real Producers events, email Kim Curry at kim.curry@realproducersmag.com.

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Make Your Pre-Approved Buyer STAND OUT



pro tips

By Steve Calabrese

The market is absolutely on fire right now. Inventory has dried up and July sales are up 23 percent from last July, even though April and May sales were down 40 percent from last year due to the COVID lockdown. With working from home on the rise, our market doesn't look like it's slowing down anytime soon. In this kind of market, it's often much more difficult to get an offer accepted that is financing when going up against several other financing or cash offers. How can you make your pre-approved buyer appeal to sellers so they accept your offer?

The lender, the borrower, and the buyer's agent know how strong the buyer is, but the listing agent and seller are usually staring at a computer-generated pre-approval letter from a lender who doesn't answer their phone. How can you make your pre-approved buyer stand out? This is where the lender comes into play.

Ever had the lender directly call the listing agent and vouch for how solid your pre-approved buyer is? More often than not, a brief call from the loan officer to the listing agent, letting them know how strong the borrower is, can make the difference between the seller selecting your offer or someone else's.

Interest rates are at an absolute all-time low, by far. Rates are so low that it probably makes sense, for the majority of homeowners who bought in the past, to refinance if they haven't already. This is great for homeowners, who can take advantage of lower rates, and a great opportunity for loan officers looking to refinance their borrowers and increase their pipeline of mortgages.

Loan officers (and Realtors®) can only service so many clients at a certain time, even if they've invested the time and resources into building a team, which *most* have not.

It's like shooting fish in a barrel right now; loan officers are spending the majority of their time focusing on the "quick money" — refinances — and dropping the ball on their purchase mortgages, as there are simply too many clients wanting to refinance than most lenders can handle.

It's not uncommon nowadays to get a random call from a real estate agent who I've never met before because their lender has "gone dark" on them and all of a sudden won't return their calls. You need an aggressive lender, willing to pick up the phone on a moment's notice to vouch for your clients — a team member who is on top of it and keeps everyone up to date on the stage of the mortgage.

Many lenders are caught up in the refinances right now and are not giving their purchase clients the service that they deserve. It's not that they can't handle more loans; it's that they haven't built out their team to handle the business they have right now. Your buyer deserves a lender who is focused on building their business for the long haul, not distracted by the quick money of refinances.

Bottom Line: Make sure you have a solid lender who focuses on purchases, isn't caught up in the refinance boom, has in-house underwriters, and doesn't rip your buyer off by charging higher costs and fees than market value.

If you need an aggressive lender to help you get offers accepted or you're interested in growing your business through social media, reach out to Steve Calabrese at 239-932-3216.



Steve Calabrese transferred down to FGCU from Ohio State in 2017. He started doing mortgages out of his house and opened an Equitable Mortgage branch in 2019 in Bonita Springs. He's an avid free diver and spearfisherman and can be found on or under the water when not closing loans.

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JEAN HARVEY

Elevating the Experience

►► featured agent

By **Dave Danielson**
Photos by **Megan DiPiero Photography**



Jean Harvey at home with daughter Lori Keeton, from North Carolina, and Lily Kate, the family's pet Goldendoodle.

Success in life comes to those who set themselves apart by lifting those around them higher. Jean Harvey is one leader who does exactly that.

As a Broker Associate with John R. Wood Properties, Jean takes pride in going beyond and elevating the experience...being an encourager and resource to help others reach their own potential.

Growing and Learning

Jean's remarkable impact on the world began when she grew up as a self-proclaimed "small-town Mississippi girl."

It didn't take long for her strong desire to help to manifest itself in the lives of other people. Jean earned her BA from Southern Miss, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, before going on to receive her MA from Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi.

After graduation, she began her rewarding career as a teacher.

"Teaching is a career I dearly loved. It was the perfect job for a mom," Jean recalls. "I married my high school sweetheart at the age of 19, and we had two beautiful daughters: Paige Keeton (Stewart) and Lori Keeton."

In time, Jean divorced. In 1987, she married Major General Alton H. Harvey.

"At the same time, I inherited my third beautiful daughter, Connie Harvey (Engel), who was a student in one of my classes and ultimately introduced me to her dad," Jean remembers. "One of the best days of my life was adding both of them to my life."

Al had just retired from a distinguished military career, where he headed the legal services for the U.S. Army as Judge Advocate General. He had returned to his home state of Mississippi to become Dean of the local law school.

As Jean says, "Prior to Al's legal career, he was a decorated soldier in the infantry. He gave up an appointment to West Point to join the army in the Korean War when his National Guard unit from Mississippi was called up. During his service, he was awarded such commendations as a Purple Heart, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star for Valor."

Following her marriage, Jean continued to teach in Mississippi as their three girls finished their high school careers.

Finding a New Home — and Career

After Al retired from the law school in 1991, he and Jean moved to Southwest Florida. They built a home on Pine Island on a lot overlooking Sanibel Island, and Jean continued her teaching career — this time at Edison College, now Florida SouthWestern State College. In time, they moved to Fort Myers to be closer to Jean's work and to their church — Covenant Presbyterian Church.



Jean collects original artwork; shown in the background is a painting by one of her favorite artists, Revati Sharma Singh.

...

During this time, Jean’s longstanding interest in real estate was brought to the surface through encouragement from Al.

“In a casual conversation, Al looked at me and said, ‘You know, you’re not getting any younger. If you want to sell real estate, what are you waiting for?’ His words were a reality check for me,” Jean recalls. “He was encouraging me to follow my dreams. I will always be grateful for those words.”

It was 2001. As Jean remembers, the idea of a career change was a sobering thought. So she reached out to a friend from church, Sally Bond Lowrey, who suggested that Jean get in touch with Denny Grimes, a top real estate producer in the area.

Jean met with Denny, who, after hearing Jean’s interest in real estate, turned her down. Two days later, with encouragement from Sally, Jean called Denny to meet again.

“Denny had said he didn’t have time to train me. This time, I emphasized that I would take complete ownership of training myself — reminding him he had nothing to lose on taking a chance on me. He sat there shaking his head ‘No,’ and smiling the Denny smile...and then he hired me. I assured him I would not disappoint him.”

Jean proved true to her word.

“What the Grimes team provided me was a launchpad for success. Denny ran his business like a business, and

the lessons I learned were priceless in growing my career,” Jean says. “He also introduced me to Howard Britton and the Star Power Network, an awesome resource for agents sharing their success with real advice on how to grow your business.”

Success soon followed. By the end of her first year, Jean was one of Denny’s top producers and had more than doubled her teaching income.

Sharing Her Gifts

Her positive energy and diligent service led to more success. In the coming years, Jean would share her talents with the Ellis Team at RE/MAX (with Sande, Mike, and Brett Ellis). She also worked as an independent agent before earning her broker’s license while working under Claude Allen Realty. In the process, she met Jack Shea, the regional vice president of Colonial Homes, who gave Jean the opportunity to list some of their inventory. In turn, the relationship expanded to communities in both Lee and Collier counties. Later, during an open house

she was hosting, Jean met Charles Idelson from Investor’s Security Trust. He brought Jean in and entrusted her to work with some of the clients in his company, thus helping her to further grow her business.

As Jean’s career flourished, she also pursued opening her own brokerage. Around this time, she was approached by the leadership of the UBS Fort Myers Financial Center.

“They offered me the opportunity to do a build-out with them for their new 12,000 square-foot building, of which I would have 3,000 square feet,” she recalls. “While it was flattering, it was also terrifying. The opportunity/challenge was especially daunting when the only financial backing I had was a \$10,000 CD my precious mother had given me. I prayed about it and turned it over to God. I assured Him I would do my best, but I needed Him to walk with me through all of this. I jumped off the cliff and grew wings on the way down. The lesson I learned was sometimes it’s important to believe in yourself and to take chances.”

Jean built her team, hired business coach Brian Tracy, and continued stepping forward.

“His training on goal setting five years into the future was instrumental in my success. Later, I hired a local coach, Heather Christie, who did a great job of coaching not only me, but my team,” Jean remembers.

The results were powerful. With eight full-time agents, in 2005, at the height of the market, Jean and her team sold \$158 million in real estate and were comfortably housed within the new UBS building.

In 2007, Jean was recruited to join VIP Realty in Fort Myers as one of the managers of their Residential Real Estate Division, where she had approximately 80 agents and was in

a position to offer support for their business. There, she formed a friendship with Dennis Brando.

As Jean says, “At the time, Dennis was the residential manager of the Naples office. He influenced me then, and he continues to do so to this day. Dennis is now also at John R. Wood Properties. He is an amazing RE-ALTOR® and person and sets a high benchmark for our industry. I am proud to call him my friend.”

In time, Jean partnered with four core group members to launch Keller Williams’ new franchise in Fort Myers. In the process, she developed a close friendship with top producer Denise Chambre.

“Denise was my top recruit at the new franchise. I’m fortunate to call her my friend,” Jean smiles. “She inspires me. I always say I want to be like Denise when I grow up.”

Time passed, and Jean moved to John R. Wood Properties, where her success continues to grow through service to others. In 2019, Jean recorded over \$16 million in sales volume, and she received the JRW Emerald Division Award.

This Year

Jean is excited to be joined on her journey at John R. Wood Properties by Nancy Frates, who many of you will know from her family’s journey with their son Pete as he battled ALS. The Frateses have significantly impacted the world and made significant progress towards a cure through such efforts as the Ice Bucket Challenge.

“Nancy is my dear friend and professional colleague,” says Jean. “She’s a licensed agent in Massachusetts and will come aboard in an unlicensed capacity — at least for the time being. She is one of the most amazing women I have ever met, and I consider her to be a gift from God to both my life and my business.”

Deep Gratitude. Strong Purpose.

When you talk with Jean, you quickly see the deep gratitude and sense of purpose that guide her.

“Everything I have is a gift from God. I am so grateful for my clients...and the opportunity to serve them,” Jean emphasizes.

The future holds more opportunity.

“I love the journey. It just keeps getting better and better,” Jean smiles. “I love watching — from afar — the agents who, at some point in their journey up the ladder of success, shared the path with me even so briefly. Hopefully, I, in some small way, had the opportunity to encourage them...people like Florie Gage, Jerry Neisman, Kathy Brady, and Jessica Diaz, who have gone on to create great careers.”

Her encouraging words and supportive spirit continue to elevate the experience for those around her.

“For those who want to succeed in this career, I say, if I can do it, you can do it,” she humbly smiles. “It’s okay to have doubts. Just don’t stop. Don’t let anything get in your way. If you conceive it and believe it, you can achieve it.”



Jean Harvey at her 5th Avenue office of John R. Wood Properties, where she is a Broker Associate.

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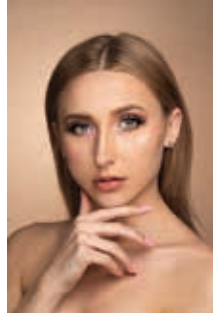
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By Lindsey Wells
Photography by Sandy Windham

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**TIM
DUPRE**

CONDITIONED AIR



...

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Timothy Dupre, one of the company's partners, brings over 20 years of

experience to the table and is at the forefront of the business. He began working for Conditioned Air as an installer in 1997 and worked his way up through several management positions over the last 23 years. In 2015, he became Conditioned Air's President and Chief Operating Officer and was promoted to President and CEO in 2018. Looking back, it was Tim's friend and personal mentor who encouraged him to pursue a career in the HVAC industry.

"He said, 'In the state of Florida, you have two options: you can either go into the medical field or the HVAC field because those are two jobs that will always be in high demand,'" Tim recalls. Having come from a construction trade family, Tim naturally leaned towards HVAC. He began working for Conditioned Air and immediately fell in love with the industry, the culture of the company, and the opportunity for advancement within the business. "With a lot of hard work and commitment to the trade, the HVAC industry provides a great career path," Tim

says. "The trades are rebounding as a solid career path for people and it is long overdue, especially with Florida's continued growth."

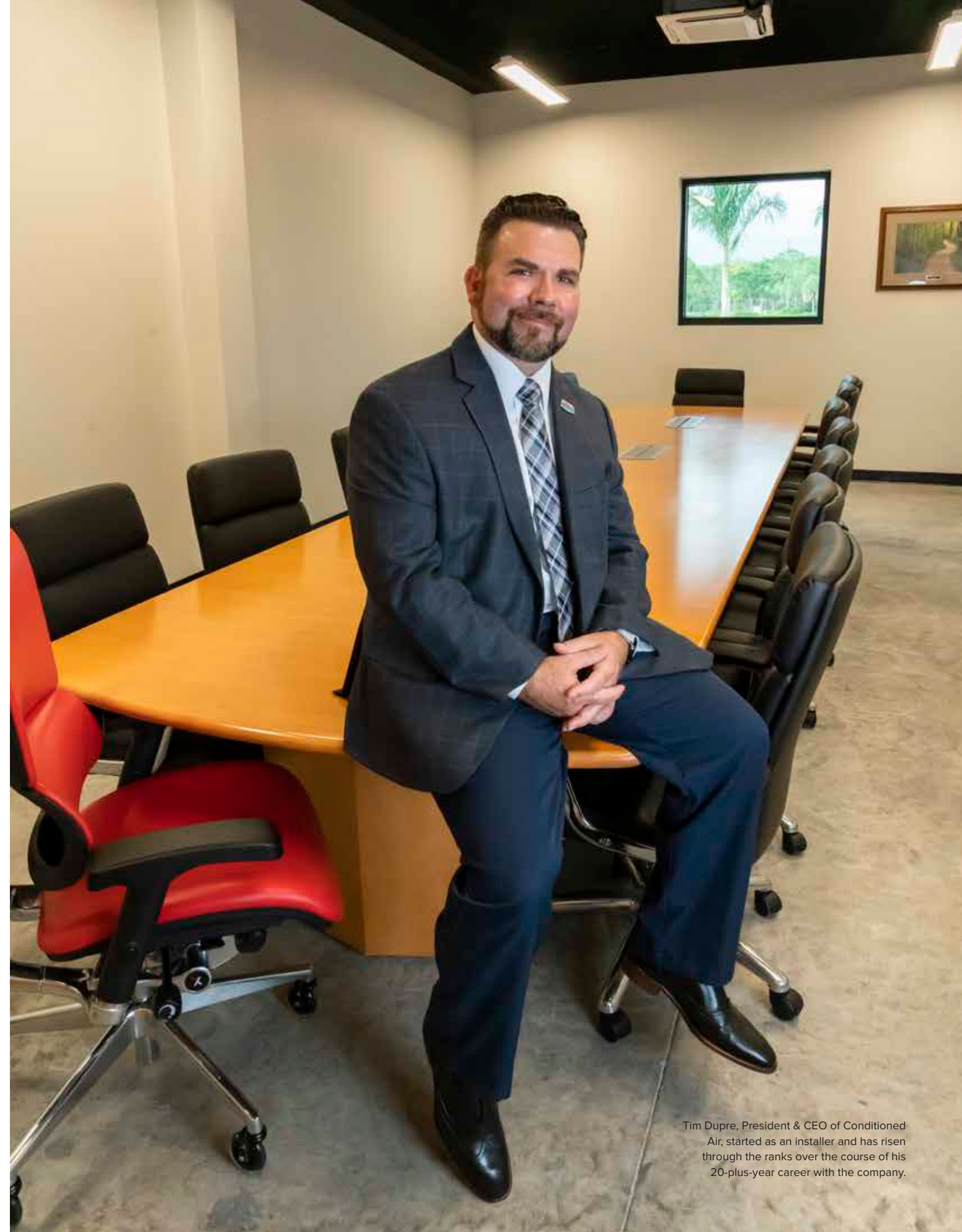
Offering full residential services and light commercial services, Conditioned Air's service area spans the length of Southwest Florida, including all of Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Desoto, Sarasota, and Manatee counties. They can provide new HVAC service, maintenance, replacement, and repair of all manufacturers, and will work on anything under 25 tons.

Conditioned Air's company culture sets the business apart from others in a big way. With the prevalence of scams and bait-and-switch tactics in the HVAC industry, Conditioned

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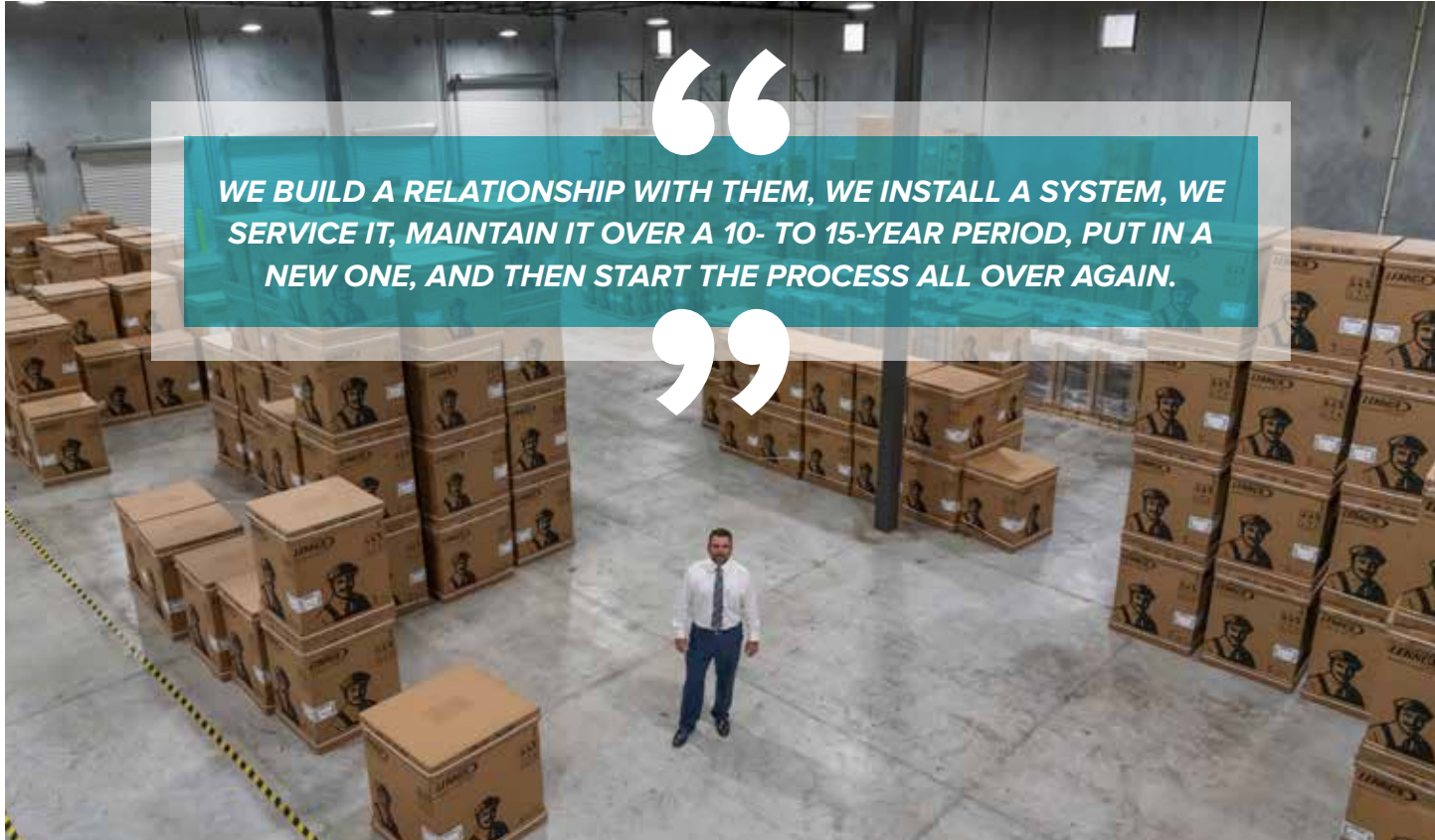
In business since 1962, Conditioned Air has grown to be the largest air conditioning contracting and service firm in the area, serving Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Desoto, Sarasota, and Manatee counties.



Tim Dupre, President & CEO of Conditioned Air, started as an installer and has risen through the ranks over the course of his 20-plus-year career with the company.



...



“WE BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM, WE INSTALL A SYSTEM, WE SERVICE IT, MAINTAIN IT OVER A 10- TO 15-YEAR PERIOD, PUT IN A NEW ONE, AND THEN START THE PROCESS ALL OVER AGAIN.”

Tim Dupre shows off the 52,710-foot warehouse in Conditioned Air's new hub in Fort Myers.

Air prides itself on simply doing what's right for the customer. "All of our employees are incentivized to provide great customer service," Tim explains. "Conditioned Air has always been in it for the long game. We're not in it for the quick dollar; we want to build a relationship with our customers and provide solutions to their problems that are not only in the best interest of their family but in the best interest for them financially."

Tim has been married to his high school sweetheart, Christine, for 22 years, and the couple has a 9-year-old daughter, Sydney. Self-proclaimed foodies, this family loves to eat! "Before COVID, we loved going out on the weekends and trying local restaurants. We really don't enjoy going to chains much; we like to support small businesses," Tim says. They enjoy giving back to their community in any

way they can. Just last year, Tim became involved with Best Buddies International, an organization that works with children with learning disabilities. They also support the American Heart Association and other various organizations.

For Tim, his biggest motivation is being able to help people — not just his customers, but his employees, too. "I love being able to help our employees strive for their dreams and expectations just as much as I love serving our customers and taking care of the challenges that maybe some other HVAC companies have not been able to solve," he says. "It's rewarding, that sense of gratification of being able to do things that others haven't and really building a lifelong relationship with our customers...or, as I like to call it, the 'full circle of business.' We build a relationship with them, we install a system, we service it, maintain it over a 10- to 15-year period, put in a new one, and then start the process all over again."

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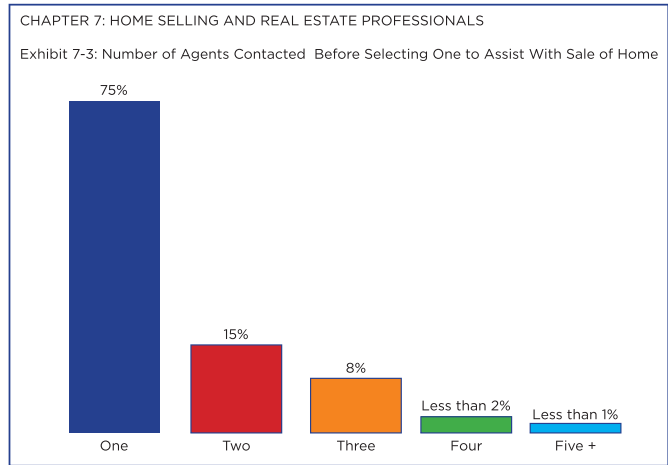
For those businesses that are able to achieve TOMA, consumers think of those brands when they are in the market for their products and services. For example, if you were thinking of buying a new computer, what brand do you think of first...Apple by chance? It's the biggest and most valuable brand in the world. Have you been to an Apple store? Take a number. Something about branding and being top-of-mind must work.

Marketing pundits figured out a long time ago that people can't do business with a company they've never heard of. That's obvious. But being perceived as the best has other advantages besides just getting the call. For example, if a company is able to connect with someone first and that customer likes their product or service, they probably won't ever talk to anyone else. Not only will they do business with them, they'll pay a premium for a name they can trust. People buy Macs and they pay a lot more for them. And it's not just computers. How about Mercedes, Rolex, Gucci, Ralph Lauren? I could go on and on, but that's the way it works.

Now let's talk about real estate. Imagine if through effective marketing you were able to brand yourself as the number one real estate professional in any given area. What if when

it came time to sell, or buy, or refer a friend or relative EVERYONE thought of you? Do you think that would give you first opportunity to talk to each and every one of those people?

Validation of the importance of TOMA in real estate can be found in the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR's) annual Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers*. According to NAR's research, when it comes time to sell, 75% of homeowners only call ONE Realtor. Another 15%, or a total of 90%, only ever call TWO. If you are number one in homeowners' minds when it comes time to sell, buy, or refer, you will have an opportunity with 90% of home owners, while everyone else is competing for the remaining 10%.



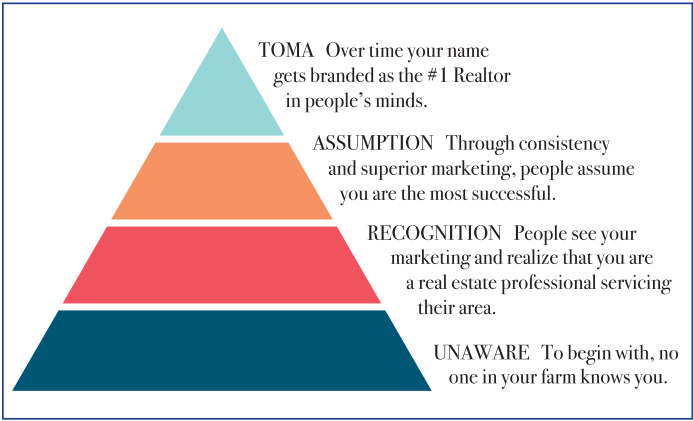
* Source: NAR's 2019 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers

And if you had first opportunity to talk to sellers, buyers, and referrals, and they all saw you as the best person to get the job done, what percentage could you capture...15%? 25%? 50%? More?

Is that attainable? Yes and here's how. Unless you are McDonalds you probably don't have the budget to market to everyone in your county or even your zip code. Fortunately you don't have to. All you have to do is select a group of nice homes and out-market everyone else there. In advertising it's called target marketing. In real estate it's called farming.

That's why savvy real estate professionals concentrate their marketing in specific farm areas. TOMA is better achieved by targeting a select group of homes and marketing to them consistently, as opposed to marketing to a lot of homes occasionally. Put another way, you'll be more effective reaching one thousand homeowners ten times than ten thousand homeowners once.

By concentrating your marketing dollars in a select farm of one thousand or more homes and becoming the real estate professional owners think of first when it comes time to sell, buy, or refer a friend or relative, you will grow your business and your GCI year after year.



by Tony Spano, a real estate marketer who works with REALTORS® to grow their businesses.



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By Lindsey Wells
Photography by Sandy Windham

STEVE HAMRO III



Since moving to Naples and obtaining his real estate license in 2010, Steve Hamro purchased and sold four RE/MAX offices before creating his own firm, Hamro & Associates, in 2015.

Against All Odds

“As with the butterfly, adversity is necessary to build character in people.” —*Joseph B. Wirthlin*

Adversity. We’ve all faced it at some point in our lives, and most of us know that it’s what you do in the face of misfortune that can make or break you. Steve Hamro is the epitome of overcoming such adversities to achieve true success in life, adversities that he was dealt from the moment he was born.

His family lived in a single-wide mobile home in one of the most impoverished areas of the United States, where Steve lived the

majority of his life before moving to Naples in January 2010. Despite the unfortunate hand he was dealt, he always strived to focus on the important things in life. “The best way to summarize it is that I knew the most basic equation in life was that there is a point A and a point B,” Steve said. “Birth and Death. Everything in between was Life — and it would be whatever I made it.”

Steve’s parents divorced when he was eight, leaving his mother to raise him and his younger brother. “Everything she did, she did for us, to provide for us,” Steve says. His mother served four years in the United States Air Force, giving her the tools needed to instill in her children the value of hard work and determination. “For me, I always wanted to do the best I could, help others to be the best they can be, and try to raise people up above some of the challenges and issues we are sometimes born into.” ...



Steve and his wife Isabel with their 2-year-old daughter Ella.

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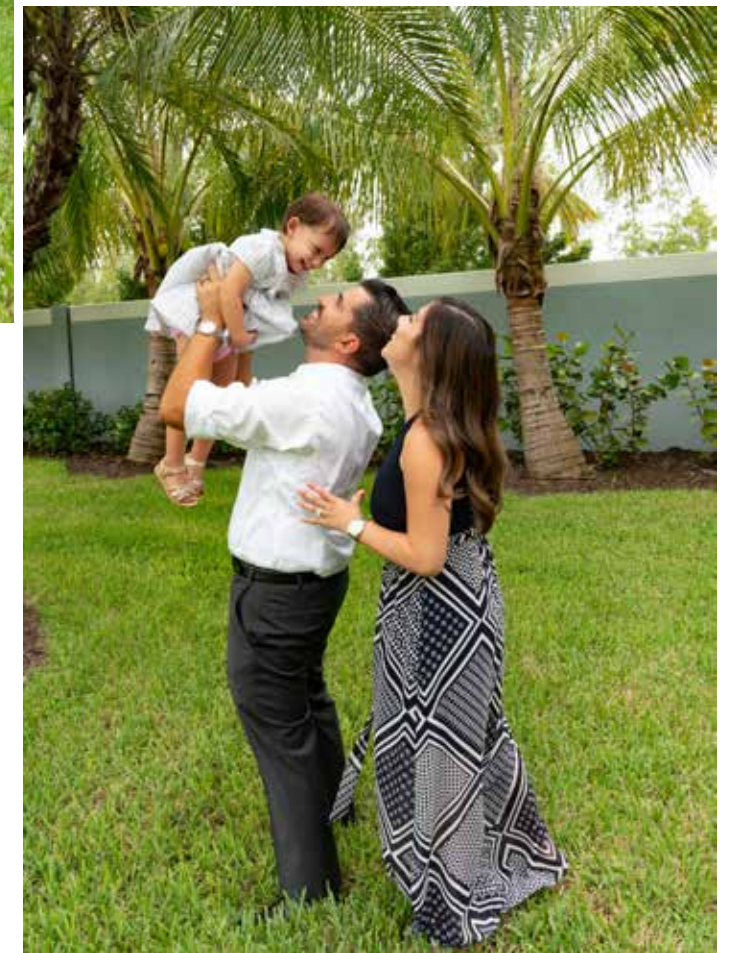
The values instilled in him from a young age are evident in everything Steve Hamro has accomplished thus far. Just one example of his determination was, at just 20 years old, when he ran for a school board against a two-term incumbent who had also served in other public offices. Against all the odds, on election night he pulled off the upset and beat two opponents with 51 percent of the vote, becoming the youngest person to be elected to a school board in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since moving to Naples in 2010, Steve has purchased and sold investment

properties, managed a real estate brokerage and consulting firm, and was the CEO of a private capital investment company. He also consulted on one of the largest and most successful agricultural bankruptcy liquidations in the United States. He purchased and sold four RE/MAX offices before creating his own firm, Hamro & Associates (H&A), in 2015.

A former banker, high school educator, and coach, Steve earned his real estate license in September 2010. He opened his own firm with the goal in mind to be able to serve clients with

a team of professionals who possessed nothing less than the highest of integrity and character. Today, two of Southwest Florida's top-producing Realtors®, Denisse Viera and Jhorjana Portilla, call H&A home. "There are over 20,000 people with a real estate license in Collier County. Over 7,000 of them attempt to practice actively. There is a reason that the top 5 percent of agents produce well over 50 percent of the total volume," Steve says. "It isn't by accident. It wasn't done by 'faking it till you make it.' It was done through hard work, integrity, and education — the classroom kind and the kind that life and the street sometimes dish out to us. It's easy to talk about a mission, a vision, and values. Demonstrating them through actions is all that matters."

The best way to summarize it is that I knew the most basic equation in life was that there is a point A and a point B. Birth and Death. Everything in between was Life — and it would be whatever I made it."



H&A offers both traditional real estate services and real estate investment consulting. The firm also performs Broker Price Opinions (BPOs), property inspections, and listing services for asset companies, banks, and mortgage services.

With the little free time he has, Steve enjoys boating, golfing, attending sporting events, and traveling. He has been married to his wife, Isabel, for just under four years, and the couple has a two-year-old daughter, Ella.

For Steve, one of his major goals in life is to let people know that they *can* make it if they put their mind to it. "They can do it. It doesn't matter where you were born, how you were born, how much you were born with, or how others treat you," he says. "There is a place in this world for those willing to work hard."

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ADNAN



rising star

By Lindsey Wells

Photography by LaCasaTour



DEDIC



Adnan Dedic, shown here in his BMW i8, has a passion for exotic cars.

From Tech to Real Estate: Inventing His Success

“I ended up sticking with real estate, and it’s been a blessing that I stayed with it,” says Adnan Dedic, a top-producing agent with John R. Wood Real Estate. Adnan, who was a star high school basketball player, had dreams of continuing with the sport after high school when a devastating injury forced him to adjust his sails. An

entrepreneur at heart, Adnan graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University with a degree in health science before realizing four years ago that real estate was his calling. He hit the ground running, selling \$5 million in his first year and dramatically increasing that number in the following years.

To fully appreciate the work ethic and values he possesses, one must first become aware of the

circumstances that brought Adnan Dedic and his family to America. Almost 30 years ago, Adnan’s parents and family found themselves fleeing war-torn Bosnia in search of a safer, more stable place to live. They emigrated from Bosnia to Germany, where Adnan was born, though they never planned to make Germany their permanent place of residence. “I was kind of their getaway out of Europe,” Adnan says, “and it was either going to be Australia or America.” America, marketed to Europe as “the Land of Opportunity,” was the

first country that accepted Adnan, a German citizen. Because of this, his family took a shot in the dark and immigrated to upstate New York, where they lived in a refugee home for about a year and worked multiple jobs to make ends meet.

One day, while in the grocery store, Adnan’s mother picked up a pamphlet advertising Sarasota, Florida, and immediately fell in love with the area before even seeing it in person. Right away, she and Adnan’s aunt scraped together money for a flight to Sarasota and found an affordable condo. “While they were down there, they called my dad and uncle and said, ‘Pack your stuff, we’re going,’ and we literally hopped in a van, came to Sarasota, and that’s how life began down in Florida,” Adnan recalls.

Both an entrepreneur and innovator, Adnan’s technological expertise has certainly been a plus in his real estate career. He once pitched an idea for an app to a group of investors, including Shark Tank’s Kevin Harrington, which earned him the title of Young Entrepreneur of the Year at the Buzzprize Expo in Sarasota. “I think a lot of my success in real estate comes from my experience in the technology industry and the different technology I can utilize for my buyers and sellers,” Adnan says. “That’s kind of how I was able to separate myself and become a top agent right away.”

What keeps Adnan’s spark for real estate alive? Simply put, the people. He says, “You just never know what’s going to come out of it. The number one thing is meeting the different types of people and personalities. You want to be true to who you are, but at the same time, you want to adjust to the different personalities you meet. Real estate is the biggest transaction of someone’s life. From the moment the sellers sell their home, or the buyers get the key, the joy on their faces is just amazing.”

In his down time, Adnan takes advantage of all of the outdoor activities Florida offers, like boating and fishing. He also enjoys working out and playing basketball. But one of his biggest passions will also be innovating. “I have a booklet of ideas of things that could be invented, and I’ll stay up until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning working on ideas,” he says. “I’m actually working on a startup right now that has been in the works for the past 10 months and will be my first startup/invention

that actually came to life.” His other passion is exotic cars; he owns one of his own, a BMW i8.

When all is said and done, Adnan hopes to be remembered by his peers as someone who was loving, caring, and always tried to think outside of the box. “There are two things I live by: ‘If someone else did it, why can’t I?’ If someone invented Facebook, why can’t I invent Facebook?” Adnan says. “And the second thing is to just take every day step-by-step; don’t try to think about the past, don’t try to think about the future, just take it one day at a time and give it 100 percent.”



Rising Star Adnan Dedic entered real estate right after college and sold \$5 million in his first year.



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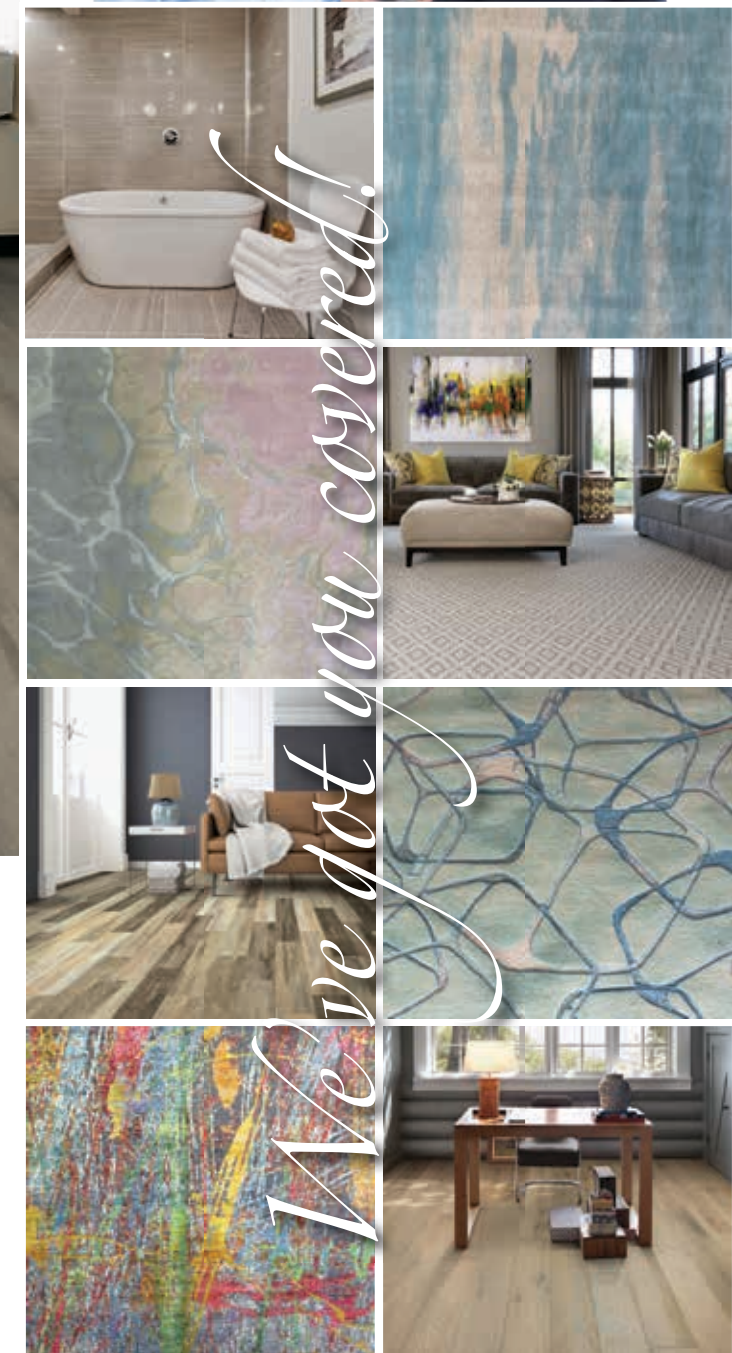


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DENNY GRIMES

» cover story
By Lindsey Wells

National Real Estate Trainer with a Passion to Serve

It was 1983; Denny Grimes was fresh out of college when, as he says, “the Lord” led him to real estate. “I am a person of faith. However, people laugh when I tell them this story,” Denny says. “There was a gentleman, a friend of my in-laws, by the name of Jack Lord, who was a part-time real estate agent in Tampa. One day, he said, ‘I’m going to list this property over here, and I’m going to make X amount of money.’ At that time, I had already finished college, and I had no idea you could make money selling real estate. The next day, I checked it out, got my license, and that was the beginning of it. The Lord led me to real estate.”

While it was “the Lord” who first piqued his interest in real estate 37 years ago, the inner workings of the industry came quite naturally to Denny. Denny Grimes is not a man who likes to play it safe. He would never take a job with a guaranteed salary; he wants to bet on himself. “Real estate is that type of profession,” he says. “Yes, there’s the joke that when you move to Florida, you automatically get a real estate license, and there’s a lot of competition out there. However, it’s a no-ceiling career, and that’s what I like about it.”

...



Denny proudly displays his collection of medals won in marathons and half-marathons that he ran. (Photo by John Paul Buchanan)

...

Having graduated from the University of South Florida with an MBA in marketing, Denny used that training to build his business from the ground up. Today, he owns Denny Grimes & Team, with Keller Williams Realty. Denny and his team's sales are approaching \$1 billion in residential sales, with an annual production as high as \$150 million.

Just as important as his customers are Denny's fellow real estate professionals. His passion is mentoring other agents. "In my first or second year of real estate, I heard a sales trainer speak, by the name of Tommy Hopkins. He's a national speaker out of California. I knew then that's what I wanted to do," Denny said.

Not only does he speak to and mentor the agents on his own team, but Denny also travels the country to speak to agents nationwide. He is the annual keynote speaker for The News-Press Market Watch, one of the largest real estate programs in the country that attracts between 1,000 to 2,000 attendees each year.

He also has a regular TV segment on a local CBS affiliate called, "Real Estate Matters."

How exactly has Denny achieved such a successful career in this industry? One word: integrity. "I worked hard," he says. "And in 37 years, I've never had an ethics charge. I always do my best to make sure that I do the right thing. I never fight about money; I always do what's right."

Denny's wife of almost five years, Kristan Cole, is also a longtime real estate agent. Having grown up in Alaska, one of Kristan's best friends was Sarah Palin, who officiated their wedding — at a gun range! Their professions aren't the only thing that Denny and Kristan have in common. They both earned MBAs in college and are both pilots, two things that they pursued separately before even meeting each other. "We had parallel careers, and we just had so much in common with what we were doing," Denny says.

"It's funny that I would meet somebody like that. You can't get any further apart in the country." In school, Denny says it was his dream to become a fighter pilot, then a commercial pilot, though he was never able to go down that road. He did, however, earn his pilot's license 35 years ago and, later, his Instrument Rating, and enjoys flying single-engine aircraft.

Another hobby of Denny's is running; he has completed nine marathons, 100 to 150 half-marathons, and has an entire wall full of medals to show for it. Interestingly enough, he didn't start running until he was about 55 years old, when a friend of his asked Denny to run in a marathon to raise money for cancer, as his friend's mother had been diagnosed. The story became even more interesting when a medical issue concerning his heart stopped Denny in his tracks at an airport following the race.

...



Denny and Kristan's "shotgun wedding" at a gun range in Alaska, officiated by Kristan's lifelong friend Sarah Palin.



Denny Grimes and his wife Kristan attend the "Operation 300" Gala in Naples, in honor of fallen Navy SEAL Aaron Vaughn. (Photo by Scofield Productions)



Denny at the Gateway office of Keller Williams Realty, where Denny Grimes & Team have an annual production of approximately \$150 million. (Photo by John Paul Buchanan)



...

“The paramedics had to cart me out of DFW and took me to Baylor University Hospital in Dallas,” he remembers. “I’m pretty fit, but the doctors said it was a heart rhythm that most people die from. As I look back on it, me wanting to run to help raise money for my friend’s mom probably helped make my heart strong enough to survive that episode. It’s interesting how life works. I started running to help someone else and running saved me.”

Both professionally and personally, there seems to be a recurring theme in Denny Grimes’ life: it’s all about serving people.

“In 37 years, I’ve never had an ethics charge. I always do my best to make sure that I do the right thing. I never fight about money; I always do what’s right.”

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