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▶▶ publisher's note

RESILIENCE **REIGNS!**

This summer I have been mesmerized and in awe of the breathtaking sunsets, our desert has gifted us with. Almost every night I peek out the window watching in anticipation of the wonder that is possible. I was able to capture a few shots with just my iPhone! When the fire surrounded us, I was in shock of how it kept marching across our mountains finding its way, displaying its own beauty in the midst. As I write this, we still have not had much rain and I am hoping it will come soon giving us the reprieve we all thirst for from this heat.

Tucson Real Producers would like to be a light sharing positive, uplifting content, especially as we all find our way back to normal! If you know someone you think we should feature who has pushed through this crisis and is stronger as a result, we would love to share their story. Email me their name at Delilah.Royce@RealProducersMag.com.

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tom tatro

“INSURING” A BETTER LIFE

By Dave Danielson • Photography by Jacquelynn Buck

As a State Farm Agent, Tom Tatro has a passion for helping his real estate partners and clients get the insurance protection they need. In fact, he’s been doing it for over 19 years.

Tom and his two team members bring 43 years of combined experience in the agency office.

“We focus on the client, and we do all we can to make their experience the best it can be. We offer a wide range of auto, home, life insurance, annuities, health insurance, investment products, and even pet insurance,” Tom explains. “We go the extra mile to provide service to our clients and try to meet with our clients routinely so we can keep their coverage up to date with the changes in their lives. We want to dial in every policy we write, so we don’t just offer the cheapest coverage available, or the most expensive, but what is appropriate for the customer and their needs.”

But that’s just the start of what drives him. You see, Tom and his

team work in many ways to ensure a better life for Tucson-area residents. It starts with each quote they provide.

“We do something we call Quotes for Good,” Tom says. “We make a contribution of \$10 to a local charity every time someone gets a quote, whether they go with us or not for their insurance. It feels good to write out a check for a local group nearly every month.”

Involvement and Impact

Some groups that have been on the receiving end of the agency’s support include Youth On Their Own, the Alzheimer’s Association, and the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona.

Through time, Tom has been a volunteer with the Tucson Association of REALTORS®. He chairs the group’s Member Relations Committee. His participation represents his contributions to Tucson. In fact, Tom is a past recipient of the organization’s Community Involvement Award.

The Pantano Rotary Club of Tucson has also been a recipient of Tom’s giving nature. Tom has served as President of the group twice.

“It’s an outstanding group that does a lot of good in our area and beyond, including funding grants for water well projects in Africa,” Tom says.

Meaningful Memories

There’s another special effort that Tom and the Rotary Club did for 10 years that has stuck vividly with him. It was called The Shoebox Project.

“We spearheaded efforts for a decade to take Christmas gifts just over the border for under-privileged kids in Nogales,” Tom recalls. “We got involvement from a dozen different Rotary clubs across the U.S. and Canada.”

Tom and the large team of donors, contributors, and volunteers each played a part. They gathered shoeboxes, filled

“

WE FOCUS ON THE CLIENT, AND WE DO ALL WE CAN TO MAKE THEIR EXPERIENCE THE BEST IT CAN BE.

”



partner spotlight

“

MY MOM TAUGHT ME THAT YOU CAN'T EVER REPAY THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED YOU ALONG THE WAY, BUT YOU CAN DO THINGS FOR OTHER PEOPLE AND HELP TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES, EVEN IF IT'S IN A SMALL WAY.

”



them with clothing, toys, candy, and other things, and then went to the Rotary Club in Nogales, Sonora.

“It was an amazing experience. Thousands of people would be lined up,” Tom smiles. “One by one, they came in and we gave them each a shoebox by boy or girl and by age, so that, hopefully, they would get things that they liked. To see the faces on those little kids... there’s nothing better than seeing their faces light up.”

It’s about making the world a better place.

“We take that for granted sometimes. Christmas can be pretty commercial. But right across the border, it’s a different world,” Tom says. “It was very rewarding knowing we brought people together from across the continent to put smiles on the faces of those little kids, even if it was just for that one day.”

In his free time, Tom enjoys running. “I can step out my front door and, in 100 feet, I’m on the Loop... more than 100 miles of bike and running trails that go all around the city. I never have to pass a car,” he says. “Most places don’t have anything like that.”

Community Spirit

One of the other things that make life fulfilling for Tom is being a contributing and engaged member of the Tucson community he loves.

“It’s rewarding to be involved. We enjoy the opportunity to just show up and be part of Tucson. It’s a good way to live your life,” Tom says. “You get a sense of fulfillment when you do something like go to the Community Food Bank’s Walk Against Hunger. When you get involved, you see the people who are helped, and it’s gratifying.”

Each day, people like Tom are building a better community.

“If you volunteer at a place like Habitat for Humanity, your muscles may be sore, but you know that someone is going to be living in a house that you helped create. They wouldn’t be able to do that if the organization wasn’t in existence, and if there weren’t people who were willing to jump in and help.”

As Tom says, the most important thing to him is making a difference.

“My mom taught me that you can’t ever repay the people who have helped you along the way, but you can do things for other people and help to change their lives, even if it’s in a small way. If we all do a little bit, we can make it a better place,” Tom emphasizes. “If you want it to be a better world, you have to start by doing something yourself. We do a little bit every day and maybe that will influence others to start doing something similar and the impact grows.”



Ronda & Tom enjoying a stroll

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Michele BILLER

By **Kylea Bitoka** • Photography by **Jacquelynn Buck**

“GET IN THE HOUSE!”

Michele Biller quickly steps inside the high-end house. Listed at close to a million dollars, she already had some nerves about showing a property of this caliber. “Quick, shut the door!” her client commands from a few feet back. Startled, Michele obeys. “There was a big window, and through it, I saw my client pointing as this unbelievably large snake cruised across the cement in front of the door.” Michele chuckles as she shares the experience. It’s one of many fascinating stories she’s collected during her time in real estate. “You just never know what’s around the next corner!” Michele shares a couple more stories from a close encounter with a rat to an underwear-clad seller, and a cell phone locked in a showing house. She laughs, “With every transaction, I always walk away learning something new. Life’s unpredictable, don’t you love that about it?” Real estate seems like a natural fit for someone like Michele, who loves being social, enjoys a good challenge, and excels at solving puzzles. But given life’s knack for un-

expected twists, it’s only fitting that Michele’s real estate journey began with the words, “Never again!”

Michele started as a dental assistant. After 12 years in the field, she enrolled at Arizona State University. “I studied mechanical engineering first. As I went through classes and experienced great teachers and then terrible teachers who didn’t care, it reignited my passion for teaching.” Michele had considered being a teacher in high school. “I have a nurturing spirit; I wanted to help kids who weren’t able to get the help they needed.” Her experience in college reminded her of her passion, and she switched to an education major. After graduation, she taught second grade in Phoenix before moving with her partner, Cheryl, to Santa Fe, New Mexico. “I thought about getting my teaching license in New Mexico. However, I saw a job posting for a position at a non-profit preschool. I thought it looked fun.” Nestled in historic downtown Santa Fe, the school operated out of a building built in 1946. Within walking distance from Michele’s and Cheryl’s home, it was a neat opportunity. “I started as an administrator. When the current director left, the school struggled, and

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Pam (Mom), Lisa (Sister), and Michele on a wild golf cart ride.



Michele and Cheryl – Sweetwater Trail



First introduction to e-bikes



Kino and Patch



Michele and her mom, Pam

...

the board approached me about taking over the position.” Michele was up for the challenge. “I learned how to write grants, I brought my mom in to teach art, I created a music program, and I held fundraisers.” Slowly but surely, Michele grew the school from 20 families to 115. By the end of her time there, Garcia Street Club was a vibrant and essential part of the historic neighborhood. The winds of change blew again. Cheryl’s employer shut down the Santa Fe location and offered her a position in Tucson.

When it comes to moving, Michele was a bit of an expert even before becoming a REALTOR®. “We moved every year in high school. Life was challenging as I grew up. My mom was a single parent, and we didn’t have a lot of money.” Michele understood responsibility at an early age. “When I was growing up and something around the house would break, my mom would say, ‘Let’s see if Michele can fix it first.’ I’ve always been good with puzzles and solving things.” Michele didn’t let circumstances hinder her; instead, she turned it into the building blocks of success. “My sister and I quickly learned that if we wanted to be successful, it was up to us to make it happen. We worked really hard to be the people we are today.” Experienced in moving, handy with projects around the house, and skilled in fundraising – Michele’s experience

practically spelled real estate. However, by the time Michele and Cheryl moved to Tucson, she didn’t even want to think about buying a house.

“While we lived in Santa Fe, we had some experiences with REALTORS® that were not the best. It left me bitter towards real estate agents and the whole process. I said, ‘Never again! We are not buying a house because I am done with REALTORS®.’” Michele and Cheryl also technically didn’t need a house since their sweet dog had recently passed away, so they rented an apartment in Tucson. Michele contemplated her next career move, that’s when Cheryl suggested real estate. Michele balked at the idea, “No way! I’m not going to be a REALTOR®; people don’t like real estate agents!” Michele pursued other opportunities, but could not find the right fit. Michele finally considered real estate, “What if I could do it in an entirely different way than what I had been exposed to?” As Michele has done many times before, she took a negative experience and turned it into a positive one. Once licensed, Michele found her calling in real estate. “I believe it is all the little things that I do that are most recognized and appreciated – being a good listener, putting my clients first, providing outstanding customer service, and having a sense of humor.”

Michele laughs as she continues the story, “So when we moved here, we said no dogs, no real estate. We own two dogs and have bought three houses since moving to Tucson!” Michele and Cheryl found Kino, abandoned, and in need of help. The poor dog had ear mites as well as a host of other issues. When Kino struggled with separation anxiety, they found him a partner in crime, Patch. “Those two dogs are like peas in a pod!” When they’re not hanging out with their furry friends, you’ll probably find Michele and Cheryl riding their e-bikes. Michele and Cheryl discovered e-bikes on vacation in Baltimore. “We both like to ride bikes. We were walking around downtown with some time to kill. We saw a sign for a historical tour of the downtown on e-bikes. We decided to check it out.” Michele’s sister also joined in the adventure. “At the time, my sister lived near Baltimore so no sooner had we arrived back in Tucson, then I got the call from her saying she had bought an e-bike!” It didn’t take long for Michele and Cheryl to buy their e-bikes. “We loved it; we were hooked!” Michele quickly adds, “For the record, I do still ride my regular mountain bike!” Now Michele’s mom and sister live in the same neighborhood. “They are within walking distance; it’s great! We enjoy weekly game nights, outdoor BBQs, cycling, and happy hours.” After many moves across states and careers, Michele has finally found a home where she least expected it.

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By: Jessica Dennes
Photography by: Joey Ambrose



“

“It’s all about your attitude,” he says.

“You have to stay positive, do your best, and not quit.”



LAMADRID

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Luis with his daughter Yaneisy, wife Lizeth Valencia & son Luis

STAYING POSITIVE FOLLOWING HIS INSTINCTS

“*Animo, carnal,*” or “Cheer up, brother!” As a saxophone player of the musical group *Lamadrid*, Luis Lamadrid had heard those words countless times – it was how the group members encouraged one another to keep up their energy and enthusiasm. Since the group originally consisted of Luis’ father and four uncles, he had been surrounded by them his whole life. As a child, he would help to set up their equipment to prepare for a performance or observe as the brothers practiced together. He joined the group at the age of 15 when he learned to play the saxophone, just like his father.

Luis’ grandfather, Roberto Lamadrid, began teaching his five sons how to play an instrument when they reached the age of 6 or 7. They formed a cumbia group like the popular *Fito Olivares y Su Grupo*, and with Roberto as their manager, they performed at weddings and *quinceaneras* all over the surrounding region of their hometown in Agua Prieta, Sonora in Mexico, across the border from Douglas, Arizona. They played together for decades, and eventually, their children, like Luis, picked up instruments and joined them,

too. For an additional fifteen years, Luis traveled with them for performances and they were even able to record a few albums together.

Unfortunately, the group doesn’t play together anymore. “It’s a lot of work,” Luis explains. As they got older, his father and uncles eventually grew tired of the long days and hours of practice required to maintain the group, but music is still deeply embedded in the family’s soul.

“That made me the person that I am,” he says. “I learned from my uncles, the way they were unit-

ed, the way they would help each other and help their mom. I’ve never seen that anywhere else. They always had each other’s back.”

Luis was born in Agua Prieta, Sonora, and moved with his family to the United States when he was 7 years old. In addition to playing music together, Luis also worked with his father in sales for most of his young life. Together, they would sell all kinds of things—furniture, blankets, jackets, accessories, or even curtains. He smiles as he reminisces about going door to door to businesses to sell furniture by catalog. They were their own bosses and Luis was never interested in a traditional 9-to-5 job.

Once, when he was younger, Luis applied to be a server at Denny’s and lasted about two hours on the job. “I was getting trained by



...
 a woman, following her as she was taking orders," Luis recalls. "After the fourth customer, I knew it wasn't the job for me."

Instead, Luis followed his entrepreneurial instincts. By the time he was 20, he had purchased his first home and invested in two more soon after. Before the age of 23, he opened a furniture store in Tucson when he saw that a business space was for lease. "I didn't plan it or anything. I leased the property for three years, opened up my furniture store, and started selling. I'm the kind of person who gets an idea and just goes with it," Luis says. He also attempted to open a mini-restaurant and what is known as a *paleteria* where *raspados* and other snacks are sold, but that endeavor didn't pan out due to permit issues. Setbacks like that didn't deter him, though. He knows opening any business is a risk and he can always try again.

These days, he is not as quick to rush into business ideas before talking to his wife Lizeth, a 2nd-grade teacher at McCorkle Elementary. She understands his go-getter attitude and supports his real estate goals. He first learned about the field from his cousin, who was taking a real estate course at Pima Community College. The flexibility and ability to set his own limits attracted him. Shortly after doing some research of his own, he signed up for Broadsky School of Real Estate. The year was 2005 and he was 23 years old. Like many agents at the time, business was going well for him those first few years.

"I couldn't believe how easy it was to sell houses," Luis recalls. "I thought that was the way it was." To sell his first homes, he set up a table at the Tanque Verde Swap Meet one night and passed out flyers and business cards. He also set up a board with photos of houses from the southside area to show people what was available. He reached his very first clients that way.

Things certainly changed once the market crashed. As a new agent, Luis was lost. To pay the bills, he worked as a disc jockey at bars. It was a skill that he had picked up on the side while playing with Lamadrid. He and his cousins would DJ to keep the music going in between sets and were eventually hired for the afterparties. He also moved from realty company to realty company just trying to keep his license. "It was difficult in those times," he laments. "I had to be the one to knock on people's doors and tell them they had to leave because their home was foreclosed." While the business was not what he had hoped it would be, Luis would not give up. Instead, he saw the challenges as an opportunity to continue to learn and grow. "It's all about your attitude," he says. "You have to stay positive, do your best, and not quit."

These days, Luis and his team, The Vermillion Group at Omni Homes International, are doing well. He leads the team along with his amazing partners Kevin Tate and Justin McLamarrah. Luis works hard to be



an example for the agents on his team. He says, "I always want to make sure that I can provide value to them and help them in every way possible. I want to see them grow and be successful." He is also grateful to business partner and mentors alike who encouraged him along the way. When things were difficult and Luis considered leaving the business, it was Juan Parra, a mentor, who pulled him back and continued to support him.

He is also incredibly grateful for his family. He met his wife nearly 20 years ago on a night of *quinceanera* crashing. They have been married since 2007 and enjoy traveling, date nights, and working out

together. They also spend a lot of time planning for their children's future. Yaneisy is 18 years old and will begin her first year at the University of Arizona this fall. His son, also named Luis, is going into his sophomore year at La Cholla High School and has already decided that he wants to be a real estate agent like his dad. They are a fun and active family that truly enjoys spending time together.

Luis has surrounded himself with people who love him, support him, and motivate him to be the best version of himself. He knows that he cannot succeed alone and strives to bring others along on his journey towards achieving his goals.



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hidden gems ◀◀

Kartchner Caverns STATE PARK

LIVING HISTORY!

Talk about a well-kept secret! This Arizona state park has a history that reads like a movie-script – from oaths of secrecy to a night-time rendezvous at a motel, and a blind-folded car ride.

In November 1974, Gary Tenen and Randy Tufts set out to find “a cave no one had ever found.” They explored the limestone hills at the eastern base of the Whetstone Mountains and made a fantastic discovery. The two kept the cave a secret until 1978 when they told the property owners, James and Lois Kartchner. Preservation of the cave was a priority. It was a long, secretive process as they worked towards turning “the secret cave” into a protected state park.

Kartchner Caverns State Park is a special place because it shows how conservation has kept the cave in virtually the same condition as when it was discovered in 1974! This is a beautiful example of a “living cave” – a cave with a water source that is causing new formations and current formations to grow. Visitors can experience two caves with very different looks and formations. The Big Room tour is closed from April to mid-October because the cave houses a nesting colony of bats, some of which have been coming back to the cave for decades! In addition to the caves, the park also offers amazing hiking trails, beautiful campsites at the base of the Whetstone Mountains, and camping cabins for the more indoor-type camper.

For the full exciting history of the cave and to plan your trip, visit <https://azstateparks.com/kartchner>.

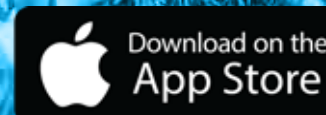
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BRANDON THOMPSON

WALKING THE WALK!

Like most days, Brandon Thompson walked into his corporate job one morning and sat at his desk. Unlike most days, instead of logging in immediately, he simply stared at his computer screen for several minutes. Ever since the communications company, MCI WorldCom, had filed for bankruptcy, the job had lost its luster. He was only 21 years old and had already climbed a fair share of the corporate ladder, but suddenly it seemed that his hard work was inconsequential. He didn't know his path in life yet, but he knew it wouldn't be there.

"I walked out the door and didn't look back," Brandon says, "It was one of the greatest feelings ever."

Following his exit, Brandon took a year off work and went back to school to focus on business management and marketing. During his second semester, he spoke with some trusted friends that had started real estate careers. He was attracted to the opportunity to set his own expectations and the fact that his income and goals were only limited by himself. It was the summer of 2003 and Brandon was 23 years old living in Colorado Springs, Colorado when he decided to take the leap into a career that allowed him to be his own boss. "I have always been results-driven, and love goals—setting and expanding them," he says. "We do not always hit every goal, but when you can sit down, see why you missed one, and how you could improve it, it is rewarding."

Business was good for Brandon those first few years until the market crashed in 2007. He was recently married and had

purchased his first home. When the market changed, he and his wife ended up doing a deed in lieu of foreclosure on their home and gave the keys to the lender. He reflects on that experience and how it helped him empathize with clients in similar situations. "Every situation is different, but those were hard times for a lot of people, and I believe my life experience helped me relate to them more than if I had not experienced it myself...If I take a listing, I focus on getting it sold as priority number one." Since the beginning, Brandon has made it a point to put his clients' needs first. In fact, he sees real estate as a service industry, a place where he can give back to others. "If you think the job is about sales," he explains, "you're going to be terrible because people see through that."

Years ago, when short sales were plentiful, Brandon worked with a family who had purchased a two-story home shortly before they found out their four-year-old daughter had muscular dystrophy. As she grew older, she began to have difficulty walking and access-

ing the upstairs bedrooms and bathroom. However, purchasing a new home would not be so easy for the family. Thankfully, Brandon knew of a loophole that would help. He showed it to them, began the paperwork needed, and relentlessly started making phone calls. He recalls how people on the other end of the line at Fannie Mae advised him to let the family go into foreclosure, but that did not sit well with him. Determined to help the family, he wrote a letter that he sent via certified mail to the office and home of Fannie Mae's CEO. Five days later he received a phone call and was assigned a high-level special assessor. Brandon says, "It was the fastest short sale I ever completed, they got a new home, and the lender paid me the full 7% listing agreement too, which was unheard of in short sales. More importantly, two families moved into better situations because I was able to not take no for an answer and think outside the box."

More recently, Brandon helped a couple purchase their first home and he was humbled when he noticed the man crying

▶▶ making a difference

By Jessica Dennes • By Casey James

at closing. "I didn't know his full story," Brandon explains. "A decade or so ago, he had been homeless. He turned it around, now he's married and helps others. The emotion was so raw and real." It's moments like these that remind Brandon of how essential agents are. He says, "Being able to get people financially stable in a home they can afford...is humbling and rewarding."

Helping his clients is something he puts into practice regularly. Whether he is installing floors so that a family can close on a house, getting a volunteer team together to renovate a widow's home so she can move into a better place, or digging around the garden preparing a house for sale, Brandon is there providing full-service realty.

He is also a skilled negotiator. Brandon believes that each party needs to work with honesty and respect the opposing side. "True negotiation," he says, "is something you cannot teach in a class. You can help give best practices, ideas, and more, but really being able to work something out, and realizing that the contract and the sale are fluid is something that goes a long way."

When other agents approach him for advice on where to find leads, he is quick to respond with two questions: Where are you involved and what are you passionate about? He says, "This is not a business that will just fall into your lap. You need real connections, and jumping from church to church, or volunteer group to group will be obvious." Truly caring about people and investing in a community, he believes, provides instant credibility.

Brandon walks the walk when it comes to getting connected. As a



longtime member of Northwest Bible Church, he has built lasting relationships with fellow churchgoers and is grateful for their support of him and his family. He is passionate about working with youth and makes it a point to take an interest in their lives. Though he has never been a youth pastor, he has been volunteering in this area since he first helped establish a youth ministry while still in high school. He has also been singing with the church band since he was four years old! On any given Sunday, Brandon can be found singing with the worship team.

He and his wife, Debbie, are happily married with three children. Amelia is "eleven going on fifteen" and is a talented writer who cares deeply for friends and family; Jonah is five and loves his bike and Transformers as much as he loves one-on-one time with his dad, and three-year-old Zoey is full of energy and loves to dance and sing. Brandon credits Debbie for helping to get him through the ups and downs of real estate and describes her as a "true helper and best friend." When he is not spending time with his immediate family or church family, he enjoys playing sports, especially baseball, and watching a game with friends.

Brandon dove in head-first to this field and there was no turning back. He is grateful that his career allows him the flexibility to spend his time on things that matter most to him – his family, serving others, and building relationships that last.



DETERMINED TO HELP THE FAMILY, HE WROTE A LETTER THAT HE SENT VIA CERTIFIED MAIL TO THE OFFICE AND HOME OF FANNIE MAE'S CEO.



JOELLE KAHN



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX!

"I just wanted to inform you that we are at your listing. Lighting struck the house."

Joelle Kahn hangs up with the sheriff. Before she can even call her clients; the sheriff is calling back. "Just so you know the lighting struck the palm tree, arced off it, and hit the roof. There's a fire in the roof. The firefighters are here putting it out."

Joelle calls her clients. Next, she calls the buyers' agent and tells her, "Go buy a lottery ticket, because the unbelievable just happened. The house was struck by lightning." It's a crazy situation, but Joelle does not let it rock her world. "In this business, you have to keep yourself calm. The way you convey the situation is the way the client is going to take it." The next day, Joelle surveys the damage. The whole ceiling in the front living room was ripped out, and everything was completely soaked. "Here's the good news," Joelle informs her clients, "We'll file an insurance claim, and now we can get updated flooring!" Although the house is restored, the buyer does not go through with the sale. A second buyer comes along with a cash offer. Two days before closing, tragedy hits. "The buyer was admitted to ICU, it's COVID-19. The COVID addendum wasn't in existence yet. Buyer number two cancels." Joelle refuses to be discouraged, and she won't let her clients be either. "I told them, 'Third time is the charm.' My clients trusted me," Joelle adds, "and they had a sense of humor which helps!" The third time was the charm. The house successfully closed a few months ago.

Joelle's humor, creativity, and work ethic found the perfect outlet in real estate. Joelle was a rising star in her first year with over 3 million in sales. Fourteen years later, her natural talent paired with experience makes an unstoppable combination. In an industry where the sky is the limit, Joelle stays genuinely grounded. "I don't want to be the best in the business; I want to be the best in MY business. My goal is always to do the best I can." With her first sales job at the age of 16, Joelle quickly fell in love with the art of negotiation. Now, her clients benefit from her innovative problem-solving. She shares an example where a little creativity saved the deal. "On a listing, we had a buyer interested in the house, but the buyer felt the yard and pool were too much to take care of. So, I asked the seller if they were willing to pay for a year of landscaping and pool service for the buyer. It was less than \$2,500 and they successfully closed. I always want to 'think outside of the box.' I also won't blink an eye about throwing commission back."

For Joelle being the best in her business means doing the best for her clients. It's something she learned from watching her dad. "He was not your typical car salesman. My dad was not the fast-talker, sly guy and people appreciated it. I still run into people in Tucson that worked with my dad and talk about how amazing he was." Joelle shares the lessons she learned from her dad—the lessons that created a foundation for her success in life and real estate.

“

"I didn't want to be a REALTOR®—I thought they had to wear dresses and pantyhose every day. I didn't think it fit my lifestyle."

▶ featuring

By: **Kylea Bitoka**
Photography by:
Casey James

...

“Never break a promise. My dad never broke his word. I remember when I was a little girl, he promised that he would buy me a horse on my 13th birthday and he did!” As Joelle grew up her dad continued to share his wisdom. “When I was 19, I was hit by a drunk driver. I received a check for \$13,000. My dad said, ‘You can blow it, or you can start a nest egg.’” Joelle bought her first house with that money. “I did an assumable loan at 8% interest and I was all excited!” Joelle watched her dad build his career on referrals. “He sold cars to multiple generations within the same families. He would give the shirt off his back if needed. One time a single mom came into the lot with her son. They didn’t have a TV. He went and got his TV and gave it to them. He instilled in me the importance of honesty, integrity, and generosity.”

When Joelle was 16, her mom moved to California. Joelle moved in with her 19-year-old brother so she could finish high school with her friends. “I had to get a job while I was still in high school; having that responsibility forced me to grow up quickly.” Joelle had a choice, “I could barely scrape by or I could choose to be the best I can be. I saw how hard my dad worked. I wanted to be like him; I wanted my dad to be proud of me.”

After 30 years in car sales, Joelle’s dad decided to open his own car dealership in 1991. He asked Joelle and her brother to join him in the venture, neither one hesitated. “After my dad passed away in 1996, I stayed at the dealership for a few more years then decided it was time for a change.” A single mom, Joelle was looking for an opportunity that had advancement potential and flexibility. “My daughter, Savannah, had this

group of girlfriends and one of the moms was a REALTOR®. She kept telling me I should get licensed.” Joelle laughs, “I didn’t want to be a REALTOR®—I thought they had to wear dresses and pantyhose every day. I didn’t think it fit my lifestyle. I had never moved; I didn’t have a portfolio of investment properties.”

When Joelle finally leaped into real estate, she discovered it was everything she had been looking for. “I was 35 years old when I finally figured out what I wanted to do with my life.” Joelle built her business on the values her father taught her and it quickly propelled her to the top. “My business is 100 percent referrals; one client has bought seven houses with me. I think my clients see my honesty and integrity and it makes a difference. A client once told

me that I approach negotiating like it’s my money. I think that’s true.” Now that Joelle’s found her calling, she’s using it to give back to the community she loves. “We have supported the Arizona Young Adult Program (AYAP) for over eight years now by hosting their annual holiday party. These are the teens that are aging out of foster care and group homes that never got adopted. Sister Jose’s Women’s Shelter is another I donate to. We used to cook once a month at Ronald McDonald House for many years up until the virus hit. I’m looking forward to getting back in that kitchen when we can!”

With \$12 million in sales volume last year, no one can argue Joelle’s success in real estate. However, her true success lies in becoming a woman of integrity, honesty, and generosity. Joelle has indeed made her dad proud.



Joelle and her daughter, Savannah



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TOP 150 STANDINGS

Teams And Individuals Closed Date From January 1–July 31, 2020

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
1	Marsee Wilhems (16298) of eXp Realty (495201)	225.5	58,213,409	258,153
2	Kyle Mokhtarian (17381) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498305)	241.5	49,701,012	205,801
3	Michael D Rhodes (19668) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498307)	159.5	36,962,117	231,737
4	Danny A Roth (6204) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	112.5	32,797,966	291,537
5	Angela Marie Kuzma (28301) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478310)	138.5	32,103,285	231,793
6	Lisa M Bayless (22524) of Long Realty Company (16717)	66.5	30,567,500	459,662
7	Kaukaha S Watanabe (22275) of eXp Realty (495203)	128.0	28,954,330	226,206
8	Lauren M Moore (35196) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306) and 1 prior office	65.5	26,511,200	404,751
9	Russell P Long (1193) of Long Realty Company (298)	33.0	25,322,000	767,333
10	Laurie Lundeen (1420134) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70204)	93.0	24,273,100	261,001
11	Laura Sayers (13644) of Long Realty Company (16717)	62.0	22,606,429	364,620
12	Aaron Wilson (17450) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (4783)	91.0	22,578,243	248,113
13	Peter Deluca (9105) of Long Realty Company (298)	56.0	22,203,505	396,491
14	Denice Osbourne (10387) of Long Realty Company (16707)	50.0	21,137,239	422,745
15	Traci D. Jones (17762) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306) and 1 prior office	69.5	20,297,950	292,057
16	John E Billings (17459) of Long Realty Company (16717)	51.0	18,887,850	370,350
17	Don Vallee (13267) of Long Realty Company (298) and 1 prior office	47.0	18,837,500	400,798
18	Jennifer Philips (16201) of Gateway Realty International (52120) and 1 prior office	74.5	18,678,515	250,718
19	Matthew F James (20088) of Long Realty Company (16706)	28.0	18,088,750	646,027
20	Tom Ebenhack (26304) of Long Realty Company (16706)	56.0	17,981,022	321,090
21	Sandra M Northcutt (18950) of Long Realty Company (16727)	45.0	16,892,721	375,394
22	Paula Williams (10840) of Long Realty Company (16706)	34.0	16,568,645	487,313
23	Brenda O'Brien (11918) of Long Realty Company (16717)	37.0	16,202,222	437,898
24	Laurie Hassey (11711) of Long Realty Company (16731)	38.0	15,955,944	419,893
25	Leslie Heros (17827) of Long Realty Company (16706)	42.0	15,716,600	374,205
26	Jose Campillo (32992) of Tierra Antigua Realty (2866)	78.5	15,638,220	199,213
27	Anjela K Salyer (30415) of Mattamy Homes (5799)	31.5	14,796,239	469,722
28	Eddie D Watters (31442) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (4983)	46.0	13,870,105	301,524
29	Candy Bowen (37722) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498303) and 1 prior office	61.5	13,580,295	220,818
30	Nicole Jessica Churchill (28164) of eXp Realty LLC (495204) and 1 prior office	52.0	13,466,200	258,965
31	Nestor M Davila (17982) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286606)	62.5	13,294,770	212,716
32	Kathy Westerburg (1420955) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286610)	39.0	13,082,500	335,449
33	Alfred R LaPeter (32582) of Long Realty Company (16717)	26.5	12,978,976	489,773

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
34	Patricia Sable (27022) of Long Realty Company (16706)	25.0	12,962,500	518,500
35	Louis Parrish (6411) of United Real Estate Southern Arizona (5947)	26.0	12,894,806	495,954
36	Gary B Roberts (6358) of Long Realty Company (16733)	47.5	12,800,650	269,487
37	Corissa Y Miller (22532) of Tucson's TLC Realty (3939)	48.0	12,738,678	265,389
38	Gary P Brasher (80408123) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's International Realty (472205)	34.0	12,662,928	372,439
39	Bob Norris (14601) of Long Realty Company (16733)	48.0	12,626,250	263,047
40	Robin Sue Kaiserman (4368) of Long Realty Company (16706)	16.5	12,608,950	764,179
41	James L Arnold (142000775) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286614)	22.0	12,396,021	563,456
42	Jim Storey (27624) of Tierra Antigua Realty (2866)	30.5	12,261,793	402,026
43	Michele O'Brien (14021) of Long Realty Company (16717)	34.0	12,218,000	359,353
44	Anthony D Schaefer (31073) of Long Realty Company (298)	35.5	12,209,215	343,922
45	Curt Stinson (4808) of Engel & Volkers Tucson (51620)	32.0	12,163,403	380,106
46	Sofia Gil (1420209) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (4983)	47.5	11,492,000	241,937
47	Kristi Penrod (33258) of Redfin Corporation (477801)	31.5	11,453,360	363,599
48	Christina E Tierney (29878) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	11.5	11,377,500	989,348
49	Ann K Gavlick (27887) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286601)	35.5	11,295,400	318,180
50	Peter R Oosterhuis (32811) of Dove Mountain Realty, LLC (5156)	6.5	11,162,188	1,717,260

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TOP 150 STANDINGS

Teams And Individuals Closed Date From January 1–July 31, 2020

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
51	Susanne Grogan (17201) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	13.0	11,137,378	856,721
52	Tim S Harris (2378) of Long Realty Company (298)	23.0	10,953,374	476,234
53	Barbara C Bardach (17751) of Long Realty Company (16717)	12.0	10,835,000	902,917
54	Bryan Durkin (12762) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	12.5	10,721,100	857,688
55	Debra M Quadt (16709) of Redfin Corporation (477801)	32.0	10,512,290	328,509
56	Spirit Messingham (22794) of Tierra Antigua Realty (2866)	31.0	10,505,300	338,881
57	Paula J MacRae (11157) of OMNI Homes International (5791)	23.5	10,115,986	430,467
58	Brittany Palma (32760) of 1st Heritage Realty (133)	42.5	10,076,925	237,104
59	Anthony Boatner (16214) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	46.0	10,021,469	217,858
60	Carolyn A. Fox (1420840) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70204)	45.0	9,991,050	222,023
61	Dottie May (25551) of Long Realty Company (16728)	20.5	9,923,200	484,059
62	Trina M Alberta Oesterle (1420383) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70204)	30.0	9,841,900	328,063
63	Glenn Michael Nowacki (35737) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	36.5	9,791,019	268,247
64	Kelly Garcia (18671) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (4783)	33.0	9,539,984	289,090
65	Martin Durkin (145036508) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	23.0	9,530,700	414,378
66	Thomas J Krieger (17680) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	33.5	9,494,370	283,414
67	Margaret E. Nicholson (27112) of Long Realty Company (16728)	19.5	9,293,200	476,574
68	Tony Ray Baker (5103) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286606)	30.0	9,284,200	309,473
69	Jennifer C Anderson (16896) of Long Realty Company (16724)	31.5	9,284,032	294,731
70	Tom Peckham (7785) of Long Realty Company (16706)	15.0	9,223,775	614,918
71	Carmen Pottinger (145000027) of Carm's Realty LLC (145064241)	49.0	9,116,800	186,057
72	Maria R Anemone (5134) of Long Realty Company (16717)	13.0	8,922,189	686,322
73	Denise Newton (7833) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	20.5	8,908,873	434,579
74	Melissa Dawn Rich (30786) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286607)	37.5	8,849,900	235,997
75	Michael D Oliver (14532) of Oliver Realty, LLC (51610)	30.0	8,782,995	292,766
76	Lori C Mares (19448) of Long Realty Company (16719)	28.0	8,440,274	301,438
77	Michelle Bakarich (20785) of Homesmart Advantage Group (516901)	33.5	8,432,314	251,711
78	David K Guthrie (19180) of Long Realty Company (16706)	23.0	8,319,000	361,696
79	Jay Lotoski (27768) of Long Realty Company (16717)	26.0	8,307,420	319,516
80	Tim Rehrmann (25385) of eXp Realty (495206)	27.0	8,271,964	306,369
81	Tori Marshall (35657) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70207)	25.5	8,196,200	321,420
82	Julie Marti-McLain (148054285) of Sunset View Realty, LLC (402901)	25.5	8,177,525	320,687
83	Catherine S Donovan (28185) of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services (356307)	18.0	8,125,000	451,389

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
84	Shawn M Polston (20189) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	47.0	8,111,030	172,575
85	Ronnie Spece (19664) of At Home Desert Realty (4637)	28.0	8,109,700	289,632
86	Marta Harvey (11916) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	17.0	8,109,681	477,040
87	James Servoss (15515) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	37.5	8,102,750	216,073
88	Jameson Gray (14214) of Long Realty Company (16706)	14.5	8,082,876	557,440
89	McKenna St. Onge (31758) of Long Realty Company (16706)	14.5	8,082,876	557,440
90	Scott Melde (38588) of eXp Realty (495203)	33.5	8,042,050	240,061
91	Don Eugene (10600) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	27.0	7,961,000	294,852
92	LizBiz Nguyen (27962) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498305)	29.5	7,886,735	267,347
93	Susan M. Derlein (1420144) of Long Realty -Green Valley (16716)	33.0	7,885,700	238,961
94	Rob Lamb (1572) of Long Realty Company (16725)	17.5	7,859,000	449,086
95	Joelle C Kahn (21408) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286607)	22.0	7,826,900	355,768
96	Ricardo J Coppel (11178) of Long Realty Company (298)	20.5	7,620,670	371,740
97	Josh Berkley (29422) of Keller Williams Southern AZ (478307)	28.0	7,614,613	271,950
98	Pam Treece (13186) of Long Realty Company (16717)	19.5	7,586,600	389,056
99	Rebecca Maher (11616) of Long Realty Company (16719)	17.0	7,533,650	443,156
100	Sally Ann Robling (1420161) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498304)	28.0	7,479,401	267,121

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TOP 150 STANDINGS

Teams And Individuals Closed Date From January 1–July 31, 2020

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
101	Michael Shiner (26232) of CXT Realty (5755)	26.5	7,428,250	280,311
102	Patricia Kaye Brown (14873) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70202)	21.0	7,343,025	349,668
103	Ryan Porzel (26144) of Homesmart Advantage Group (516901)	27.0	7,337,400	271,756
104	Karin S. Radzewicz (20569) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70202)	13.5	7,320,303	542,245
105	Carlos L. Albelais (30953) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	38.5	7,298,100	189,561
106	Mary Vierthaler (12199) of Long Realty Company (298)	17.0	7,215,290	424,429
107	Misty Rich (16280) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498311)	21.5	7,203,225	335,034
108	Alicia Girard (31626) of Long Realty Company (16717)	23.0	7,197,184	312,921
109	Melinda L. Akowski (26025) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70202)	26.0	7,192,050	276,617
110	Heather L. Arnaud (32186) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	28.5	7,189,050	252,247
111	Robin L. Supalla (30882) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286607)	20.5	7,151,450	348,851
112	Alyssa A. Kokot (18637) of Coldwell Banker Realty (702)	19.0	7,103,737	373,881
113	Merle Martinovich (13924) of Long Realty Company (16706)	10.0	7,095,945	709,594
114	Jeffrey M. Ell (19955) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478312)	28.0	7,094,833	253,387
115	Andrew Smith (38920) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (4783) and 1 prior office	27.5	7,081,650	257,515
116	Tyler Gadi (32415) of Long Realty Company (16707)	26.0	7,048,780	271,107
117	Misty Morgan Hurley (33341) of Redfin Corporation (477801)	21.0	7,025,500	334,548
118	Heather Shallenberger (10179) of Long Realty Company (16717)	24.5	6,994,298	285,482
119	Joshua Waggoner (14045) of Long Realty Company (16706)	8.0	6,975,000	871,875
120	Jason K. Foster (9230) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306) and 1 prior office	16.0	6,954,400	434,650
121	Amanda Clark (39708) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306) and 1 prior office	28.0	6,932,270	247,581
122	Jenna D. Loving (18375) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	17.5	6,858,800	391,931
123	Jeremiah Taylor (17606) of Keller Williams Southern Arizona (478306)	32.5	6,829,407	210,136
124	April Ayala (29221) of eXp Realty (495203)	30.5	6,752,050	221,379
125	Judy S. Ibrado (27978) of Long Realty Company (16717)	18.5	6,748,284	364,772
126	Tyler Lopez (29866) of Long Realty Company (16707)	28.0	6,715,834	239,851
127	Katie M. Smirnov (52565) of Long Realty Company (16706)	15.0	6,713,843	447,590
128	Sue Brooks (25916) of Long Realty Company (16706)	20.5	6,675,050	325,612
129	Sonya M. Lucero (27425) of Long Realty Company (16719)	27.0	6,658,927	246,627
130	Erick Quintero (37533) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286606)	34.0	6,643,799	195,406
131	Briana A. Zorilla (18358) of Long Realty Company (298)	17.5	6,614,519	377,973
132	Zachary R. Tyler (16327) of Tierra Antigua Realty (286601)	17.0	6,611,900	388,935
133	Amos Kardonchik-Koren (29385) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498312)	20.0	6,553,021	327,651

Rank	Name	Sides	Volume	Average
134	Jordan Munic (22230) of Coldwell Banker Realty (70202)	9.5	6,524,740	686,815
135	Nancy Nhu Ho (35602) of Realty Executives Arizona Territory (498306)	31.0	6,485,412	209,207
136	Kate Herk (16552) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	10.5	6,460,928	615,327
137	Angela Tennison (15175) of Long Realty Company (16719)	13.5	6,459,000	478,444
138	Suzanne Corona (11830) of Long Realty Company (16717)	13.0	6,302,348	484,796
139	Becca Riccardi (29910) of Tierra Antigua Realty (SV) (286603)	27.5	6,256,900	227,524
140	Tanya Barnett (30843) of OMNI Homes International, LLC (579101)	20.5	6,236,485	304,219
141	Michael Braxton (53095) of Long Realty Company (16717)	21.0	6,218,725	296,130
142	Dina M. Hogg (17312) of eXp Realty LLC (495204) and 1 prior office	24.0	6,216,750	259,031
143	Pete M. Torrez (21748) of Long Realty Company (16706)	12.0	6,193,665	516,139
144	Antonio Reyes Moreno (33276) of RE/MAX Portfolio Homes (142000645) and 1 prior office	20.0	6,147,841	307,392
145	Judy L. Smedes (8843) of Russ Lyon Sotheby's Int Realty (472203)	9.5	6,140,928	646,414
146	Tracy Wood (36252) of Realty One Group Integrity (51535) and 1 prior office	15.0	6,123,400	408,227
147	Cathrine L. Donau (142000057) of Long Realty -Green Valley (16716)	25.5	6,102,300	239,306
148	Nanci J. Freedberg (30853) of Tucson Land & Home Realty LLC (783)	9.5	6,097,400	641,832
149	Kevin Nullmeyer (35101) of Timber Creek Real Estate (51390)	17.0	6,091,900	358,347
150	Jean Barclay (19068) of Long Realty Company (298)	7.5	6,056,250	807,500

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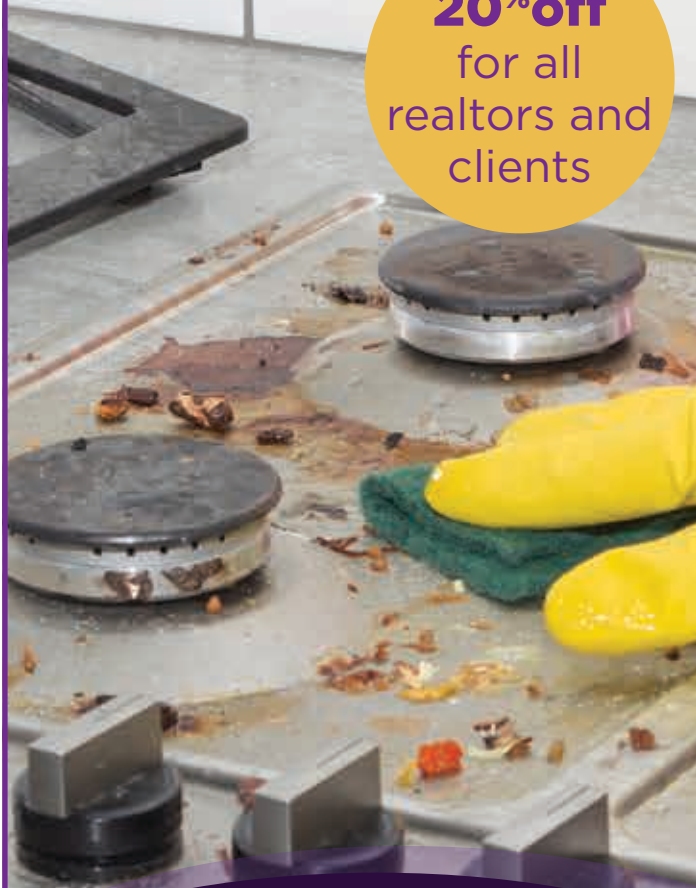
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The image is a collage of three interior design photographs. The largest photo on the left shows a living room with a fireplace, a large clock, and a coffee table. The top-right photo shows a living room with a sectional sofa and a checkered armchair. The bottom-right photo shows a living room with a blue sofa and a patterned rug. A dark blue box with white text is overlaid on the top left of the collage.