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▶ publisher's note: dees hinton

The first three months of 2021 seemed to have flown by!

April is already here and with it brings Hope for a brighter, better year for our nation and world! The days are longer, people are feeling safer to get out more freely and the real estate market is still doing great!

All four of this month's features talk about how good their careers have been for them financially and personally. No matter how long they have been in this industry, they each feel they are doing what they were always meant to do and they are spending more time with the people they care about while doing what they love.

We at *Central Mississippi Real Producers* are enjoying what we are doing too! We are so happy that we

are getting back to our quarterly events. We are thrilled that we continue to grow. And we truly enjoy celebrating those in the Real Estate Industry by sharing their stories and introducing them to others in the industry. If you didn't make it to the March Social Night, you missed out! But not to worry, we are already planning one for June! Each of our events will be at a different location and be a little bit different, but you can count on the constant that they will each be a fun, relaxing evening!



Take time to enjoy this beautiful April, your family and friends and celebrate the Risen Lord and Savior and all that He has done for each of us!

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▶ top producer

Written by **Susan Marquez**
Photography by **Abe Draper Photography**

JULIE Davis

EMBRACES THE TEAM APPROACH TO REAL ESTATE

For the first forty years of her life, Julie Davis lived in South Bend, Indiana. But fate smiled on her when a job opportunity brought her to central Mississippi twenty years ago. The job did not work out, but Julie liked the area, so she began exploring other options. “I have always liked real estate,” she says. “I had a license when I was younger, but never used it.”

In 2007, Julie decided she was going to try her hand at flipping houses. “I actually did a couple, then realized I’d be better off selling.” In 2009 she joined a team at Keller Williams and learned she really liked the team approach to selling real estate. For the past nine years, Julie has been with RE/MAX and is currently with RE/MAX Connection where she put together a team. “It really is an

interesting approach. I enjoy mentoring people and being around people of all ages.” Julie says that when she started selling real estate, she immediately embraced technology and the internet. “I learned about search engine optimization, the value of a good website and I started advertising. The more I did, the more leads I received, and I ended up with more business than I could work. So

I added another agent, then another, and that’s how my team was built.”

There are currently five agents on the Julie Davis Team, and collectively they sold over 150 homes last year. “Besides myself, there is Missie Bray, Jimmy Stuart, Lauren Jo Smith and Sherribeth Wright. I am very excited with their results. They just keep getting better!” With almost 500 leads monthly, Julie says she needs to add a couple more agents. “We’ve had many successful agents on our team over the years, mostly rookies that I’ve helped get their license. This team has been a fabulous stepping stone for several

super successful agents in town. We are all friends and stay in touch. I am proud of them – they are all great agents and will be for years to come.”

Julie says that real estate is a good fit for her, as she loves people and loves interacting with different personalities. “I have always been in outside sales – I have never had a ‘real job.’ I considered another career but I had to ask myself what I really liked. Real estate is what I loved. I knew it would give me the most satisfaction.”

Comparing selling real estate to fishing (which she loves to do in her



“

WE’RE BLESSED TO DO A LOT OF BUSINESS, SO AGENTS AND PEOPLE KNOW WHO WE ARE AND THAT WE ARE WELL-TRAINED AND GOOD AT WHAT WE DO.

spare time), Julie says you can cast your line, see what hits, and do everything you can to get it into the boat. “It’s a personal challenge for me. I find the people needing help with real estate, then I try to find what they need while making it a great experience for them.”

Julie’s team has a lot of repeat business as well as new clients through advertising. “We’re blessed to do a lot of business, so agents and people know who we are and that we are well-trained and good at what we do. We love first-time home buyers, and we sell homes up to a million dollars. We are equipped to do it all.”

Julie says when a new person joins the team, the team works together to teach them every day for months. “We don’t look at new agents as our competition, rather as our strength. It’s a true team spirit to help each other, including our administrative staff. It’s like six kids raising the baby!”

Julie has two grown children, both of whom live in Nashville. “My son just got married, and my daughter has

...



my only grandbaby, a little mini-me! I love being a ‘Grammie,’ and I go to Nashville to see them all as often as I can.” Julie has been married to her husband, Rick, since right out of high school. “He has always been my rock. I have been in outside sales my entire career. Having a strong support person with a regular paycheck opens up the world for someone in direct sales.” Julie also enjoys being

outdoors and particularly loves anything to do with water, including swimming and going to the beach. She also plays golf. “I am a football fanatic,” she laughs. “I love college and professional football, and even high school football on Friday nights!”

With its wonderful climate and all the wonderful friends she has made here, Julie says she has no plans to

leave Mississippi any time soon. “I like Mississippi. I have the number one RE/MAX team in the state, which I am very proud of. Our team is made up of amazing individuals who are stronger as a group. I enjoy helping them grow and it’s nice to see the people I have mentored add so much to the real estate community.”

With the current housing shortages, COVID, and other unknowns, Julie

believes now, more than ever, sharing costs, ideas, training and advertising is imperative. “It’s a 24/7 world and clients expect instant access to everything. Several people can more easily manage operations, the websites, social media, as well as showing and listing homes seven days a week. One person will run themselves ragged striving toward an amazing client experience. Teams are becoming more popular, and I’m so lucky to have such a good one.”





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Protect what matters

Josh Huff

▶▶ rising star

Written by Susan Marquez | Photography by Abe Draper Photography

Finds Job Satisfaction in Real Estate



Born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, Josh Huff still lives in the Capital City. “Except for the four years I was in college at Samford University in Birmingham, I have lived right here in Jackson.” Josh is a product of First Presbyterian Day School and Jackson Prep, and now his children are enrolled in First Pres, Prep and Jackson Academy. “We live in LoHo (the area between the District and Ridgewood Road, and Eastover Drive and Meadowbrook Road), which is perfectly situated between all of our children’s schools and our church home. You cannot beat this location for a real estate career in Central Mississippi. It allows me to serve clients anywhere in the Tri-County area with ease.”

Josh and his wife, Cameron, have four children. Abby, Caroline and Logan are their oldest children, 18-year-old triplets – two girls and a boy. Their youngest son, Holt, just turned 12. Cameron is a Physical Therapist, working for Methodist Rehab. “One of my greatest joys has been coaching their sports teams,” says Josh. “I’ve coached well over 20 teams over the years including basketball, baseball, softball and soccer. The one sport

my kids have played that I have not coached is volleyball. When my girls started playing volleyball, I had to defer coaching and just enjoy being their biggest fan!”

Josh majored in general business at Samford and began a career in marketing after graduation, but he always wanted to own his own business someday. His first job out of college was with WorldCom. Ten years into his marketing career, he took a position as Director of Marketing at Butler Snow law firm. “As Butler Snow began to grow geographically in a big way, it became apparent that more time on the road away from family was going to be required. This led me to take a position to serve as Metropolitan Bank’s first Director of Marketing.” Metropolitan was a small, quickly growing, young bank that offered a great challenge and opportunity for Josh, but the desire to work for himself was still weighing on his mind.

After 20 years in marketing, Josh’s continued desire for business ownership opportunities was stronger than ever but finding the right fit that would allow him to provide for

his large family without taking on substantial debt proved difficult. “I began to explore real estate as an option. I had always had an interest in real estate, but never really considered it as a career.” After a significant amount of prayer and due diligence, Josh realized a career in real estate would give him everything he was looking for. As an independent contractor, he would have control over his schedule and the flexibility he wanted to be able to spend time with his family, and with minimal capital outlay. “I thought about getting my real estate license and doing that on the side, but the more I learned, the more I realized that to have the career I wanted, I needed to be all in.” Taking a leap of faith and forsaking a steady income with benefits, Josh left the bank on January 15, 2016, to begin his full-time career in real estate. “When I look back over my career path today, it is humbling to be able to see the Lord’s hand in each job and every transition, and the move to a career in real estate is no exception. As He always has, the Lord closed all the wrong doors and opened the right ones in His perfect timing to lead me right where He wanted me to be.”





Josh started his real estate career at Keller Williams and is now with eXp Realty. Aside from moving to a commission-only pay structure, one of the biggest adjustments he had to make when becoming a REALTOR® was scheduling. “It’s interesting,” he says. “For 20 years, I was at a desk from pretty much 7:30am to 6pm, Monday through Friday. I knew I would have to work weekends and evenings in real estate, but I was conditioned to be at work during the day. It took me a while to realize that if I wasn’t slammed, I could head out to the yard and play ball with the kids in the middle of the day.”

Now five years into his real estate career, Josh says he cannot imagine doing anything else. Looking ahead to the future, Josh has taken his broker classes and his next step is taking the test to get his broker’s license. “It’s been a good run so far,” he says. “Real estate has been a great fit for me. People tell me I am a people person, but most don’t realize I’m more of an introvert. I don’t like crowds of people, but I love the one-on-one interactions this work offers, and the opportunity to build relationships with so many unique individuals and families.” And while he loves selling a big home or a piece of land, Josh says he often gets

the most satisfaction when working with first-time home buyers. “There is something very satisfying about helping someone make that dream come true. It’s also nice when that same client comes back to you, because you served them well, seeking your help to move into a bigger home or ultimately their dream home.”

Family is Josh’s number one priority. “We just love being together, and we love doing most anything outdoors. Hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, canoeing - you name it.” Scouting played a large role in Josh’s love for the

outdoors, introducing him to backpacking, white water, and so much more. “We love to spend time at my parents’ place in Edwards, hunting, fishing, or just being outside, and vacation for our family is anywhere in the mountains. From our favorite vacation rental on the river in Ocoee, TN, to snow skiing in Colorado, we just love it.”

In short, real estate has given Josh the opportunity he always wanted – to be his own boss and set his own schedule. Evidence also suggests it has been a good fit for Josh’s skill set. Josh has ranked as one of the top five producers among eXp’s 130+ agents in three of the last four years. In 2020, Josh received the ICON award with eXp for closing 20+ transactions after reaching his annual cap. “Switching to 100% commission was no doubt scary, but it helps motivate me to do all I can for my clients, because that’s the key to success in this business,” he says. “I am grateful for a wife and kids who have encouraged me and supported me every step of the way, allowing me to launch a successful career. As a result, we have more time together than I could ever have imagined in my previous roles and I think they have a much happier me.”

“There is something very satisfying about helping someone make that dream come true.”





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CHRIS GIPSON

▶ partner spotlight

Written by Susan Marquez
Photography by Abe Draper Photography



Home Warranty Inc.

Throughout his career, since the early 1990s, Chris Gipson has worked in sales and marketing. But it was an opportunity that came to him six months ago that led him to Home Warranty, Inc. The company was recently licensed in Mississippi and was in need of a district sales representative. “When I first moved to Mississippi 13 years ago, we leased a home. The homeowner had a home warranty on the house, which was a good thing, as a few things went wrong when we were there. That was my first-ever experience with home warranties. I guess I knew home warranties existed, but I was never really aware of the market.”

A native of Hot Springs, Arkansas, Chris graduated from Lakeside High School before heading to the University of Oklahoma where he earned a degree in psychology, with a minor in business. Both of those skill sets, he explains, are essential in marketing.

“Home Warranty, Inc. has been in business for 22 years,” says Chris.

“I met with the folks there and got a good feeling of who I would be working for. It is a family-owned business, and at 54 years old, I can truly say that this is the best working environment I have ever been in. I could tell before I accepted the position that it was a good company. I spent time with other marketing reps in the company, many of them with the company for 15 years or more, as well as with the owner and CEO. The owner, Doug Vanthof, is retired military, and the company is a very vet-friendly organization. I got a good feeling about the company’s overall integrity.”

Now six months into his position with Home Warranty, Inc., Chris says working with the company is all he had hoped for. “They put their trust in me.” That is exactly what he wants his clients to do. Chris has been working with several REALTORS®, educating them on what his company provides and how it can save them a lot of hassle down the road. “The first person a homeowner calls when something goes wrong is their

REALTOR®.” But the agent is not responsible for a broken appliance or a faulty HVAC system.

“A home is the biggest investment most people will ever make,” Chris says. “That comes with a lot of financial exposure, particularly with first-time homebuyers, who most likely scraped together all they could for a down-payment. If something goes wrong in the first few months in their home, it can be devastating. Having a home warranty is a great benefit to have, and it provides peace of mind. Home Warranty, Inc. pays 94% of all claims, and that makes me feel good about what I do.”

Chris visits with REALTORS® on a regular basis and makes himself available to them whenever he is needed. “I am fully aware that REALTORS® don’t work regular hours, so I make myself available when they need me. I took a call last Saturday at 8pm and it was no problem. That is just part of it, and I really enjoy it. That is critical in a partnership, which is how I see



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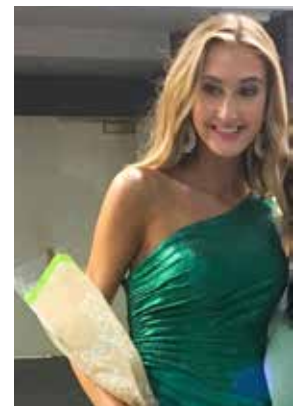
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”



my relationship with REALTORS®. I want to make the life of the REALTORS® I work with as easy as possible. I want to be the first line of defense after the deal is done.”

Starting a new position during COVID could be difficult for anyone. “It’s been interesting. I can tell you that from a marketing standpoint, many of our offices have been locked down and closed. But it has never been an issue for me to go into an office and talk with someone. I was surprised as I came into this industry how REALTORS® are pulled into issues and problems they have nothing to do with, even a year down the road. That is why it is important to me to let them know what we can provide. It also surprises me that some people really like the idea of home warranties and some don’t like it at all. Our company



approaches things with such integrity, which is something I’m very proud of.”

all to take the burden off the REALTOR'S® shoulders.”

The most satisfying part of his job, so far, has been the feedback Chris has gotten from the REALTORS®. “I like when they realize their life will be easier. I answer calls at all hours and I return calls promptly,

Chris lives in Madison with his wife, Caroline, who is a first-grade teacher in Clinton. He has a daughter, Hallie, who is a senior at St. Augustine High School, and a “bonus” daughter, Camille, who is a freshman at Mississippi State.



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TENA MYERS'

PASSIONS RUN DEEP

Ministry. Marketplace. Management. Like the water that flows through a river, Tena Myers says these three “rivers” flow through her. The rivers run so deep in her soul, she had the desire to start her own company, which she named Three Rivers Real Estate. She entered the real estate business in 1979 when she got her first license. Everywhere she worked, she was a top producer and she always left in the number one spot. In the early spring of 2013, three different people, within one week, asked

her when she was going to open her own brokerage and Tena paid attention. “I began an inner dialogue, asking God if he really wanted me to start a company.” As with other life decisions, Tena prayed and journaled about it.

Real estate is one of Tena’s life passions, as is following the will of God. She also has a passion for teaching that led her away from selling real estate in 2017 and to managing 40 agents with more set to come on board. “I do have a limit,” she laughs.

“I only have 50 chairs in my storage room, and I’m only one person!”

Tena’s path to real estate has taken her on many twists and turns. Born in Ruleville, Mississippi, she moved to Chicago with her family when she was just six weeks old. With a father in the military, she has lived all over the world and was educated in military schools. Perhaps it was the fact that the family moved so often, never putting down roots, that made Tena crave a home of her own. “I





remember when I was 15, we lived in Okinawa. My parents were divorcing, so my mother took me and my four siblings to our grandparents' home in Memphis. At the time, I said all I wanted was to move into a house and never leave. We didn't have the luxury of having much 'stuff.' Because we relocated so much, we always had to lighten our load." Tena says that despite her desire to have a permanent home, she was hardwired to move every couple of years.

Just out of high school, Tena married her high school sweetheart, then gave birth to a son. Soon afterward, she found herself a single mother, working as a secretary. "I met my mother for lunch one day at the old Primos restaurant on North State Street in Jackson and she said I really needed to make more money. I agreed but wasn't sure what I could do. As we walked out of the restaurant and around the corner, we saw Wortman and Mann, which at the time was a mortgage company. My mother encouraged me to go in and ask if they had a position available. I walked in and the receptionist took me back to meet with the Vice President. It turns out he was in the choir of the church I attended. He recognized me



and hired and trained me." Tena was in the mortgage business for six years before she was offered an opportunity to become a loan originator, earning commissions. "In that job, I called on real estate companies. Folks often asked why I didn't get into real estate myself." She did just that in 1979. "I now knew the financial part of the real estate industry, which was very helpful," Tena says. "I have



never done anything else since. I have stayed on my path, selling residential real estate."

Tena started Three Rivers in 2014 with a couple of agents. "My dad told me I needed more agents, but frankly, I was tired. I wanted something easy and manageable." In 2015, Tena was asked to be the managing broker at Keller-Williams. "When I

was told there were 115 agents, I wondered how I would manage that many." But she did, and she says the one year she spent at Keller-Williams was like a crash course in how to manage multiple agents. "I know God led me there. When I left, there were 175 agents and I was a totally different person. I was now more confident."

In 2017, she re-launched Three Rivers and made the decision to stop selling real estate and to manage agents. "I felt that I had the wisdom to share to help grow people professionally. I developed a training program which I feel is the real strength of my agency. Agents contacted me, and I took the time to talk to all of them. I have never been a recruiting agency and have vowed that I would never recruit agents from another brokerage. All of our agents here called out to me." Soon she had 30 agents on board. "My agents know they can call me any time. I try to be as accessible to everyone as possible. My legacy has been that I raise top producers. I know what it takes to be a top producer. I also know the frustrations - it is very time-consuming and at times agents can neglect their families or their own health. I keep an eye on that. Top producers are driven, and I try to help them, even telling them when they need to take a step back for a while. No matter the problem, I usually have the wisdom to handle it, because I have been there myself. That wisdom is part of their training."

Having a plan is important to Tena, who says that all one must do is look to the Bible. "Jesus had a model for everything he did!" Tena is a Bible scholar, and she takes time daily to read and study the Bible. She has had Bible studies in her companies in the past, and they were very well received. "I decided when I moved into our new building in October that we would start the Bible studies again. They are open to anyone." The Bible study began in March, using the journals Tena has kept for years. "I call it *Jesus Taught Me to Sell Real Estate*. Our first session was phenomenal!"

Recognizing that each of her agents has different talents, she works to develop them. "So often we don't recognize the talents others see in us. I see their talents, and if they are willing, I will work with them to make them even stronger. Several of my first group of agents were a depressed-looking bunch. Many had been relegated to back rooms, doing cold calls. I told them to get outside! It was spring, and they needed to go out and meet the homebuyers where they were. Drive through subdivisions, especially where there is new



construction. Of course, that instruction was to get them moving again."

Tena says that her youngest agent is just 20 years old. "He is old enough to sell a home, but not old enough to buy one," she muses. "Young people can absorb knowledge. But wisdom is the ability to know how to use that knowledge, and that comes with age and experience and anointing. Proverbs tells us there is worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom. While I am a simple person, I am anointed to do what I do. My pursuit has and always will be to find the will of God and walk in it."



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