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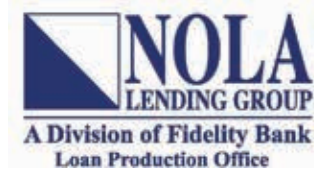


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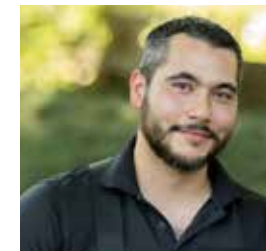
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▶ publisher's note

That's a Wrap

By Gina Miller

This is our December edition! The last one of 2021!

Merry Christmas, y'all. This is me. I'm just a tree-decorating, present-wrapping, yuletide girl typing to my readers asking them to have a cup of spice tea with me.

And all of this comes with zero disrespect for how you December... but I am decking my halls, hanging my lights, and cueing my Spotify Christmas Jams while I do it!

Our differences are what make us beautiful unless we allow our differences to make us ugly.

This text I received back in August meant so much to me. It read, "Thank

you so much for showing the humanity of real estate in Real Producers, AK all ethnicities, sexes, and races. It's so refreshing."

I appreciated this so much; to be recognized as someone who includes and does not exclude is a life goal.

I asked this question over on our Facebook group page: **What will you leave in 2021, and what will you bring to 2022?**

Preferred partner and mortgage broker and owner of LA Lending, Chasity Graff replied: *"For 2021, I would like to leave my anxiety and stresses behind and bring nothing but confidence and growth mindset into 2022!"*

So good. What about you? What can you leave with 2021? What can you bring with you into 2022?

We have some really groovy things planned for next year! More opportunities to get together with all our differences, underneath the same objective...a desire to connect and build relationships that strengthen us and elevate our businesses.

Happy December,
Gina



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Success is simple, not easy.

After losing 10 contracts in her first six months as a real estate agent, Joy Russell was faced with the decision of changing careers or continuing her pursuit of becoming a successful REALTOR®.



the JOY of real estate

▶▶ cover story

By Breanna Smith
Photos by Trenton Gordon



Everyone around her was convinced she should get a “real job.” They felt that she went to school to obtain two degrees in vain. There was so much negativity surrounding her that she decided to stay true to herself and prove them wrong.

She left her career as a marketing representative with a home healthcare company following the announcement that her position would be relocated to a city an hour and a half away. She knew that relocating was not the best decision for her, so she recalled the purchase of her second home. During that purchase, she constantly searched for homes online, in the newspaper, and by driving around. She found her new home on her own and truly enjoyed the process. She remembered the REALTOR® making a nice commission and thought, “I can do that.”

Within three weeks, Joy had her real estate license.

After a rocky start, her first broker stated that if she left, she would never sell real estate.

“This was devastating, but I knew I couldn’t give up and had to give it my all.” So, Joy joined Keller Williams Realty and got to work. She attended every training session that was offered. She was also the first one in the office every morning and then headed back out the door for 9 a.m. sharp with business cards in her hand and determination in her heart – destined to succeed. The early mornings and getting out of her comfort zone paid off. She closed 50 transactions that year, earning the title of Rookie of the Year.

“I said I can do this and believed that this was the career God destined for me.” That was 18 years ago.

The Numbers Game

Joy stepped outside her comfort zone early on after realizing that people weren’t going to call just because she had her license. She needed to build relationships with people and was willing to do whatever it took to make that happen. She has always enjoyed working with people and helping them reach their goals. Now, she needed to find her new potential clients.

•••

Not one to back away from an adventure, Joy decided to make the difficult task of getting to know any and everyone a fun game.

“I had to do a lot of things out of the box because I was a very quiet person, definitely an introvert. I made it a point to wear my name tag every day, and I created a mind game. If I made eye contact with anyone, I would have to stop and have a conversation with them about real estate.” Every time she went to a gas station or a drive-thru, she would park, go inside and talk with everyone in line who made eye contact with her, then leave a few of her cards at the register after paying.

“You see other people selling real estate, and assume it’s easy... You have to work hard and meet hundreds of people. Real estate is a numbers game. There are a lot of things you don’t want to do that you have to do in this business to be successful.”

After reading “Millionaire Real Estate Agent” by Gary Keller and “Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill, she felt unstoppable.

“That allowed me to realize that anything that I set my mind to, I can achieve. I started adopting a positive mindset. Regardless of what was going on in my life, I had to adopt a positive mindset around it.”

With that mindset shift, Joy’s sense of adventure grew larger than life. She’s taken countless classes – ballroom dancing, aerial silks, you name it, she’s probably done it. She also traveled to more than 50 countries.

Help Others Win, You Win.

While attending the Keller Williams Realty Mega Camp, she lost everything in the Great Flood of 2016. Stuck in Austin and routed to Houston, she decided it wasn’t the time to feel helpless or hopeless. Instead, she got to work providing resources for the Baton Rouge community, including financial assistance and acting as a hub to get pertinent information to people.

“Even though that may have been the most devastating point in my life, I count it a



If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.



blessing because it truly showed me what’s important in life.”

Her tagline is “When it comes to real estate, bring Joy to your world,” but bringing Joy to the world is much more than a motto. In everything she does, she strives to bring a positive light to others’ lives. Helping someone be the first in their family to buy a home, volunteering in the community or emptying her purse for the little girls she met on an island off the coast of Africa – that’s what Joy is all about.

At home, she volunteers and supports Church on the Levee, an organization that provides meals and assistance in locating shelter to houseless members of the community. She also supports AKCCL, a nonprofit that helps children build reading and math skills. She mentors young women in a local Jr. ROTC program and helps with outreach programs like food drives, blood drives and providing services to local veteran organizations.



Regardless of what was going on in my life, I had to adopt a positive mindset around it.



In her worldwide travels, Joy’s had an adventure in each one – from paragliding, ziplining and even hanging out with tigers, lions, snakes and elephants.

“If there’s something adventurous to do, I’ll seek it out and do it. I always try to find things to do that I wouldn’t normally do in the United States. I’ll try anything at least once.”

The adventures are fun, but Joy says the best part of every trip is learning about different cultures by getting to know the people who live there. She dances the Bachata with locals in the Dominican Republic and donates school supplies to children in need in Cuba.

“That brings so much joy to me – seeing the smiles on their faces and being able to help and provide some of the things they may not have. That’s what we’re here to do – help others. We have to think about other people and help them along their journey as well.”

Every journey has ups and downs, but Joy has proven that getting out of your comfort zone, changing your mindset and striving to put smiles on others’ faces is the secret sauce to happiness.

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”



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Necole weaver

Built with Intention

By Erin Phelps | Photos by Trenton Gordon

Executive Lady began after Necole Weaver's 20-year career as a legal secretary came to an abrupt end. Knowing she had all the knowledge and skills needed to dive into another industry, Necole began working as an administrative assistant for a real estate company.

"I worked for a year as an administrative assistant, but I think I was still a little heartbroken over leaving the legal world. I knew I wanted to try something new, but I didn't want to work for anybody but myself," she said with a laugh. Noticing that Necole was feeling antsy, a friend introduced her to the world of transaction coordination.

"I started training with her, and she told me that I could make this job into

something huge if I wanted to. I could have my own business. So, I started marketing myself."

In 2019, Necole spent her year as a virtual transaction coordinator. She got her systems in place and began marketing herself with great success; however, the reality of her success was about to set in.

"Not knowing what was coming, I already knew exactly how to navigate the virtual world when COVID hit. God will put you into something, and it won't make sense at the time, but He has a bigger plan."

With business booming since COVID, Executive Lady has grown into a team of four and Necole has big plans to

keep that number growing so she can help as many homeowners as possible.

From the minute a buyer or seller starts the process, Necole is there to congratulate them and begin her system for making the event seamless and stress-free.

"Sometimes, clients are so excited about being under contract that things go in one ear and out the other, so I'm really hands-on with them and let them know all the information they may need."

Originally from New Orleans, Necole has a wonderful way with people and leads her business wanting to help as many people as possible achieve their goals. Executive Lady was built with

...





intention and memory. Her late mother, Lady CJ, is the inspiration behind the company name and the principles that guide Necole through her life and career. Her logo, the butterfly, and the blue color all represent Lady CJ.

“Before she passed away, one of the last things I told my mother was ‘when I see a butterfly, I’ll think of you.’ Everything I do in my business is based around my mom.”

With these personal and meaningful touches, Necole puts heart and attention to detail into everything she does.

“I treat people the way my mom taught me to treat people, and that’s with kindness and authenticity.”

There’s no doubt that Lady CJ looks down at Necole and is proud of the business she’s built and the beautiful family she has with her high-school sweetheart, Alex, their son, Alexander, and dog, Louie.

“I learn something from every single REALTOR® I’ve worked with. Even if it’s unintentional or just through osmosis, I learn something every time.”

Loving what she does, Necole has big plans to take what she’s learned and continue to grow her team throughout the next year.

“Marketing myself was really time-consuming for me at first, so that’s something I want to explore more right now.”

Putting her heart and her mother’s memory into her business, Necole has helped so many REALTORS® and clients achieve their dreams, which is what being a true Executive Lady is all about.

“GOD WILL PUT YOU INTO SOMETHING AND IT WON’T MAKE SENSE AT THE TIME, BUT HE HAS A BIGGER PLAN.”



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financial fitness ◀◀

AN ANNUAL Financial Check-Up

By Shauna Osborne



The end of the year brings us many opportunities to reflect: on our objectives, our blunders, our accomplishments. Think back to the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of this year; did you get where you wanted to go? If not, why? If so, congratulations, and what's next? There are lessons to be gleaned from both our failures and our achievements, particularly in the economic arena. A thorough **financial check-up** during this introspective time of year will help you establish a clear financial plan for 2022 and beyond!

Begin at the end. Take an honest look at where you ended up financially this year. Perhaps, you had a particular financial goal in mind for this year – paying off a credit card, boosting your credit score, or putting more toward retirement. If you didn't get there, ask yourself what prevented you from meeting your target. Was it unrealistic? Maybe you had a major life event that waylaid you (e.g., divorce, new baby, etc.). Be gentle with yourself here; it's been a tough couple of years for most!

Once you've done some reflecting on whether your financial goals were met and what you should do differently next year, dive into some forward-looking practices to help you get a clearer picture of your current financial health. Start with your **budget**. Is the budget you established for yourself at the year's beginning still adequate? Did you consistently over- or underspend in any areas? Adjust as needed for 2022. And, if you've stuck to your budget, you hopefully have a **surplus**, which can be thrown at debt or put away into savings. It's also a good time to double-check that you're maxing out your **401K contributions**. If that's not within your reach right now, strive to contribute at least as much as your employer will match.

Other areas to assess include **credit card interest rates**, **stocks**, and **insurance policies**. Many people don't know you can call your credit card company to negotiate a better interest rate, especially if you've been faithfully paying down your debt over the last 12 months. You might also use this time to study your stock portfolio; will you shift toward riskier or safer investments in 2022? Finally, review your insurance policies to ensure your coverages are still relevant. You may also qualify for new discounts and/or need to add major purchases made over the last year to your policy.

During this festive time of year, sitting down to examine your finances may sound like the ultimate killjoy. However, as you turn your thoughts toward resolutions for your physical, mental, and spiritual health, don't neglect your financial health!

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TYLER ALEXANDER



Change is Good

Making perhaps the biggest decision of his life thus far, Tyler Alexander made a career decision that changed the entire course of his life in a mighty way.

“On October 8th, 2020, I called what was going to be my employer and said, ‘I’m not coming. I’m going into real estate.’”

A risky move? Perhaps. But a right move.

Less than a year in, Tyler is becoming familiar and successful in the real estate arena of the capital city. “I began at the end of March and I’m currently at 4.5 million, predicting 6 million by the end of the year.”

Just a little more than a year ago, Tyler was in school to become a physical therapist and about to begin his clinicals. Switching gears, he ended up finishing his bachelor’s degree in business administration and was set to take a full-time sales job post-graduation. “I had one more class to complete before I could graduate, and it was an internship course. My advisor told me to find someone who is self-employed and shadow them for 300 hours.” The person he chose to shadow was Darren James, *Baton Rouge Real Producers’* top-producing agent and cover story for August 2020. After the first day with Darren, Tyler was hooked. He knew he needed to keep showing up and learn as much as possible from Darren and his team. “I started working with

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“

My favorite part of the process is seeing the smile on my clients' faces when we walk away from the closing table.”

him four days a week. It was during that time that I knew I didn't want to sit in an office all day

for my job. I wanted to go out there and make people's day. I wanted to change people's lives.”

The first life that Tyler changed was his own. He admits that before he found the genuine happiness and financial freedom of real estate, things were tough.

“When I chose to start real estate, I had \$278 in my account. I knew it was a huge risk, but I also knew it was God's calling for me.” Tyler was validated in his career switch when he sold his first house three days after he got licensed. “I told myself that I would sell my first house in my first week, and sure enough, I got

a lead, and it was a cash buyer. I was able to close it in five days, and it started a momentum for me that hasn't stopped.” Tyler emphasized the financial freedom that real estate has given him so early on in his career. “I used to have to watch the gas meter when I would fill up my truck. I had to be so careful, but now I don't have to do that. It's just simple things like filling up my tank that I'm beyond grateful for.”

Tyler credits his mentor Darren as the reason he's successful today. “I owe everything to Darren. I've always looked up to him as a person, as a businessman and as a provider for his family.” Learning from Darren and his 20 years of experience, Tyler has already found the rewards of real estate beyond the finances. “My favorite part of the process is seeing the smile on my clients' faces when we walk away from the closing table.”



Things are rapidly changing for Tyler. The growth he's had as a REALTOR® in just nine months projects exponential growth for the future, but one thing will always stay the same for him. “If my clients aren't satisfied and I get a check, then I'm not satisfied. Even if I don't have money, but my clients are satisfied, then I'm happy. I got into this business to make people's day, and that's what I want to do for the rest of my career.”

Tyler is a great resource for individuals considering a career in, or new to real estate. He has fresh perspective and a willingness to offer insight. “The first thing is that nothing is ever going to happen for you unless you learn how to implement. You can have the knowledge, but if you can't implement it, you're not going to get anywhere. The second is that every real estate agent in the country can provide customer service, you should provide a customer experience that no one else can.”



Pictured Left to Right: Alex Polito, Mark Schoen, Cathy Waggenspack-Landry, Keegan Wisdom, Amy Lane, Robert Adams

▶▶ partner spotlight

By Breanna Smith | Photos by Jonathan Silva

Baton Rouge TITLE COMPANY

Baton Rouge Title Company has thrived for over 40 years by focusing on evolving to meet its clients' needs. After becoming the first company in the Baton Rouge area to exclusively handle titles to real estate transactions, they found ways to best serve everyone, from employees to industry partners and clients.

"This company was born out of a need in the industry as it evolved; people wanted a specific attorney for closings, and Baton Rouge Title Company envisioned it as an opportunity to be of service to the community," said Alex Polito, Director of Business Development.

Aptly named, the company is the oldest and largest title company in Greater Baton Rouge owned by an underwriter. The company has grown over the years by rising to the occasion as the economy and environment have constantly changed, and the team is ever-evolving in their quest to serve those they do business with every day.

First in Efficiency

As any seasoned REALTOR® will tell you, to stay in this business, you have to evolve.

Baton Rouge Title Company didn't stop at becoming the first full-service title company in the area. They were also the first to purchase microfilm of court records many years ago. This investment saved their clients time by housing many of the documents the team needed for research in the office instead of across town in the courthouse basement. Obviously now, Baton Rouge Title Company is connected online with all 64 parish Clerk of Courts and all three Federal District Courts (as well as the Secretary of State's Office).

Baton Rouge Title Company was also the first local title company to hire team members dedicated to building relationships with others in the industry - real estate agents, lenders, and builders.

"We're all about efficiency and effectiveness," Alex said. "Our leadership is family-oriented, but there is still a standard of performance with the



We understand how important the investment in a home or commercial property is for our community and clients, and we respect that everyone has different needs.

-Alex Polito



•••

understanding that we all truly care about everyone we work with.”

The company’s app has risen in popularity, becoming one of the top closing cost apps among REALTORS®. The BatonRougeTitleAgentOne app provides agents with quick, easy-to-read estimates to the most common financial questions they or their clients may have during a transaction.

Baton Rouge Title Company is also a leader in wire-fraud prevention, which is prevalent in today’s society. From the minute an order is received, through the final disbursement of funds, Baton Rouge Title Company utilizes a proprietary software “In Here,” a technology-based application designed to avoid fraudsters.

Embracing Diversity

Baton Rouge Title Company operates from three fully staffed offices that directly service the parishes of East Baton Rouge, Ascension, and Livingston. They handle residential and commercial real estate transactions in all 64 parishes of Louisiana. With four attorneys and nine Notary Publics, they are equipped for all your closing needs. From the first-time homebuyer to the luxury home purchaser, from construction loan transactions to any FHA, VA, RD, or conventional loan transactions, from cash purchases to refinances, from residential transactions to commercial transactions, or 1031 tax-deferred exchanges, you will find Baton Rouge Title Company to be your full-service provider of all title and escrow services.[1]

Built on Stability

Built with serving the Greater Baton Rouge area in mind, the leadership team of Baton Rouge



Division President and Attorney Mark Schoen, Branch Manager and Attorney Robert Adams, Branch Manager and Attorney Amy Lane, Notary and Branch Manager Keegan Wisdom



We, as do the Realtors, want the closing process to be smooth and enjoyable for the client so the more we can anticipate and deal with issues before we are at the closing table the better the closing experience will be.”
- Robert Adams

Title Company understands the importance of experience and dependability. The firm is a locally managed, wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity National Financial. This Fortune 500 company takes pride in title and escrow services that meet customer demands for efficient and timely processing and quality products and services throughout the United States. This unique alliance of local management and the financial stability of a Fortune 500 company means stability, efficiency, and innovation for every client.

As a subsidiary of Fidelity National Financial, Baton Rouge Title Company has access to cutting-edge technology and systems to ensure the best experience every time – even during a global pandemic.

“When the pandemic hit, we didn’t skip a beat,” Alex said. “It was all hands on deck, and we never missed a single day.” Baton Rouge Title, as always, was solution-oriented and made it work with parking lot consultations and closings, determined to make things happen with their clients’ needs in mind.

“We understand how important the investment in a home or commercial property is for our community and clients, and we respect that everyone has different needs. We always strive to cater to what makes each individual comfortable with the process, especially during this time. We all want to meet the end goal, which is helping our clients close. That’s the fun part – celebrating others’ success.”

The leadership team prioritizes teamwork and respect for others in everything Baton Rouge Title does.

“Our leadership team truly cares about everyone they work with. People matter.” Alex said.





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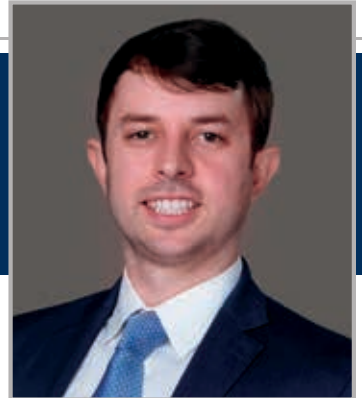
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Under the leadership and vision of CEO, Jeff LeSaicherre, Fleur Des Lis has grown to be one of Louisiana's largest title companies, with a focus on local offices that are managed and operated by local attorneys with direct ties to the community. Our growth is a result of how we treat the agents and lenders we serve, providing them an alternative to more traditional and often dated ways of doing business.

Our ability to anticipate changes in the marketplace and remain at the forefront of evolving technologies has made our emphasis on being a trusted resource even more relevant as the world continues to change.

As a company, we are successful when our clients are successful, and that success can only come with a proven process. Here, it's called the Fleur Des Lis Way.

At Fleur Des Lis Title our roots run deep, founded with a vision of not only taking care of our clients but also the people that call Fleur Des Lis home.