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► publisher's note
By Gina Miller

Dreaming of a VACATION



Growing up vacation meant one of four things for me...the annual family reunion on July 4, a trip to the beach in Galveston, church camp via a smelly bus without air conditioning and maybe...just maybe...a trip to Six Flags over Texas. Each of these things were looked forward to with great anticipation. I was giddy just to go!

I never wished for more...until I wished for more.

I was in the 4th grade and our teacher asked us to draw a picture of our summer vacation on some blank manila paper.

This particular summer consisted of my older sister getting married so vacation funds were limited to the family reunion. *How do I draw a family reunion? How the heck do I draw all those people before lunch? I'll be here all day!*

Susan sat next to me and began drawing what looked like an amusement park.

What's that?
Disney World.
Oh.
I knew of it.
M-I-C-K-E-Y...

I looked around and saw crayon shrapnel filling the air as my classmates happily colored their depictions of summer vacay.

Ugh.
Hmmm...
I think I went to Disney World, too.

I turned my blank page into a fantasy and I liked it.

I drew Micky Mouse and probably a roller coaster and Ferris wheel. I don't remember exactly. That's the thing about a lie...the details get blurred.

But I wanted to go somewhere exciting-er than a family reunion, church camp or grandmothers!

God forgive me for lying but I truthfully want to see more of the world. I want to travel and taste and see. I want to behold creation and swim oceans and take photos and bore my family with all the historic details of the places I've been and things I've seen. Vacations are good for the soul. We

need to get away and clear our minds and escape reality sometimes! I've been to Cancun, Boston, New York, Sedona, Hot Springs and Ireland...but I want to see Santorini and Maui and The Holy Lands and more!

I asked our readers what their dream vacations would be and here are some answers:

Joelle Hocke: Maldives
Darren James: Maldives
Nathan Tallo: Italy for a week and then just cruise the Mediterranean for another week
Aundrea Allen: Italy
Ericka Queen: Maldives
Marie Broussard: Bora Bora. Been there!...*absolutely breathtaking, hut*

over water, private dinner on the balcony...know you by name!
Meghan Dunne: New Zealand. I hear there aren't poisonous snakes and spiders there.
Donna Gaspard: Tuscany
Karen Moore: Three weeks in Australia!
Patton Brantley: Island hopping in Southeast Asia!
Jill Lemoine: Travel all over Europe with a fellow agent taking my calls so I could truly relax!
Chelsea Meng: I'd like to go to South Africa on a safari trip!
Denise Thibodeaux: Corfu! Watching "The Durrell's of Corfu" many times during the shutdown has inspired me.
Bambi Guilbeau: Costa Rica! Sitting in a natural jacuzzi at the base of the

volcanos while watching the toucans flying by and eating a mango!
Kayla Johnson: Sailing in the BVIs it is the best way to detox from Real Estate!
Shemika Mayfield: South Africa!
Justin Brewer: Maldives!
Kelly Mitchell: Hubs and I just went turkey hunting in Kansas and it was pretty dreamy.

Y'all have worked so hard this past year. The real estate world is a busy, bustling, bidding war of never seen before activity, and even if it's a weekend staycation somewhere in Louisiana, I hope you can find a moment to relax and unwind.

Does the body good, **Gina**

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▶ guest columnist

Dad Life

PUTTING THEM FIRST

If it's not on your calendar, it doesn't exist.

This is one of my brokerage's "laws." Another is: *the purpose of business is to build the perfect life.*

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to meet Gina Miller at a coffee shop to chat about all things real estate. I had planned to talk about my 18 years in business, mistakes I had made, gems that I picked up along the way, and the team concept vs being an individual agent. I like to think that I am somewhere in between. I found that instead of hitting on all of those talking points, I instead kept going on about my relationship with my kids and how I adore them.

I talked about the things they were into and the plans we had. I joked about how my 15-year-old and I were chatting on a

Thursday last summer about how we both wanted to see Mount Rushmore. "Wanna just go?" I said, and at 3:30 that afternoon, we left. We got there Saturday morning. It was exhilarating.

This conversation was really eye-opening for me. I know that I am now middle-aged, even though I still feel like a kid most of the time. What I didn't know was that I have somehow gone from an I to an S on the DISC personality scale. Somewhere after experiencing a market crash, a great flood, and a soul-crushing divorce, and most recently a pandemic, I became less concerned about trophies and volume. I had my Jerry Maguire moment. I only wanted to do business with clients I loved. I was fine with being a top producer without being the top producer. I immediately began adding things to my calendar. My oldest and I learned to play the guitar together. We had many family movie nights... Hamilton is one of our faves. We play UNO together about once or twice a week. We spent Spring Break at the beach. I'm sure once the virus passes, we'll head to Disney. All is good in my world. I feel like my life is finally balanced.

The business I built is based on referrals. My clients know me, and many of them know my kids. They're perfectly fine with me telling them I can't do it right now, but I can get to it in a few hours or even tomorrow.

So what makes it all work? Boundaries and that calendar.

Most days I pick my kids up from school. I get showings and listing appointments done during the school day and am in line for carpool on my custody days around 2:30. That's about 40 minutes before they get in my car. The perfect amount of time for following up with potential clients, checking in with my admin, and checking in on my past clients. I've put and kept many deals together in the elementary school parking lot. This works so much better for me and my family than during a game of UNO or at the Piccadilly.

Due to the extremely hot market, 2021 will most likely represent my record year. Unlike others in the past, it will also be my happiest. In that respect, I can say that my business is helping me build a life that's perfect for me and my family.

-Kyle Petersen

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▶ partner spotlight

By Breanna Smith | Photos by Aaron Cox

Garbarino

State Farm

When Ross Garbarino saw his name on the door of his own State Farm office in Baton Rouge, the moment felt surreal. Looking back, that day in 2017 feels more like 10 years ago rather than just four. “I’ve learned a lot over the last four years. About the business, about leading a team, but most importantly... I’ve learned a lot about myself and what our calling is for this community.”

Every day, he and his team put their all into being a good neighbor. To Ross, it’s so much more than a corporate motto. It’s who He has called us to be.

Man on a Mission

In 2018, Ross became a confirmed Catholic – the culmination of a 10-year long journey with his wife Erin right by his side. A few months later, the two welcomed their twin girls, Lila and Mae, into the family. “I started to look at the world differently at that point. I started really leaning on Jesus, even though I knew that was the answer the whole way through I started actually doing it,” he said. “We are called to love our neighbor, and to be the Light. And we are called to allow these

LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOR AND
SHINE THE LIGHT

words to guide us in each situation and all interactions every single day!”

No one knew what 2020 had in store, but Ross began the year with a fresh mission for his business. Ross and his team wanted to keep the focus on building relationships by genuinely helping people, no matter what. Of course, helping people with their insurance needs, but he knew they could give so much more.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” – Mark 12:30-31

In March of 2020, the first COVID-19 lockdown came and Ross knew it was time to shine. “People were in a tough spot, businesses were

...



struggling. BR got pushed up against the ropes and we were faced with the decision to sit there and do nothing or find a way to help people.” He couldn’t shake the uneasy feeling that he needed to jump into action. As he scrolled on social media, the world seemed like a dark, scared, and frantic place full of negativity. “I felt like we had to do something to help somebody and be the Light in all this darkness. I didn’t know where to start but we had to do something.”

He and his team watched as the once-bustling parking lot on Jefferson Highway went empty overnight. That’s when they decided to start with their neighbor Billy Haydel – Owner of Pot and Paddle, the jambalaya shop right next door to Ross’ office. He posted it on Facebook with a call to action. “The first 20 families who comment below get a bucket of Pot and Paddle for dinner on me tonight.” The buckets were claimed within 30 minutes. Then came logistics.

“I figured it out as I went,” he said with a laugh. Then, he did it all over again.

The movement quickly grew to highlighting different businesses and focusing on providing meals for front line workers, hair stylists and others in careers most negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

“I got back to my roots of what I really wanted to do in the first place,” he said. “Insurance is the vehicle I use to shine a light on some people you might not normally get to interact with.”

Chosen Community
Ross is a Ruston native with a lifelong love for Baton Rouge. “Growing up I went to LSU football games with my dad every Saturday. My Ruston buddies were out hunting and stuff all the time and I was headed down to Baton



“INSURANCE IS THE VEHICLE I USE TO SHINE A LIGHT ON SOME PEOPLE YOU MIGHT NOT NORMALLY GET TO INTERACT WITH.”



Rouge for the games. In my mind, I always knew this is where I would call home.”

After graduation, he and Erin moved to Houston, which he affectionately calls the New York of the South. There, he worked as a consultant with State Farm corporate. Suddenly, an opportunity to start his own office in Baton Rouge opened up – it was nothing short of a miracle. “It was just the biggest blessing to be able to come back,” he said.

Ross knew he wanted to become a State Farm Agent in college. “It’s a goal I had since the summer before I graduate, when I interned under another agent.” His calling is exactly what he is able to do through this business. “Insurance can be simplified to make sure that the people you love are protected the right way and at the same time it provides a venue to build relationships by helping people in so many different ways.”

He constantly seeks out ways to help others in his community, whether spotlighting businesses or assisting with hurricane relief because that’s what a good neighbor does, and that’s what we are called to do: Love your Neighbor!

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Shemika Mayfield with Engel & Volkers has big dreams and an even bigger heart. From a young age, she developed a keen awareness of the needs of those around her and a passion to make a difference. The native of Old South Baton Rouge strives to build up her community, empower her neighbors and strengthen her connections with others. Real estate is simply the tool she uses to turn her dreams into reality.

Pass It On

Growing up, Shemika's parents made sure she never went without. "I had a beautiful childhood," she said. The table was always full for family dinners and the Christmas tree always had presents underneath it, but she didn't have to look far to see that there were many families struggling to make ends meet. Instead of turning away, letting those problems be someone else's, she became an agent of change.

"Where I'm from, there's not a lot of generational wealth passed down. I had amazing parents and a beautiful childhood, but

I wasn't able to have a home passed down to me like some people do, so I want to be able to help inspire and encourage others to build generational wealth and break generational curses," she said. "I want people to know you can leave your children something to build on and grow with."

Shemika speaks with such passion for her community, soon it feels like you're on the mission right alongside her. The energy and zeal she has for creating change within her community is contagious. She is working to spread the joy and security of homeownership throughout her community, and it's turning into a wildfire. "When you take care of your people, they take care of you. My people take care of me," she said with a big smile. For Shemika, each transaction is not only a life changed but a promise made – the promise of a brighter future for the next generation.

She has known since high school that she would become a real estate agent. At 16, she met a friend's father who was a real estate agent – he was always there for his family and was a kind person with a passion for helping others. "I was always intrigued by

it from that moment on I grew to love it." As it turns out, he was the REALTOR® who sold her godmother her first home. "I remember how much she loved it and how she always wanted to host parties there, so that's why I fell in love with it. I thought, 'I want to do that, I want to make people happy like that.'" The joy on a new homeowner's face is exciting, but the resounding comfort in knowing that they are providing opportunities for future generations is what keeps her going. A house is so much more than a place to live. It's a door into the future, an opportunity for generations to come. "Do it for the passion or don't do it at all," she said. "I feel as though you truly have to love real estate or the daily challenges that will pop up will cause you to give up. But if you're passionate about it then you'll find a way to push through in spite of those challenges."

Love Your Neighbor

Taking care of people is what Shemika does best. That's her motivation for showing up and doing her best every single day. Her favorite people to take care of are her two children, Kameron, 14,



▶▶ rising star

By Breanna Smith | Photos by Aaron Cox

Rise by
Lifting Others



When you take care of your people, they take care of you.



and Karsyn, 7. She and her husband Floyd are partners with everything and they have always prioritized time together as a family. "My kids are my true motivation. They are my why," she said. "I work so hard because I want them to understand hard work and the fruits of your labor but I want to set them up with a different start to life."

Her big dreams center on how she can help others, whether family, friends, neighbors and even strangers. Every October, Shemika gives away dozens of care packages to people in her community going through chemotherapy, or who have recently gone through chemotherapy. Each year the giveaways get bigger and better – and she has high hopes of growing the



outreach as big as possible. "After losing both parents to cancer I know first hand what the struggle is like to watch someone going through chemotherapy." Seeing the toll cancer and treatment took on her family, she decided that she would help as many of her neighbors as she could as they fought their own battles with cancer. "I hear so many testimonies, so many stories of triumph. And it makes me want to push harder because I want to be able to do more for people than what I've already been able to do. It just fuels me."

She dreams big and believes deeply in the promise of a brighter future for generations to come. "Dreams are a way of showing us God's promises."

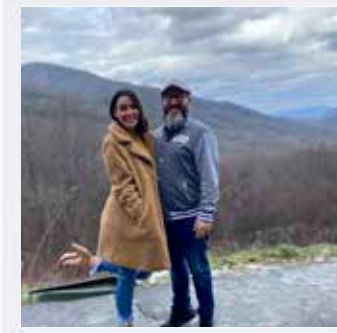


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Are We There Yet?



Ericka Queen
Puerto Rico, 2021



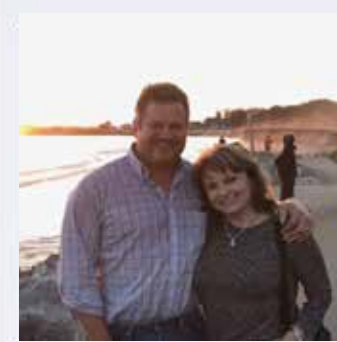
Joshua and Bambi Guilbeau
January 17, 2021, Gatlinburg, TN



Spring Break in Watercolor, FL
Kyle Petersen with his children, Hadley,
Connor and Presley Kate



Chelsea and Field Meng
San Francisco, October 2019



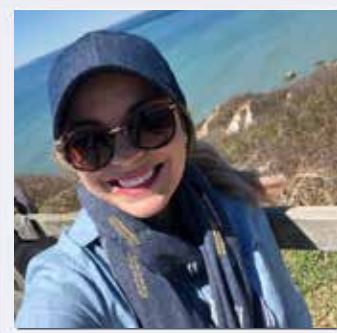
Webb Wartelle and wife, Leah.
Fall of 2019, Northern California coast



Webb Wartelle with wife Leah
and son Jordan. Utah, Fall 2020



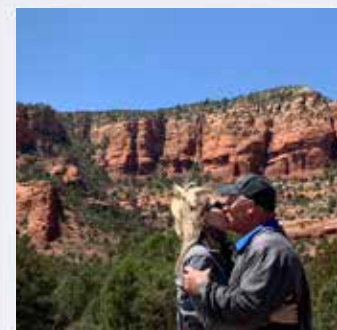
South Africa 2019
Danielle McKinley and husband Orlando



Nicole Rowell, Martha's Vineyard 2019



Stephen Couvillion with wife Cara
and daughter Ruby in Jackson Hole, WY.



Maria Thorn and her husband
on a bucket list trip to Sedona, AZ
and the Grand Canyon. 4/15/2021



▶▶ cover story Well Played

JORDAN TROSCLAIR

By Breanna Smith | Photos by Aaron Cox

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You can learn a lot about a person by the way they play Monopoly.

Jordan Trosclair with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices United Properties aggressively grabs up properties and drives a hard bargain at the negotiation table. Yes, we're still talking about a family-friendly game of Monopoly. It was during one of those games that a lightbulb came on for his wife Tari, and the first of many times Jordan would hear, "You'd be really good at real estate."

For years Tari told Jordan he would make a great real estate agent, but he wasn't convinced he would enjoy it. He loved his career as a personal trainer, helping people reach the finish line of their strength training and weight loss goals. But Tari didn't let the thought pass that easily. She kept at it, knowing Jordan would find fulfillment and joy in a career as a REALTOR®.

"I finally heard 'you need to be in real estate' enough that I was like okay, I'm going to do it for a year and prove to her I don't like real estate." That was four years, one Rising Star designation by the Greater Baton Rouge Association of REALTORS® and two licenses ago. "I got addicted. It was in my blood."

All In

No matter the goal – whether the title of Board Game King, physical fitness or the keys to that one house a client never thought they would be able to call home – Jordan throws his full weight into making it happen. Despite taking on the new venture to prove Tari wrong, he still wanted to do it well. "Like everything I do, I put everything into it. I wasn't going to do this and not give it some effort, I just didn't think I was going to like it." It took about eight months for his aha moment to hit. "I was like okay maybe I can do this, maybe this is great. Let's keep the momentum going, just be positive and keep going. And it never slowed down," he said with a smile.

When the first COVID-19 lockdown came, there was a bit of a lull – those two weeks where no one knew what was on the horizon. The calm before the storm. Jordan and Tari were working from home and soon started itching for an adventure – a quarantine-style adventure. So they packed their bags and headed for a remote spot in Mississippi. "It was wonderful to be outdoors and disconnected, so to speak...I was having a blast out in the woods fishing and hunting and doing all



kinds of outdoor stuff, kayaking with the wife. Yet my business was thriving and continued to thrive." There, in the serenity of the great outdoors, he knew it was time to take on the challenge he had been contemplating – Florida real estate. As a solo agent, he is licensed in Louisiana and Florida, focusing on expired listings in the boot and luxury beach homes on Highway 30A. "It's been a lot of fun," he said with a laugh.

Knock, Knock

Who's there? It very well could be Jordan Trosclair. There is no shame in Jordan's door-knocking game. If his clients want a home in a particular neighborhood, he doesn't place his hopes in leaving a voicemail. He shows up. And he has a knack for arriving at the perfect time.

During one inspection, the buyer and seller began talking when the seller

said, "You know it was the craziest thing. I'm sitting here thinking about selling my home and the next thing you know Jordan knocks on my door and said he has some clients this home would be perfect for!"

"I remember my buyer looking at me and asking 'you just randomly knocked on their door for us?! That's the coolest thing ever!'" Jordan has had several of these instances in his four-year career. He enjoys showing up and meeting face-to-face, which is how he has bolstered his business with expired listings. He knows there are dozens of agents calling, so he cuts the line by ringing the doorbell.

Jordan's integrity and excitement shine through in everything he does – whether a game of Monopoly, kayaking with Tari or getting his clients in the home of their dreams.

“If my name's going on it, it's going to mean something and that's my brand. You know what you're going to get when you get Jordan.”



MBG

LAWN & LANDSCAPE

We Mow the Extra Mile

MBG Lawn & Landscape began in 2019 with one goal in mind: provide service a cut above the rest. Managing Partner Donna Gaspard worked in the lawn care industry for five years before joining the MBG team and bringing to life the company's vision of client-centric lawn service that makes the neighbors ask "who does your yard?"

The MBG Experience

Every member of the MBG team takes pride in each job, whether it's a simple mow or a full-scale landscape project. Three types of crews make up the team - two for mowing, two for landscaping and one crew of horticulture specialists. This unique structure ensures that each job is completed by experts who enjoy the exact work clients need done. Whether it's a landscape project ahead of a summertime party on the patio or regular

yard maintenance, there's an MBG crew for that.

"Our crews do the little things to make a difference," Donna said. "We take our time, make sure we blow and trim, pick up trash, pick up hoses and garbage cans, anything we can do to make sure it's the best service possible."

Employees have found the company through recommendations by a friend who already works with MBG or by seeing the trucks rolling through

town. "When they come to us, they say I've seen y'all everywhere and I want to be a part of this company. From Management to our crews out in the field, they are invested in MBG. That buy-in makes the difference on every job."

"They're all invested in this company," Donna said. In 2020, the company earned the Best of Home Advisor award after racking up dozens of five-star reviews.



"I just love doing what I do, especially when we get those calls from people saying their yards have never looked better and praising all of the hard work our crews put in," Donna said. "We are the company that cares." In fact, some of Donna's favorite clients are the ones who are skeptical. They may have used another company or be hesitant to trust the MBG crew with their yard, but the skepticism soon melts away when they see a crew of smiling faces mowing the extra mile to earn their trust and business.

First Impressions

The quality and maintenance of a yard say a lot about a home to prospective buyers. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests that homeowners invest 10% of a property's value in landscaping. In fact, a well-landscaped home can add up to 13% in value compared to a property with no landscaping.

"When someone drives up to a house the landscaping makes a big impression," Donna said. The MBG team enjoys helping clients bring their vision for a property to life, and while they are more than happy to offer an opinion or put together a landscaping plan, what the client wants wins every time.

"We enjoy the process of getting to know what a client wants, then we make it happen. For us, it's all about catering to a client's specific needs and goals for their property, whether it's a home or commercial space."

When it comes to scheduling, the structure of their crews allows for maximum flexibility. The team recently earned the contract for maintaining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on Highland and Bluebonnet. They handle all of the mowing and flower bed maintenance and plant annuals to add color and vibrancy to the grounds. The church often has events or certain days they ask the crew to avoid coming and for MBG, that's no problem. "We don't

“

We take our time, make sure we blow and trim, pick up trash, pick up hoses and garbage cans, anything we can do to make sure it's the best service possible.

...
 tell people when we're coming, we ask when they want the work done and what works best for them. We make it work because we want to earn the business every single time."

Donna is also particularly proud of a recent project surrounding a pool with mondo grass and terrazzo stepping stones. The final result is a breathtakingly modern yet cozy outdoor space perfect for relaxing or having friends and family over for a get-together.

"Landscaping draws people to a home," Donna said. "And it doesn't have to be anything fancy or overdone. It can be minimal and beautiful."

The name might have started as a play on words Mow, Blow & Go, but the professional service and catered approach to landscaping are what make their clients stay. "We got into this business for our clients, to build relationships," Donna said. "Everyone on the team genuinely enjoys working and spending time with clients whether it's on a big project or doing scheduled maintenance."



Dakota Sikat



Jose Ramirez



Dylan Reviere



Eliberto Melgar



Preston Salassi



I just love doing what I do, especially when we get those calls from people saying their yards have never looked better and praising all of the hard work our crews put in.

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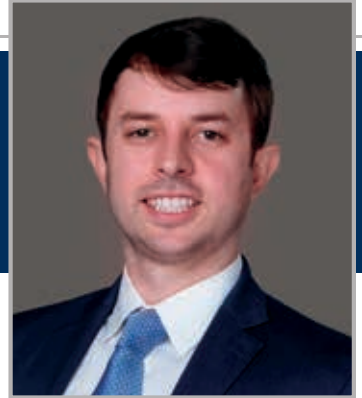
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