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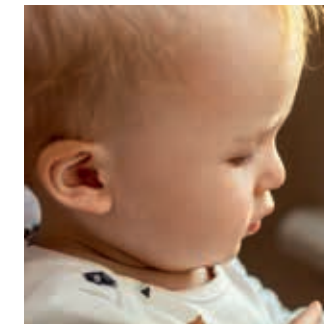
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dees Hinton

The March 23rd Social Night was a great Success! Over 100 people attended and enjoyed an evening of great food, fun and fellowship. There was lots of laughter and catching up after a long intermission in our quarterly events. A lot of amazing door prizes were also given away!

Thank you to The Burkleys and Deep South Custom Homes for opening their beautiful home which easily accommodated everyone.

Also, a HUGE thank you to our Sponsors who pay for these events. Without them, Social Nights would not be possible!

If you missed the last event, not to worry, we are already planning the next one!

We have our quarterly events to bring together the top 300+ REALTORS®

in Central Mississippi and our Ad Partners in a fun, relaxed social atmosphere so they can meet and develop relationships. We want to celebrate the successes of these REALTORS® and at the same time introduce them to our ad partners. Our Sponsors and Ad Partners know how important the real estate industry is to the growth and success of their businesses. At the same time, REALTORS® can rest assured knowing if a business is one of our Ad Partners, they have come highly recommended by one of their peers.

If you know of a business that works in the real estate industry and you think they would be a good fit as one of our Preferred Partners, contact us! We would love to discuss how we can connect them with more REALTORS® in the industry and produce more business!



Hope to see you at the next event and be sure to celebrate all the mothers in your life this month!

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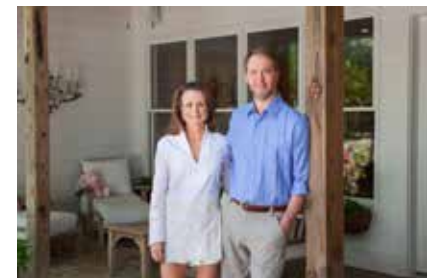
“I am Blessed to Do What I Do”

▶▶ top producer

Written by Susan Marquez | Photography by Abe Draper Photography

Leslie LeDoux knows what it is like to move into a new home. “I lived all over the South as a child. We moved nine times before I was in the ninth grade!” Born in Mobile, Alabama, Leslie and her family moved all over until she ended up in Bastrop, Louisiana where she spent four years in high school. Opting to stay in Louisiana, Leslie attended Louisiana State University where she went straight through to earn her master’s degree in business in 1996.

Because of her experience of moving from one home to another, Leslie understands what her clients are experiencing as well. That kind of empathy is probably one of the reasons that Leslie is a top producer in the Central Mississippi real estate market. But her path to being a REALTOR® was not a straight one.



“I got married in 1995 and had my first two children in Baton Rouge. I had my third child in Jackson, and spent many years working in human resources. I ended up as Vice President of Human Resources for a casino in Baton Rouge.” That job became more stressful for Leslie as it began to cut into precious family time. “I was having to work long hours during the week and every other weekend, and that’s difficult to do when you have active children at home.”

Leslie ended up leaving the HR world and focused on being a mom. She and her husband took a leap of faith when she quit her HR job and moved to Madison in June of 2000. “We built a home next door to my aunt, Sandi Mathews. She was a real estate broker who owned Sandi Mathews Realty, and she kept telling me to get my real estate license and go to work for her. I wasn’t even sure I wanted to work, but I went ahead and got my license in 2005.”



With a trial-by-fire approach, Sandi pushed Leslie, who ended up taking to real estate like a duck to water. “I wasn’t really sure I wanted to return to the working world. But, I trusted her, so I got my license and then my aunt kind of threw me in. I had to learn quickly, but I am so glad she did. It was such a good decision for me.”

Two years later, Leslie got her broker’s license. “I wanted to get it as quickly as I could.” After getting her broker’s license, Leslie started her own company, LeDoux Properties, LLC. “Before I got my broker’s license, I established relationships with contractors in the





area. I have a great working relationship with several contractors. We respect each other.”



The one builder who has been a huge part of Leslie’s business and success is Steve Rimmer. “I began

working with Steve, listing the homes he builds. We have been working together for 15 years and have established a great partnership. Right now, he is starting a new subdivision in Gluckstadt, and I’m looking forward to working with him to sell homes there. Autumn Crest is the name of the new subdivision. The houses will be around 1,700 to 2,000 square feet and construction should begin late June 2021.”

One of the things that has surprised Leslie about the real estate business is how easy it was for her to fit right into it. “Maybe my HR background helped because I understand people and I also understand the legal aspects. But the thing I love the most is helping people, especially first-time home buyers. They are always so



“Now I am in control of my own schedule, so I am more present. I can take a call anywhere and because of my job, our family has the opportunities we have and we get to enjoy each other more. That’s made it nice for me.”



thankful, and I felt early on that they really needed my services.”

Leslie says she also loves how easily real estate fits around her schedule with her children. “I’ve hardly ever missed anything with them, but it used to be hard. Now I am in control of my own schedule, so I am more present. I can take a call anywhere and because of my job, our family has the opportunities we have and we get to enjoy each other more. That’s made it nice for me.”

Keeping her business small and manageable is important to Leslie. “I am not a managing broker. I am a working broker and I am doing exactly what I love. Right now, I have one agent, Tracy Mason, but I’ve had up to three.”

Outside of work and family, Leslie stays active playing tennis and working out. “I’m on three tennis leagues and play three or four times a week. I also work out five or six times a week. I run and I do half marathons. I have done a half Ironman triathlon. It gives me a real sense of accomplishment. I also eat as healthy as possible, which helps me function at my best, but I also love to bake. I have a really good cake recipe and I can decorate a decent cake.”

A big do-it-yourselfer, Leslie and her husband, Charles “Joby” LeDoux, have worked to remodel their home. “I painted our entire house and we built the deck, which took two weeks. I have always wondered why we should pay someone else to do something we can do ourselves.”

This past Easter, Leslie had all her “chickens” home to roost for the family’s annual Easter Feast. “Easter is my favorite holiday and we do it up big. We usually have a big crowd.” It is also a time for Leslie to spend time with her children, Charlie (25), Emily (23) and Jack (20). “We are so blessed.”

MARCH 23RD SOCIAL NIGHT RECAP

Our March 23rd, Social Night was a huge success! Over 100 people came to enjoy the evening.

Many thanks to our Sponsors for making this night happen!

Our Ad Partners provided almost 20 door prizes which were given away, including a \$1,000 cash prize!

Over 20 real estate agencies were represented at the March event.

We always enjoy sending our Features home with a framed copy!







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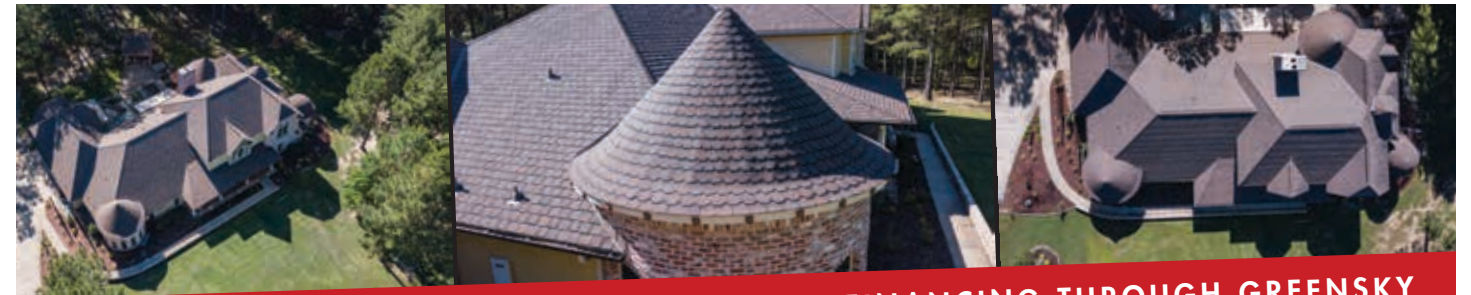


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STEPHEN BRYANT'S

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partner spotlight ◀◀

Written by Susan Marquez | Photography by Abe Draper Photography

WORKS TO HELP REALTORS® SUCCEED

When Stephen Bryant headed up to Mississippi State University after graduating high school in Brandon, he was confident he wanted to go into landscaping. “I majored in landscape contracting, but my senior year of college I realized I didn’t want to do that.” So, he went into pharmaceutical sales. He and his wife, Melanie, moved to Nashville with his job, which they loved. “Nashville was such a fun place to live. But I had the opportunity to move back home with the same company, so we did.”

By 2010, the pharmaceutical industry was changing, and Stephen decided to leave the industry before the industry left him. “I went into construction sales, which was something I was familiar with.” Stephen worked his way up through the company, moving to Houston and taking a more challenging position, but after a while, he realized that is not what he wanted to do. “I was working hard for my family to do the best for them, but because of the hours I worked, I never got to see them. I told my boss that maybe I needed to go back into sales.” He was offered the north Mississippi territory, and the young family moved to Starkville. But his territory was large and he spent a lot of time on the road. “I had to look at other options for my life.”

Stephen looked at franchises and studied business plans, trying to decide what to do next. About the same time, he and Melanie felt led to move back to the Jackson area and they bought an old home to



renovate. That is when he had an “ah-ha” moment. “I paid \$425 to have a home inspection done only to realize I didn’t learn anything about the house that I didn’t already know.” That started a process of inquiry until Stephen pulled the trigger on buying the coursework online. “It still took a year because I was working full time, renovating an old home, and raising children! That was a tough year.”

Stephen started Benchmark Inspections part-time while still working in his other job. He finally took a leap of faith. Leaving behind a car allowance, benefits and perks that come with a corporate job, Stephen made a full-time commitment to the company he founded. “I had always wanted to be a business owner, doing something I like to do.”

About the time he started his business, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Stephen was surprised that his business took off. “It goes to show you have to have faith in what you’re doing.” He started by reaching out to REALTORS® he knew. “I told them what I was doing and asked for the opportunity to serve their clients.” Benchmark Inspections continued to grow organically as REALTORS® referred him

...





Stephen and Melanie have two children, son Gaines (11) and daughter Emerson (8). The children are homeschooled by Stephen on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and they attend St. Augustine school on Tuesday and Thursday. "I pushed for homeschooling, then Covid forced it," says Stephen. "The arrangement we have now works perfectly for us. It saves a lot of planning and I pack as much into the days they are in school as possible." Melanie is an interior designer, so both can plan their own schedules to meet the children's school schedule. "It is such a blessing for me to spend time with them and disciple them," Stephen says. "At the end of the day, I don't measure success by the dollar amount in my bank account. It's more about how I spend my time. That frees me up to think about possibilities for the future."

While it may not always be easy, it is worth it for Stephen and his family. "Life is a journey," he says. And the family has enjoyed the journey, spending time together on trips in their travel trailer. "I'm also a huge outdoor person. I am heading to Colorado soon to go fly fishing and back again in the fall to go elk hunting." The children are involved in soccer and music. "Gaines plays the piano and I play the guitar, so that's fun for us. All in all, I feel quite blessed to have the opportunity to do what I love while spending as much time with my family as possible."



...

to other REALTORS®. Fostering relationships with people and educating them on what he does is the cornerstone of Stephen's business. "I let folks know I can offer professional, quality service, and I can articulately communicate with clients. That's important, because when a REALTOR® refers me to their clients, the work I do reflects on them. I want them to feel confident with me."

Explaining problems he finds to homeowners can be difficult, as often it may be news they don't want to hear. "Some folks aren't happy to hear what I find, but I talk it through with them, explaining what needs to be done. Often it's not as big a deal as they had thought it might be." Stephen explains that a home inspection is important for every home. "Most folks aren't keen and aware of all the systems in a home. Having a trained inspector helps to protect a buyer's investment. A home is the biggest expense in a monthly budget. People don't want to take ownership in something that can be catastrophic down the road." Benchmark Inspections finds problems or potential problems and works to get them corrected before they get out of hand.

GIVE MOM THE GIFT OF HOUSE PLANTS

Flowers are the quintessential Mother's Day gift, with over one-fourth of all holiday flowers sold in the U.S. purchased for this beloved May holiday, mostly for mothers but also for wives and mothers-in-law. According to ProFlowers, while the majority of these flowers were fresh-cut (around 60%), a growing percentage of these special gifts were flowering or green houseplants. After all, fresh flowers, while a gorgeous addition to the decor short-term, eventually wilt and die away; live plants are the gift that keeps on giving! Here are a few sought-after indoor plant choices for Mother's Day gifting:

Orchids

Both elegant and beneficial for the atmosphere of the home – they absorb carbon dioxide and toxins like xylene and formaldehyde – orchids are not your traditional potted plant. They are epiphytes, which means that rather than growing in dirt, they grow on and derive moisture and nutrients from the bark of trees in the wild. Fascinating! These serene stunners have a reputation for being high-maintenance, so pass along these care instructions to Mom: Water weekly via ice cube; soft, indirect light; and plenty of humidity.

String of Pearls

This luxurious-sounding succulent is at the top of many ladies' plant wish lists this year, with very little maintenance required to sustain its quirky, bubble-shaped leaves and attractive, cascad-

ing tendrils, which can grow up to 2 to 3 feet in length. String of pearls can also produce tiny, cinnamon-scented, white flowers, if provided with bright light, plenty of space to sprawl, and well-drained soil.

Fiddle Leaf Fig

The fiddle leaf fig is having its moment right now, and for good reason: This fast-growing broadleaf evergreen, hailing from the tropical rainforest of Western Africa, instantly draws the eye and brings the drama in any room, with its vibrant, lush, violin-shaped leaves contrasted against its slim, prehistoric-looking trunk. It's no surprise the fiddle leaf has been featured in nearly every major design blog or Instagram account over the last several years. This popular houseplant requires bright, indirect sunlight and infrequent watering, allowing soil to dry out almost completely in between.

Snake Plant

This eye-catching plant, also known as sansevieria or mother-in-law's tongue (ha!), is perfect for the lady in your life whose thumb *might* not be green; they are notoriously hard to kill! Low-maintenance snake plants are happy in all types of sunlight and only need watering when the soil is completely dry; they also helpfully remove toxins such as formaldehyde and benzene from the home's atmosphere.

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