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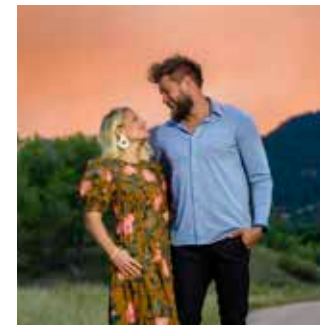
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To elevate the culture in real estate so agents know each other better and treat each other more humanely. Better communication results in smoother transactions, leading to happier clients and more repeat business for everyone involved.

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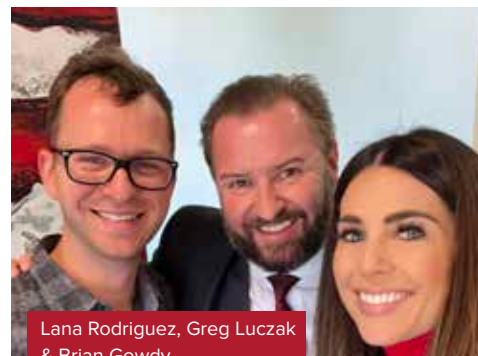


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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Lana Rodriguez, Greg Luczak
& Brian Gowdy

Welcome to our December edition of *Colorado Springs Real Producers*!

Last month I shared a goal of mine: to host more small events. Since writing last month's "Publisher's Note," I've set a total of three events (two magazine celebration parties and a volunteer event), all of which will be over by the time you're reading this. Who knows, maybe by then I will have set a fourth or a fifth event!

Yesterday (as of writing this) was our first-ever magazine celebration party. Despite my anxiety around hosting events, it went well! What made it special to me was getting to witness agents who knew of each other interact face-to-face for the first time. After the event was over, some of them even visited the other agents' social media pages and commented on their *Real Producers* article posts sharing kind words about their story and how much they respect them after getting to know each other. I've been the publisher for *Colorado Springs Real Producers* for two and a half years now, and every once in a while, I will still get surprised by how kind and supportive REALTORS® can be to one another. This was one of those times.

On another note, if you know of a business that would appreciate the opportunity to get their name in front of more real estate agents, we welcome you to introduce them to us. Advertising in *Real Producers* is more than just a print ad; our partners are invited to our events, and I go out of my way to make introductions to REALTORS® who need their services. If you ever have the opportunity to refer us to a potential advertiser (the best referrals are businesses that could potentially be involved with a real estate transaction), we will do our absolute best to bring them strong connections and a return on their investment.

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Written by Brian Gowdy
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ERIC COUNCILL

Eric Councill is not your typical REALTOR®. Beneath his passion for tattoos and drifting cars, Eric thrives on connection and authenticity. He is someone who will leave a high-paying sales job because the organization's ethics aren't in place. He is someone who won't speak poorly of someone just because they wronged him in the past. He is someone who won't judge others for being themselves. And he is someone who holds everyone, no matter their background, to the same ethical standard.

Eric's mother passed away when he was 4 years old. His father wasn't always around, so he and his two older brothers were raised by their grandma, Joy. "It was my oma that taught us life skills. She was a hard-working, intelligent and confident woman," Eric says about her. Coincidentally, she owned her own real estate brokerage, where all of her agents were female. Eric says, "I remember at her funeral, one of her former agents told a story about how she took

her entire office to San Francisco and together they cruised around, looking at houses while drinking Champagne. 'That was Joy,' the agent said. 'She was a classy broad.'"

At 16 years old, Eric began what would become a decade-long path waiting tables, save for a temporary detour into the door-to-door alarm sales industry. Regarding the alarm sales job, Eric says, "The money was great, but the company pushed aggressive sales tactics on us, and my coworkers had no moral compass." While Eric learned more in that job than he had anywhere else, it didn't align with his ethics, nor did he believe in the product. After two years, he went back to waiting tables, making a fraction of what he was selling alarms, and sleeping better at night.

Eric first visited Colorado Springs while visiting his brother Benjamin in 2010. Despite having bought a house for himself back in Florida, he fell in love with the Springs and decided to move.

"I'm a believer in moving out of your hometown," Eric says. "Once you experience living in a new city, you either realize that you come from a great place and grow to appreciate it more, or you realize there is a big world out there with lots of amazing places to live and see."

Eric was working four jobs when he earned his real estate license in January 2018. He was a welder at a car shop, he was a server at B.J.'s Brewhouse, he was an Uber driver, he was the property manager of his home in Florida, and, after making the leap, he became a real estate agent with Keller Williams Partners.

Starting out, he expected clients to just fall from the sky. No one in real estate school taught him what the job of being a real estate agent actually entailed. Despite being advised against it during training, Eric made the

strategic decision to join a team. "I knew the first year was a make or break in the industry, so I made what I consider to be the rational decision. It's better to make 50% of something than 100% of nothing."

Eric stayed on the team for 10 months, making countless connections, notably Brittney Welch, who would go on to introduce him to future partner in business Joel Nath. "When I first met Joel, I knew he was highly intelligent, he understood the industry, and we had similar mindsets towards the job." Three years later, Eric and Joel opened their own real estate firm, Stone Gable Realty.

The vision for Stone Gable Realty was to build a quality, close-knit firm with a heart for hyper-local-focused REALTORS®. "We're small; we have

under 30 agents and, regardless of being solo or a team, everyone is closer to each other than when I was at larger offices.

"As an owner, we get to design our culture. We work hard and have a good time. I'm proud of how our agents' minds work when it comes to handling our clients."

Eric would also love to give a shoutout to Ashlee Nath who has been integral in both the brokerage's direction and in Eric's business. "Ashlee is passionate about real estate in a way that I strive to one day compete with, and she has the biggest heart." Outside real estate, Eric and his fiancée, Renelle, have two dogs: Jack, the Great Dane, and Peelite, the pocket pit bull. Together, Eric says, they are Scooby and Scrappy Doo. Plus, they have a cat named Banana and five chickens.

•••





•••

Eric loves drifting and racing cars. He has six in total, plus one motorcycle. He also loves tattoos; he doesn't keep count of how many he has, but he says he has at least 60 hours' worth of work. "My tattoos started off sentimental; I have a letter that my mother wrote shortly before she passed on my side. But now I'm just collecting art."

And if you know Eric well, you know about the Chiquita stickers. Growing up, Eric's father would stick Chiquita banana stickers on everything from race cars to random objects for good luck. Years later, Eric has taken up his mantle, stepping his father's "Chiquita game" up a notch. Each year, Eric

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”



“
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 BREATHS IN THIS
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 gets a new Chiquita sticker custom designed and he buys them in bulk. The trick is, you can't purchase a Chiquita sticker from Eric; you either have to leave a five-star review for a local, family-owned business or make a donation to a charity to get your hands on one.

As a human, Eric is a firm believer in being honest and genuine. He attributes those traits as two of the biggest reasons for his professional success. "We all get a finite number of breaths in this world. I don't care what a person does, how they spend their time, or what their interests

are. I will never judge a person AS LONG AS they handle their responsibilities and they are not hurting others in the process." Eric loves people; real estate is just the outlet.

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Brandon Tomic

Brandon Tomic got his first taste of real estate at twenty-three years old when he and a friend formulated a plan to develop a rundown area near UCCS to become the “Ivywild of the North.” The two met with several investors and potential companies and gathered enough verbal commitments to believe it was going to happen. “We were stupid twenty-three year olds,” Brandon says, now knowing better than to treat verbal agreements as set in stone.

Brandon grew up in Seattle. His dad was involved with a startup during the dot-com bubble and, like many other companies, their stock dropped from a high value to nothing over night. Brandon was nine years old at the time. “I remember my parents being careful to not fight around us but you could sense the uneasiness and unrest in the air.”

...



“ I LOVE MY JOB. IT’S TAUGHT ME TO BE MORE CONFIDENT, REGIMENTED, AND A BETTER PROBLEM SOLVER. AND I CARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE.”



•••

Brandon moved to Colorado Springs in 2012 to attend UCCS. Around that time, he held a variety of jobs from being a ranch hand at a shooting range to a barista at Starbucks. He was introduced to sales while working for Verizon and Enterprise. “I knew I was good at sales, but the sales positions I held back then had me selling a product that no one wanted.”

Drained in his job, Brandon wanted something new. And so, he and a friend put together a plan to develop the “Ivywild of the North.” Before things fell through, the real estate agent they were working with walked them through the process and Brandon saw a shade of his new future.

“Moving into real estate was me selling myself to become the person who could get people to where they wanted to be!” Coming from a dead-end job where he didn’t believe in the product, it was a meaningful shift.

Brandon earned his license in late 2017 and started in 2018. His first year was humbling to say the least. The training he attended coached him to call all his friends to see if they wanted to buy or sell their homes. In short, it led to him getting ghosted by fifty-five people in six months.

While such a start was defeating, he took it as a lesson. “I learned that real estate was a numbers game. For every hundred people I talked to, roughly five would entertain me. Of those five, two would agree to meet. Of those two, one would actually meet me. Half of who would meet would qualify to buy or sell. So all I needed to do was walk up to 6,000 people! Easy right?” Despite the sarcasm, Brandon went on to sell twenty-nine homes his first year.

“I love my job. It’s taught me to be more confident, regimented, and a better problem solver. And I care about the people.” Today, Brandon is an agent with 6035 Real Estate Group and he owns four properties, three of which are investments. His goal is to cover all his personal expenses by just his rental income.”

Looking down the road, Brandon envisions having a small, yet powerful team of some of the best agents in the city. “I want to grow my career, but more importantly, I want to grow others’ careers.” It’s taken a lot to get him where he is today, sharing that he would have never made it this far without his incredible clients, his wife and family, and friends who have always had his back.

Outside real estate, Brandon loves snowboarding, hockey, and music. He’s been playing guitar since he was twelve and he even plays bass in a band with his friends; their name is Sleep Academy.



Left to right: Ben Stratman, partner with Creative Carpet Care and AmeriDri Restoration; Troy MacDonald; Brandy Brown; Brian Gowdy; Kendall Sukach; Doug Barber; Krystal Mucha; Chris Franquemont, partner with Guaranteed Rate

OUR OCTOBER MAGAZINE CELEBRATION PARTY

In our November 2022 "Publisher's Note," Brian Gowdy committed to testing out a brand new event: Magazine Celebration Party. On Oct. 19, we hosted our very first one! We were so lucky to have every REALTOR® and partner highlighted in our October edition present (plus a few bonus peeps). Thanks to everyone for coming!

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SAVING VIOLET

a property management holiday tale

As property managers, we're out there in the real world dealing with all kinds of situations. Some, we've detailed here in this magazine. Today, we bring you a heart-warming story about how the folks at All County® Colorado Springs, CRMC came together to save a cat named Violet, and the blessings it brought to us all.

One morning, Julie went to a vacated property to do an assessment. A cat ran in as she opened the front door, straight to an empty food bowl. It seemed the family left the cat behind without food or water, outside in the elements. This hungry cat, practically still a kitten, melted Julie's heart. White and gray, fluffy and sweet, it purred and rubbed against her leg, happy to see someone had finally come home. Julie grabbed a carrier from home, packed up the cat, and took her back to the office. Sue, a property manager in our office, decided to take her home.

Sue named her Violet, and the next stop was the vet. He examined Violet, and found an infection of coccidia and microscopic parasites living in her intestinal walls. The biggest surprise was that although she was only 7-months-old, she was pregnant. Soon Sue helped Violet bring her kittens into the world--2 girls and 2 boys. She cared for them for 2 months before trying to find them homes.

Three of the kittens were adopted by staff members, and the other two with Sue's friends. From that one visit to the vacated rental property, the office went on a 2-month-long journey that found homes for five cats, and blessed many people. It is stories like this one that make property management so rewarding.



"Yoshi Bear is the only cat I've ever had that goes on the morning walk with me and my dog. It's impossible to go through the day without a smile on my face."

YOSHI BEAR

"I never underestimate the power for love and healing that pets bring, and I am so grateful to be a part of this sweet adventure. I love Violet and Iris with all my heart, and my dogs love them as well. Because of them my home is full of love and laughter." --Sue



VIOLET



IRIS

"Leaf brings so much joy and happiness to my life. She loves cuddling and playing fetch with her favorite toy, her platypus."

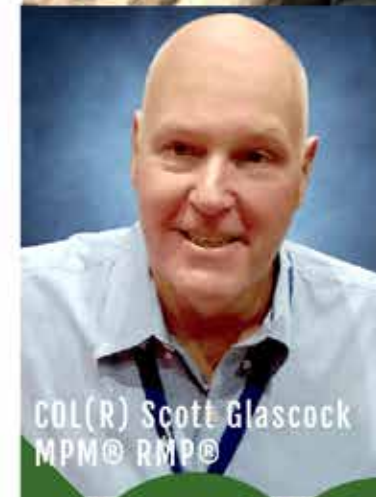


LEAF

"Umi is a cute circus monkey. His lighthearted antics have brought peace to my home by settling down my other pets."



UMI



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▶▶ partner spotlight

Written by Brian Gowdy
Casa Bay Photography

DAN O'BRIEN

NORTHPOINTE BANK

Danny O'Brien lost everything when he tore his ACL on the football field. In that life-altering moment, he lost his mobility, his dreams, community and his identity. "Football was my life. When I lost that, I no longer knew who I was."

After his injury, Danny's dream was to be a part of others' recovery plans. He didn't want anyone to go through what he went through after his injury ended his football career and through his entire life. He had plans to go to medical school but, with the uncertainty of the Affordable Care Act, he wasn't sure he wanted to take on \$400,000 in debt and sacrifice his 20s working to pay it off. Instead, he entered the orthopedic sales field.

For 10 years, Danny worked as a medical device representative for ConMed. His job was to train and teach physicians how to use orthopedic equipment. While it aligned with his goal of helping others

heal, it had him on call 24/7. "I was driving three hours one-way just to meet a doctor." He had no work-life balance. He had no time with his family. And he was missing out on his kids growing up.

The day he finally burned out, Danny texted all of his business contacts, asking them if he could send them his resume; Todd Crane with Northpointe Bank responded. "I told Todd that I didn't know much about the mortgage industry other than I had one." But Todd told him that he could learn. And so, he joined Todd at Northpointe Bank.

...



...

“I wished I had started 10 years earlier,” Danny said. While the mortgage industry didn’t heal torn ACLs, it helped people in a deeper way.

As a lender, Danny brings a unique approach when it comes to helping his REALTOR® partners. First, he is NOT a one-stop shop. “I would rather specialize in what I do best rather than try and offer basic solutions to everyone’s unique problems.”

Second, when Danny meets a REALTOR®, he wants to meet their existing lenders as well. “There is enough business out there for all of us, and stepping forward with a purpose of collaboration lowers everyone’s guards.”

When approaching another lender, Danny wants to know where he can best help them. If there is a specific loan that he doesn’t offer, he wants to have allies in the industry who he can refer to get the job done. In contrast, when a REALTOR® or another lender has a challenging situation, Danny would love to serve as a second set of eyes on it. “If neither myself nor the other lender can find a solution, then the loan probably isn’t viable. But if one of us has the right tool to solve the problem, let’s let that person solve it.” What Danny doesn’t want is for REALTORS® to feel obligated to alternate between their lenders so that everyone receives an equal number of loan referrals. Let the person who is best equipped to help the client help the client.

When one of Danny’s best friends was applying for a construction loan, the friend asked for quotes from both Danny and another bank. It turned out the other offer beat out Danny’s, and so he told his friend to go with the other bank.

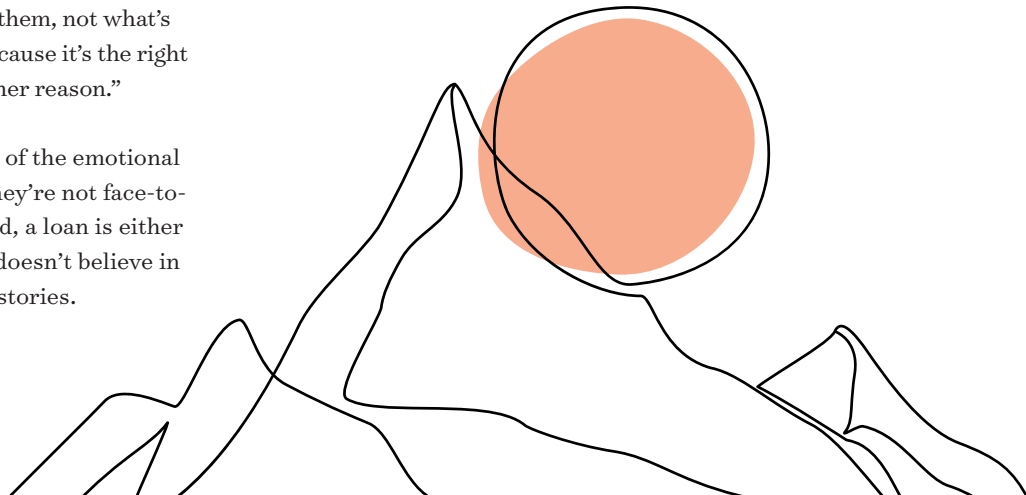
“Ultimately, I’m an advisor. When a buyer is coming forward with their lifetime’s worth of earnings, it’s our job to think of what’s best for them, not what’s best for us. You do what’s right because it’s the right thing to do. You don’t need any other reason.”

It’s easy for a lender to lose track of the emotional side of the transaction because they’re not face-to-face with the client and, in the end, a loan is either doable or not doable. But Danny doesn’t believe in distancing himself from people’s stories.



“Sometimes you have a client who needs a particular home for the sake of their child’s education. Maybe they only have the one car and the kid would have to walk to school so they need something nearby.” It’s situations like these that make Danny so committed to what he does. One of his life dreams is to have an “Undercover Boss” moment where you meet someone who is working to make ends meet and you have the opportunity to gift them something significant, like a car, that would immediately solve a huge problem in their life. Being able to change someone’s life’s trajectory is Danny’s big “why.”

“A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking because her trust is not on the branch but on its own wings.” — Unknown



“
There is enough business out there for all of us, and stepping forward with a purpose of collaboration lowers everyone’s guards.
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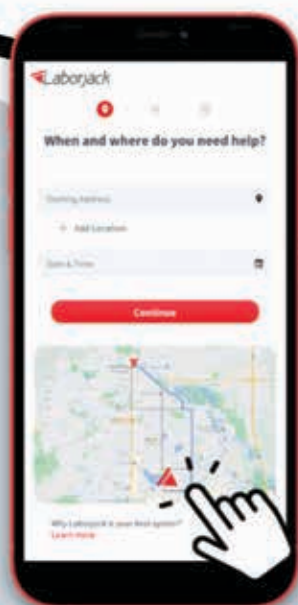
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REAL ESTATE EXPERIENCE

Event by Lana Rodriguez

On Sept. 27, Lana Rodriguez hosted the first ever ELEVATE The Real Estate Experience event! Ten speakers from across the country gathered for the all-day conference to expand

agents' mindsets and educate on how to grow agents' businesses and master their lead-generation opportunities. Look out for another ELEVATE conference next year!





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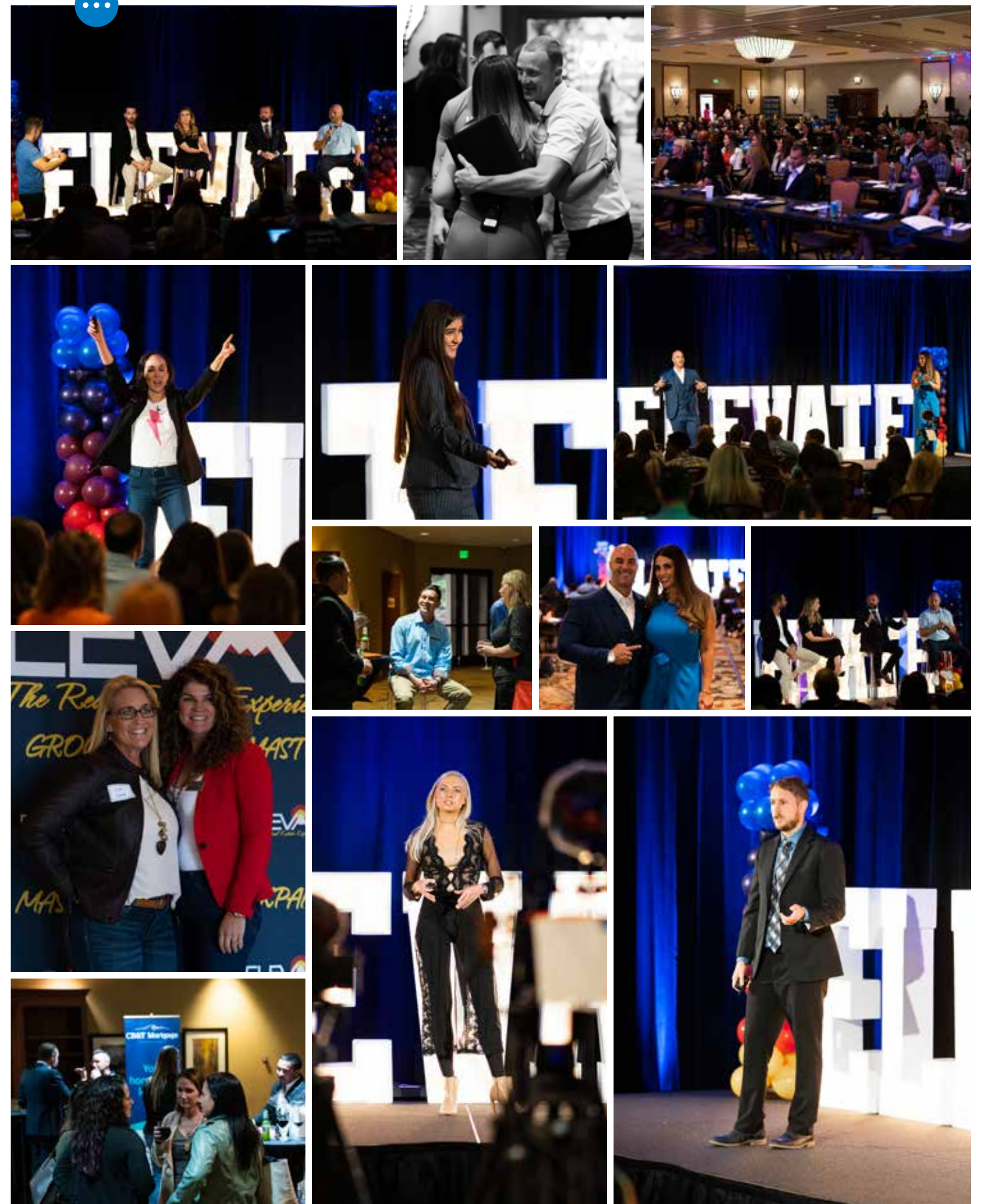


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Michelle GARRIGAN

Yellow Ribbon REALTY

In the midst of the struggles and instability that young Michelle Garrigan and her family endured, a woman named Sarah became Michelle's mentor and role model. After her parents divorced, she spent time in two different cities, and several homes, in Connecticut. Through Sarah's lifestyle lessons and her gentle instruction, Michelle learned healthy habits and how to set high standards for herself in school, work and life. Sarah taught Michelle that family was about the heart, not biological relationships.

With Sarah's encouragement, Michelle went to college right out of high school. Her goal was to be a family law attorney so she could advocate for children like herself. She set aside her "high school" jobs in retail and fast food and accepted a full-time job as a receptionist for a mortgage company. As the school year progressed, Michelle found it hard to focus on a full-time job *and* full-time class load.

GROWING A FAMILY

After an exciting summer, Michelle married a military man stationed in Georgia at Fort Stewart. Though she was almost 22, she had never lived so far from family and friends. During his deployment, Michelle learned the skill of making her own "family" by getting to know some of the other military wives.

She also got a job with a real estate company that became, and remains to this day, an extension of her family. Michelle began working as a receptionist, and after two years, she transitioned to property management. She enjoyed working as a leasing consultant, and shortly after her

son, Matthew, was born, Michelle accepted a similar position with a new company.

In 2006, Matthew was 7 months old and her husband was deployed, but Michelle bought her first house. It was enough to whet her appetite, and in 2008 she became a licensed REALTOR® in Georgia.

In 2010 Michelle welcomed her daughter, Hailey, into her family. Two years later, her family dynamics changed, and the Garrigans moved to Colorado Springs. Michelle settled into her new life and then became a licensed Colorado REALTOR® in September 2013.

Although Michelle had been a top solo buyer's agent at the boutique brokerage in Georgia, Colorado Springs was a completely different market.

Shortly before Thanksgiving 2013, Michelle had her first day of "floor duty." She received a call from a couple moving from her Fort Stewart. Although Michelle had lived there for years, she did not know the soldier or his wife, Crystal, prior to that day. The women felt a sisterly connection as soon as they met, and the couple not only became Michelle's first Colorado buyers but she and Crystal became lifelong friends.

GROWING RELATIONSHIPS

Michelle's first year as a REALTOR® in Colorado Springs was tough because there were procedural learning curves, and the market was much different. She changed brokerages several times before she found the right fit.

...

CREATING
RELATIONSHIPS
TO CHANGE LIVES

▶▶ real producer

Written by Ruth Gnirk
Photography by Heidi Mossman
of Capture Life Photography



...

She was filled with compassion for families who needed to rent, and even though there was not much financial reward, serving renters allowed her to connect with military families who needed help navigating the new location. For the second half of her first year as an agent in Colorado, Michelle also worked as a receptionist at another boutique brokerage. After selling 11 homes “on the side,” her mentor, Kenton Carew, helped her become a full-time REALTOR®.

Michelle continued to focus on building connections and gaining experience. She learned how to help many of her renters become buyers. By the end of her second year, Michelle had tripled her business and made Peak Producers for the first time.

She had been a strong believer in referrals for years, and in 2015 she was introduced to Brian Buffini’s Working by Referral system. She was delighted to find out more ways to cultivate what she was already trying to do to connect and relate with clients. Michelle was more concerned about serving than staying top of mind, but it was nice to learn to do both.

In 2016 Michelle completed 67 transactions, all referrals, with very little help and no transaction coordinator or assistant. She decided to create The Michelle Garrigan Team. In mid-2017, Michelle followed her mentor Kenton to KW, and in 2018 she became an investor in KW Freedom. She also earned her broker’s license in 2018 and decided to take a big leap of faith.

In 2018 Michelle also hired her first assistant and transaction coordinator as well as a buyer’s agent, Alex McDonagh, who is invaluable to the team still to this day.

A former military buyer, Alex had purchased his first home with Michelle and then decided he



wanted to start a career in real estate. Michelle was honored to mentor the new agent and build up her team.

In 2019 Michelle gave up her shares in KW Freedom and started her own brokerage, which she named Yellow Ribbon Realty & Property Management. Michelle and her team focus on serving the community’s military families, and most of the Yellow Ribbon agents are veterans or military spouses.

As a REALTOR® and now a broker, Michelle has never been one to focus on numbers but on building relationships. As she consistently chose quality over production, Michelle organically recruited team members who became like family and received solid referrals from the community.

“
When I was growing up, my family needed the donations of others; now it is my time to give back.
”

Her “work family” experienced natural growth as clients became agents and joined the Yellow Ribbon team.

GROWING IN SERVICE

As a long-time member of Peak Producers, Michelle helps fund community projects for nonprofits. She also likes to donate personally when she hears of local needs for individuals, families, children or military personnel.

Michelle has participated in bike giveaways, backpack drives at the Autism Center and fundraising after crises. She is quick to volunteer her time to

serve others and loves making gift baskets for clients welcoming a new baby into the family.

Every year Michelle takes her kids on a trip to a new destination. She and Hailey, age 12, are looking forward to a trip to Europe with a school group in 2023. Hailey, who loves to cook and bake from scratch, also enjoys craft projects and loves anime. At 17, Matthew is a senior in high school with his eyes on an applied sciences course in machining from Pikes Peak State College. He loves building things and is very helpful around the house. The trio love Manitou Springs and traveling. Michelle and Hailey both love taking photos when they are

...



...
 out on walks or exploring new places. Michelle is proud of both of her children, who are well-rounded and adjusted and care about others.

Even before her move from Georgia to Colorado, Michelle has been collecting friends and growing an extended "family." She and several other women became a cheer squad for each other. Then, several years ago, Michelle started intentionally getting the whole "girl tribe" together to make memories. The group included her friend from middle school; the fresh Army wife, Crystal (her first CO client, who is now a Yellow Ribbon agent herself); Cheri, a local KW agent; another friend-turned REALTOR® in North Carolina; and her neighbor and co-worker from Georgia. The lifelong friends, now connected to each other through Michelle, have been taking annual "girls' trips" together.

"I did not grow to where I am by being transactional," Michelle reflected. "I got to where I am by being *relational*. I am so thankful for Sarah, and others, who helped me learn how to care about others and how to follow through on tasks and projects. When I was growing up, my family needed the donations of others; now it is my time to give back. I love helping families make their dreams of homeownership come true, and I love creating a sense of 'family' wherever I am."



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FUN FACTS ABOUT YOUR FELLOW AGENTS & PARTNERS

To read more about your fellow agents, add Brian Gowdy on Facebook. He posts short bios and fun facts about each agent on his personal page! If you haven't met Brian yet, he would love to meet you! Brian's contact: 719-313-3028, brian.gowdy@realproducersmag.com, or Facebook message him!



Every month, **Ben Stratman** (pictured on the right) and the team at Creative Carpet Care and AmeriDri Restoration take a day off to do community service, whether it's picking up trash, delivering food cans or volunteering at a local nonprofit!



Aracely Arvizu dropped out of school in the seventh grade to take care of her family. Later in life, she wound up adopting her two brothers, raising them alongside her two children to save them from the foster system.



Alexis Glover was Miss Colorado USA for the 2022 Miss USA pageant!



Danielle Frisbie has a passion for taking care of animals who need a bit of extra love, such as a three-legged chinchilla, an asthmatic rat, an epileptic dog and more!

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