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## Corrections Corner

Our sincerest apologies to Portrait Artist Carol Walker, owner of Thomas Bruce Studio. In our December issue, Carol should have been credited for the photos of Team Leader Melinda Pursuitte. Carol, you are an asset to our staff and we are honored to have you on board. Thank you for your years of service to *Real Producers*.

MEET THE  
**TAMPA BAY**  
REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



**Don Hill**  
Area Director



**Abby Weber**  
Business  
Development Director



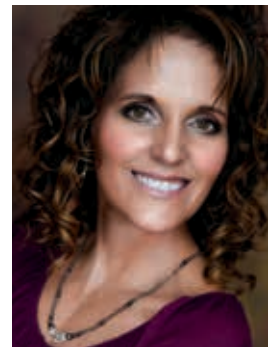
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- Clean, wash or paint your patio furniture
- Declutter the porch
- Powerwash the porch
- Clean the grill
- Check outdoor lights and/or add new lighting
- Clean windows and doors leading to the outdoor living space
- Add plants and/or flowers
- Remove and prune dead plants, flowers, trees, and shrubs
- Add fresh mulch to flower beds
- Mow the lawn
- Add citronella candles
- Add pillows and cushions to outdoor furniture
- Clean, wash or paint the garage door
- Remove cobwebs in the garage and outdoor areas
- De-clutter the garage
- Clean the garage floor
- Organize outdoor items
- Clean out the refrigerator/freezer chest in the garage
- Set up a recycling station or spare pantry
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## Publisher's

# NOTE

"All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt."  
- Charles M. Schulz

Hello, Top Producers!

Happy Valentine's Day to each and every one of you. Take time to cherish those closest to you, whether friends, family, or clients. A heartfelt note of gratitude or a small gift can go a long way in a digital age. Investing in others makes the world a smaller place as we put people first. In a service-driven industry, real estate is all about helping others and being

a bridge to help them achieve their goals, whether securing investment property or their dream home.

I am grateful to have met many of you - whether on Zoom or face to face. Connections are important in real estate. That's where *Real Producers* is happy to help. Read about those who are putting others first, helping people find the homes of their dreams, or are just making a difference in the community. Real estate has rich rewards, whether is in the smiles

of clients or in planning a well-deserved vacation for a job well done.

I look forward to meeting more of you in the days and months to come.

Until next month!



**Don Hill, Publisher**  
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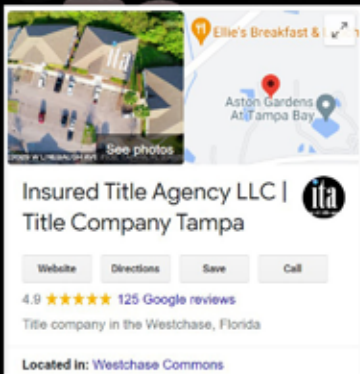
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Elizabeth McCabe



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▶ cover story

# Vanessa leonard

“I love every aspect of real estate,” says REALTOR® Vanessa Leonard. “It’s absolutely amazing and fun.”

Real estate wasn’t always on the radar for Vanessa. After graduating from USF with a business degree, Vanessa learned about an opportunity in REO properties, working with real estate agents and making homes ready for sale. Working as a relocation coordinator for a bank, she excelled in managing the REO market and was promoted and recruited to Kansas City. Vanessa worked in the

home warranty department of a major franchise before being promoted to VP of HR and training.

“We put together training programs for agents nationwide on how to sell houses and promote the services of the company,” she says. After taking a couple of years off and having children, Vanessa moved back to Florida and worked as a real estate assistant for the Kennedy Team, a top team in Tampa, before moving to Pinellas County and working for a couple of teams as their licensed assistant – doing marketing

and contract to closing processing as well as some listing and selling.

#### Starting a Team

In 2013, Vanessa started her own team, the Vanessa Leonard Group now with Keller Williams Realty. She started a team out of necessity to better serve her clients.

She comments, “Our team is a family. Before our weekly meeting, we read a devotional and then share what we are grateful for and/or how we have been blessed during the week. The

“  
I love every  
aspect of  
real estate.

It’s absolutely  
amazing and fun.

Lord has continually blessed our business, and we are humbled, honored and delighted.”

Vanessa leads a team of eight. Her husband, Scott Leonard, is an asset to the team, especially with his background of 15 years in the residential mortgage industry. He has been a licensed REALTOR® for 20 years. With his servant’s heart, he does whatever needs to be done, whether that is sitting at home inspections, showing homes, changing a lightbulb, picking up supplies for the office or removing/changing lockboxes at listings. He willingly jumps in to help out in any way that is needed.

Shannon Mott serves as the Team’s Director of Marketing and manages the listings from contact to contract. Prior to relocating to Florida, Shannon worked in two real estate offices in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. She has a background in education, mainly in leadership positions that required excellent communication, customer service, and close attention to detail.





Kimberly Fickett works as the Team's Director of Operations and handles the files from contract to close. With 15 years of experience in the title industry, she is a valued member of the team. Kimberly has knowledge of all types of real estate transactions and has strong customer service skills and goes the extra mile for clients to ensure their satisfaction.

REALTOR® Maryanne Davis has resided in the Tampa Bay area for over 15 years. Prior to moving to Florida, Maryanne excelled as a licensed REALTOR® in the Chicago area. Additionally, she worked as a marketing coordinator for a major Chicago real estate developer. She serves the team by being the lead agent helping with training.

As a people person with an extensive background in the hospitality and service industry, REALTOR® Lisa Miller enjoys meeting new people and looks forward to helping clients find the right house for them. She also values teamwork that results in excellence.

In 2019, REALTOR® Laurie Finger joined the Vanessa Leonard Group. Originally from upstate New York, Laurie moved to Tampa Bay in 2002 and entered real estate in 2015. For the past 11 years, Laurie has worked full-time with an outdoor recreation ministry as missions and prosperity director. She is proud to have an extensive background in sales, hospitality, education and photography.

Last but not least is Sara Taylor, who joined the group a little over a year ago. She has worked in real estate since 1997, starting as a marketing assistant for a small luxury real estate firm in Long Island, New York. Sara moved to Palm Harbor in 2013 and continued her career in real estate. She has a thorough understanding of the local real estate market, strong business acumen, and helps achieve client satisfaction.

Vanessa couldn't be happier with her team and with working for Keller Williams. She comments, "I joined Keller Williams five years ago and

absolutely love it. It's wonderful for teams, and they offer great training and a good support system." She likes KW Cares, which takes care of people in need.

#### Riding the Waves

Through her decades of real estate, Vanessa had seen the ups and downs of the market.

"I've ridden some waves," she says. "I remember the 18-percent interest rates in the '80s and the crash of 2008. This [2021] is the wildest. We are having to get MORE creative to get clients in their homes, especially if they aren't cash."

#### Secrets to Success

When it comes to her secret to success, Vanessa attributes it to service. She explains, "We go above and beyond to meet our clients' needs." She and her team partner with their clients and follow them through to closing. They have met vendors at the house, including window washers, pressure washers, and stagers. With



minor improvements, houses can sell for top dollar.

"We want to work with all people, from those who are renting to those who are looking for multi-million-dollar homes. We are about providing a service to people who are looking for a place to call home," says Vanessa.

Vanessa's business keeps growing. She reflects, "Every year we keep getting more clients through referrals

from past clients as well as repeat business. It's been amazing. We love what we do, and so we never feel like we work a day in our lives."

#### Outside Interests

When Vanessa isn't working, you can find her with her family. She has been married to Scott for 16 years, and they have been together for 19 years.

Vanessa has two children, who are both married. Four months ago, she

welcomed their first grandson. Now Vanessa's daughter is expecting in March. She couldn't be happier. "My daughter wanted to be a mom her entire life," smiles Vanessa. Now her dreams are coming true.

Other hobbies for Vanessa include being involved in her church where she and Scott co-lead a group. Vanessa also loves hiking to relax and unwind. Her favorite vacation destinations include cruising, the Grand Canyon, and Zion.

"Anything I can do with my family is awesome," she says. She is very good friends with both sets of in-laws and feels so blessed with her extended family.

We are honored to feature Vanessa in this month's issue. For more information on this cover story, check out her website, [vanessaleonard.com](http://vanessaleonard.com).

“Our team is a family. Before our weekly meeting, we read a devotional and then share what we are grateful for and/or how we have been blessed during the week.”

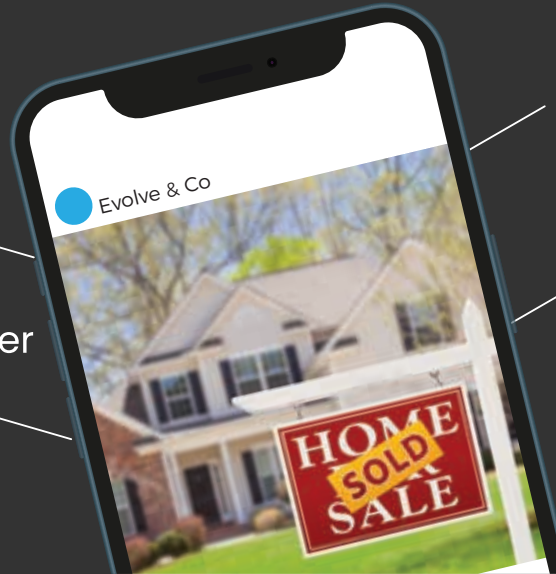


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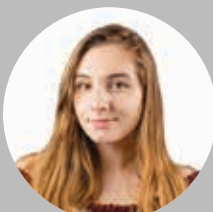
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Written by  
Elizabeth McCabe

# Caring TRANSITIONS

## ►► sponsor spotlight

### Offering Senior Relocation, Downsizing and Estate Sales

When it comes to senior relocation, downsizing, and estate sales, TLC is needed. That's where Laura Bruce, owner of the Tampa Bay franchise Caring Transitions, is happy to help.

"I purchased the franchise in January 2018," says Laura. She genuinely likes her job, commenting, "I like throwing away stuff and clearing out clutter." With her sense of organization, planning, and

attention to detail, she helps seniors move to their new home, declutter, downsize, and can even take care of unwanted possessions.

Laura and her compassionate staff come to the rescue for clients, who may feel overwhelmed. They may not even know where to begin, especially when family may not live locally. Laura helps seniors get to their new place with ease.



"People may have collected items for years," says Laura. "Often their children don't want their china, crystal, or furniture. In today's world, for a lot of people, that's a crushing blow. We work very hard to sell those items." She tells seniors that their items are going to be treasured for years to come in their new home.

#### A National Network

Caring Transitions is proud to be the largest senior move management company in the country. With over 220 franchises, it simplifies the process of assisting seniors with moving.

"If seniors move out of town or out of state, there is a good chance that there is a Caring Transitions in the town where they are moving. We try to coordinate with our franchise partners as much as possible and they can receive the client on the other side," says Laura.

#### Complimentary Consultations

Caring Transitions simplifies the process for individuals. Often seniors are downsizing to a new home or transitioning to assisted living. Laura explains, "It's a decision that is made because of a family loss of a loved one or a medical event. Or an individual can't live safely and securely on their own. They may need the extra care that assisted living communities provide."

Laura and her staff offer complimentary consultations, assessing

what people want to take with them to their new home. They also help them understand the floor plan and space plan of their new place and help them select furniture and items accordingly.

"When you're moving from a 2,500-square-foot home to a 600-square-foot apartment, there isn't a lot of room for stuff," explains Laura. "We work with individuals in terms of downsizing, taking items that 1) they need to live with and 2) items that have special meaning. We don't want people to have regrets about leaving something behind. For items that don't make the move, we help people with liquidation needs as well."

Online auctions and personal estate sales can be held for clients. Laura explains, "In-person estate sales are determined by the location of the home, whether it is in a gated community, and the amount of items available for sale." Sometimes HOA restrictions might not allow for an estate sale. Online auctions are a great solution.

Online auctions grew in popularity with the pandemic. Now buyers can peruse items digitally, which is convenient. With professional photographs and item descriptions, people can see items and enhance their shopping experience. Caring Transitions schedules pickup times to manage the flow of traffic for a three- or four-hour pickup.

#### Packing and Resettling Professionals

When it comes to packing, it makes sense to trust the professionals, especially for seniors. Caring Transitions packs everything with care, properly labeling boxes, noting the placement of specific items, such as the bedside table set up or items from the curio cabinet so that when the boxes are unpacked to resettle the client, everything is placed where it should be. The level of care and detail is critical for these types of moves to help remove as many of the stressors as possible. "We plug in the coffeemaker and toaster, connect the TVs and computers, make the beds and put the toiletries away. We want the client to feel like they are coming home to familiar surroundings when they first walk in," says Laura.

#### Working with REALTORS®

Caring Transitions is proud to work with area REALTORS® and their clients. Most times REALTORS® contact Laura to help with senior relocation and clearing out a house in preparation for a closing. At the end of the process and before closing, the house will be completely emptied out and left broom swept. Clients also search for Caring Transitions through Facebook, Google, Yelp, and their websites.

"We also receive referrals from senior living communities in the Tampa Bay area," explains Laura. Caring Transitions is on the list of approved vendors.

"No job is too big or too small," says Laura. "We work with our clients to the absolute best of our ability, whether that client is the REALTOR® or the senior who is moving out. We try to help guide them based on our knowledge and our experience."

We are honored to feature Caring Transitions in this month's issue. For more information, check out their website, [www.caringtransitionstampa.com](http://www.caringtransitionstampa.com), or call 813-235-0685. To see items currently available for sale in the online auctions, go to [Tampa.CTBIDS.com](http://Tampa.CTBIDS.com).



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# LAURA MARIE

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By  
Dave Danielson



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Clients who prepare to make their way through a real estate transaction are almost always entering a process that they have either never experienced, or one that has changed since the last time they made a purchase or sale.

In turn, they rely on a professional REALTOR® to help them make their way through to a successful conclusion. Laura Marie cherishes the vital role that she plays.

As a REALTOR® with Douglas Elliman, Laura provides current market knowledge and genuine guidance for those she serves.

“That’s the part I love the most about what I do ... being able to make a really big, positive difference in people’s lives. Even before the current market challenges, one of the major stressors in life is buying a house. It doesn’t matter if you are a first-time homebuyer or have more experience,” Laura explains.

“I like helping my clients understand the process, so that if they are buying or selling, they can feel empowered and confident in their choices. They can relax knowing that my team and I have their back every step of the way, before, during and after their transaction.”

#### Her Journey to a New Life

Laura earned her real estate license in 2015. But her story really started in her earlier life in Maine and Western Massachusetts.

“Working in real estate in Florida has really helped me have a rebirth in life. I moved here seven years ago from the north. I had just come through a divorce and lost my grandmother through illness,” Laura says.

“I was blessed that my mom and my best friend were in a position to move, and both had a strong desire to make the transition to St Petersburg. We were done with northern winters, and the call of the ocean and vibrant lifestyle of St. Petersburg made it a perfect match.”

#### Entering a New Door

Real estate is a natural extension of Laura’s background.



“I grew up in construction and in a cabinet shop. I love home and creating backyard paradises. I love what a smart investment real estate is for building wealth opportunities if you are informed and do it smart. I have a passion to help people with their real estate process and make it easier than mine has been in the past. I consider myself a Real Estate Advisor that helps people make those smart decisions.”

#### Easing the Transition

The transition to Florida was blissful. The transition into a full-time, professional REALTOR® was a lot of long days, blood, sweat and tears. It was worth every moment because it immersed Laura into the Tampa Bay area, helping her to quickly find her way around and where the gems, treasures, and disasters are.

“I have been blessed to meet the most amazing people through real estate. From my clients to the service professionals that are part of my concierge services.”

...



#### Gaining Ground

Laura has continued to build her business through time with great success. One of her specialties is working both with on-market and off-market deals," she says. "I like to create opportunities for my clients. Helping people get ahead of the market and winning the deal for them is one of my things."

I love what I get to do and the people that I have the opportunity to serve each day as their REALTOR®. At this point in time, 95% of my business comes from repeat clients and referrals," she says.

Her mother, Ariana Shelton, joined her full-time last year as her Director of Operations, and her team, LM

Home Group at Douglas Elliman, continues to grow as they enter 2022.

#### Fulfilling Life

Away from work, Laura enjoys a wide range of activities, including dancing, with a passion for Argentine Tango, biking, helping rescue animals, sailing, designing jewelry, spending time with her dogs, Rosa and Louie, and any and all things to do with the ocean. She also has a passion for biodynamic gardening and working with Florida native plants. Being a massive foodie, when asked, she will tell you "I navigate my way by food."

"My grandmother was a Master Gardener, so part of my passion doing that is an homage to her," she says.

“  
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When it comes to giving back to the community, Laura gets involved with groups such as Feeding Tampa Bay. In fact, with each purchase, sale or referral, she makes an additional donation to the organization.

"It's one of the gifts real estate has brought me ... being able to contribute at a higher level," she emphasizes. "If I can do one small thing to ease some of our community's suffering, that's what I want to do."

The people who have a chance to get to know and work with Laura appreciate her caring, thorough nature, savvy negotiation abilities and how she applies her gifts to helping them.

"My clients are an incredible blessing to me. People I work with become friends," she says. "Something that is a big badge of honor for me is effectively representing my clients. It's very precious, and I don't take it for granted."



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» broker feature

# Peggy

## NARUNS

### Founder of Northstar Realty

Written by Elizabeth McCabe

**When you grow up in a family consisting of eleven children, one thing you may develop is a competitive edge. Peggy Naruns, the third oldest child, as well as the first daughter, did just that. Her natural inclination to always put her best foot forward and stand out from the pack was the early cornerstone she laid down en route towards distinguishing both her personal and professional lives.**

“At an early age I started buying my own real estate. I found homes that had great value and potential - and to me - recognizing these properties almost felt like a sixth sense.”

Originally born in NYC and raised in Florida, Peggy spent her early adult life in Denver and Kansas City before returning to the Sunshine State to settle down and raise her children.



“When I came across the Gandy Bridge on my way to a friend’s wedding, I knew St. Petersburg was my place. I wanted to live here.” Much like the local market today, when she started looking for a home, by the time a sign was in the ground, the house was already sold. In addition to finding her first home, she also became a REALTOR®, getting her license in 1997, followed by her broker’s license in 1998.

“I have always had an entrepreneurial spirit, so this felt right. I immersed myself in the area. I attended every open house, took every real estate class and got involved in the Chamber of Commerce.”

#### Starting Northstar Realty

Peggy started Northstar Realty in 1997 as a boutique style real estate brokerage, with a focus on concierge service.

Why Northstar? Peggy explains, “The North Star is what you follow to find your way home. I really loved my new home, and I wanted to help other people find theirs.”

Today, Peggy has 25 agents at her firm. And while still operating as a boutique, over the past year alone Northstar has successfully completed over 227 transactions with approximately \$108 million dollars in sales. Peggy and her personal team are responsible for 38 of those transactions, totaling \$26 million dollars during that time.

Peggy has established a culture at Northstar that consists of integrity, compassion, knowledge, and focus on the needs of each individual. Those principles, coupled with the feeling that everyone she encounters is like a family member, has proven to be her calling card. She’s put those attributes

to work to create a very successful recipe for taking care of a community she holds very near and dear to her heart. She cares for her clients and colleagues in the same manner she does her own family and that’s really become the Northstar way.

“When I opened Northstar I wanted to be more than a REALTOR®, I wanted to be a reliable source of real estate expertise for my customers.” In regard to her need to go above and beyond for her clients, so she said, “I love helping people solve their real estate riddles, and even more so - I really pride myself on being able to connect people to one another. One of her favorite pastimes is hosting the famous monthly “Sundowner” party at her Beach Drive office. Not only is it a great place to network for the real estate world, it’s a regular who’s who of the St Pete Community. Of course,



•••

Peggy supports the local community in other ways as well, having supported many charitable organizations over the years.

**Family Focused**

The mother of 7 children, and blessed to have 22 grandchildren, Peggy is devoted to her family and has even seen a few of her children follow her into real estate. Her daughter Margie operates her own Northstar Realty in Missouri. "It's not a franchise, she just really liked the name," Peggy joked.

Her daughters Georgia, Kristen, and Katie all work with Peggy at Northstar Realty here in St. Petersburg. "They are smart, engaging, and committed to Northstar. All of them are powerful team players," she beams. "I also have two sons and another daughter who've all worked in real estate, which makes me proud" she adds. "Really, I'm so pleased with what Northstar has become, and humbled by all we've been able to accomplish. Watching a family, a business, and a city grow has been very exciting and I cannot wait to see who we can help next!"

Peggy has built a legacy in St. Petersburg with her drive and determination. We are honored to feature her in this month's issue. For more information, check out her website, [northstarrealty.com](http://northstarrealty.com).



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# Michael Wooldridge

BRINGS AWARENESS TO COLON CANCER

When REALTOR® Michael Wooldridge lost his wife, Nicole, due to colon cancer, it left a hole in his heart. Diagnosed with Crohn's Disease in 2004, Nicole progressively grew worse through the years.

"I became her caregiver until she passed away in 2017," says Michael. "We were truly each other's best friends." He met his beautiful wife at the age of 24 and Nicole was 21. They enjoyed almost 25 years of marriage together.

When Nicole passed away, Michael says, "My heart stopped beating for two years. Six to nine months ago, I

decided that I would turn things around and started heading in a different direction. My why was not there. I would give back in another way and build up my team in real estate to where it is today – at 15 million in volume. I hope to double that in 2022." Michael works for Keller Williams on the Water Sarasota and developed his own team, the Michael Wooldridge Team.

#### Helping Others

"I am looking to pour into people moving forward. That's what my wife would want me to do," says Michael.

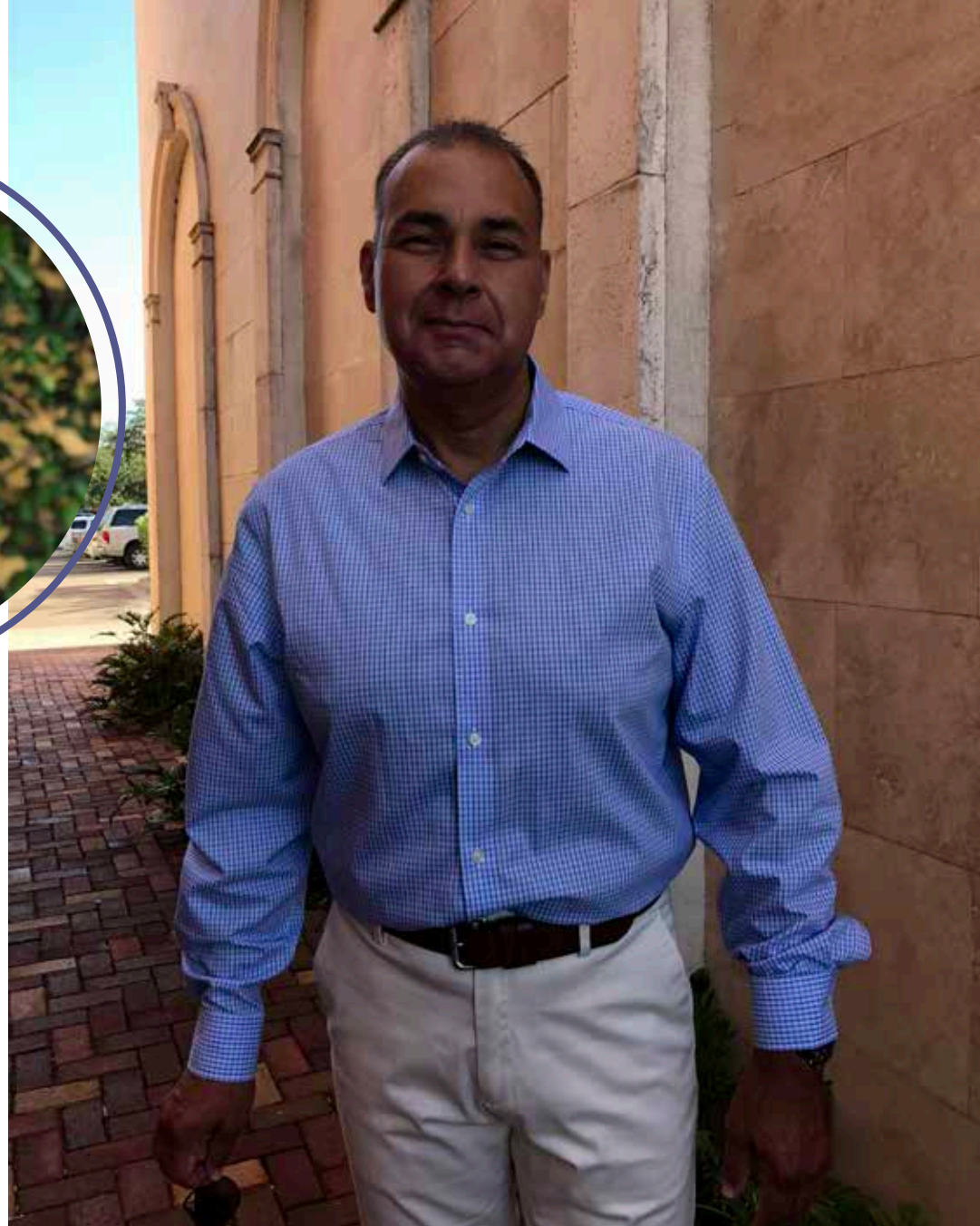
Michael is involved in various Crohn's charity organizations and is currently writing a book, sharing his story with others. In addition, he does volunteer work at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center &



Written by  
Elizabeth McCabe



“ I am looking to pour into people moving forward. That's what my wife would want me to do. ”



Research Institute, where Nicole went for treatment.

“I am also working on setting up my own charity,” says Michael.

His turning point came in his life when he developed gratitude. Michael explains, “Each day when I woke up I found something to be grateful for – as hard as it was. I kept that positive mindset from day one and I told myself to never ever give up. That relentless will came from my Father.”

#### Michael's Background

Growing up in the Tampa Bay area, Michael worked for Haddon House Specialty Foods as an independent account manager before working with Nestle as a team leader. In 2004, he started real estate and did that part-time.

“After Nicole passed away in 2017, I decided that I would leave the corporate world and pursue real estate full-time. I took some time after she passed and moved to Boca Raton, doing real estate down there, before making my way back to Sarasota.” Now Michael sells real estate from Tampa to Venice.

Real estate really took off in 2021 for Michael. He explains, “It was at that point of time that real estate became more than selling homes. It was an avenue to give back. I don't look at it as selling homes. It's about helping families and people to get to another place in their life. Real estate is a way of giving back and making a difference in their lives.”

In his free time, Michael loves the water, including kayaking and jet skiing. He comments, “Put me around water, and I'm very content.” Other pastimes include reading books,

golfing, traveling to the mountains, and playing the violin, which he hopes to pick up again this year.

#### An Optimistic Outlook

“I have a positive outlook for the future,” says Michael. “Each year gets better.” Every month, he wants to engage more and is starting to find joy.

“I had the perfect person to share a life with. I'm extremely grateful for that. We loved each other as much as we could. Nicole taught me how to love. Her headstone says, ‘Everything you do, do out of love.’ I try to maintain that every day of my life.”

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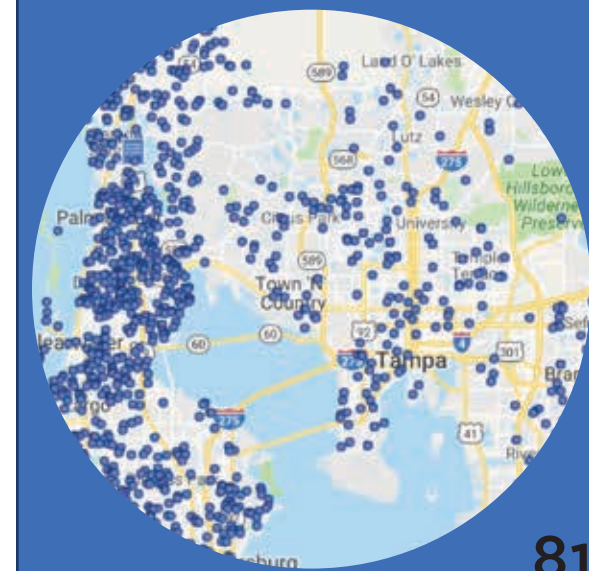
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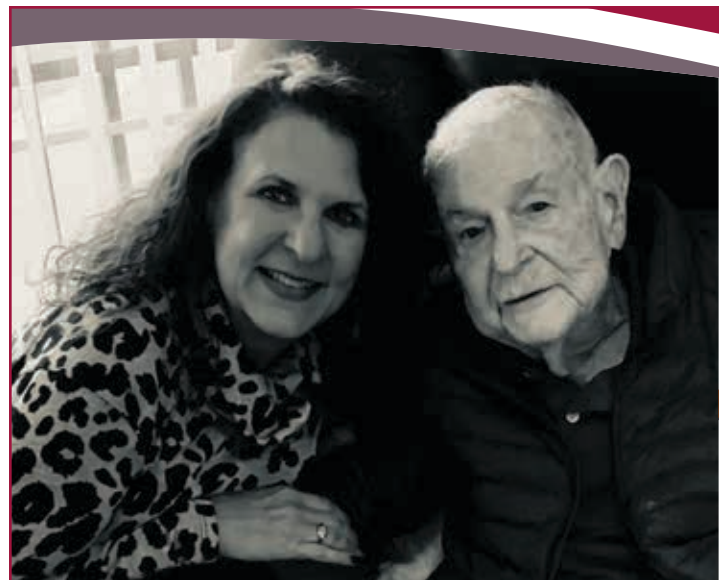
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