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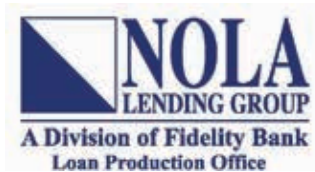
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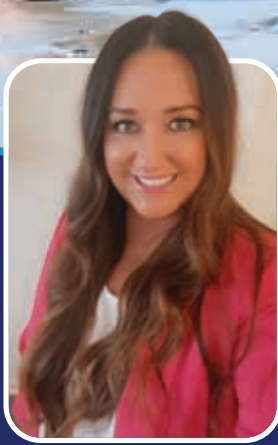
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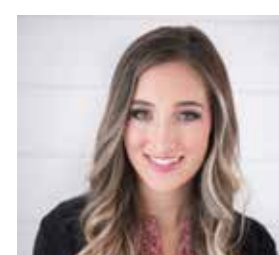
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YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF YOU

We live in the greatest time of convenience, yet we walk around like we are inconvenienced if we have to deflect from our calendars and schedules and lists.

I'm not preaching.

I'm guilty.

Take a breath, sister. Breathe, brother.

I took the month of June off to do some heart checking, business aligning and connect with some dear people in my life that felt distant. I missed my people. I've been wonderfully blessed with this opportunity, but I had to remind this opportunity that I OWN IT, it does NOT own me.

I went to the beach. I made spontaneous road trips. I drove to Texas and hugged my parents. I read and napped and recentered. I got a massage. And I asked myself why I'm not doing this on the regular? Why not?! It was AMAZING. *Call Woodhouse Day Spa and book an appointment with Roneshia. Trust me. No, this is not paid promotion.* This is me thinking enough of my friends to say, book a massage and book with her. You'll thank me.

Yep. I took a break, and now I'm back. If we've yet to connect, let's find a time to do so! I'd love to meet you! We are halfway through this year and we will be wrapping up the year in what feels like a blink. I know our calendars are full and our lists are long, but life is crazy, the world is hurting and we need one another.

Please do not hesitate to call or text me. I'm old-fashioned. I love a phone call! I love coffee and pizza and laughing, too.



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Gina



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▶ rising star

By Molly Cobane
Photos by Ace Sylvester



JOHNETTE TOLLIVER

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

“NOBODY TOLD ME I COULDN’T, SO I DID.”

Johnette Tolliver’s viewpoint on her real estate success thus far is straightforward and direct, just like her approach to life. By keeping things simple and staying focused on her goals, Johnette has grown her business tremendously in her first year and a half as a full-time agent, and she isn’t slowing down anytime soon.

A FULL HOUSE

Originally from Watson, LA, Johnette is a mother to five children – Bailey, 19, Luke, 16, Joshua, 15, Grace, 14, and Gavin, 10. As you can imagine, this makes for quite the full house. “They drive each other crazy,” Johnette laughed, “but they have each other’s backs.” Johnette and her husband, Corey, also have three dogs, Remington, Ruger, and Kimber.

Johnette stayed home to care for her children until they reached school age. “As soon as my youngest went off to school, I got bored. By the time lunchtime rolled around, my house was clean, dinner was cooked, and there are only so many plants you can repot before you run out of things to do!” she joked.

FINDING HER PATH

Johnette took a job as a bank teller, which quickly progressed into a management role. While she enjoyed the work, the lack of flexibility was a downside. “I am a very loyal and devoted person, and it bothered me when I had to take time off for things like kids’ doctor’s appointments,” she explained. In 2017, Johnette got her license and began selling real estate whenever she had time in between work and her kids’ obligations.

The deciding factor to leave her management role and pursue real estate full-time in early 2021 came down to a chance encounter that provided Johnette with the clarity she needed. “I had recently hired a teller, and out of the blue she asked if I had ever considered owning my own business,” she recalled. “She mentioned that she felt I

would be great at it. After that, it was something I kept in my heart and prayed about a lot.”

Weeks later, the conversation arose again. “I asked the teller why she had asked that question. She replied, ‘Don’t take this the wrong way, but I was praying, and God showed me that 2021 was going to be your year for your business – but that you’d become so busy you’d have to leave the bank.’” At that moment, Johnette’s decision became crystal clear. “I grabbed my cell phone and ran to the bathroom to call my husband. I told him I was submitting my resignation. I was gone the next day!”

MEANT TO BE

“I realized pretty quickly that I had made the right call and that God had led me in the right direction. That first year full time, I sold over 10 million in volume and was able to help over 40 families,” Johnette said proudly. This was far more than in her previous years combined. Her secret? “I think it’s just getting up every day and saying that today is going to be better than yesterday, and having a passion for helping people.”

“The more I helped people find secure housing, the more happiness I had from within,” she continued. “Nobody told me I couldn’t close five houses a month, so why not?” This simple viewpoint helped Johnette break through the self-limiting beliefs that often keep new agents from really





KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, AND DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU REACH IT. AND EVEN WHEN YOU DO REACH IT, KEEP GOING.

putting themselves out there. "I think it's so important to wake up every day and have a plan or goal in mind. Know what you want, and don't stop until you reach it. And even when you do reach it — keep going."

FINDING TIME

The career change didn't come without challenges for Johnette. "What I've struggled with the most is finding a good balance between work and family," she confessed. "Whoever said kids are needier than teenagers is a liar! They are always needing a ride and have places to be." Perfecting the balancing act is still a work in progress for Johnette. "I've had to put myself on a strict schedule. Really planning, scheduling, and being very disciplined in that has helped."

This also includes finding time for hobbies. "I love everything outdoors," Johnette stated. "Especially gardening. Yard work is actually really fun for me; it's my zen." Johnette and her family all enjoy spending time outside. Johnette and her husband also participate in car shows and are members of The Louisiana Mopar Club. "Each year our club does a toy drive for Toys for Tots at one of our largest car shows, which we really enjoy."

Ultimately, Johnette's life and business rest on two key principles. "Honesty and integrity are of utmost importance to me. I will always have my client's best interest at heart," she stated. "What I've learned in real estate is that clients become friends, and friends become clients, and they intertwine. When you do it out of your heart, it's not work; it's fun."




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Kristan Fletcher

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JUST KEEP GOING

► broker spotlight

By Molly Cobane, Photos by Ace Sylvester

When Kristan Fletcher wants to clear her head, she enjoys a refreshing hike at scenic Tunica Hills. The trail is a far drive from her house, and it's easy to get turned around on the way. "I always think I missed a turn because the roads all look the same," she said. "So I started telling myself 'just keep going' ... because the turn was always just a little bit further up the way."

"Just keep going" soon became a mantra for Kristan in all aspects of life. "It doesn't matter whether you're driving a car and don't know where you're going, or navigating a deal; you just keep pushing on," she expressed. This mindset has served Kristan well in both her personal life and profession and has proven to be a key component of her thriving real estate career.

From Classroom to Open House

Kristan has called Baton Rouge home ever since her family moved from Connecticut when she was 7. In a past life before real estate, Kristan was a teacher for two decades. "Teaching was my first job out of college. My first position was teaching computer robotics ... but don't be too impressed!" she laughed. "This was back when we still had dial-up modems."



Kristan went on to teach chemistry, physical science, and physics. But 20 years in such a selfless, demanding profession began taking its toll. "My sons were teenagers, I was with teenagers all day... It was a lot of teenagers!" she reflected.

Real estate had been in the back of Kristan's mind for a while, and a close college friend of hers had recently opened a brokerage. "I took a tennis trip to Florida with a lender in Baton Rouge, and she told me I would be great at real estate," Kristan recalled. It wasn't long after that trip that Kristan got her license and joined her friend's brokerage full time.

The transition from teacher to agent was a smooth one for Kristan. "You use a lot of the same skills," she explained. "You have to deal with a lot of personalities, do your research, and proofread contracts." She also had an expansive network of potential clients thanks to her time served in education. Her very first deal was with the parents of a former student for whom she served as cheerleading sponsor. "They knew and trusted me," Kristan said, "which is key."



Do more of what you love and infuse real estate into it, and you will succeed.



...
 “ Sometimes you feel like you won’t make it, but every single time, if you just push a little harder, you can get there. You can make it work. ”



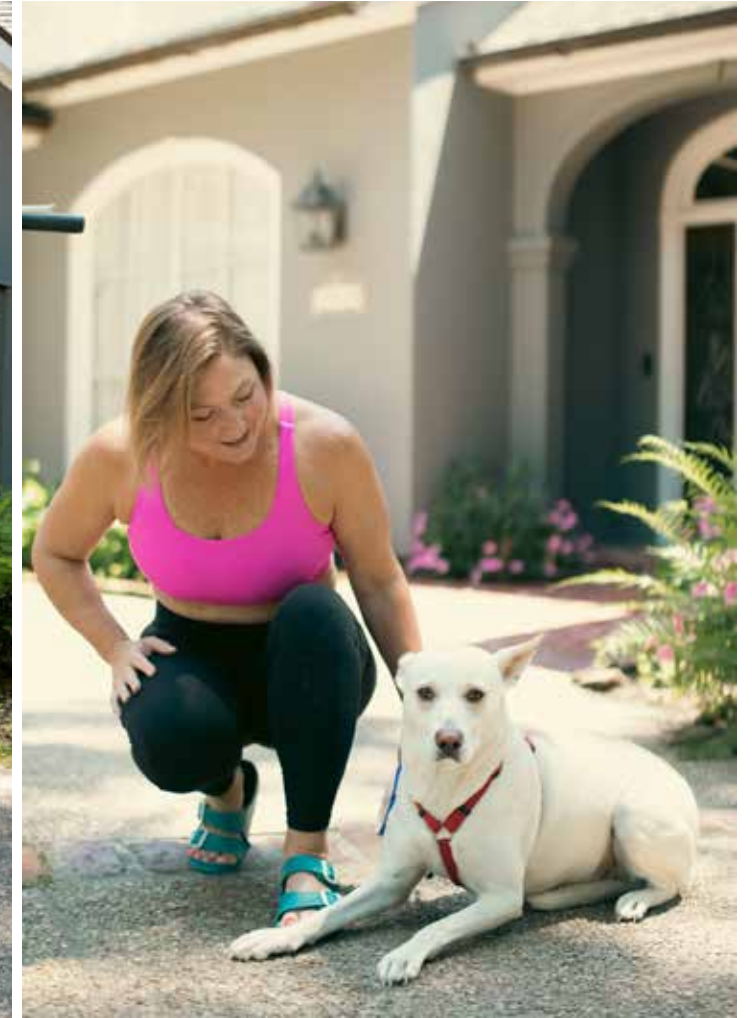
Do What You Love

Kristan continued building her career by fostering authentic connections in her daily life. “Do more of what you love and infuse real estate into it, and you will succeed,” she advised. “I play

a lot of tennis and beach volleyball, and I’ve sold a lot of real estate doing those activities too.”

In 2017, Kristan received the Rising Star award at KDK out of 130 agents and began pursuing her broker’s

license shortly thereafter. She now owns and operates Peak Properties LLC in Baton Rouge. She also recently launched Peak Agency, a new up-and-coming venture based in Baldwin County, Alabama, focused around the area of Orange Beach.



Her Reason

As passionate as Kristan is about her real estate career, her true “why” is her sons, Griffin, 27, and Pryce, 25. Griffin works in the financial side of the real estate industry, and Pryce works in high-end construction. “My dream is to one day have us all working together to meet the needs of clients,” Kristan smiled. “I love to spend time with them. They are wonderful humans. If I am questioning myself, I look at a picture of them and it reminds me of goodness.”

Kristan also has two dogs, Sweetie and Lil Dog. “Sweetie, 6 years old, is a western-SKITTISH-poo,” she joked. “She is a pound puppy from West Baton Rouge kill pound.” Lil Dog is a beloved 9-year-old Chihuahua. “We

agreed to foster him for 40 days in 2016. He has been with us ever since.”

Giving Back

Kristan has a heart for service. She is actively involved in the Tri Sigma Alumni Association, which frequently conducts philanthropic fundraisers for local organizations in need. “We recently raised several thousand dollars for The Emerge School for Autism,” she said proudly.

Kristan also volunteers with Attic Trash and Treasure in Baton Rouge, serving as the co-chair of the furniture department. This organization raises money for charity by selling donated household items, and they recently participated in the Fort Polk “Deploy Your Dress” event. “We donated more than 30 gowns for the event, and had local servicewomen come in and pick

out a gown for their military ball,” Kristan explained. “It was amazing.”

Just Keep Going

Kristan doesn’t take life — or herself — too seriously. “I am a cursing Christian,” she laughed. “My favorite pump song is ‘I’m Not Afraid (Explicit)’ by Eminem.” Her favorite quote comes from a book titled *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech. “Don’t let the birds of sadness nest in your hair,” Kristan recited. “Everyone gets sad. Just don’t let it be where you land.”

With this guiding principle in mind, Kristan will always keep pushing forward in real estate and life. “Sometimes you feel like you won’t make it,” she said. “But every single time, if you just push a little harder, you can get there. You can make it work.”

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FAVORITE HOBBIES: I love to hunt, fish, and golf when I can. Along with riding my Harley when possible.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY: Married to my wife Marla for 34 years and have a 32 year old son, as well as a German Shepard (Bella) and a cat (Holly).

FAVORITE PART OF BEING A MORTGAGE LOAN OFFICER?

Just love being able to help new and past clients with guiding them through the mortgage loan process. I have been in business for 30 years and have seen it all, so I guess you can say I have "some" experience, right?

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Our Two-Year Anniversary and Awards Gala was held on Thursday, May 12, at The Loft downtown Baton Rouge. We enjoyed a house full of our very best REALTORS® and Preferred Partners in the area. Cecelia Creole Bistro provided delicious smoked salmon, their notorious crawfish queso, meat pies and cake balls. The energy and excitement was high with the buzz of new connections being made while we enjoyed acoustics provided by Kevin Schexnayder. We debuted our new signage, and it set the stage for fun photo opportunities, along with Eye Wander Photo and their 360 Photo Booth. We aim to capture the events, and capture them well, so we never forget how important it is to get together with our peers to celebrate our hard work and strengthen relationships.

Our next VIP gathering will be in November, and the details will flood your social media, texts, and inboxes in plenty of time for you to RSVP.

We look forward to seeing you all again.

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TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY AWARD RECIPIENTS



MALE REAL PRODUCER OF THE YEAR
DEANTE' THOMAS
Keller Williams Red Stick Partners

2021 Volume: \$19,083,879

Favorite Restaurant: Mike Anderson's

Favorite Vacation Destination: Los Angeles, CA

Biggest Splurge: Investment properties

Book Recommendation: *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*

Someone who has mentored, coached or inspired you and why?

Holly Haws, my MAPS coach, has pushed me for the last two years bringing fresh ideas to my business and holding me accountable.

What did winning your award mean to you? Winning to me was an honor! Being recognized with the best of the best in the business was a great feeling! Six years ago I would have never imagined my business being at the level it is today! I have a great deal of respect for the work ethic and level of production for all of the nominees. Winning shows that people do acknowledge the hard work and dedication!

FEMALE REAL PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

JOANNA ARNOLD

Keller Williams Red Stick Partners

Years in Real Estate: Six years

2021 Residential Volume: \$11,712,504

Favorite Restaurant: J. Alexander's

Favorite Vacation Destination: Negril, Jamaica

Biggest Splurge: Vacations

Book Recommendation: *The Go-Giver* by Bob Burg and John David Mann

Someone who has mentored, coached or inspired you and why? Brian Erahon, my MAPS Coach. Brian helped me to uncover/discover that I possessed the skills to be a top producing agent and create the life that I always desired to have, during a difficult time in my life when I was grieving and wanted to give up.

What did winning your award mean to you? It meant that I am Living the Legacy that I have desired to leave of treating people right and touching lives in a positive, impactful way.



TEAM OF THE YEAR

DARREN JAMES

Darren James & Associates brokered by eXp Realty

Years in Real Estate: 21

2021 Residential Volume: \$63 million

Favorite Restaurant: Japanese Hibachi, Tokyo Cafe

Favorite Vacation Destination: Cabo San Lucas

Biggest Splurge: Technology that enhances productivity or cars

Book Recommendation: *The Energy Bus; Rich Dad, Poor Dad.*

Someone who has mentored, coached or inspired you and why?

My dad is my biggest inspiration. He's everything to me and has taught me values, character, dignity, and respect in life. Just an amazing person who is my best friend, and if I can be just half the man he's been to me, to my kids, or a mentor to someone else like he's been to me, I've done a great thing in life. Words cannot explain what he means to me and has done for me throughout my life. He didn't have to be the dad that he's been to me, but I'm forever grateful for all he's done and continues to do for me and so many.

What did winning your award mean to you? The award of REALTOR®

Team of the Year meant the world to me and all our team members. We are thankful to be able to change the lives of so many clients daily and making the real estate industry better as a whole. We are forever grateful that the Lord above allows us to be able to work in our gift every day and bless others. It's truly a blessing to be able to receive this award, and grateful to make it happen in our industry working with all the great REALTORS® in our area, and throughout the nation every day.



BROKER OF THE YEAR

CLAYTON FIELDS

Keller Williams Realty Premier Partners and Keller Williams Realty New Orleans

When and why did you become a broker? Broker's license was earned

on October 7, 2015. Thankfully I was surrounded by wonderful friends and coworkers (Nancy Marcotte, London Montgomery, JD Pierce) that believed in me and pushed me to pursue my broker's license. I've always truly enjoyed helping others, and this position allows the opportunity to help in the biggest way.



THE CONNECTOR/Community Builder

SONDRA RICHARD

Real Broker LLC

Years in Real Estate: 22 years

2021 Residential Volume: \$13 million, 62 transactions

Favorite Restaurant: DiGiulio Brothers

Favorite Vacation Destination: Key West

Biggest Splurge: Costco trips and gardening

Book Recommendation: *Make your Bed* by Admiral Williams H. McRaven

Someone who has mentored, coached, or inspired you, and why? This is an incredibly long list as the success that I've achieved is because of those that I've been lucky enough to surround myself with. Tim Houk has not only inspired and mentored me but he's also become my brother. Matt Hughes, Kyle Peterson, Amanda Walker, Tim Tullos, Lance Kelehan, Caroline Davis, and Jeffrey Doussan, have molded me into the person that I am today, and it's their efforts that have allowed me to win this award.

What did winning your award mean to you? This has allowed me the opportunity to spotlight our staff at Keller Williams Realty Premier Partners and Keller Williams Realty New Orleans.

Winning this award means that I've earned the opportunity to celebrate alongside the greatest associate brokers in our industry Amanda Boudreaux & MJ Sauer! And immense gratitude for Kristy Ferguson — without her none of this happens. This has been the greatest accomplishment of my career, and it's an amazing feeling to know that so many of my friends and colleagues love me just as much as I love them. Thanks, Gina, and everyone at Real Producers for this award and for everything y'all do for our industry.

Favorite Restaurant:

Casa Maria in Watson

Favorite Vacation Destination:

Costa Rica

Biggest Splurge: Inground Pool

Book Recommendations:

Work by Referral: Live the Good Life!

Perk Your Sphere: How to Reward

Those Who Reward You

Someone who has mentored, coached, or inspired you, and why?

Maya Angelou. Her famous quote — "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

What did winning your award mean to you? It validates that I am doing things right and correctly. Now I know how others see me, and I am making a difference in others. ●●●



REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR
LYRIC FORET
Keller Williams First Choice

Years working as a real estate administrative assistant: Since 2014
Career prior to this: Managed Child Development Centers
Best advice you've ever received: Focus on what only you can control.
What did winning your award mean to you? I am passionate about what I do, and this truly has shown me that I make an impact on so many around me.



THE ELEVATOR/ Social Media Influencer
STEPHEN COUVILLION

Keller Williams Realty – First Choice, The Couv Group

Years in Real Estate: Five
2021 Residential Volume: \$18 million
Favorite Restaurant: Sushi Masa
Favorite Vacation Destination: Northern California
Biggest Splurge: My wife's car
Book Recommendations: For team leaders and business owners, *I Love It Here*. For personal development, *The Miracle Morning*.
Someone who has mentored, coached or inspired you and why? I have so many that I could name, but my previous broker, Sterling Hall, taught me real estate better than anyone. He taught me how to write a great contract, how to protect your clients, and helped me lay a great foundation to build on. More recently, Trey Willard, Tim Houk, and Scott Gibson have been great mentors for me since starting my team, The Couv Group. I can't begin to name how



many people inspire me on a daily basis, just in our Real Producers community alone.
What did winning your award mean to you? Being nominated and awarded the Real Estate Influencer by my peers in the industry is such an honor and inspires me to keep pushing the boundaries on creativity and marketing! It means so much to me because I truly invest a lot into my social media content. My video content is a huge part of my business and has contributed to a lot of my success.

THE INSPIRER/ Servant's Heart
CHRISTIE FARRIS

Keller Williams Realty Red Stick Partners

Years in Real Estate: Nine years
2021 Residential Volume: \$12.5 million
Favorite Restaurant: Sushi Yama
Favorite Vacation Destination: Greece
Biggest Splurge: Definitely trips and food! I would much rather spend money on an experience than anything material.
Book Recommendation: *Things that Matter*. "There may be no greater pursuit for yourself and others than choosing to live a meaningful life focused on the things that truly matter."
Someone who has mentored, coached or inspired you and why? My grandmother, Bonnie Cothren; her nickname was Cornbread. I was her caretaker for many years, and she moved in with me at my house for three years after the flood. We had such a

special bond, and I miss her so much. After she passed away, I found that I had a big void in my heart. This void allowed me to discover my love for volunteering and giving back.
What did winning your award mean to you? This is the best award I have ever received. I am so happy to see this type of award given out in our profession. Volunteering and giving back to my community means the world to me. Every time I see my favorites ladies, Mo and Laree at the nursing home, my heart is full. Seeing the smiles of people while serving them a hot meal is the best feeling. Some people believe it takes a lot of your time to volunteer, but it doesn't! You will find that it only takes a small amount of time to make a difference in somebody's day.

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While Keyfinders Team Realty is celebrating their first year as a brokerage, its heritage extends back decades and is deeply rooted in family values.

Through a fierce dedication to their agents and highly effective systems that help agents operate in excellence, Keyfinders is poised for many more years of real estate success and will continue raising the bar for clients and agents for decades to come.

Local Roots

The Keyfinders name dates back to 1974 when co-founder Jeffrey Welsh's mother, Ms. Carley, established a property management company in Louisiana under the same name. "The focus has always been local real estate, with keeping the client relationship number one," said co-owner and agent Stephanie Pierce. Jeffrey moved to Baton Rouge in 1983 to launch his own branch of Keyfinders, and in 2006 he met Carol Poche, an up-and-coming real estate powerhouse with a gift for marketing. "I recognized her talent, and ultimately figured if I can't beat her, join her!" Jeffrey laughed.

Growing the Team

The two joined forces in 2006, partially as a result of the increased demand in the area due to Hurricane Katrina. As a team, Carol and Jeffrey cultivated a passion for educating and helping other agents reach their full potential. "Teaching and coaching other agents are some of our great joys," Carol shared.

Stephanie joined the team shortly after its founding and quickly learned the ropes through "field trips" with Carol and broker office tours with Jeffrey. "I'd get in the car with Carol and Jeffrey and we'd drive around," Stephanie recalled. "They taught me everything I know."

Neal Francois joined the group shortly after graduating from LSU, and after a family visit to Baton Rouge, Jeffrey's son-in-law Brandon Baird followed suit. Jillian Argrave, described by Stephanie as "the backbone of the brokerage," joined in 2010. "She guides and directs the agents, ensuring all contractual deadlines are met and marketing materials are produced and executed promptly," Stephanie explained.

Independence Day

In July of 2021, the real estate brokerage portion of Keyfinders was born. "We call it our Independence Day," Stephanie said proudly. The agents at Keyfinders invest in each other just as much as they do their clients, and this culture is infused in everything they do. "Jeffrey is known as 'Papa J' and Carol is known as 'KK' in our office," Stephanie joked. "You really get that feel during our meetings that we all care for one another. The foundation of our brokerage is service above self."

"We still hold to the cultural aspect of God," Carol added. "Our foundation is God, family, and then business. We talk daily and meet weekly, and start meetings with faith-based affirmations for our team and clients." The team, which feels more like a family, also knows how to have fun. "Our meetings are fun but purposeful. We have mutual respect for each other. We love to laugh, and we love to 'pun' each other!"

Systems for Success

Between Carol and Jillian, the Keyfinders Team Realty has developed scalable systems that have

proven to be successful over the years. "We want our agents to be able to go on vacation and have a life!" Stephanie said. "That's why the systems are so important." Keyfinders also invests in their agents by teaching them how to invest and build generational wealth. "We are promoting the American Dream of homeownership, but that parlays into a deeper level of ownership that can provide funds for education and retirement," Carol remarked.

The Keyfinders method has a proven track record of success. "Last year, our agents earned 15% more than the average agent in the GBRAR, and earned it faster by averaging 52% fewer days on market than the GBRAR average," Stephanie shared. "We have 47% of our business comes from investors, and 95% of it is repeat or referral business," Neal added. "Many of our investor clients come from the residential side. We educate our clients on getting into investing too, as it's wealth-building for them."

High-Level Leadership

Keyfinders Team Realty is also heavily involved in leadership at the highest levels of the industry. Jeffrey, who was named REALTOR® of the Year at

•••



Carol Poche



Jeffrey Welsh



Brandon Baird



Stephanie Pierce



Colleen Rando



Victoria Smith



Neal Francois



Jillian Argrave

Not pictured: Jennifer Cagley.

...

both the state and local level in 2021, is on the local board of REALTORS®, the state board of directors, and also sits on the national board of NAR. “We have to protect our industry through advocating for ethics,” Jeffrey stated. “We advocate for things like avoiding excessive taxation and keeping flood insurance affordable and accessible.”

Growth with a Purpose

While the team at Keyfinders is looking to grow, they are selective about what that looks like. “At the end of the day, our motto is we aren’t for everyone,” Stephanie stated. “We are only for a select few who

are looking to grow both personally and professionally by surrounding themselves with higher-level thinking. We are for the agent looking to provide a customer experience like no other, and one who sees their business as a legacy they are building that will provide generational wealth for their family.”

“We encourage anyone who is looking to partner with a brokerage that focuses on the agent rather than the number of agents on their roster to reach out for a review of your business and how we may be able to help,” Stephanie added. “We hold family near and dear to our hearts, and will always pay homage to Jeffrey’s mother through the Keyfinders legacy.”



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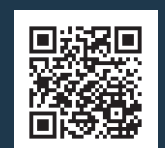
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DANNI DOWNING

CONTINUALLY TRANSFORMING

► career moves

By Ruth Gnirk

Photos by Ace Sylvester



Danni Downing appreciates stability but is always open to adventure. She has been happily married to the same man for over four decades, yet in her quest to serve others better, she has had two major career changes in the past 10 years. She also discovered she had a hidden talent when she was in her early 50s and has recently found new ways to use her gift to bless others. Danni is thankful that her willingness to always be transforming allows her to be a greater blessing than she ever thought possible.

Forty-three years ago this month, Danni married her high-school sweetheart, Paul Downing, and they started a life adventure together. Over the years, Paul served as a pastor, marriage counselor, writer, and speaker, and they raised their children, Amy, Heather, and Paul, as a unified team. Though Danni was proud to serve as a dental and orthodontist assistant for 25 years, she never defined herself by a job or title. She simply viewed herself as a person with a servant's heart who wanted to bless others in whatever way she could.

After the children were raised, and with Paul's blessing, Danni found a new way to expand her horizons and serve a new group of people through aerial hospitality. In 2003, at age 48, Danni completed her intensive training and became a flight attendant with Express Jet Airlines, an Atlanta-based carrier for Delta. She brought a wonderful balance of wisdom, life experience, and mature energy to the team. She had a strong sense of

identity, and a desire to collaborate with teammates and encourage staff and passengers.

In 2017 Delta didn't renew the Express contract, and Danni chose to take an early retirement buy-out. While she was applying at other airlines, an acquaintance called to ask her to meet up and consider a career in real estate. Paul was very supportive, and Danni was intrigued at the idea. She knew that the lessons she had learned in her previous careers make her a more well-rounded REALTOR®.

"I learned a long time ago that it is important to focus on customer service, taking on the attitude of serving others, not trying to serve myself," explained Danni. "I am an excellent negotiator as well. I knew how to handle bad news with a velvet glove, and how to talk to people who feel panicked. I am very good at building relationships with other agents as well, and that is important to me. Other REALTORS® are teammates in the task of growing our community, not my competition, and my biggest and highest honor is to have the respect of my colleagues."

She loves when clients and REALTORS® call her "Mama D." Danni truly views her community as an extension of her family. Even though she is wise and focused in the world of real estate, Danni's goal is not just to complete a transaction, but to make a friend.

In 2005 she had discovered that she had hidden artistic talent. She used to sell her art, but now she gifts her paintings to her real estate clients and donates them to the local nonprofit Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) organization. Danni is humbled and thankful that her paintings are used to raise money for the Capital Area CASA Association. She also donates her art and her time to the Mental Health Association of Greater Baton Rouge, teaching art at the Alliance House Residential Center (AHRC).

"I have observed that the REALTORS® with the biggest hearts, who are kind and genuine, end up with the best results and are the most successful," Danni smiled. "It hurts a real estate transaction when agents do not get out of the way, and there is power in fearlessly admitting when one is wrong and willing to pay to make it right again. I appreciate the wisdom in the book *Failing Forward* and find that I have learned a lot through experiencing, and observing, 'failure' too."



...
 Danni is very thankful for and the innovative, community-focused team with which she serves the community. She is grateful for the vision of Grant Clayton, founder of 1% Lists®, and for Scott McLaughlin, broker/co-owner, and Cody Currier, co-owner/REALTOR® of 1% Lists® Greater Baton Rouge franchise. She admires Scott's passion for ensuring that clients keep their hard-earned equity and Cody's vision for the competitive advantage of 1% Lists®. She loves celebrating the successes of her colleagues and all the families they are helping.



“There are many people to whom I am so grateful,” said Danni. “Where would I be without Lisa Bice, who mentored me and modeled integrity, or Joanna Arnold, who taught me about social media and following leads? I owe a big thank you to Skip Shows of Key Lending, HDMK Inspectors, and Ryan Smith of Southern Prime Prospectors. And I am eternally grateful for Jenny Smith, of Partners Title, who invited me to networking events, and taught me to build continual relationships with other REALTORS®. She helped me learn how networking can help my business progress, and she modeled how to always be kind and respectful.”

Her husband and children have been her biggest cheerleaders. She is proud of her husband, Paul, who is the Associate Pastor at Fellowship Church in Zachary, helping people to deepen their relationships with Christ and others. Their daughter Amy and son-in-law Jeff Henderson are both in sales in Park City, Utah. They enjoy spending time with their daughter Heather who also resides in Baton Rouge and is a certified Pilates instructor. The Downings love spending time with their son, Paul, a veteran of the U.S. Navy, his wife, Selena, and their first grandson, Harrison.

“God directed my steps to start this new career,” shared Danni, “and this is a career where I really have to trust God! I plant seeds, and God waters and brings the increase. I pray with clients over their homes, whether they are buyers or sellers. Each day I pray that God would honor the work of my hands, and show me how He wants me to serve others and show them hospitality and kindness. I



was very honored when I received *Baton Rouge Real Producers* in my mailbox, because it was a secret dream of mine, and I cried many tears of joy when I was told that my story was going to be shared so that others could be encouraged by what God can do with a person who is willing to continually be transformed!”

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By David Madaffari

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

As real estate agents and industry professionals, we are charged to the highest level of fiduciary responsibility to our clients. Our contractual obligation – and the reason we are hired in the first place – is to negotiate and represent the best interests of our clients and provide information and knowledge to help advise on the best course of action in any given situation. Ultimately, it is our clients’ decisions, not our own, that steer the course of our transactions from showings to the closing table.

Of course, the keyword here – steer – is taboo in the real estate world especially given our industry’s past and the strides we’ve made to eliminate such practices. There is, however, one form of indirect “steering” that I believe still exists, and I suggest it is time to address the ethical questions it undoubtedly raises. This is the practice of offering agent bonuses on top of brokered commissions.

As it stands today, commissions offered to buyers’ brokers are solely at the discretion of the listing broker and the listing agent. And while it can be argued that differing broker commission splits among properties can already constitute an indirect inducement to steer agents’ showing proclivity, the agent bonus in particular begs a couple of questions of the intent of such an offering. I can argue that offering a special bonus to a buyer’s agent (i.e., “\$5,000 bonus to any agent who brings a contract and closes within 30 days”) can be seen as a more overt inducement to steer home searches based on agent compensation. The risk here, then, puts the buyer’s agent in jeopardy of violating that hard-earned fiduciary responsibility to their client by looking after their own interests (more commission) than what may be best for their client.

Just like with the other forms of ethics violations that are heavily dependent on subjective viewpoints, the agent bonus offerings can also be scrutinized in much the same way. Who is to say that even if a client was considering two properties, one offered with an agent bonus and one offering no bonus, that an agent



consciously or subconsciously steered their client to the one offering the bonus? With broker commission disclosure already in the national spotlight through several high-profile legal cases, this practice will surely be a part of the discussion especially if they must be publicly disclosed as well. Reducing our exposure to ethics violations should be our goal, and the use of agent bonuses just may be inviting more scrutiny in the future than we would care to deal with.

Have something you would like to say?

Email David to keep the conversation going: david@davidmadaffari.com.

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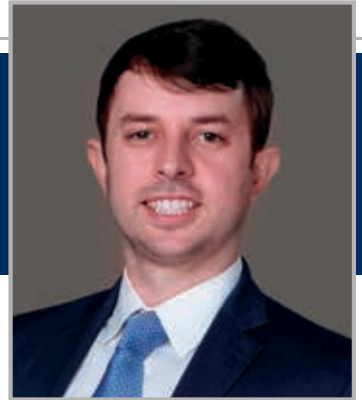
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