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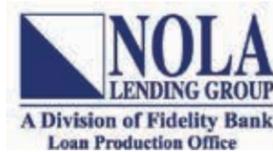
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2. How do you like to spend your weekends?
Weekends are spent exclusively with family. Love hanging by the pool in the summers and watching games by the fire in the fall.

3. What is your favorite local restaurant?
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4. What's your favorite part about being in the Mortgage Industry?
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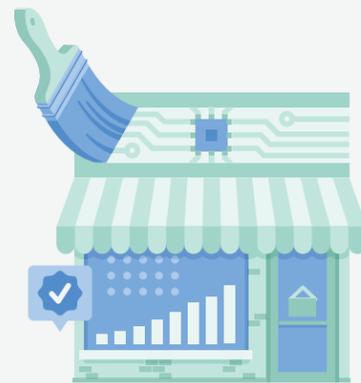
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▶▶ rising star

A PLAN TO SUCCEED

Danielle Kidwell
Photos by Ace Sylvester



Alison Stott with Keller Williams First Choice is well deserving of recognition for the success she has found in our local real estate community, but she is quick to give credit to the village that helps her. She admits her sphere isn't huge, but it helps that she was born and raised in Baton Rouge and her whole family lives here. "My family is my biggest support," she says gratefully. "My parents live down the street from us and I couldn't do it without them." With three young daughters, each a year apart, Alison has her hands full and artfully time blocks to juggle multiple schedules. Charlotte, Margaret, and Alice often accompany their mom and say they love to go to showings. Alison also serves as a substitute teacher at the girls' school. In referencing her time blocking she says, "I do 'blackout days' for my substitute teaching assignments and I do most of my work during the school day and at night after the girls are in bed."

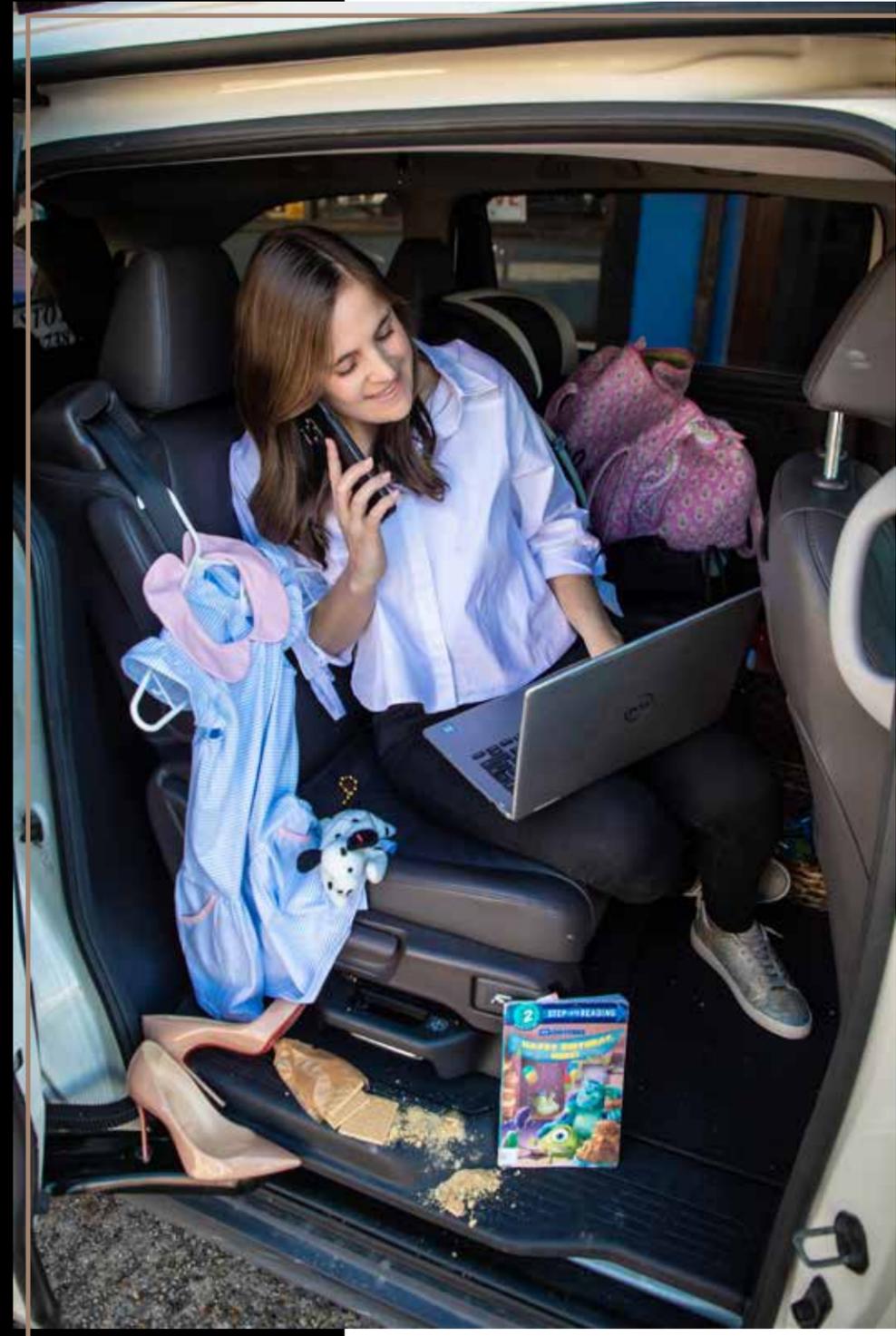
Alison also delegates administrative work to her transaction coordinator, Lyric Foret. "She handles the paperwork and essential administrative tasks," Alison says. "A lot of the back office stuff isn't taught when you study for the real estate test and I feel confident relying on someone who is an expert at paying close attention to the details," Alison says that decision allows her to take any business that comes her way, regardless of the amount.

Named 2022 Rookie of The Year for KW First Choice, Alison got her official start in real estate in February 2021. Her husband John encouraged her to get her license upon recognizing the natural talent she had for the selling process with some for sale by owners. She is truly grateful for the people in her life who surround her with strength and encouragement. It was a tough time to get into the market but Alison is not one to shy away from hard work and she is certainly not afraid to go the extra mile. "My coach and husband used to get mad at me for never saying no," she recalls with a laugh. "I once went to someone's house a few minutes before midnight to get a signature because that was the only time they were available!" Alison knows how to task delegate, but she openly admits that learning to outsource the hard stuff was not easy. "I tried to do it all by myself last year and sold nine houses in two months." She continues, "There were so many little things I didn't know how to do!" She is grateful to have a group of agents she could, and still can, call and ask if she is doing things correctly. "They are so kind and helpful."

Alison believes honesty and transparency are two of the keys



“MY FAMILY IS MY BIGGEST SUPPORT.”



to her success. “I try to make it as comfortable as possible, laying out my numbers honestly because I’m not here to overprice houses and let them sit.” She tells the story of one of her most rewarding closings. “My client moved away and I handled everything in selling their house, feeling like it was happening all at once,” she remembers. “I got a handwritten letter thanking me and that was an excellent feeling.”

Alison is dedicated to her profession and looks forward to the next leg of her journey. “Everyone wants to be at the top, but I just want to learn from well-established agents who are here now so that one day I can do what they are doing.” As she works hard at building her network Alison takes care to surround herself with people who keep her motivated. She is grateful to her agent friends, colleagues, family, and personal friends who advise and encourage her. *“There have been times that deals have gone sideways and learning to deal with that stress has been challenging, but ultimately made me a stronger person.”*

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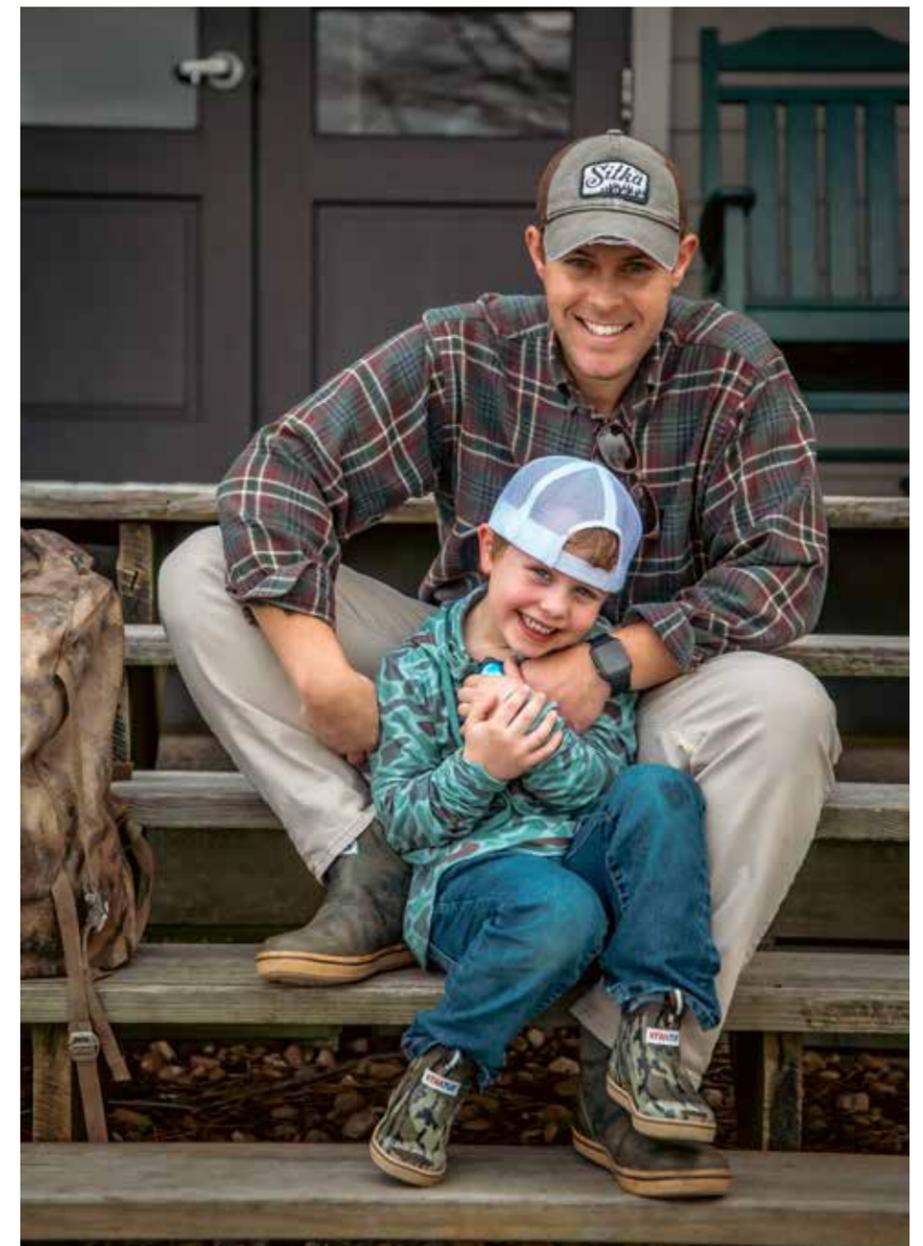


ROSS DORAN

Game Plan

“I like to be busy and don’t like a lot of empty free time,” says Ross Doran of Brantley Realty Group. “Sometimes I feel like I’m really on top of it and can get home and jump right into dad mode, other times I’m working late into the night.” Ross is candid about the struggle that many of us feel regarding work/life balance, but he’s been smart about growing his businesses and making them work for him.

“I have a family first mentality and it extends to my clients and business partners,” he explains. “Everyone is on equal footing and I treat them with the same respect and attention I give to family members.” Ross is proud to be raising his family in Central, close to where he was born and raised in Baton Rouge, and attended Catholic High and LSU, where he pursued General Studies with a minor in business, communication, and sociology. “I’ve always loved Baton Rouge and take deep pride in being from and staying here,” he says. “I never had a thought of living anywhere else.” Ross and his wife Stevie Doran, a title attorney in Denham Springs, have been married for nine years and have two children, John Ross (5) and Caroline (1). John



Ross plays baseball and loves to fish and hunt *'like his dad'*. He is proud of shooting his first duck this year - quite an accomplishment. He also plays baseball and the whole family loves to cheer for LSU sports including football, basketball, and baseball. John Ross loves the Cincinnati Bengals, and Caroline loves figuring out how to cheer for her favorite teams, and all things musical and dancing.

Ross's game plan that he laid out shortly before he graduated college is still working for him. "I'm still doing what I did before real estate when right out of college I started working for the company that manages Lamar Advertising's shipping, receiving, and printing department," he explains. "I started part-time as a mail clerk and now manage the company within Lamar for the owner." He also manages a large, exclusive hunting camp in Krotz Springs. "I'm the assistant operations manager and I guide duck hunting for several customers, employees, and clients," he says. "We cook, entertain, manage skeet shooting, and run our guests around the property - it's great fun!"

"I've always started stuff as the young one at the bottom of the barrel, and worked my way into management," Ross says. "A friend and I flip houses and started with one small house, learned how to do all the processes, then got rolling on two to three per year." He hopes to expand on that business and begin accumulating rentals with his partner. On top of that venture, he and his partner at their company, B&D Developments, are managing the buildout for a subdivision off of the Diversion Canal in Maurepas, where he has also picked up the listings to start selling the waterfront homes.

But how did he get into real estate in the first place? Ever the entrepreneur, Ross was searching for a rental while he was in college, and when trying to find the right spot and negotiating with the landlord, he decided to get his license so he could go into the business himself. "I got licensed in 2012 and started it as a side job, figuring I could learn a little here and there and

get my footing while the market was down," he recalls. "I did a few deals in my first year or so when the market started to pick up and before I knew it I was doubling my production year over year."

What started as a side hustle has opened doors to other opportunities and turned into one of Ross's most important revenue streams. With well over 100 transactions and a lifetime volume of over \$30M, Ross has done more than half of that business over the last three years. Nominated as a Baton Rouge Real Producer Male Real Producer of the year in 2022, Ross hopes to eventually win that title.

Ross's key to successfully managing his many diverse revenue streams

is by delegating the work that he knows can be done more efficiently by others, leveraging his strengths, and building up those around him. "My cousin got his license last year and I'm starting to pull him under my wing and help him grow his business, teaching him what I've learned over the years," he shares. "He's helping me with showings and open houses while learning how to talk to people and identify what they are looking for." That's not to say that Ross doesn't do the hard work. He has no problem getting under houses, checking work, comparing multiple quotes, or double-checking contracts. He says, "Going the extra mile and doing the extra work is never wrong and I have learned that the easy road is not always the best route to success."



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By Breanna Smith
Photos by Ace Sylvester

Billy Leach

PROFESSIONAL TITLE



When William “Billy” Leach became the owner of Professional Title, Livingston Parish’s oldest title company, he was just two years out of law school. He immediately understood the importance of building trust with clients and real estate professionals. He stepped into a business with a longstanding tradition of excellence, integrity, and honesty, and for 20 years, he has continued to build on those tenets.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Professional Title became the first title company in Livingston Parish when Richard Renia opened the firm in 1976. Since 2003, Billy and his team have continued to build on the strong foundation of honesty and integrity that clients and real estate professionals trust. In his early days at Professional Title, Billy leaned on the advice of seasoned mentors, got involved in the Denham Springs community, and, when necessary, pointed to his Juris Doctorate on the wall when a client asked to speak to the attorney.

“Early on in my career, I would make it a point to wear my glasses when meeting with clients, as I had heard repeatedly that they ‘wanted to speak with the attorney’ as I apparently didn’t look old enough to be one.” Billy hasn’t had to point to his degree in a long time but is still just as focused on building trust one transaction at a time. “While I have conducted thousands and thousands of closings throughout my career, I understand it is a very big deal for the client and

...

•••

especially first-time homebuyers, so I am cognizant of that and strive to make them feel comfortable by explaining the process and the paperwork to them in a manner which they can understand it without overwhelming them.” In the words of Stephen Covey, “by behaving in ways that build trust with one, you build trust with many.”

As Billy has continued to build upon the foundational tenets of integrity and professionalism, the business’ roots have grown deeper within the Denham Springs community and spread with the opening of a satellite location in Baton Rouge.

HOME GROWN EXCELLENCE

Billy celebrates 20 years at the helm of Professional Title this year and points to his family, community and growing team as key to his success. He and his wife, Dr. Lauren Leach, have two sons, ages 12 and 6. Lauren is also a local business owner, operating Walker Family Dentistry. They are both active in the community and actively serve at Healing Place Church. Billy has served as president of the Denham Springs Kiwanis Club, board member of the Livingston Chamber of Commerce and legal counsel for the Livingston Board of Realtors. He has also relied on Baton Rouge Independent Title Attorneys, a tight-knit group of local colleagues, for invaluable guidance and support throughout his career.

Billy is a proud Denham Springs native who is proud to invest in his community. While the vast majority of Billy’s legal career in his hometown has been fruitful and enjoyable, August 13, 2016 marked his toughest day as a business owner. On that day, his office building was flooded by 5 feet of Amite River water. For the next eight months, he and his staff of 5 continued operations out of a 20 x 14 office on Sherwood Forest Blvd, and closed sales and loans in an adjacent conference room. “We were up and running the following Wednesday and had our first closing on Friday, August 19. I looked like Tiger Woods, wearing a red golf shirt, black slacks and black tennis shoes, as that was the best outfit I could assemble as my house had flooded also, along with most of my wardrobe. But the way my staff came together and worked exceptionally hard in the midst of that trying time was unbelievable. And I was grateful for the many in my industry, including other title companies, who reached out during that

time to offer assistance.” He never hesitated about rebuilding in the community he loves most. “Growing up, Denham Springs was a good bit smaller than it is now - I used to ride my bike all over town. I enjoyed my time growing up here, going to high school here, and I love this community and working with people I know from growing up here, so it made sense to stay here and continue to invest in this community.”

AIMING FOR AN ACE

While pursuing his Juris Doctorate at the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University, Billy considered a career in politics. Admittedly, the adversarial spirit seemingly required for a career in Louisiana politics did not come naturally to him. “For an attorney, I’m pretty non-confrontational,” he said with a laugh. But as the adage goes, do not mistake kindness for weakness.

As an avid sports player throughout his youth, and at age 13 found his favorite sport - tennis. Over the years, the other sports he played growing up and through his 20s, like Rugby, have fallen by the wayside of life. However, he still plays tennis competitively, and golf socially and enjoys running, lifting weights and the occasional yoga session. “I still love playing tennis,” he said. “I enjoy the camaraderie and teamwork of doubles, but also the strategic grind and self-reliance of singles.”

And just the same, as both a solo practitioner of law and the leader of an excellent, hardworking staff, Billy appreciates the nuanced requirements of both. “I love practicing in this area of law because clients walk out of my office happy, which isn’t common for many areas of legal practice,” he said. “When clients leave Professional Title, they’re either leaving as owners of a new house or with a big check in hand, and I enjoy ensuring every step I’m responsible for is handled with care and their best interests in mind.”





► cover story

CHT GROUP

REAL ESTATE

BUILDING OTHERS UP

Breanna Smith | Photos by Ace Sylvester

CHT Group Real Estate fosters individual growth and community building through the sublime art of celebration. The team of four brokers gathers agents and support staff around the table to feed their minds, souls and relationships as a genuine community.

When Nikki Calmes, Ashley Greer, Cade Harris and Kim Day started CHT Group Real Estate, they had no idea how bountiful their table would become in just one year.

The Dream Team

The group all hail from a variety of previous careers ranging from the medical field to the corporate world, with invisible strings that pulled them toward real estate and each other.

After years of working in a corporate job that brought more tears and late nights than joy, Ashley earned her real estate license and was soon too booked to accept new clients and manage her full-time job. “My husband always said, ‘why don’t you just do this? You know you can make it.’ So, I quit my job and made this happen.”

Ashley encouraged her friend Kim to join real estate after seeing how dissatisfied she was with her corporate-like job. Ashley did more than encourage, as Kim recalls. “When I started in real estate 11 years ago, Ashley

didn’t give me too much of a choice,” Kim said with a laugh. “And soon I loved it.”

Nikki and Cade share a similar background, with family members involved in the housing industry. Nikki began helping her father-in-law near the end of his building career and became interested in real estate. Cade’s parents and brother are contractors, and after a stint in the medical field and working nights and weekends as a rookie real estate agent, he took the plunge. “With my background and dislike of working for someone else, real estate fit what I was looking for,” Cade said. Ashley quickly affirmed with a cheerful “Word.”

Nikki, Ashley, Cade, and Kim connected as real estate agents when they independently ran the Calmes Team, Capital Home Team and Coastal Home Team. “We’ve kind of always worked together as teams,” Ashley explained. “We started working together... The rest is history, I suppose.

We leaned on each other for support and advice, so when the time came to make a change, it was a no-brainer that we all wanted to be in business together.”

It didn’t take them long to decide on a name - CHT Group Real Estate. And their goal is simple: Build others up to accomplish their goals, so they can help others realize the dream of home ownership or wherever their home-buying journey takes them: *Your Dream, Our Team.*

A Community Worth Celebrating

Each leader offers a unique perspective and specialization in CHT Group Real Estate’s growing markets. With more than 50 years of combined real estate experience, the group of four began the remarkable journey of building a brokerage founded on excellence, community, and celebration. “We all four sat down at the table and made a plan about if and when this was going to happen - we decided



WE LEANED ON EACH OTHER FOR SUPPORT AND ADVICE, SO WHEN

THE TIME CAME TO MAKE A CHANGE, IT WAS A NO-BRAINER THAT

WE ALL WANTED TO BE IN BUSINESS TOGETHER.



that we wanted to surround ourselves with like-minded people and help them grow, achieve, and hit the very top of their goals regardless of what those goals are,” Nikki said. “We work to be better not just in real estate but in life. We want everyone around us to know that they are surrounded by people who care about them, whether they’ve known them for a day, 12 years, or forever. And that is a very successful mindset for us.”

CHT Group Real Estate does not give awards based on rankings but instead celebrates the unique milestone that marks what success means for each team member. These achievements could be hitting a savings goal, adding a member to the family, or fulfilling a life-long dream by checking off a bucket list item. *“We don’t do rankings and awards; we do accolades when someone does extremely well, whether in real estate or outside of real*

estate,” Ashley explained. Celebration is an event, not a destination; It serves as a pause to survey the road traveled or the mountain climbed. In a moment of celebration, there is rest and contemplation of the next opportunity before starting to climb again. The fact that the interval of celebration is brief does not make it unimportant or harmless if neglected. CHT Group Real Estate is proof that celebrating agents’ achievements, both great and

small, is high-octane fuel for further achievement. CHT Group Real Estate doesn’t just celebrate the win; they celebrate to win.

#LevelUp

When Nikki, Ashley, Kim and Cade announced to their teams that the four of them were starting their brokerage, every agent - all 23 of them - joined in the vision without hesitation. That, in itself, was cause for celebration.

Reflecting on their first year in business, the agents and support staff are at the center of their proudest accomplishments. “We’re seeing our people thrive,” Ashley said. “They’re happy in this community we created, and that’s all we wanted - personal growth for our agents. Just watching that is something that makes us very proud.”

What is their most common piece of advice to agents? Be consistent, whatever that

means for you. The leaders focus on providing education as much as connection. Agents join in on a massive group text seeking advice or sharing newfound wisdom, come together every Tuesday for a Masterclass that is also available to agents on Facebook Live, and will soon mark the first anniversary of CHT Group Real Estate in Jamaica together.

As the team grows and its territory expands, so do the



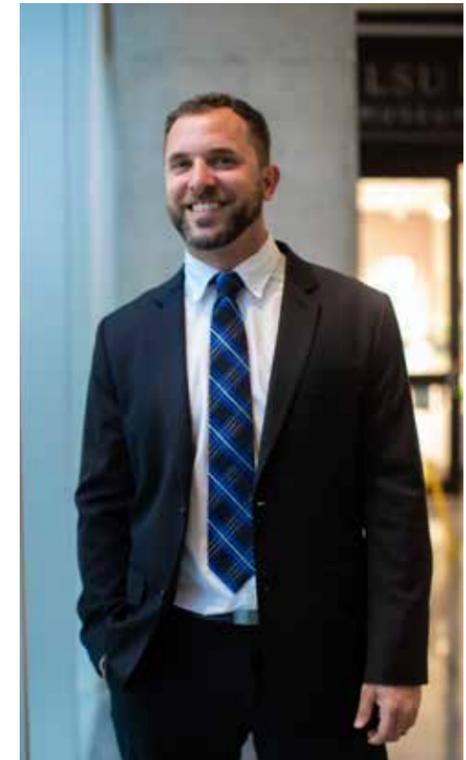
Ashley Greer



Kim Day



Nikki Calmes



Cade Harris



avenues of connection and celebration. CHT Group Real Estate has branch offices in Baton Rouge and Houma, and agents serving the North Shore, Orange Beach,

Alabama, and Mississippi. “It makes us feel so good to hear that an agent has been bragging about how much we care about them and how we’ve changed how they

operate,” Kim said. At that first roundtable meeting, the goal was to build a different brokerage apart from the rest through unwavering yet genuine support and encouragement.

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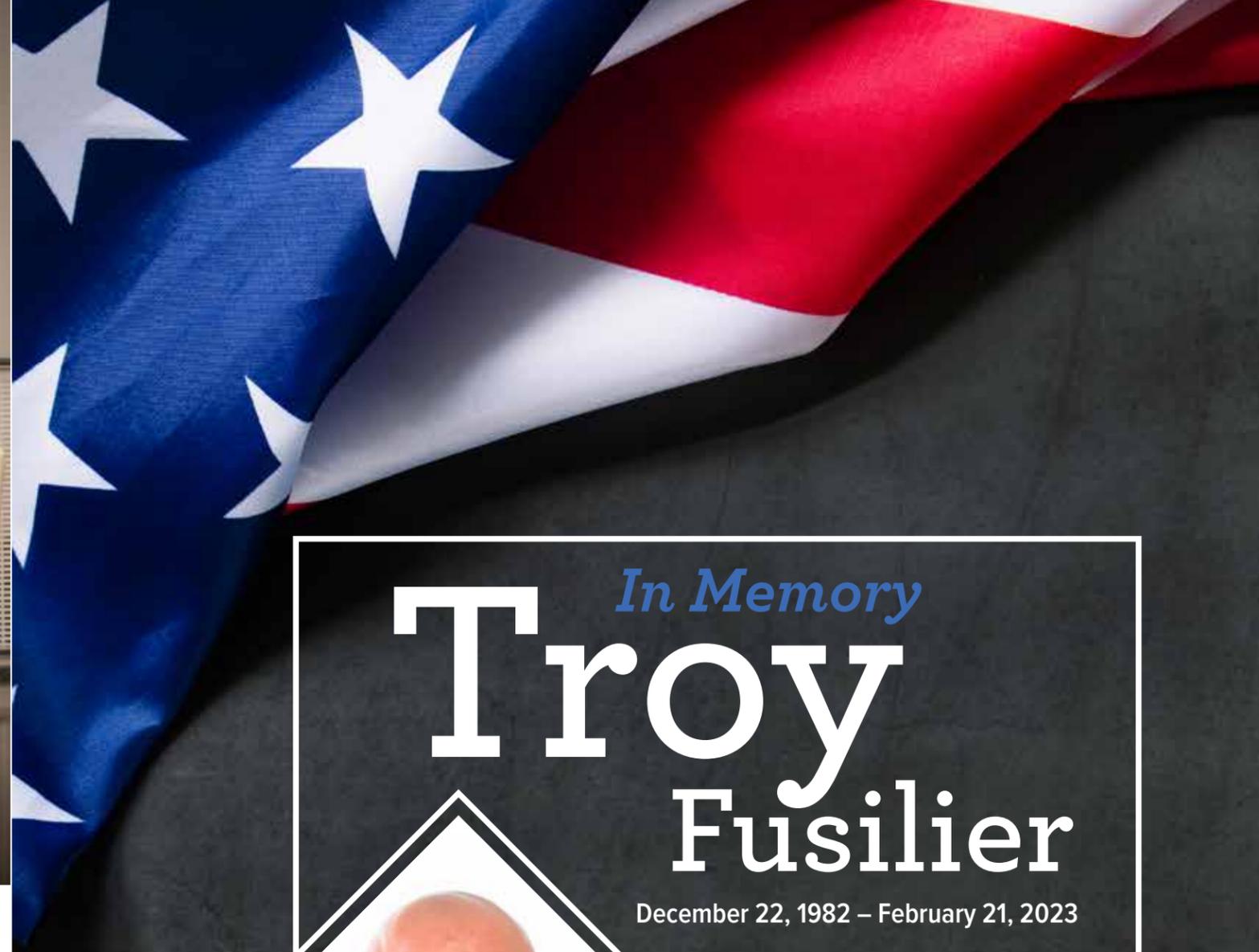
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Our CHT family lost a very special member in February, Troy Fusilier. Troy was a Realtor for over 8 years and had established an amazing business in our industry. He was deeply compassionate and caring with all who knew him, clients, friends and family. Troy was certainly a motivator and would listen and help anyone who needed words of encouragement. Troy recently relocated to Florida and was working on establishing his real estate business there, as well.

“I don’t think I ever met anyone that didn’t love him. He was just a super special person and a wonderful friend. He will be deeply missed by all.” ~ *Ashley Greer*

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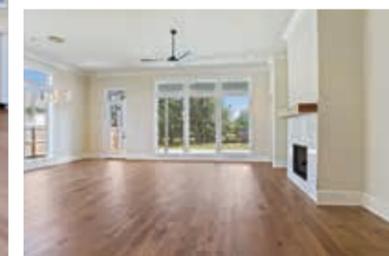
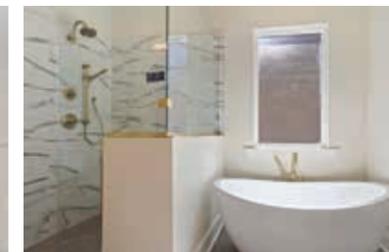


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