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TABLE OF CONTENTS



06

Index of Preferred Partners



14

From the Desk of the President of Florida Realtors®



16

The RP Experience Podcast Recap: Episodes 59-62



20

Featured Agent: Alison Gesuele



26

Partner Spotlight: Venture Title Services



30

Cover Story: Cindy Cyrus

RP

If you are interested in contributing or nominating REALTORS® for certain stories, please email us at SWFL@n2co.com.

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►► publisher's note

THE POWER OF Real Producers Networking Events

Dear Real Producers of Fort Myers,

Networking events like the ones Real Producers exclusively hosts for top agents like yourselves are not only a great time ... but attending them provides you with an opportunity to build relationships with other top REALTORS® and industry professionals, learn about what's new in the industry, and enhance your knowledge of the local market.

At Real Producers, our mission is to connect the best of the best in the industry, which we do through this monthly magazine, through *The RP Experience* podcast, on our social media platforms, and by holding regular networking events that provide opportunities to gather together at amazing local venues. Outside of a transaction, where else can you convene with top agents from other brokerages who are producing at the

same high level that you are? It is our pleasure, through our Real Producers events, to help offer you a fun and engaging way to further expand your professional network. In addition to other top agents, at our events, you can meet our preferred industry partners, such as mortgage brokers, appraisers, and home inspectors — the very special folks who make this publication possible and who can help you provide better service to your clients. By building relationships and expanding your network, you can improve your chances of success in the industry, and we hope that our events help you do just that. I encourage you to join us and attend our signature Real Producers events whenever possible!

Thank you to all who came out to our big launch party at The Club at Renaissance in January. What a great time we had, thanks to all of our wonderful partners and sponsors ... and

most of all, to all of you, who made the night so memorable. (For those of you who are new to the Top 500 this year, if you haven't seen them, photos from the launch party are on our social media pages. Check them out and tag your friends! We hope to meet you at our next big event!)

We are now planning our next event for late May and hope to see you all there! Be on the lookout for your exclusive invitation. And if you ever have questions about our events, feedback, or suggestions for great places we should hold them, please feel free to reach out. I'd love to hear from you!

Very respectfully yours,



Andrew Regenhard
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From the Desk of the PRESIDENT



REALTOR® ADVOCACY LEADS TO NEW HOMEBUYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FLORIDIANS

The entire world knows that Florida is one of the best possible places to call home. Why? Our beautiful beaches, sunny weather, business-friendly focus, and lack of an income tax make Florida an amazing place to live.

Over the past few years, thousands of people relocated to the Sunshine State. Unfortunately, the state's supply of housing is not increasing as quickly as we need it to, not only to welcome the influx of new residents but also for an already growing population. Due to this and other economic factors, we've seen a dramatic surge in prices, increasing the affordability problem for many who want to buy their first home in Florida.

Since 2016, the median price of a home in Florida has increased more than 58 percent. By December 2022, it was \$373,990, up 21 percent from one year earlier. Yet, household income isn't rising at nearly the same pace. The challenge of affording a home is even greater for many workers and educators, whose salaries often fall well below the amount needed to buy a home.

To help address this issue, your industry worked with the Florida Legislature to create the Florida Hometown Heroes Housing Program, a new program that provides down-payment and closing-cost assistance to first-time, income and occupation-qualified homebuyers so they can purchase a primary residence in the community in which

they work and serve. The Hometown Heroes Loan Program also offers a lower first-mortgage rate and additional special benefits to those who have served and continue to serve their country.

As a part of the program, borrowers can receive up to five percent of the first mortgage loan amount (maximum of \$25,000) in down-payment and closing-cost assistance. This assistance is available in the form of a zero percent, non-amortizing, 30-year, deferred second mortgage. This second mortgage becomes due and payable, in full, upon sale of the property, refinancing of the first mortgage, transfer of deed, or if the homeowner no longer occupies the property as his/her primary residence. The Florida Hometown Heroes loan is not forgivable. Eligible frontline workers also have access to lower-than-market rates on an FHA, VA, RD, Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac first mortgage, reduced upfront fees, and no origination points or discount points.

Do you know a buyer who might qualify? Go to www.floridahousing.org/programs/homebuyer-overview-page/hometown-heroes for specific information on how to apply.

To date, more than \$60 million has been allocated for down-payment assistance to thousands of families. Our industry is truly appreciative of the Florida Legislature's willingness to understand the need for this program.

But there is so much more work to do. As the 2023 legislative session begins, real estate leaders continue to advocate for new solutions that enable Florida's vital workforce to become homeowners.

Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo has worked with her colleagues to introduce and advance Senate Bill 102, known as the "Live Local Act." The Live Local Act is an innovative, statewide strategy on housing that will allocate hundreds of millions of dollars to the creation and sustainment of affordable housing units. Included in this legislation is a proposed \$100 million expansion of the Hometown Heroes Housing Program and the elimination of the occupation requirement for program eligibility. This means that if it passes, any Floridian employed full-time by a Florida-based employer, whose income is at or below 150 percent AMI, could receive up to \$35,000 in down-payment assistance on their first home purchase. This landmark legislation is historic, and your industry is truly grateful for the state's willingness to invest in solutions that keep Florida shining!



Mike McGraw
2023 President of Florida Realtors®

Mike McGraw is the 2023 president of Florida Realtors® and a broker-associate with RE/MAX Central Realty of Apopka.



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RECAP OF EPISODES 59-62

EPISODE 59 STACEY MACZULIS

Born and raised in Ohio, preferred partner Stacey Maczulis has been with Ohio Real Title and, now, Venture Title Services for over 10 years. There are roughly 130 employees in the company. For Stacey, she enjoys the sales aspect the most about working in the title industry. Stacey explains how she enjoys building relationships, as well as having a strong understanding of the real estate industry. She discusses the importance of client longevity and relates that she

has had clients who have worked with her for the past nine years.

In this episode, Stacey also talks about what sets Venture Title Services apart from other title companies, and emphasizes that it starts with great customer service and communication. She explains the importance of being there for your clients and for your buyers and sellers as well.



Stacey Maczulis (left) and Andrew Regenhard



EPISODE 60 CARLENE MURRAY

Originally from Boston, preferred partner Carlene Murray moved to the Midwest to raise her family, and then eventually found her way to Naples, where she has grown to love the area. Before Carlene got into health and wellness, she worked as an editor and has a passion for writing (she is a contributing writer to *Naples Real Producers*, authoring the monthly “Health & Wellness” article).

In this episode, Carlene discusses her passion for health and nutrition, which she has been coaching her clients on for the past four years. She is the owner of

Board30 Naples, a boutique fitness center in Naples she opened in May 2020, that focuses on resistance-band training, cardio, and core exercises targeting the full body in a very personalized setting. Carlene offers coaching sessions that are tailored to the needs of each client. Her customized mentorship is an hour each week helping clients with their health journeys. Carlene shares that her favorite things to teach are how to reduce stress, change habits and mindset, and adjust the diet and improve overall health through a balance of food groups and proper exercise.



Carlene Murray (left) and Andrew Regenhard



EPISODE 61

LORI FOWLER

Top producer Lori Fowler is a REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Global Luxury in Naples. Before working in the luxury real estate market, Lori spent 20 years in the public service and philanthropic sectors, both as a volunteer and as an employee. While growing up, Lori was constantly moving, which afforded her a multicultural experience, meeting new people in many different areas.

In this episode, Lori relates how she and her family relocated to Florida in 2008 from Northern California, discusses her work experience prior to getting into real estate, and explains that she has always had a passion for philanthropy and how she became actively involved in it. Lori also shares how her previous experience and knowledge has helped shape her into the successful Realtor she is today.



Lori Fowler (left) and Andrew Regenhard



EPISODE 62

ADOLFO ("AD") DIAZ

Top producer AD Diaz, with Century 21 Sunbelt Realty, has a strong passion for serving his clients and community. He and host Andrew Regenhard dive into AD's support for local charities and his passion for real estate.

In this episode, AD shares how it was being a son of Cuban immigrants whose parents came to the U.S. after

the Cuban Revolution. Born and raised in Miami, AD relocated to Southwest Florida in 1988. AD recounts how he got his start in real estate and his firm belief that everything happens for a reason. AD also discusses the community and infrastructure of Cape Coral and why there is a continuing push of people wanting to move to the area.



AD Diaz (left) and Andrew Regenhard

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GESUELE

AUTHENTICALLY ALISON

“Pave your own way,”
Alison Gesuele begins.
“Be authentic, and pave
your own way.”

In real estate and life,
Alison is following her
own advice. Born and
raised in the New York
City metro, Alison first
dipped her toes into the
real estate business back
in Brooklyn. In 2017, she
followed her dreams and
the sunshine, taking a
leap of faith and relocat-
ing to Florida, where she
reignited her real estate
sales career.

Over the past five years,
Alison has proven that
grit, integrity, and
authenticity are a recipe
for real estate success.

“Authenticity is key,”
Alison says. “If you are
authentically you —
what more is there?”

Rewind: Back in Brooklyn

Alison obtained her
New York real estate
license in 2004 and
began her career selling
in Brooklyn. Still in
her early twenties, she
developed thick skin and
sales skills, to boot.

“When I got into real
estate young, I knew
I loved it right away,”
Alison reflects. “I had
no idea where it would
take me, but I knew I
liked helping people





Alison Gesuele is a solo agent with Royal Shell Real Estate.

achieve a dream, and I knew I liked showing houses.”

Alison worked in a small, boutique office; she was the only REALTOR® next to her broker. After a year in that office, the company dissolved and Alison transitioned into mortgage lending. Soon, the Great Recession hit, and the entire real estate industry was upended. Alison decided to go back to school to get a master’s degree. Meanwhile, she took a job at a daycare.

That daycare job turned into much more than Alison anticipated. She ended up running a daycare center for the next 10 years.

The Second Act

In 2014, Alison and her husband, Patrick, took a trip to Cape Coral to

visit family, and they fell in love with the area.

“We loved the warm weather. We were tired of the snow. We loved the quality of life here, and we were able to afford something on the water with a pool in a newer home than we lived in in New York. We realized it would be a better life for us,” Alison explains.

“So we left our jobs, sold our house, and bought a house here. My mom lived with us, so she came down with us. And I decided to get back into real estate.”

Alison hadn’t sold much real estate in over a decade, but she kept her license active all

those years. She always hoped to come back to it, and the transition to Florida proved to be the perfect opportunity to make a change.

“That itch for real estate was always there. I was ready to get back into the business. I wanted a change from a day-care setting, but I still wanted to help people. When I was in real estate in my young twenties, I enjoyed it so much.”

Rising Up

The early part of Alison’s second act was full of challenges. Her mom passed away just two months after relocating to Florida, leaving Alison grieving and without the support of one of her closest people.

“I was in a new place with this commission-only job... I had to figure out something to do to be financially independent.”

“

CLIENTS
REALIZE I’M A
HUMAN BEING
BEFORE I’M
A REALTOR.
AUTHENTICITY
HAS MADE ME
SUCCESSFUL.





Alison Gesuele began her real estate career in her hometown of Brooklyn, New York, before relocating to Florida.

Alison primarily focused on rentals during her first year. In 2019, she moved to Royal Shell, allowing her business to take flight. She had a strong year in 2020, a \$16 million year in 2021 and a \$15 million year in 2022.

“The business has grown exponentially,” Alison beams. “It’s been a blessing.”

Keeping It Real

Alison believes her authentic nature is one of the

primary reasons for her real estate success. She cares deeply about her clients and she shows it. She’s an open book, leading with transparency in all her dealings.

“Clients realize I’m a human being before I’m a Realtor. Authenticity has made me successful. I care about people, and they see that... You can’t just pretend to care; you have to actually care. I find that the more authentic

the relationship with the client, the better. People have to trust you.”

As Alison reflects on her journey, she taps into a sense of gratitude to be where she is today. She’s built a business that fits her personality and has room to grow in the coming years.

“The more I grow my business genuinely ... if I can keep doing that, I will move onward and upward. I’d like to be a Real Producer for many years to come.”

“
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BUSINESS
GENUINELY ...
IF I CAN KEEP
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The Ohio Real Title team (Photo by Andrew Eicher Photography)

VENTURE TITLE SERVICES

A NEW MODEL

Venture Title Services may be a newer name to the Southwest Florida title arena, but they are anything but a new company. Founded by Ryan Marrie in 2006 in Ohio, the company has proven its value in the midwest. They have now taken that model to Florida, quickly making a name for themselves with their unique approach to title services.



Ryan Marrie, owner of Ohio Real Title, founded Venture Title Services in Southwest Florida in 2021.

“We are a large company with a small-company feel, and what we have to offer to our clients and the real estate community — there is nothing else like it that exists in Florida,” Ryan says proudly. “There are many companies that do a really nice job, but there’s nobody that operates like we do.”

A Strong Foundation

From day one, Ryan has been committed to creating an unmatched title experience.

“We built this business by hiring experienced professionals and giving them the resources they need to care for our clients. That’s the driver in what we do,” Ryan explains. “We’re really good at identifying right fits, culturally, who believe in taking care of buyers, sellers, REALTORS®, lenders, and attorney clients. We have people who have been with us since day one, which means a lot.”

Ohio Real Title has since grown to 10 offices and 130 employees. Their most recent expansion is to Naples, Florida, where they are doing business as Venture Title Services.

Venture Title Services opened its doors in Naples in the fall of 2021. Ryan has fallen in love with the Florida lifestyle, from the weather and the water to year-round golf, but that’s not the only reason for opening an office in Naples. Ryan and his team conducted years of research into their next potential expansion, and Naples topped the list for several reasons.

“There are a lot of companies from the north that come south, but I don’t think many of them do it for the reasons we did. We’re not here to dabble in it and get out of the cold. We’re here to do serious business at a large volume and be a leader in the market. We’re not just dabbling, looking to close a few deals a month and expense travel. That’s not how we operate. We researched for many years and felt 2021 was the time. We’ve had a great response,” Ryan says.

Florida operates similarly to Ohio, making the transition smooth. The state also allows Venture Title Services to continue running their joint venture that had become so popular in Ohio.

“
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Meet the Team: Stacey Maczulis, Business Development

Originally part of the Ohio Real Title team in Cleveland, Ohio, Stacey Maczulis now spearheads the business development efforts for Venture Title Services. Stacey spent nearly a decade working with Ohio Real Title out of her hometown of Cleveland before moving to Naples to lead the marketing efforts for Venture Title Services.

Stacey brings experience and a deep commitment to providing best-in-class service.

“I’m building business relationships, showing agents how we can grow and build businesses together,” Stacey says. “I want agents to know how good our customer service, processes, and systems are. We’re a well-oiled machine. Our follow-through is great. For me, personally, I’m all about building trust and relationships. I want agents to know and trust me. We’re always here to help. I’m available anytime someone needs me.”

Partnering for Success

Title agencies are limited in what they can and cannot offer to real estate agents, especially in the realm of gifts and complimentary services. Ryan and his team have found another way to support agents and their businesses — through their joint venture, Venture Land Title Agency.

“Brokerages, Realtors, investors, builders, attorneys ... they can all be minority owners — anyone that’s involved in title work,” Ryan explains. “State and federal securities law allow for it. If you believe in our team and our service



Stacey Maczulis heads business development for Venture Title Services in Florida.



The Venture Title Services team in Naples (Photo by Michelle Reed)

and the value we deliver, become a partner with us, as well and benefit financially with us and earn quarterly distributions. We have more than 1,400 partners in that joint venture now.”

One of the unique pieces of Venture Title Services’ joint venture is that they go directly to Realtors, allowing them to benefit from the success of their partners. It’s the first program of its kind in Florida, following its heritage as the first of its kind in Ohio nearly 20 years ago.

The Closing Experience

While the joint venture is a unique and powerful offering in its own right, Ryan understands that providing a best-in-class

closing experience is what makes the whole thing work. Delivering a good experience for buyers and sellers is priority number one.

“Ultimately, everything revolves around buyers and sellers. Everything is about having happy buyers and sellers and creating an experience for them. We want to be as accommodating and efficient as possible,” Ryan says.

Ryan and his team are willing to do whatever it takes to provide a stellar closing experience. For example, they’ve offered “any time, any place” closings since opening their company. If clients want to sit down in person, they can come to Venture Title Services’ offices, but if they prefer to close remotely, Venture Title Services will come

to them, either in person or virtually, at no extra cost. Offerings like these have helped the organization gain a stronghold in Southwest Florida.

“If we have happy buyers and sellers, then the Realtors have happy buyers and sellers, and that leads to long-term value for real estate professionals. Everything we do is built around happy buyers and sellers.”

For more information, visit VentureTitleServices.com.



Cindy Cyrus

AN INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

► cover story

By Zachary Cohen
Photos by Michelle Reed

Ten years ago, Cindy Cyrus picked up a Florida Sun Magazine at a Frankfurt train station while it was raining. This seemingly minor event would forever alter the course of her life.

By that time, Cindy had already traveled the majority of the world. Growing up, her family moved to many different countries and, as an adult, Cindy further deepened her passion for traveling and exploring new cultures. In 2008, she even took a nine-month sabbatical to travel the world with one suitcase.

Cindy holds an MBA and has a background as a senior product manager

in global cash management with Deutsche Bank at their head office in Frankfurt, Germany. She was one of the few women that excelled in a senior leadership position with Deutsche Bank. Her life was good and her career was flourishing, but she still had the incredible drive to explore a new career in another country — especially the United States, where she held a green card.

“In my management role, I was traveling a lot around the world. My clients were senior executives and even CEOs of other banks worldwide. I really enjoyed my profession and success. However, when I was standing in the freezing rain and waiting for my train, flipping through the Florida Sun Magazine, I discovered an ad for a seminar being held by the Florida

Sun Magazine that coming Sunday. It was the perfect timing,” she reflects.

At the five-hour seminar, Cindy listened as a team of REALTORS®, attorneys, and property managers talked about beautiful properties in Fort Myers, solutions for obtaining a visa or green card in the U.S., and how a real estate closing works. Cindy left the seminar inspired.

Around the same time, Cindy received a call from her immigration attorney. She had lived in the U.S. and held a green card, but her green card was set to expire unless she spent three months in the U.S. Instead of spending time in her favorite cities like New York, Philadelphia, or San Francisco, she chose Fort Myers as her destination.



During her three months in Florida, Cindy got bored at the beach and began looking into the real estate market and visiting open houses. Initially, she had no intention of purchasing a property, as she still had to return to her responsibilities in Frankfurt.

However, one day before leaving the country, she came across a stunning waterfront condo overlooking a marina. Against all odds, she decided to buy it.

Now, Cindy not only had a dream but also a property. She just had to work out her professional path to foster a move to Southwest Florida.

New Beginnings

Cindy arrived in Southwest Florida in May 2013 and quickly adapted to the new culture and lifestyle. The agent she purchased her condo from (Jeff Tyson) kept suggesting that she get into real estate, telling Cindy she had the right personality, attitude, and drive to excel.

“As I have been to so many countries, I knew I would be able to adjust to the U.S. culture. I have been dreaming about being my own boss for a long time. My strong, intrinsic motivation and background might have made me successful in many different professions, but after all, I did decide to get into the exciting world of real estate, which became my pure passion.”

Cindy passed the state exam and got her real estate and broker’s licenses. Once licensed, she spent six months in new construction to understand how houses are built in Florida.

Six months later, Cindy joined Engel & Völkers for their international exposure. Her business took off quickly; her first deal was a \$1 million Gulf-front condo in Naples from a client she acquired by advertising herself in Florida Sun Magazine. Soon afterwards, she closed a \$3.8 million condo in Bonita Springs.

A Unique Strategy

“I manage real estate ... with a clear vision, goals, time-lines, tasks, and broken-down schedules and excel sheets, with the main goal to ensure my clients obtain the highest amount of dedication and the highest professional service they can obtain,” Cindy says.

Cindy has applied the skills she perfected in the corporate world to her real estate business. She focuses on building relationships with her customers, listening to their concerns, and making the process as seamless as possible.

Cindy continuously educates herself and analyzes the strategies of other top agents.

Her ability to form connections and work in the international market has helped her become well-established in the luxury market. Regardless of the price, Cindy dedicates herself to giving her customers the attention they deserve.

Right at Home

Ten years after having left her home country, Cindy’s business is soaring. She is now an agent with Compass. Using their technology, support, and referral network, Cindy has taken her business to the next level while continuously increasing her average sales volume.

Recently, she listed one of the most impressive waterfront homes in Fort Myers for nearly \$12 million.

Cindy has indulged in some memorable listings, too, like a castle in Germany; a \$14 million mansion in Switzerland; Peace River Island for nearly \$20 million in Florida; a \$2 million single family home in Chiang Mai, Thailand; an island in the Maldives; and a beautiful multimillion-dollar penthouse in Ludwigsburg, Germany.

Having moved 29 times, Cindy understands the challenges of relocating and how important it is to work with the right agent. Her ability to connect with people of differing backgrounds is exceptional.

Cindy distinguishes herself by developing global business relationships. Her international expertise, combined with her sales skills and experience in project and product management, allows her to quickly identify business opportunities with investors, developers, builders, and business owners.

“What really differentiates me is that, besides having traveled the world, I can easily adjust to different types

“

The exciting world of real estate ... became my pure passion.



Cindy Cyrus is a top producer with Compass.



Originally from Frankfurt, Germany, Cindy Cyrus was in global cash management with Deutsche Bank before entering real estate in Southwest Florida.

of people and do not hesitate to even work with the most demanding CEOs. I understand others' values."

Cindy is not only enjoying her real estate career, she loves the Florida lifestyle. After she obtained her American citizenship, she married Jeff Tyson on the highest tower in the world, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. Now, the couple enjoys traveling the world when time allows.

Big Plans Ahead

"I'm very ambitious. I have clear three- and five-year plans," Cindy says. "Within the next three years, I plan to expand my team on an international basis by carefully selecting top agents as team members

in different countries to expand our team's global exposure. With Compass, I already have access to an outstanding referral network, but going global is my ultimate dream."

Within the next five years, Cindy aims to offer international clients what she calls "global lifestyle concepts."

"This is what affluent clients are looking for, more and more, especially those that come from different countries," Cindy says. "Such concepts

must be customizable and might include, but are not limited to, a network of yacht brokers, private airplane advisors, entertainment solutions, and travel concepts that tie in with customized property management, allowing for an ultimate lifestyle. A global lifestyle concept must also be customized to each type of generation."

For Cindy, the most important thing is to stay ahead of the market, stay open to new challenges, and ensure she is continually adjusting to change.

“Going global is my ultimate dream.”

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