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Tonia Witt Photo

Our next social event details inside!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<p>06 Preferred Partners</p>		<p>08 Publisher's Note</p>		<p>11 Event Promo</p>
	<p>12 Sponsor Spotlight: Tonia Witt Photo</p>		<p>18 Cover Story: Colby Davis Excels in Residential Real Estate</p>		<p>24 On The Rise: Mary Todd Ashbrook</p>



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NOTE

PUBLISHER'S

Here I sit at the beginning of the month writing a new note with anticipation ahead and the Ironman 70.3 in just 3 weeks.

SWIM: 52.12MI
BIKE: 974MI
RUN: 242.5MI

These are my current totals since beginning training at the end of February. Once again, taking a look at those distances might look simple. Certainly, the hours spent in each event, dialing in the nutrition, keeping a good sleeping regimen and everything it takes to prepare and train for a race of this type is no small feat. I have a few other friends who are doing this race and it's interesting to see each person's path. Some have done many before and feel they're under-prepared but they have mentally been through this before so they know they can complete it, but this will be a different test. For me, everything is going to be brand new. From the first time jumping in the water, figuring out transition points and experiencing the July heat, all knowing that there's a finish line ahead.

I've read in the past that your brain doesn't know the difference between excitement and nerves, and I remember from my days competing in other sports, it was excitement rather than nerves or hesitation that came upon me before I competed in events. This is the same I feel now having completed two triathlons to this point. I am very excited and feel well prepared for what is in front of me. If the saying is true "you don't rise to the occasion, you fall to your level of preparation" then I'm encouraged. I have what it takes to complete this race and do it in a time frame that I will be proud of.

Hopefully, you can take away from this a message you can share with your clients. Something that separates you from others is not that you need to figure anything out along the way, you've been through it before you know what to expect, and if you fall to the level of your preparation that might even be leaps and bounds ahead of where other agents are. Experience gives us wisdom, and understanding of what needs to be done to move things forward, and also pitfalls to avoid. You have likely created a plan



to avoid most pitfalls, and can fall on your experience and expertise to keep clients best interests in mind and help them with their transactions.

Congratulations to our features this month on all their hard work and doing what it takes to step up and be great in their profession. You'll get to learn more about **Mary Todd Ashbrook** from the small town of Cynthiana, **Colby Davis** and how his upbringing and past careers have prepared him for a life in real estate. Sponsor Spotlight is **Tonia Witt** who retired a second time in 2020 to take a deep dive into many aspects of photography.

I look forward to seeing many of you here later this month at our next social event, check out our promotion page for more details.

Cheers,

AARON

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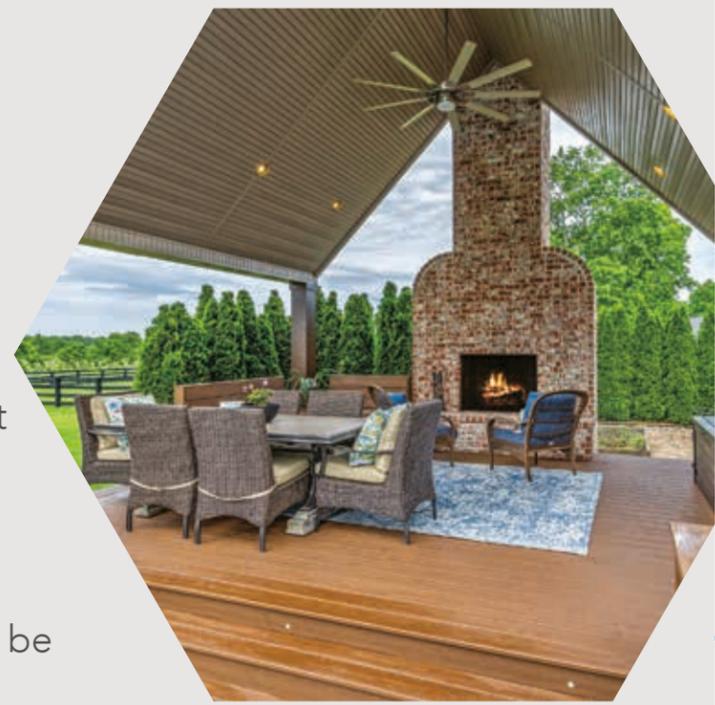
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Written by **Elizabeth McCabe** | Photos By **Tonia Witt**

CAPTURING PICTURE-PERFECT PHOTOS WITH A FLASH!

“A lot has happened since 2020,” reflects Tonia Witt. “I’ve got a whole new life and a whole new career.” She reinvented herself during the pandemic, following her heart into photography and establishing her own business, Tonia Witt Photo.

A HEART TO HELP OTHERS

Tonia, who was a middle school social worker for 20 years, has always had a heart to help others. She dedicated her career to helping students and families in need, immersing herself in their lives to better understand their needs. However, life took an unexpected turn when her mother was diagnosed with cancer in April 2008 and passed away later that year. Tonia’s father also suffered a massive heart attack in April 2014, which led to his passing. Tonia has also experienced

the loss of her grandparents, prompting her decision to take early retirement to focus on her son and personal life.

That’s when Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bluegrass contacted her to be their regional program manager. “I loved the job and being connected to kids at the school,” she smiles. In 2020, she was forced to go remote and connected with the families in her care over Zoom.

“I made the difficult decision to retire a second time in September 2020,” she reflects. Amidst these life challenges, Tonia found solace in photography.

BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

“I’ve always had an interest in photography,” she smiles. Inspired by a close friend who was a photographer, she began experimenting with her own photography work. The COVID-19 pandemic provided Tonia with the opportunity to delve deeper into her newfound passion.

“A good friend of mine was a phenomenal top-notch sports photographer,” she says. “He died unexpectedly in 2020. I was very much in tune with sporting events and covered his sporting events for the local newspaper at the time.” When COVID caused sporting events to shut down, Tonia continued snapping photos. Capturing

everyday moments with her new-found passion, photography came easily to her.

“I started the Passion Project. I went out every day and shot photos, whether pictures of an empty downtown, covered bridges, families on their porches, or historic buildings. I shot every single day. Around April, I went out and shot every single church in our county just in time for Easter.” Tonia’s photography started to gain popularity and she realized that photography could become more than just a hobby.

A TRUSTED SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHER

“I had opportunities to shoot UK women’s basketball, UK men’s basketball, WNBA games, and Kentucky State Athletic Championships,” she says. A trusted sports photographer, Tonia saw a lot of doors opening up for her. She has a heart of gratitude for the opportunities that were before her. COVID caused her to pivot with her profession, emerging on the photography scene.

“COVID was looked at as a distracting, distraught time, but I looked at it as a blessing,” she reflects. “I took the opportunity to shoot sports during COVID. Then the real estate market exploded.”



“ IF YOU PUT OUT A GOOD PRODUCT, THE OTHER THINGS WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.”





Another door opened for Tonia, right before her very eyes.

RISE IN RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE PHOTOGRAPHY

“I was standing out in my front yard and a friend pulled up in her car and got out. We chatted for a few minutes and she was getting ready to list the house next door.” When she asked Tonia if she wanted to take pictures of it, Tonia said yes.

“She was thrilled with the photos at that time, but they were terrible,” laughs Tonia. She then asked her to shoot another house and Tonia agreed. Although Tonia wasn’t satisfied, her friend was thrilled with the photos. She was determined to improve her skills and had the perfect place.

“I had an oceanfront condo at Myrtle Beach and went down there for a week and immersed myself in the process of real estate photography,” she says. “All my photography was



self-taught, other than a couple of mentors, Google, YouTube, and a lot of trial and error.” Her effort paid off as one referral led to another.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Tonia has shot over 800 homes, working with 55 different agents and establishing herself as a trusted real estate photographer. “I consistently shoot for around 20 agents,” she says.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Tonia prides herself on her top-notch customer service and attention to detail. As a one-woman show, she ensures that her clients, both agents and homeowners, receive the best possible experience. Tonia goes above and beyond to make the process smooth, especially when time is limited. Her goal is to provide a high-quality product

while being respectful and considerate of everyone involved. With her dedication to customer service, Tonia has built lasting relationships and earned the trust of agents and homeowners alike. As she says, “If you put out a good product, the other things will take care of themselves.”

RISE UP SPORTS MEDIA AND FEMALE ATHLETE EMPOWERMENT

In addition to her real estate photography career, Tonia is passionate about giving female athletes the recognition they deserve. She founded Rise Up Sports Media, a platform focused on empowering female athletes, primarily in Kentucky but that net is growing. Through social media highlights, podcasts, and publications, Tonia aims to give female athletes the exposure they often lack. Rise Up Sports Media has gained a significant following and

gained traction, allowing athletes to share their stories and expand their platforms.

“I’m a big proponent of female sports,” says Tonia. She is doing her part to promote women’s sports and give them the recognition that they deserve.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

From social work to real estate photography, Tonia followed her heart into a profession that she loves. She loves what she does, capturing picture-perfect photos with a flash. As Tonia can attest, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Make a lasting first impression for potential buyers with exceptional photography by Tonia Witt Photo!

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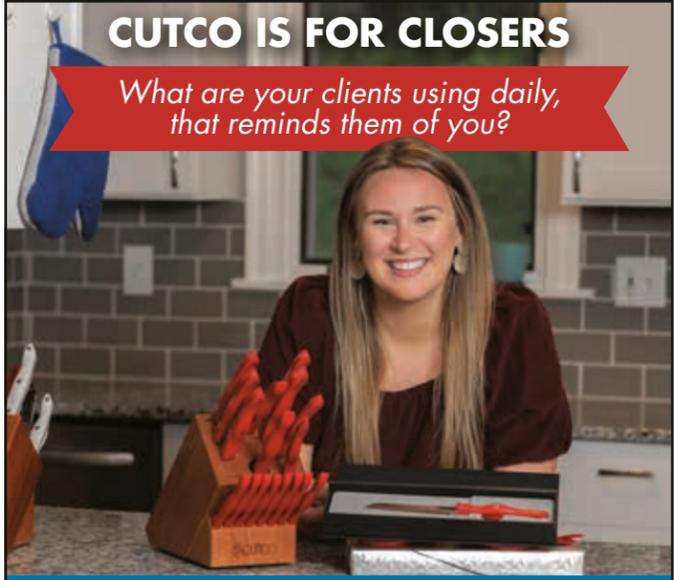
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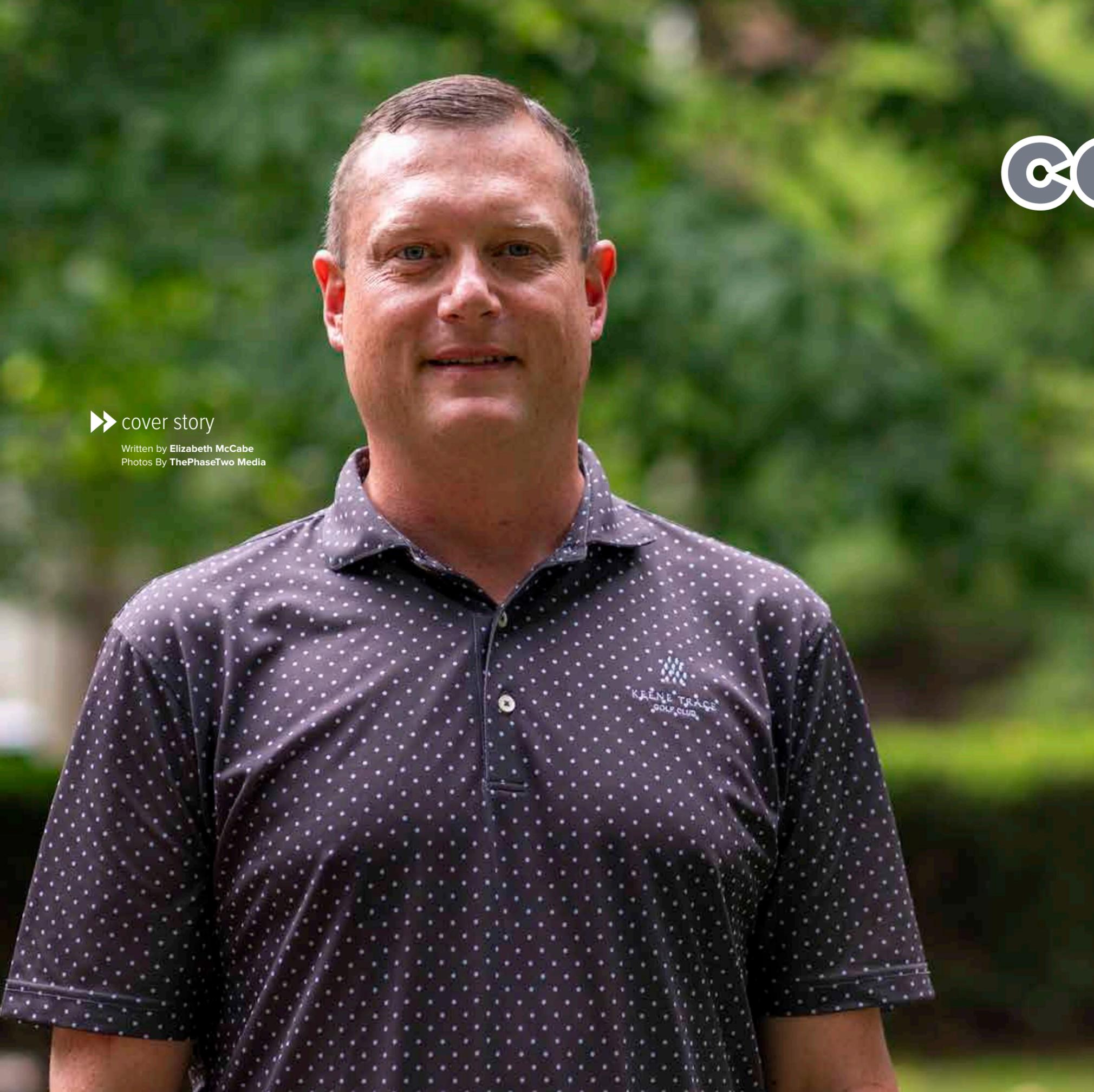
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Never underestimate the importance of your hometown and your upbringing for shaping your character and convictions.

Colby Davis, a native of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, grew up in Mercer County, just a short distance west of Lexington. Raised on a farm, Colby learned the importance of hard work from an early age. He spent his formative years working on the farm alongside his family, and even now, at the age of 91, his grandfather continues to work the land. Colby's parents still reside there, maintaining the family legacy.

"Growing up on a farm helped me learn the value of hard work," comments Colby. "That work ethic has helped me later in life." He has fond memories of driving tractors at a young age, working with the cattle, and cutting and raking hay. "I also square baled hay," he reflects. That was the most challenging task on the farm, but Colby was up to the challenge. Not one to shy away from hard work, Colby learned to persevere, a life lesson that he has carried with him throughout his career.

In addition to his responsibilities on the farm, Colby also played sports, further shaping his character and determination. When he turned 18, he moved to Lexington and got a degree in Advertising from the University of Kentucky.

From Crunching Numbers to Doing Appraisals

After graduating, Colby got a job working in manufacturing. “I worked with 600 other people crunching numbers for a company that supplied seats and doors to Toyota,” he comments. “I figured out that wasn’t for me. I am more of a people person. I don’t mind working on a computer, but not for 10 hours a day.” He left his corporate job to pursue real estate.

“I’ve always had a passion for real estate,” reflects Colby. He has always been interested in construction and took several real estate courses in college. “I felt that I was a natural fit to work in real estate.” Combining the best of both worlds, Colby first got his real estate appraisal license. “I did that from 2006-2016 and got my real estate license in 2009,” he comments.

Colby’s friend, Greg Buchanan, played a significant role in guiding Colby’s path in real estate. Greg, the Broker/Owner of ERA Select, recognized Colby’s potential and encouraged him to become a REALTOR®. Colby joined ERA Select in 2009 and has remained with the brokerage ever since.



Throughout his real estate career, Colby has built his business primarily on repeat and referral clients. His commitment to professionalism and exceptional customer service has contributed to his success. In his first year in real estate, he ranked within the top 3 of new agents worldwide within the ERA Network and was a candidate for Rookie of the Year Award for the corporation. Colby’s sales continued to grow each year until he became one of the top producers in his company.

Invaluable Experience + Expertise

Having worked as an appraiser, Colby gained invaluable knowledge about property values and different neighborhoods. This expertise enables him to provide clients with valuable insights and guide them in making informed decisions.

“My experience as an appraiser gave me great insight into correctly valuing properties,” he explains. “You learn a lot about different areas. From one street to the next, you figure out why the value increased or declined.” This knowledge and expertise are instrumental in listing properties.

He takes pride in working closely with people, understanding their needs, and ensuring they feel comfortable throughout the buying or selling process. “I want to answer questions before people ask them,” he points out. “I want to be a guiding hand for them.”

Colby sees himself as a project manager, assisting clients in achieving their real estate goals while building lasting relationships. “My typical buyer is a young professional in their 30’s and 40s,” he comments. “I’m passionate about finding people options, even when the inventory is tough.” Currently, he is focused on finding homes in school districts for his clients before the fall approaches. With his helping hand and guidance, Colby simplifies the complexity of real estate for his clients.



While Colby specializes in both new construction and resale properties, the majority of his business (around 80 percent) revolves around resale. He has cultivated strong relationships with builders such as Briggs Homes, JLT Construction, Hayden Homes, and Classic Traditions, collaborating on numerous projects over the years.

Family Matters

Outside of work, Colby cherishes spending time with his family. He has a 1 ½-year-old daughter named Everly and a son named Kingston, who turns 6 in July. Colby is also actively involved as an assistant coach for Kingston’s baseball team. His wife Brandy, whom he met in the real estate industry, provides support in the background while assisting with marketing and accounting.

In his free time, Colby tries to play golf whenever possible, which suits him to a tee. He also maintains a strong connection with his alma mater, the University of Kentucky, and enjoys attending sports events.

A Positive Impact

Through his unwavering dedication and commitment to his clients, Colby Davis continues to make a positive impact in the real estate industry and his community. From his farm town roots to his rise in residential real estate, Colby is living proof that with enough drive and determination, anything is possible.

“***My experience as an appraiser gave me great insight into correctly valuing properties.***”



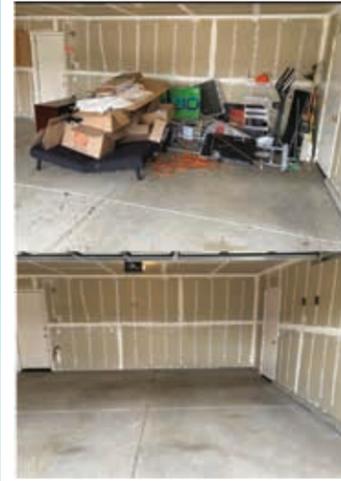
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▶▶ on the rise

Mary Todd

ASHBROOK

Written By **Brett Rybak**
Photos By **1075 Photography**

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CONTINUING TO SERVE HOMETOWN COMMUNITY

Born and raised in Cynthiana, Mary Todd Ashbrook has spent her life in and around the Harrison County city. A 2007 graduate of Harrison County High School in Cynthiana, Ashbrook has been well-rooted in the community from an early age and has enjoyed the small-town lifestyle and sense of community pride the area provides.

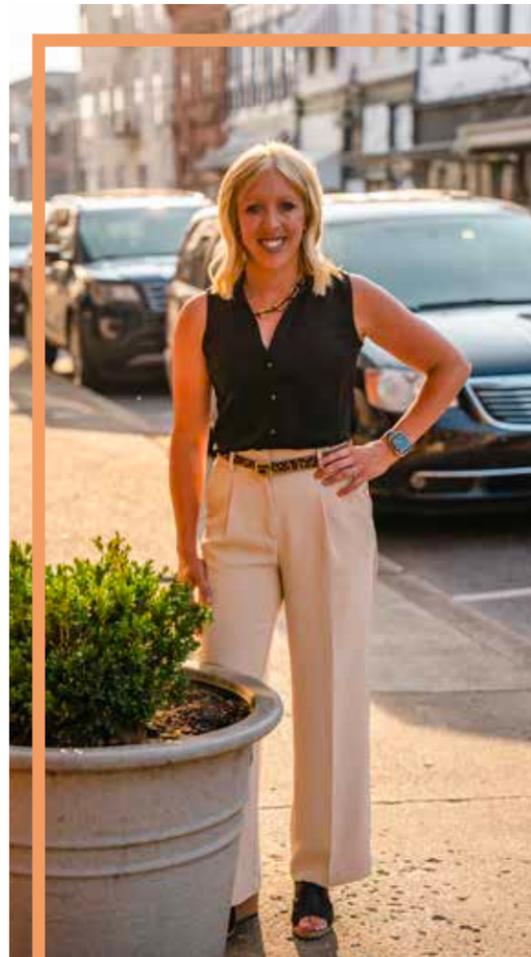
At 15 years old, Ashbrook began working at Biancke's Restaurant, which has been open since 1894 and is the state of Kentucky's oldest continuously-running restaurant. Despite originally moving to Lexington for college, she continued to work at Biancke's on weekends and eventually purchased the restaurant in 2009 at the ripe age of 20.

"At the beginning, running Biancke's was great," Ashbrook said. "I was single. I didn't have kids. I could put all of my time into the restaurant. Fast forward 10 years, life had changed. I was married to my husband, J.D., with two children and pregnant with a third so I decided to sell the restaurant."

After selling Biancke's, Ashbrook opted to be a stay-at-home mom to her three children, Eva, Avery and A.J. The couple decided to build on 10 acres in Cynthiana but Mary Todd soon realized the stay-at-home mom life was not for her.

"I needed more of an identity," Ashbrook said. "That being said, I found myself wondering what I was going to do with my life. My family and I had known Doug Hampton forever and knew he had been successful locally in real estate and insurance. He helped us sell Biancke's in 2019 and just celebrated 50 years in the real estate business this past May. My dad was good friends with Doug, mentioned I was getting back into work and Doug mentioned I should get my real estate license and get into business with him at Palmer-Hampton."

So here's Ashbrook, freshly into a brand new career much different from a restaurant owner, trying to find her footing in the business. In doing so, she had to take time to realize what she wanted

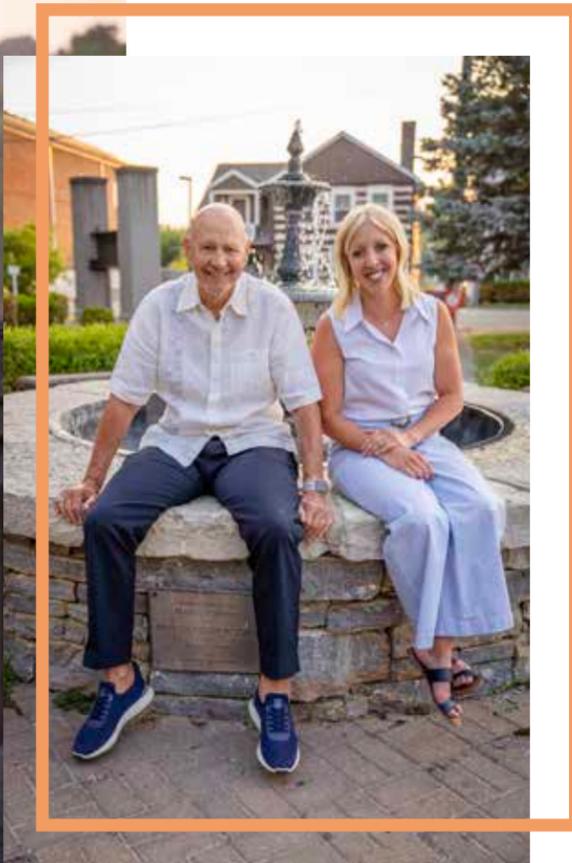


to pride herself on in this new venture. As it turns out, she reverted back to her previous experience.

“On my first day in the office, Doug mentioned that above all, we do what’s best for our clients,” Ashbrook added. “That has always stuck with me and it is something that really carries over from all my time in the restaurant business. It was important to continue to go the extra mile. It was imperative, just like my previous career, to put out fires and make everything as smooth as possible for the customer.”



I’ve always enjoyed helping people, whether they’re relationships with people I’ve already known or new people I’ve met along the way, now coming as referrals or just new customers through a listing. So many relationships I’ve had through the restaurant have transferred over and are much deeper and more personal.



All of this has made things come full circle for Ashbrook, who believes both of her careers have revolved around the business of people.

“When I was a stay-at-home mom, I missed the adult interaction of working with and helping people,” Ashbrook said. “I’ve always enjoyed helping people, whether they’re relationships with people I’ve already known or new people I’ve met along the way, now coming as referrals or just new customers through a listing. So many relationships I’ve had through the restaurant have transferred over and are much deeper and more personal.”





I'll spend more to give back to a family-owned business in town and there's a huge sense of community pride here in Cynthiana. There are a whole lot of people making it a great place to live.



With that being said, Ashbrook is thrilled to have made the jump back into the Cynthiana workforce to continue to provide a phenomenal service to this community she loves and has done so much for her.

"I genuinely enjoy living here and want to continue to see it grow," Ashbrook added. "If my kids continue to stay here, I want to continue to make it a better place to live for them. The real estate business, we see so many people who are looking for more of a small-town lifestyle. We offer a lot of that. I'll spend more to give back to a family-owned business in town and there's a huge sense of community pride here in Cynthiana. There are a whole lot of people making it a great place to live."

It's safe to say Ashbrook is one of many making her hometown the desirable community it is today.

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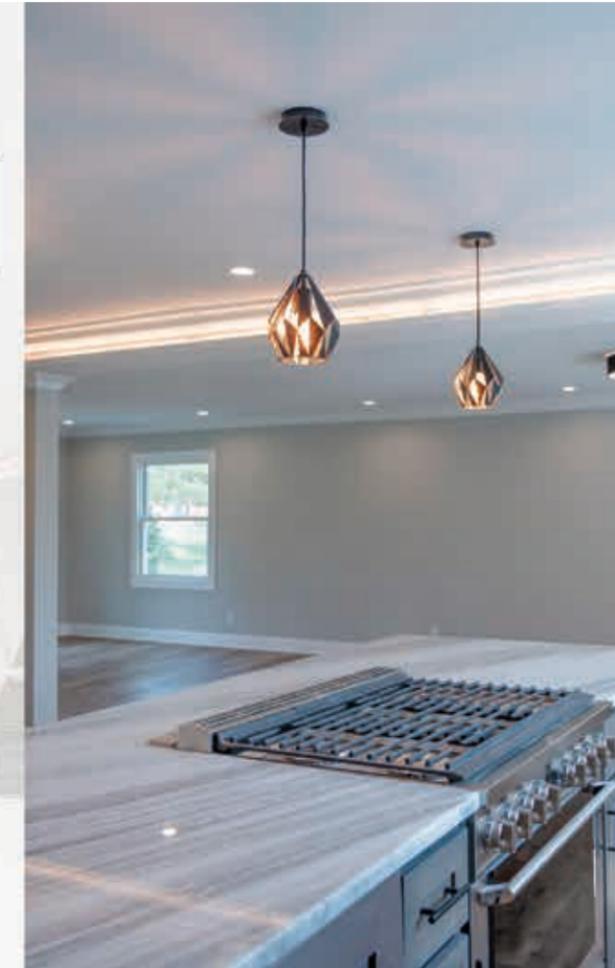


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