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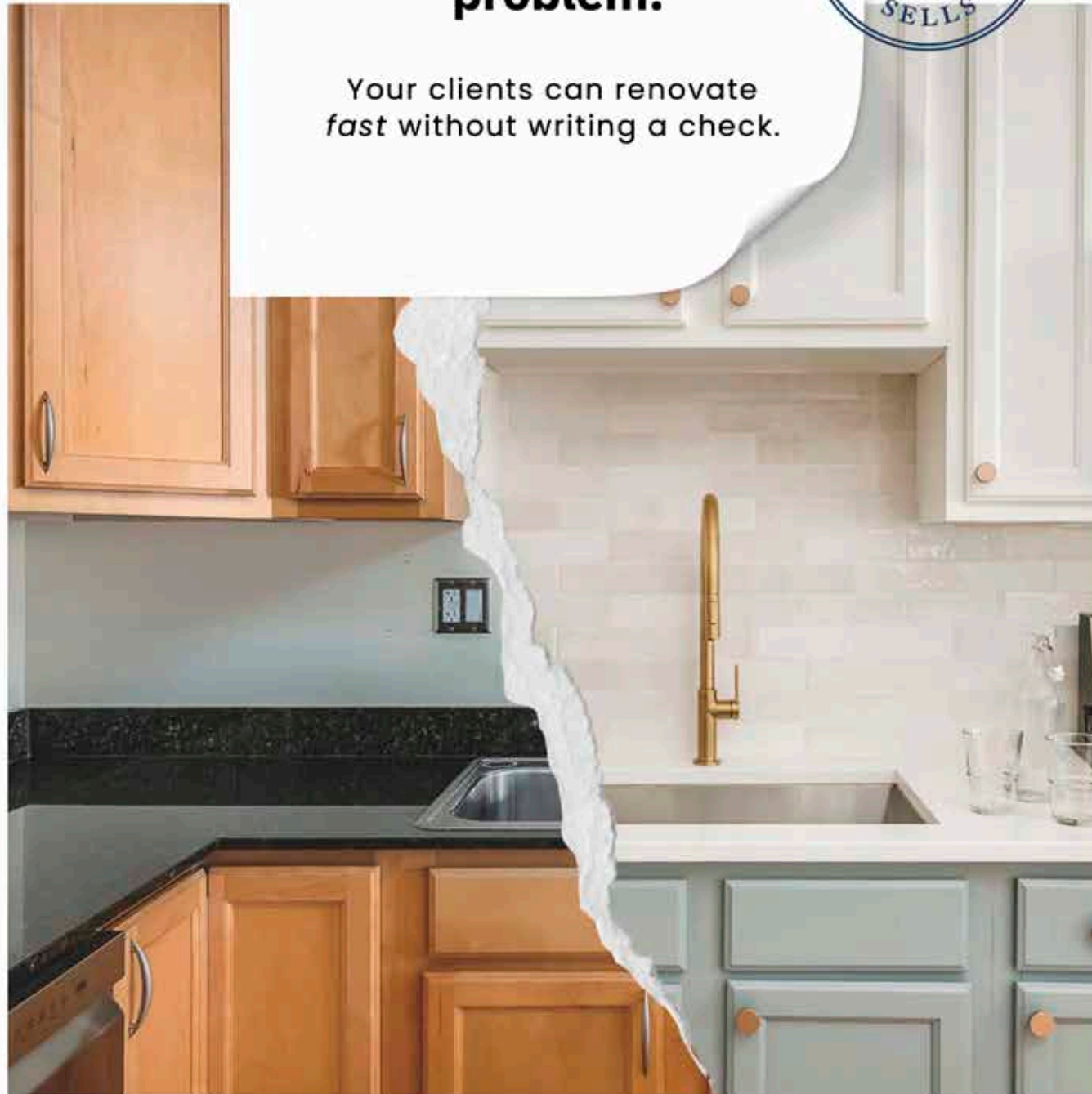
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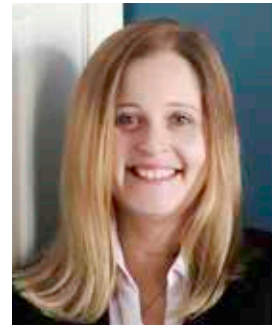
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The KEY is RELATIONSHIPS

Dear DC Metro Real Producers,

February is a month we celebrate relationships — typically, the romantic ones. On the professional side, though, it's also a great time to reprioritize relationships for 2023.

In the real estate industry, as well as all the ancillary industries that serve it, relationships are the key to success. We depend on creating real and lasting connections with others; that is how we are able to sustain our businesses and propel them forward. As we move fully into what promises to be a fast-paced 2023, filled with, no doubt, lots of challenges, as well as lots of opportunities, I encourage you to take a look at all of your relationships — personal, with friends and family; professional, with co-workers, clients, vendors, mentors, mentees and coaches; with service people; and with neighborhoods and communities of all sorts — with an eye to enhancing and strengthening them. What and how can we do better this year than the year before?

Here, at Real Producers, one of the core elements of our mission is to connect this community — via introductions and opportunities to gather and meet one another in more intimate and casual settings — to learn from each other and strengthen all of our business partnerships. Our *Real Estate Success & Support* podcast is another way we're focusing on relationships in this community, connecting names with faces and businesses; and sharing valuable information with each other. We've heard many different, creative, memorable ways Real Producers stay connected with and do special things for their sphere. This year should be one where we take our efforts up another notch!

Speaking of connecting, we are looking forward to the **Masquerade Sneaker Ball, coming up soon, on March 22nd**. It should be a marvelous time! We hope to see you there!

This month, we're pleased that preferred partner **Popped By Dominique** has joined the DC Metro Real Producers family. Welcome!

With gratitude,



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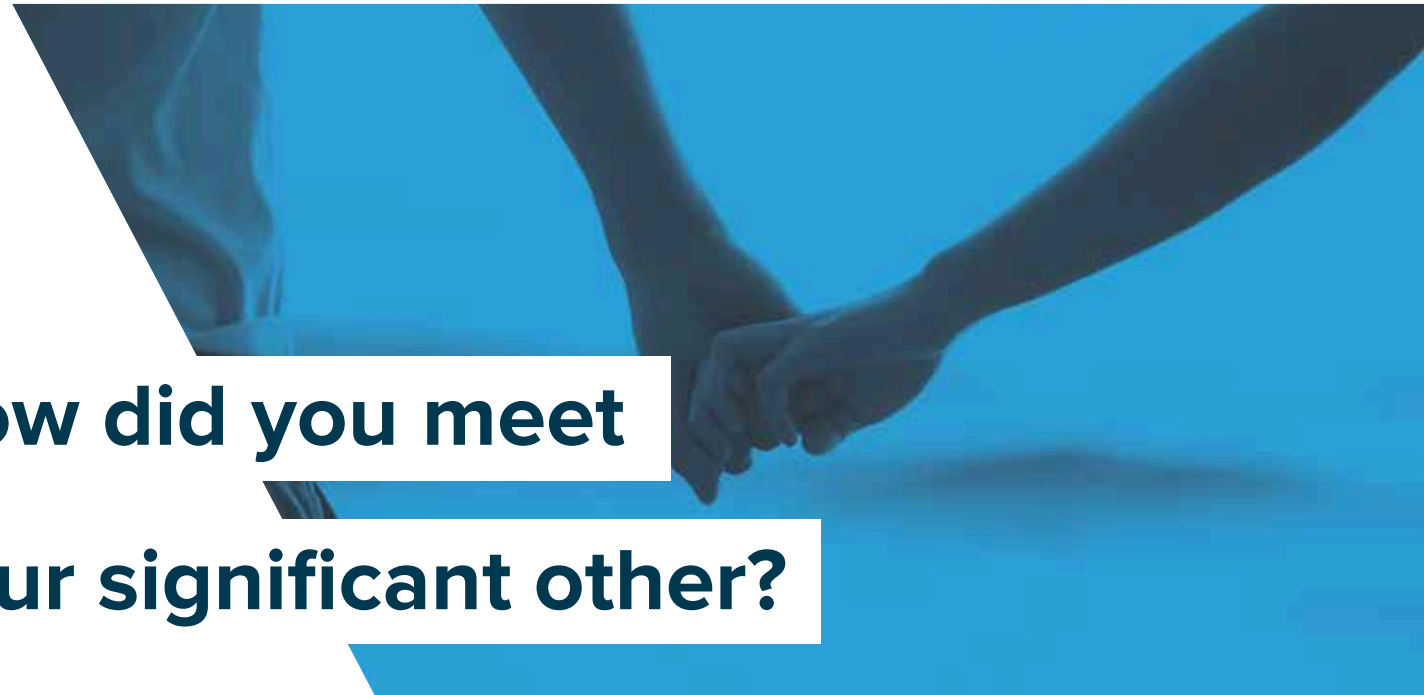
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How did you meet your significant other?



LEISEL L. TAYLOR
Village Premier Collection Maryland
We met at AARP in D.C. I was a senior accountant and he was the mailroom supervisor! Every quarter, I had to send out quarterly reports to BOA and Chase, and usually the CEO, and I would never get gone until hours before it was due. My CEO would tell me to go downstairs and ask for Donnel, he would get it done. He'd hook me up ... and from that, we started dating!



SHARI GRONVALL
Compass
At a bar in Georgetown with mutual friends in college. We got set up!



DAN SCHULER
Compass
Kels and I are both Miami mergers; we met at Miami Ohio. The marriage rate is so high there they coined a term: "Miami merger"! I needed a date in my junior year for formal, and my buddy set me up with Kels. I invited her to the formal in front of my entire fraternity, so I trapped her into saying yes. And the rest is history.



ALAN CHARGIN
Keller Williams Capital Properties
We met at a Capitol Hill softball party.



MICHAEL ALLWEIN
Century 21 Redwood Realty
I met her in third grade. We went to elementary, middle and high school together, but went our own ways. Then, I sold her a house in 2018, we met again with friends in 2019, and started dating a month later.



SCOTT SACHS
Compass
I met my wife when she was in nursing school. I was living with two girls that she went to school with in Arlington.



MOLLY BRANSON
RLAH Real Estate
A D.C. Realtor friend connected us!



LAWRENCE LESSIN
Homes By Owner, Inc.
I met her 35 years ago when she lived in Arizona. I met her at a nightclub (Jaspers) and we started talking but she didn't want to give me her number. I ended up getting it from her friends because they liked me. We went on a first date a few weeks later. I flew out to see her on weekends and we are still together.



CRAIG SWORD
Compass
We've known each other for 15 years, originally met at a country club through mutual friends. Reconnected years later to start dating!



COREY BURR
TTR Sotheby's International Realty
My wife and I met in high school and went to the same college. We were always friends, but didn't start dating until two years after college.



ELIZABETH ANN HO
RLAH Real Estate
We used to work at a nonprofit together. He worked in HR and used to walk down to the cubicle and make jokes with me. He claims he was just wanting to be my friend (I don't believe him), and we started dating from there!



TOHMAI SMITH
Compass
I met her on my birthday at a party.



EVA DAVIS
Compass
I met him the old-fashioned way: online.



LYNDA NGUYEN
Long & Foster Real Estate
Met on Hinge.



ANA DUBIN
Long & Foster Real Estate
Jason and I met on a lacrosse field. He was playing in an adult league, and we had both just moved home. We had mutual friends who played in this adult league where we met!



BARRETT STARLING
Keller Williams Realty Centre
Mutual friends that we went to college with and I had a roommate living off campus. Both transferred, but stayed in touch. He was roommates with my now wife, so I met her through that. Friends for years and ended up together, now 11 years!



MATTHEW O'CONNOR
Caliber Home Loans
My wife and I met working at the now defunct Dancing Crab in Tenleytown.



CASEY ABOULAFIA
Compass
At a party a friend was having with her eventual husband for his out-of-town, visiting brother. My husband was one of their friends, and I came by with a guy friend that night. We all stayed till 3 a.m. talking and drinking through our host's wine closet. We've been together since a birthday party I threw for the host two weeks later, where I knew I'd see my now husband again!



VINCENT HURTEAU
Continental Properties, Ltd.
At the Whole Foods on P Street in 2004, I saw a handsome man, put more groceries in my cart, and there he was again. We exchanged smiles, but when it was time for checkout, I lost sight of him and placed an ad in the Washington Blade and he responded! We have been together since and got married in 2010, when it finally became legal for same-sex couples in D.C. We both told our friends of our meeting, and our single friends went out of their way to go to the same Whole Foods to see if the same might happen to them.



STACY ALLWEIN
Century 21 Redwood Realty

I love to answer this question. I met my husband in 1988 in an alley in D.C. The Rally in the Alley on St. Patrick's Day. We were married less than two years later.



LAWRENCE O. ELLIOTT JR.
Prime Title Group

I met my wife while visiting a friend in California. We hit it off right away and started a long-distance relationship. A few years later, she moved to Maryland and we were married.



ERICKA S. BLACK
Coldwell Banker Realty

We met in college at North Carolina Central University. #CollegeSweethearts



MAYA HYMAN
Compass

My husband Rob and I met on J-Date back in "the day," when it was a new way to meet people.



MELINDA ESTRIDGE
Long & Foster Real Estate

I met my husband, Bob O'Toole, through mutual friends over 40 years ago. He was working as a mortgage broker and was calling on our office as loan officers used to, to hand out rate sheets. We were friends for many years, dating other people, and eventually we started to have feelings for each other and started dating. He joined our group as a Realtor over 20 years ago. I have learned that being friends first was a wonderful beginning to our relationship. We have been married almost 30 years and he is still my best friend.



SCOTT GOLDBERG
Streamline Property Management

My wife and I were born in the same hospital in northern New Jersey two months apart. We didn't meet until we were sophomores at the University of Maryland at a fraternity party, where she was handing out cans of beer.



DARREN AHEARN
RE/MAX Results

I met my wife in August 1996 at the Black Eyed Pea restaurant in Glen Burnie, Maryland.



JAY DAY
Real Estate Teams, LLC

She had her home listed for sale and it was not selling. She was told that she should call me because I could get it sold. She called me after terminating her agreement with the other agent and I listed and sold the home.



MONICA MURPHY
Preferred Staging, LLC

I met my husband at a party in Arlington. He knew one roommate, and I knew the other. Our eyes met across the room when I walked in the door, and we've been together ever since... 32 years!



PHILIP POPO
Renovation Sells

I met my significant other on Facebook through an introduction by someone whom we both knew.



CARA PEARLMAN
Compass

My husband and I have known each other since we were tweenagers! Our parents were friends, and so we first met at a joint family outing. He is a couple years younger than I am, so back then, I would have never imagined we would end up together. Our paths continued to cross as we got older, and finally, when the time was right, he asked me out on a date. We were engaged seven months later and married a year after that. This coming February 28th, we will celebrate our fourteenth anniversary!

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TIPS TO DOMINATE YOUR REAL ESTATE FARM IN 2023

» words by wade

By Wade Vander Molen

Looking to start a real estate farm in 2023? Farming is a great way to generate listings in your subdivision, school district, or specific geographic area. The issue is, many REALTORS® are not successful with farming, and that's for a variety of reasons. Farming can be a long game in generating business, but it doesn't have to be if you set yourself up for success from the start. The first stage of farming is *not* sending out a round of postcards to your geographical area of homes, introducing yourself as the neighborhood expert. Here are the stages to dominating your farm in 2023.

Absorption Rates and Data

The first step to farming is establishing the location. Is it where you live? A building in Bethesda? A desirable school district? Wherever your farm is located, it's important to look at the absorption rates, otherwise known as the percentage of homes

that turn over in that area over a given period of time. The next step is to find out who in your farm are owner-occupied homes versus absentee, and people who have owned for 20-plus years (downsizers) versus have just purchased in the last 18 months. You can agree, there are different marketing messages for each group.

Creating the Online Content First

Before you send out the newsletter or postcard, you need to be where people put their eyes, which is online. If a homeowner gets your direct mail piece, they will surely look you up online before reaching out. Why? Because they can. Have not only information on your website about your farm (information, current market stats, videos, and more), create video content and post it on your new 2023 YouTube channel that has your face, voice, personality, and educational content showing you

as the thought leader in your farm area. Not just one video, but several. Create a catalog of content so when your target homeowners look you up, there you are.

Offline Marketing Content

Now that we have our farm location, know the absorption rates, and have created compelling online content, it's time to send out our offline marketing messages. When spending money on direct mail, use smart programs like www.corefact.com. These programs provide a "key code" for each home and drive the homeowner to a landing page to get a CMA. The benefit for the Realtor is, it sends them an email that the homeowner put in the key code to receive the CMA.

When sending out direct mail, be sure to put a YouTube logo or your social media channels and let the

homeowners know to visit these places to watch your video content about the farm.

In-Person Seminars

You have done everything correctly in determining your farm, creating great online content, and sending out targeted outbound marketing messages to the homeowners in your farm. Now, it is time to get face-to-face, sharing helpful information, such as market-update seminars, home-selling seminars, coat/food drives, and more. Setting up these in-person events two to three times a year, along with the other marketing methods, helps with your branding and credibility.

Implementing this strategy when beginning or improving your real estate farm will help to set you up for success in the long run. Good luck!



Wade Vander Molen is the director of sales/marketing for Stewart Title in the Northern Virginia/Washington, D.C., area and has been in the title industry since 2005. Wade helps real estate professionals with all facets of their marketing and teaches a new, sustainable business model to help them grow their businesses. You can visit Wade at www.DCTitleGuy.com.

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Nurture Your Blog Content *EFFICIENTLY*

As a real estate agent, blog writing can be a thankless job. Between all of your other monthly tasks, blogging can feel like the last thing you want to do at the end of the day. That's why it's essential to work smart, not hard, when it comes to your blog content. You don't want it to be a distraction or something that takes you away from more profitable ways to spend your time. Here's how to maximize your online content output.

Outsource Your Content

Nope, you don't need to write your own content. As we've all had to learn, time is money, and it's the only commodity we'll never be able to make more of. If you're a writer at heart, then feel free to indulge your passion for the written word, but otherwise, this is one task you can easily outsource, thanks to gig sites like Fiverr and Upwork.

Make It Unique

You don't want to look at your competition and write articles just like they have. Instead of talking about mortgage applications and FICO scores, pose questions that your audience wants to know. Use sites like AnswerThePublic for ideas on what people are searching about. Make sure to keep it local, however. There's no use getting inquiries from states you aren't licensed in.

Know Your Audience

Before just writing blog content willy nilly, you want to have a plan in place. Who are your clients and what information are they searching for online? If your client base is families with children, maybe you can write about local events geared toward children. If they are relocating single professionals, focus on moving topics and area guides that give newcomers the inside scoop on your region.

Use SEO Best Practices

It's easy to waste time and energy writing blog content that just doesn't lead to more traffic to your site. Since this is the point of blog content, make sure you're formatting your blogs to be found. Install Yoast on your blogging site, which is an easy way to grade your writing and SEO quality of each blog. Focus on one keyword, use it in your headline, your opening sentence and some of your subheaders. Include at least three outside links in your article, but never link them to your keywords. Don't forget to include some images in your article that have keyword alt tags added to them.



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D'ANN MELNICK

eXp Realty

"Real estate is a very competitive industry... All the glitz and the glam that is perpetuated by shows like Selling Sunset. Real estate for me isn't about that. I want to be remembered for doing good in my community and helping to make housing more accessible to everyone."



JENNIFER VO

Keller Williams Capital Properties

"I truly believe that if you have your client's best interests at heart, and you genuinely want them to find the right home, it shines through, and I believe my clients can see that. To me, it is always about building a relationship and never a transactional experience."

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BRETT LIEBERMAN

My Pest Pros

"We have people freaking out over issues from ants and mosquitoes to roaches, bed bugs and termites. I cherish bringing that peace of mind so that they can feel safe in their homes and enjoy their homes and yards."



my pestpro

▶ partner spotlight

By Jess Wellar
Photos by Ryan Corvello



BRETT LIEBERMAN

MY PEST PROS

From Print to Pests

Almost everyone these days has some sort of background experience prior to landing their current career, especially in the real estate industry. But how does one go from being a war correspondent and seasoned journalist to inspecting houses for critters?

“Helping people — providing peace of mind, health and safety — is what My Pest Pros strives to do. I think this interest dates to my days as a journalist. The bottom line is that I like to help people,” explains Brett Lieberman, CEO and co-founder of My Pest Pros.

Now entering its tenth year, My Pest Pros is thriving and busier than ever in a post-pandemic world where everyone is spending more time at home.

“We are not the largest nor the smallest pest control company in the region. But I do feel we provide some of the best service in the industry. We have a great team that is really committed to doing a great job,” Brett notes with a touch of pride.

“With offices in Fairfax, Woodbridge, and Crofton, Maryland, we now provide residential and commercial pest control in Northern Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. This includes treatment for general pests such as ants, spiders, crickets, and stinging pests, as well as mosquitoes, termites, wood-destroying insect/termite inspections, roaches, and more.”

Prior to starting My Pest Pros with his wife, Debra, in 2013, Brett worked as a journalist for almost two decades, spending most of his writing career with Newhouse Newspapers and working as a Washington, D.C., correspondent for the Harrisburg Patriot-News.

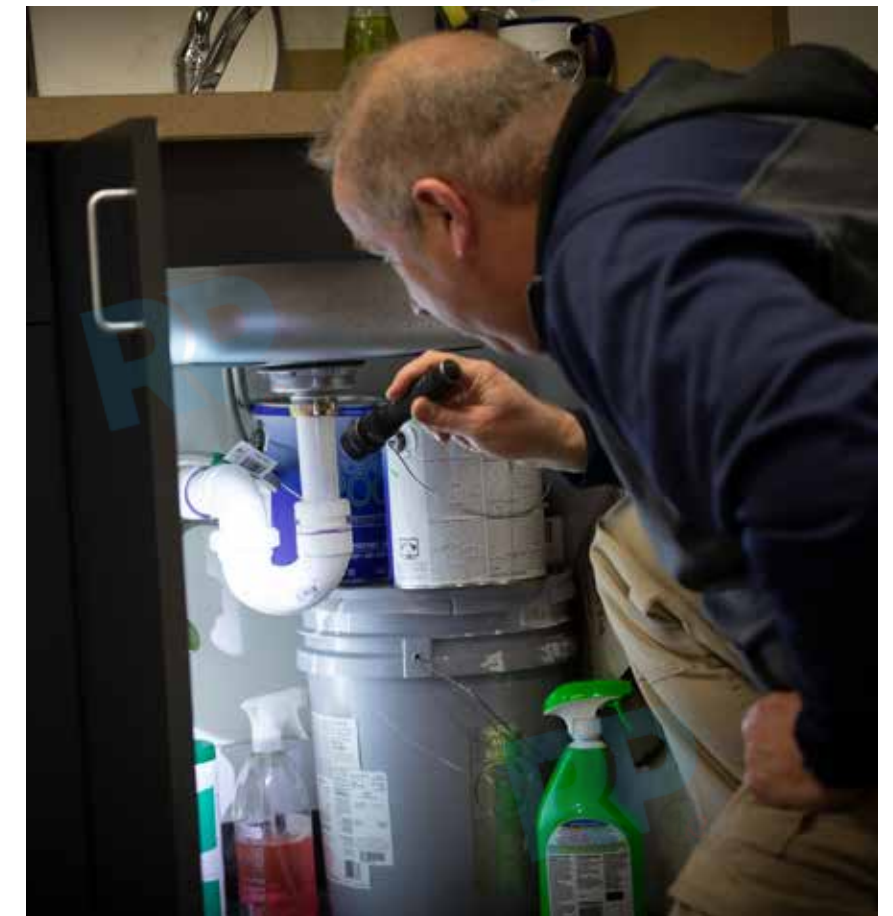
“I covered national politics and government. I was an embedded reporter in Iraq, traveled around the country, as well as reported from locations including Cuba, Japan and China. After being laid off in 2008, I worked in public relations for a couple years, but did not enjoy it. During that time, I earned a master’s degree in government and an MBA from John Hopkins University.

“Then, one day, I got an email about a mosquito franchise... It started out as a joke, but it was lucrative, and I was able to eventually buy out my

partner,” Brett notes. “And I decided that franchise wasn’t a good fit, but I continued to branch out. My Pest Pros, which is not a franchise, allowed for more control and the ability to help more people since there’s more flexibility to take care of our clients by finding alternate solutions with creative service plans.”

Brett is quick to credit his wife Debra’s assistance, noting she has really taken a more active role in the business the past few years and is a huge help in the office. Prior to that, she studied occupational therapy and worked as an ergonomic consultant. But when COVID hit and everything shut down, she became more involved as My Pest Pros was called upon to disinfect many offices.

Brett said he likes to think of My Pest Pros as the Costco of pest control





companies, noting, “One thing I really admire about Costco is that they have good products, overall, and take care of their customers and employees. We try to do the same thing at My Pest Pros. We want to do whatever it takes to do the job correctly. We don’t cut corners and we provide good value and service. We’re in the customer service industry and I like to treat our clients the way I would want to be treated or have my family treated. I want us to treat you and your home with the same respect and care that you deserve and I expect at home.”

Perhaps most impressive is the fact that in an age when it’s hard to find quality help, Brett and his wife refuse to hire just anybody to work for My Pest Pros.

“We have 15 current employees and we’d love to expand, but we won’t just take anyone,” Debra says. “We are among the 3 percent of pest control companies that are QualityPro certified, which means we do these background and drug checks and are independently audited to make sure we are doing the right thing. Again, I don’t want somebody in your home who I would not want in my home.”

As Brett looks to the future, he wants to continue to expand his business without compromising on quality. He encourages agents to look at his pest control business as part of their team, as inspections are an important part of most smooth closings.

“Problems are inevitable, and we will work with you to address them as easily as possible. Also, I strongly encourage agents to work with a pest control company to do your WDI/termite inspections and not rely on a home inspector. I know it is a lot easier to have one person do an inspection, but they do not have the same training and experience. They also cannot provide the same warranty to back up their work the way we do. We have performed termite treatments for issues that were missed by a home inspector. The home inspector couldn’t warranty it because they are not licensed for pest control.”

At the end of the day, Brett said he just loves helping people find precious peace of mind so they can enjoy their homes.

“We have people freaking out over issues from ants and mosquitoes to roaches, bed bugs and termites.



I cherish bringing that peace of mind so that they can feel safe in their homes and enjoy their homes and yards.”

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FAMILY LIFE

A self-proclaimed workaholic, Brett says he likes keeping busy. “I’m not the type of person who likes to sit on the beach. Even in places like Aruba, I was around the pool because it had wifi! But I do like photography, reading on my iPad and cooking.”

Brett and Debra have two children; their son, Zach, is a fourth-year student at the University of Virginia, and their daughter, Julia, is a junior at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, where the family lives. “We definitely like traveling, whether it’s a quick getaway or a bigger adventure. We’re often at a sports event, from the Nats and Caps to high school lacrosse,” Brett explains. “And Zach is a comp sci major and actually developed an app for My Pest Pros, which is pretty cool. We also have a mini labradoodle, Harper, who can usually be found in the office.”



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D'ANN MELNICK

Making Housing Accessible to All



It's hard to claim work-life balance when my work is my life. I do not really prioritize work over my personal life... It's all just a part of who I am," says D'Ann Melnick. Originally from a small town in Texas, real estate was not a part of D'Ann's past, and her foray into the industry was purely accidental.

"I had a friend that worked with a new home builder and they were looking to hire more sales staff. Fresh out of college, I applied on a whim and got hired immediately. I had no idea that my first real job would lead to a successful 20 plus-year career as a REALTOR®," D'Ann explains.

Working for a production builder, she learned a lot of the fundamentals of new construction, things to look for during home inspections and the basics of the mortgage business. After two years in the industry, D'Ann was looking to grow. She found that the relationships she had built with buyers in her neighborhood were turning into referrals, and many families were looking for a neighborhood or product that she did not have to offer.

In order to help more people, D'Ann got her real estate license and, two years later, obtained her associate broker's license. She is licensed in Maryland, Virginia, and D.C., and still refers quite a bit of business back home, to Texas.

D'Ann has been with eXp Realty a little over a year now as a solo agent. She recently received the ICON award — an award based on sales volume. At the heart of her real estate business is the drive to be a problem solver. "I pride myself on being honest and direct. There are so many aspects to the real estate business, but helping people solve problems is at the root of it all," D'Ann says.

She also loves research and educating and empowering her clients to build their own wealth through real estate.

Outside of work, D'Ann is always on the go, explaining that she fills her days with activities. She's the president of The Gables condo association, involved in the Junior League of Washington, and is on the board of directors for a local nonprofit called Hero Dogs, Inc. The organization provides service dogs and other highly skilled canines to former first responders and veterans with a disability. D'Ann and her husband raised Hero Dogs' Monty for the organization before he was partnered with a local veteran,



D'Ann Melnick with husband, Andrew, and daughter, Presley Briar

“

I want to be remembered for doing good in my community and helping to make housing more accessible to everyone.

”

and she now works on special events and corporate sponsorships.

In their free time, D'Ann and her husband Andrew love trying new restaurants in the area, spending time outdoors and seeing performances at the Kennedy Center. They are also both huge sports fans, and Andrew has worked in the clubhouse for the Washington Nationals for 17 years. Their unconventional schedules often require some juggling. “Most people have a traditional, Monday-to-Friday job,” D'Ann says. “We don't, and our schedules are completely different from one another. We have to be intentional about finding time together.”

At the end of August, the couple welcomed the birth of their daughter, Presley Briar.

“We plan on having her go, go, go as much as we do,” D'Ann explains. “In a

way, I had a fairly sheltered childhood. When I went off to college, I was exposed to so many new things at one time. I want her to be able to learn about the world and share experiences with her while she is young.”

For D'Ann, success is about setting up opportunities for her and her family. “Real estate is a very competitive industry,” D'Ann says. “There's so much ego ... fast cars and fancy houses. All the glitz and the glam that is perpetuated by shows like Selling Sunset. Real estate, for me, isn't about that.”

D'Ann simply wants to build a business where she can be respected among her peers.

“I want to be remembered for doing good in my community and helping to make housing more accessible to everyone.”



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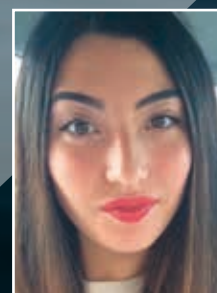
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Photo by Ryan Corvello



Jennifer Vo's father, Bernie Carr, owned the largest brokerage in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, for 30 consecutive years.

"I spent my childhood immersed in the world of real estate; driving around taking polaroids of new listings, sitting in on meetings," Jen recalls "My mom was also a REALTOR®, and in middle school, I started working in the office, answering the phones. I always joke that while other families spent Thanksgiving watching football, we spent ours discussing negotiation strategies."

Jen's father also taught real estate at Temple University, teaching, mentoring, and working closely with people who would also go on to become big names in the real estate industry, including Allan Domb, Jay Lamont, and Donald Trump. "Growing up in that environment, I always knew this is where I was going to land," Jen explains. "Real estate is my passion; it's in my blood."

Following in Her Father's Footsteps



Jen's father, Bernie Carr, owned a large brokerage in Pennsylvania for 30 years.

Before getting licensed, Jen was a stay-at-home mom and co-wrote a popular blog, "Adventure Moms DC."

"There's so much to do in the area, so we would provide tips and tricks for enjoying all the family events and activities with kids," Jen says. "We were always adventuring, and sharing our experiences on social media. People would ask for advice — where to go, what to do that weekend — so that's what inspired the blog. It comes in handy for my clients who move here from out of town; they certainly enjoy having the inside scoop on all the best places to explore in the DMV."

Two years later, Jen got her real estate license. "I waited until my kids were in elementary school so I



Rising Star Jennifer Vo is a Realtor with Keller Williams Capital Properties. (Photo by Ryan Corvello)

could give 100 percent to my clients," Jen explains.

Jen holds a variety of titles. Along with being a Realtor, she is an accredited buyers representative, certified real estate negotiation expert, sellers representative specialist, and a certified military relocation professional. She has been with Keller Williams Capital Properties for most of her career.

For Jen, the most rewarding part of being in real estate is helping her clients achieve such a huge milestone.

"Home is everything," she says. "It's where you spend the holidays, spend time with your family, and it's where your children grow up. Home is a very special place, and to know that I had a hand in finding that right home for my clients and making sure they received the best deal possible for it is really rewarding."

Jen plans on running her business like her father did. "Growing up, my dad often said that he was successful because he treated people well," Jen says. One instance that stands out in her memory: Bernie was selling a

piece of land, and shortly after putting it on the market he received a call from an acquaintance who wanted to purchase the lot but wouldn't be in town until later in the week to sign all the paperwork. They discussed the terms, and came to an agreement. The next day, Bernie received a call from a colleague who was interested in the property as well. Bernie explained that while he did not have a ratified contract in hand, he had already agreed verbally to sell the land to someone. The colleague offered to pay \$50,000 above his current offer and reminded him that since he did not have a signed contract, he was not legally bound to his verbal agreement.

"I remember my dad saying, 'There is no contract in the world that is stronger than my word,' and declining the offer," Jen recalls. "I truly believe that if you have your clients' best interests at heart and you genuinely want them to find the right home, it shines through, and I believe my clients can see that. To me, it is always about building a relationship and never a transactional experience."

When Jen isn't working, she can be found spending time with her children and going on adventures. "We're always out doing something," Jen says.

During the pandemic, the school Jen's children attend announced that it would be closing its doors permanently due to the toll COVID had taken on its stability. Jen and a few other parents took it upon themselves to save the school. They raised over \$100,000 and got the attention of the news, which generated interest from investors. The school remained open and is doing better than ever. "Helping save the school has been one of my proudest moments and top accomplishments," Jen says. "I never take no for an answer, and Seneca Academy closing forever simply wasn't an option. It is too special."

Jen looks forward to following in her dad's footsteps and helping many more clients achieve their real estate goals in the DMV.



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CASEY ABOULAFIA

A NEW TAKE ON BALANCE

► cover story

By **Zachary Cohen**
Photos by **Ryan Corvello**

Before becoming a real estate agent, Casey Aboulafia enjoyed a nine-year career in international health and development. She worked in maternal and child health and nutrition, a deeply rewarding field for her. With the opportunity to travel, often to places in Latin America and Africa, she had the chance to experience the culture and way of life around the world. Casey has always been inspired to continue exploring, learning, and growing.

By her late 20s, Casey's life began to shift. She was married and began thinking about starting a family. That's when she realized her professional lifestyle might not support family life.

"I realized that all that travel for long periods would be unsustainable. And when I was home working, I wasn't enjoying the nine-to-five job — the same thing every day, the commute, the drudgery of office work," Casey reflects.

As Casey began to consider her next career move, one industry rose to the surface — real estate. Casey had grown up in and around the real estate business; her parents and grandparents were investors, and she had an aunt and uncle who were agents. Casey bought her first property at 23 in Dupont Circle, her dad loaning her down payment money at the going rate of 8 percent interest.



She always enjoyed helping friends think about where to live too.

"So when I start thinking, 'What else do I want to do?' — it was either get a Ph.D. or go into real estate."

Casey chose real estate, beginning her career in 2004.

The Arc of Success

Casey began her career as a solo agent. When she had her two children

in 2009 and 2011, she realized she couldn't survive in the business as a solo agent, so she began enlisting more help and eventually started a small team.

Today, Casey is part of a larger team, managing Your P&rtners at Compass along with team leads Meredith Margolis and Eva Davis. Her business is thriving; in 2022, she closed over 52 transactions for over \$52 million personally. Casey has





Taking time off in the summer allows Casey to pursue her love of international travel with her family.



People know they are always going to get a straight story from me. I don't hesitate to get down to the brass tacks and be real. **THAT MATTERS.**



Casey and Richard Aboulafia with their children, Simon and Wren

formed something of a niche working with an internationally leaning crowd, but she still considers herself a generalist. She serves clients of all types throughout the D.C. metro area.

Casey is a straight shooter who can be trusted to give her clients the truth with friendliness.

“People know they are always going to get a straight story from me. I don't hesitate to get down to the brass tacks and be real. That matters,” she says. “I'm not pushy, but I'm very straightforward, and I think people appreciate that.”

A New Take on Balance

While on maternity leave for her two children, Casey learned an invaluable lesson. She took four months off the first time, in 2009, and six months off the second time, in 2011. Each time, her business survived. She found agents to cover for her, and her clients were cared for. When she returned, her business remained strong.

While cobbling together support to back her up was challenging then, the experience eventually

GIVING BACK

Giving back is a big part of Casey Aboulafia's life. She supports organizations like DASH, a nonprofit that provides safe housing to survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families, the DC Dream Center, an organization that provides community support, especially for youth programs, in lower-income areas of the city, and Mary's Center, a community health center serving people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in the D.C. metro area.



•••

propelled Casey in another direction. Through coaching, she learned how to better balance personal and professional demands. Her teammates and admin support both inspire her and provide more robust service to her clients.

With Your P&Rtners, Casey is able to take almost two months off every summer to be with her family, during which she rarely works.

"That's where my team steps in. Largely, I'm off. I try not to work, though I do occasionally get pulled into things. That time off, it's what keeps me in this business. It's

invigorating. My original love was international exploration, and this time away gives me a chance to do that with my husband and kids. It makes up for some of those missing nights and weekends when I'm out with clients."

Casey and her husband, Richard, have two children, Simon (13) and Wren (11). Travel is a huge part of their life.

"One of our favorite summer trips was to Korea and Japan. It's a nice time for the four of us ... to be with the kids and not get distracted," Casey says.

Casey's approach to balance is

inspiring in an industry where so many agents struggle to take time off. So how does Casey do it? She says trust plays a huge factor, as does having a strong team.

"If you have and do good business, it will be there when you come back. When agents live deal to deal, people are so scared to get out there and take time off. But when I took time off for my kids, I had teammates I trusted to take care of my clients so I could hand it off and feel good. My clients were taken care of. You can do it. You can have a life. I know, for me, this is what keeps me balanced and happy with my work."

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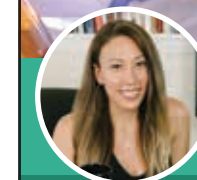
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A Head Start on Spring Cleaning

Spring cleaning doesn't have to wait until spring!

By Shauna Osborne

In February, the weather outside is still frightful — possibly the harshest of the season — but the glittering hope of spring is just around the corner. If you're feeling a little stir-crazy, why not tackle these often-neglected chores now and start sprucing up your home for sunny times ahead?

Touch up paint

Tired of looking at those marks and smudges on the walls, cabinets, doors and trim? Tackle them with a cleaning eraser first to assess what truly needs a touch-up, then address the remaining problem areas with leftover paint and a small, thin paintbrush for greater precision.

Clean out dryer vent

A clogged dryer vent can, at best, cause your dryer to run inefficiently and increase your energy bill and, at worst, cause a fire. To clear any lingering lint and/or nesting pests from your cozy vent, remove the vent and clean the duct that connects the back of the dryer to the outside using a wet/dry vac or brush tool.

Refresh mattresses

Most of us change our sheets frequently, but we shouldn't neglect our trusty mattress, which can make all the difference in sleep quality. Start by vacuuming the box springs and the top and bottom of the mattress. Then, rotate or flip, depending on whether it's a one- (rotate) or two-sided mattress (flip to prevent sagging).

Revive fridge

Refrigerator condenser coils are located on the back or bottom of your appliance. Save energy and extend the life of your fridge by using a vacuum to clean the coils as well as underneath and behind the fridge itself.

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