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## Tim Kelly









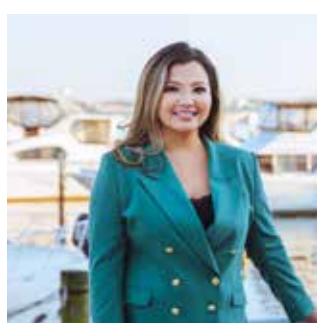



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**FRANCIS ACEVEDO-HENRIQUEZ**  
LOAN OFFICER ASSISTANT  
FACEVEDO@ICMTG.COM  
(571) 458-8393



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Cover photo courtesy of **Ryan Corvello**.





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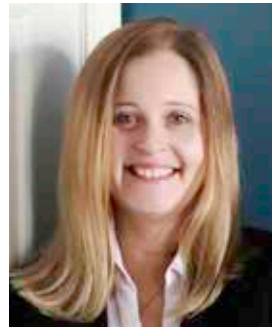
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**Kristin Brindley**  
Publisher



**Lexy Broussard**  
Associate Publisher



**Ellen Buchanan**  
Editor



**Wendy Ross**  
Operations Manager



**Jaime Lane**  
Executive Assistant &  
Publishing Manager



**Ellie Caperare**  
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**Zachary Cohen**  
Writer



**Ryan Corvello**  
Photographer



**Bobby Cockerille**  
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# The KEY is RELATIONSHIPS

Dear NOVA Real Producers,

February is a month we celebrate relationships — typically, 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 23rd**. It should be a marvelous time! We hope to see you there!

This month, we are pleased that preferred partners **It's Haul Good, Popped by Dominique**, and **National Lithograph Inc.** have joined the NOVA Real Producers family. Welcome!

With gratitude,



**Kristin Brindley**  
Owner/Publisher  
NOVA Real Producers  
313-971-8312  
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SARA RODRIGUEZ



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▶▶ we ask...you tell!

# How did you meet your significant other?



**DIANE NORTHERN**  
Coldwell Banker Realty

In an elevator. It was at Entre Computers in Tysons Corner, and he came in to do a delivery.



**JIN CHEN WICKWIRE**  
eXp Realty

We went to UVA undergrad, and we both ended up going to the Final Four. We talked for less than five minutes and exchanged business cards. He said he was a lender, but he actually wasn't a practicing lender. He was just trying to get my information.



**JANET BRINCK**  
The Dwellus Group

We worked at the same bar and went to Virginia Tech together. He was a bit of a player back then, so we didn't get together until 2017.



**LAURA SCHWARTZ**  
McEneaney Associates  
Match.com.



**VERONICA SEVA-GONZALEZ**  
Compass

I was a swimmer. I came from Spain; my best friend was a swimmer too, and we used to swim for a professional team. She came here to the U.S. on a scholarship and called me a year later and asked if I wanted to come to the U.S. I, of course, said yes, and on my first day here, I met my husband. Here we are 20 years later!



**ERIC WILMOT**  
HuberWilmot Moving & Storage

Eighth grade — middle school cafeteria. I was the "new kid," on my first day at a new school. A group of girls, which included my future wife, thought I was cute and rushed over to the empty table where I had sat down alone. As they all rushed to grab the seat closest to me, she (my wife) was hip-checked by her friend, who was fighting for the same chair, resulting in a major face plant. I stood up, ran over to her and helped her up. We've been in love ever since.



**SANEVA ZAYAS**  
Keller Williams Realty Centre

Hopefully, by February, I have one. Open to meet! Ha!



**SUE SMITH**  
Compass

My husband, Charlie Rossi, associate broker, The Sue Smith Team, COMPASS Real Estate, was a real estate client. I worked with Charlie during numerous real estate transactions during a seven-year period. Charlie had desired a career in real estate since his youth, and after a few months of dating, he obtained his real estate license and eventually retired from his full-time career. Charlie has been a full-time REALTOR® with The Sue Smith Team for over 16 years and continues to enjoy his clients and guiding them through their real estate home sales, purchases and rentals.



**DILYARA DAMINOVA**  
Samson Properties

He was my loan officer when I was purchasing my very first property. It was a great gain. I got my loan approved and found my soulmate.



**LYSSA SEWARD**  
TTR Sotheby's International Realty

I met my husband of 38 years during my sophomore year of college at a party. We bonded over playing the game, Simon.



**KELLY KATALINAS**  
Fairway Independent Mortgage Corp.

We met at a party through a previous boyfriend. That relationship didn't last, but we reconnected at another party years later, started dating, and nine months later, we were engaged. That was 32-plus years ago ... so I am glad I went to *that* party!



**GREG WELLS**  
Keller Williams Realty

At a housewarming party for a home that I sold to one of her friends. A classic real estate tale.



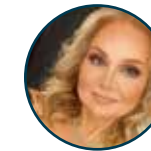
**BEN HEISLER**  
Pearson Smith Realty

We were both real estate agents at the same company and became friends. Then, several months later, she brought a buyer to my listing, and after the contract was ratified, we went out for celebratory drinks and after that, began dating. We were engaged 10 months later.



**ARTURO FERREIRA**  
Best Side Story Media

We met at a gym in Miami. She did a double take when she held the door for me to enter behind her. I was confident. I had the smoothest line ready to talk to her, then proceeded to watch my brain and mouth go through a traumatic divorce right as I started speaking. She still makes fun of me for it.



**DESIREE REJEILI**  
Samson Properties

Unfortunately, I got divorced seven years ago, so I do not have a significant other. Focusing on my career, my kids and grandbabies.



**CHRIS SHEAD**  
Movement Mortgage

We met in college at the University of Maryland when we were 19. Celebrating 20 years of marriage in 2023!



**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!



**MEG CZAPIEWSKI**  
Keller Williams Realty

We were in Air Force ROTC together. The funnier part is that my best friend thought he was quite the catch and that he'd be a great fit for me. I wanted *nothing* to do with the guy! There's lots more to the story, but as you can see, my instincts were not on point in my teen years... We will have been married 40 years this August!





**JEFF NOWAK**  
Cobalt Settlements LLC

I own a title and settlement company, and my wife was being relocated to NOVA by her company in the crazy real estate market of 2005. On my busiest day of the year, she rolled into my office at 9:30 for a 9 a.m. closing along with her grumpy, retired Army colonel father, who accompanied her for entertainment purposes. I failed to notice how attractive she was as I was worried about my schedule AND trying to reassure The Colonel (it's how I address him even to this day) that I wasn't trying to take advantage of his daughter by advising her to buy title insurance. I'm forever grateful to her agent, a perennial NOVA Real Producer, Wes Stearns, for circling back with me and setting us up on a "blind" date. The Colonel's response when Tina told him she was going on a date with her settlement attorney: "You're going out with that stiff?" She describes it as her most productive day ever ... she got a house and a husband on the same day!



**SETH HURLBERT**  
Hurlbert Home Inspection, LLC

I met my wife while both of us were working in a restaurant during college, and we have been married for 44 years now.



**JAY CAPUTO**  
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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 Arlington? 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](http://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](http://www.DCTitleGuy.com).

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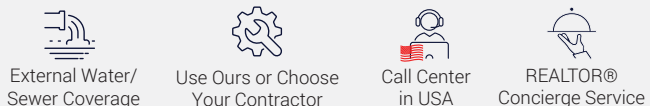


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# Who Owns **THIS** **PROPERTY?**

## ▶▶ legal hotline

By Colleen Sweeney, Esq.

One of the most important aspects of a real estate sale is accurately identifying the parties to the transaction. A listing agent should have a clear understanding of who owns the property. Most of the time, it is easy to determine by cross-checking the seller's name with the county tax administration website where the property is located. These records are readily available online in the D.C. metro area and provide a reliable source of information. The first step to a smooth settlement is to ensure that the contract identifies and is signed by the property owner.

What happens when the land records do not match the individual that claims to "own" the home? Be prepared to gently address this situation

with your potential client. In many cases where the person on record is different from the individual that you are meeting with, the death of an owner may be involved. Knowing ahead of time that you may be walking into this situation allows you to properly moderate the conversation and know which questions to ask.

When an owner of a property has passed away, three common scenarios arise. The first involves the death of an owner, where the deed provided for survivorship rights. In this situation, a death certificate will be required to confirm that the surviving tenant owns the property. Preparing the surviving tenant that this document will be required allows them time to locate the required

paperwork. After a death certificate is provided, the process is similar to other settlements and the surviving tenant signs the closing documents.

If the ownership of the property does not include survivorship rights or a transfer-on-death deed, the property will be subject to probate. Probate is the process of administering and distributing a person's assets that pass through the decedent's estate. The requirements of the probate process are determined by whether the individual died with or without a will. Therefore, a skilled agent will want to ask the question of whether the deceased owner had a will. The Virginia State Bar Association has prepared a "Guide to the Administration of Decedents' Estates

in Virginia." This is an excellent resource for individuals navigating the probate process. Directing clients to this document helps you stand out from other listing agents and ensures that you are not providing legal advice.

Probate is a complicated process that is best managed by an attorney, but a real estate agent should have a working knowledge of the law. If the owner of a property died with a will, they have died "testate." Typically, the process will require that both the executor of the will and the devisees sign the settlement documents. If the owner dies without a will, they died "intestate." In that case, an administrator of the will is required to file a list of heirs, and each will be required to execute the settlement documents.

It is also important to understand that the timing of the sale of a deceased property owner is relevant. In the event that the sale occurs within one year of the death of one of the owners, the seller will have to determine if they want to: 1) escrow the entire proceeds for a year after the date of death has passed, or 2) post a corporate surety bond, or 3) pay an extra-hazardous risk premium. Advising your client about these requirements allows them to make informed financial decisions.

A skilled real estate agent will understand the nuances of this process and know which questions to ask. This approach will gain the confidence of potential clients and ensure smooth transactions. At MBH, we are here to partner with you as you grow your business.



Colleen Sweeney is currently the managing attorney at MBH Settlement Group in the Fair Oaks office. Colleen has 20-plus years of legal experience ranging from drafting complex contracts to litigation to conducting real estate closings. Colleen has represented clients from cases at the trial court through the Supreme Court of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia. She is an active member of the legal community and a lifelong resident of Northern Virginia.



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**SARAH BROWN**  
Compass

"What I'm learning intellectually, emotionally, and physically — it's all a reflection. It's all very connected. If somebody asked me the best decision I made for my business in the last year, it's prioritizing my fitness. Building trust and confidence in the

body is connected to building trust and confidence in abilities well beyond athletics."

*A word from our Preferred Partner:*



**BRETT LIEBERMAN**  
My Pest Pro

"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 pestpros

## ▶▶ 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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# SARAH BROWN



## ► agent spotlight

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

## MIND, BODY, SPIRIT



Sarah Brown migrated from the Philippines to the U.S. when she was just 8 years old. Upon landing in the States, she was faced with a new reality. Her English wasn't very good, and the American culture felt unfamiliar. These early years would go on to shape Sarah's outlook on the world.

"I remember accidentally speaking Tagalog, my first language, the Philippines' national language. I had a thick accent as a kid," Sarah reflects.

Sarah's experience also had a positive impact on her. She became a pioneer of sorts, becoming unafraid of risk and adversity.

"Navigating a new culture, a new country, and making new friends, largely by myself — I think that built resilience and courage," Sarah continues. "This motto I learned to live by: 'We're going to figure it out.' Because that's how I survived."

### THE ROAD TO REAL ESTATE

Sarah's positive outlook followed her into adulthood. After growing up in Springfield, Virginia, she attended George Washington University and then moved to D.C.

After college, Sarah taught English in Beirut for two years, then worked in executive recruiting. After giving birth to her first child, she stayed home with her children for five years.

"Being a stay-at-home mom, I'd organize playdates and mommy meetups. I was very involved in volunteering at the school. Eventually, I realized that I found myself in so many conversations about home and looking for a place to live, schools, and growing families."

When a friend and REALTOR® needed administrative and marketing support, Sarah dipped her toes into the business. After two years in this role, she got licensed, beginning her career as a Realtor in 2016.

### BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Sarah thought real estate would be a nice side hustle, but her business grew naturally. Her network and community continued referring her out, and her sales numbers rose steadily.

"The power of relationships and community is huge. When you are seen as a giver in the community, somebody who can be trusted in the community, by the time you set up shop, people are going to trust you. I was that neighbor who would bring food to neighbors when they had babies. I volunteered at school. That mattered," Sarah explains. "Since I started real estate in 2016, every single home has been to someone from my network."

Sarah's approach has been a huge success. She's developed a niche working with suburban buyers and sellers, and in 2022, she closed an impressive 37 homes for just under \$30 million. In November, she opened her boutique brokerage, Bidwell Properties, the next step in the evolution of her business.







FAMILY  
Sarah Brown's two children,  
Naomi and Benjamin, are  
now 11 and 8.

“I was looking to really provide an elevated level of service that I could curate more, so going the boutique brokerage route was the very natural answer,” Sarah says. “If I can serve a hundred families and still know the names and interests of my clients, that’s the hope. The hope is, we’re building a community.”

#### DEVELOPING MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

One of Sarah’s greatest strengths has always been her mental outlook. From the time she arrived in the U.S. at 8 years old, she’s been strengthening her muscles of resilience and perseverance.

In 2022, she put a renewed focus on the spiritual and physical aspects of her health. She believes that’s what’s going to take her to the next level.

“I started deadlifting. I’m going to get swole in 2023,” Sarah says with a hearty laugh. And then, in a more serious tone, “My physical health has become so important to me. In some ways, it’s a spiritual practice. I can only take my business as far as my

literal body will allow me to go. So I have tried to prioritize my health to grow with my business. It’s all connected.”

Lifting weights is building muscle in Sarah’s body. In her business, she’s strengthening her muscles too. As she gets aligned on all levels, she’s prepared to live from her fullest self. She believes that will help her succeed as a broker and agency owner.

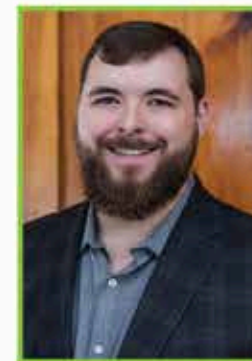
“What I’m learning, intellectually, emotionally, and physically — it’s all a reflection. It’s all very connected. If somebody asked me the best decision I made for my business in the last year, it’s prioritizing my fitness. Building trust and confidence in the body is connected to building trust and confidence in abilities well beyond athletics. And that has given me the trust and confidence I have to launch my own brokerage.”

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» rising star

By Hannah Soukup  
Photos by Ryan Corvello

# PEDRO PAUCAR



## HEART OF A GIVER, MIND OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

Since 2018, real estate agent Pedro Paucar has worked diligently towards developing his business. Many of his own goals and values contribute to why he took the career path he did, making real estate a perfect career for his lifestyle.

Pedro is a solo agent in Northern Virginia and continues to build his team and clientele, working hand-in-hand with his brokerage, eXp Realty. “I work anywhere my client needs me to work,” he says.

Before commencing his real estate journey, Pedro quickly learned that the traditional path of going to college and getting a degree to then work a 9-to-5 wasn’t for him.

“I began working in hospitality at a Marriott Hotel and realized my love of helping people,” Pedro says. “Shortly after, I got an internship at CARFAX and decided I wanted something less corporate.”

The internship at CARFAX helped Pedro discover what he really wanted, and in 2018, he received his real estate license.

“I worked for a team as an inside sales agent, got licensed in 2018, and stayed with the team until 2020,” he explains. “I decided to branch off on my own in May 2020.”

Pedro’s ultimate inspiration to get into real estate was his calling to help others ... and his brother-in-law, Ryane Johnson, a top producer in the same market.

“After my brother-in-law got into real estate, I saw how successful he was and how he was able to spend more time with the family, so he inspired me to try my luck in this business. Plus, it’s service-oriented, which is something I enjoy,” Pedro says.

### Rewind: Beginnings

As an immigrant and DACA recipient, Pedro quickly learned the challenges of being an immigrant child. Although he had a great home life, he was determined to dream big and to accomplish those dreams. If his push into real estate was able to do that, Pedro was fully invested.

“I was born in Peru, came to the States with my family in 2001, and when I was finally able to work, I was fully invested in building a business,” Pedro explains. “Things got real when my high school sweetheart, now wife, got pregnant. I wanted to support her in the best way I could and provide her with everything she deserved and more.”

Despite his humble beginnings, Pedro has been incredibly successful in his career, closing over \$35 million in transactions, total. And, at the time of this writing in late November 2022, his projected sales volume for the year was just shy of \$10 million.





Pedro Paucar with wife Victoria and son Matias

He hopes to reach a yearly volume of \$50 million in the next three to five years. Pedro's success can be attributed to his dedication, leadership, and business mindset.

"I have always had a mind that works in an entrepreneurial way," Pedro says. "Right after high school, I sold Cutco knives, and I quickly learned that I prefer performance-driven work that allows me to be my own boss."

Today, Pedro utilizes his network and social media to augment the services he provides. Savvy with social media, he is able to scour several platforms to find any hidden deals on homes to fit his clients' needs. Pedro is willing to go the extra mile for a client,

even if it requires more effort on his end.

"I am high-tech but very involved. I even like to automate a lot of processes to find hidden deals through certain networks," Pedro explains. "For example, one of my clients was looking for a specific home in Falls Church, so I looked through LinkedIn and other social media platforms to find exactly what the client was looking for all through social media within 24 hours. They were amazed."

An important part of Pedro's business model is to treat multimillion-dollar clients and first-time homebuyers equally.

"I love helping people accomplish their goals, and I love

being a part of someone's life story," Pedro says. "I enjoy first-time buyers and million-dollar clients equally, and I love seeing my clients' journey and how they got to where they are. It's incredibly fulfilling, especially getting to help people transition into new life stages."

Within the next few years, Pedro hopes that he will successfully build a team and close as many transactions as possible. As the head and owner of his business, he stays determined and knows that one day, all of his hard work will pay off. The many ups and

downs of his journey have made Pedro a determined family and businessman who is willing to go the extra mile for those he cares about, which includes his clientele, and able to share sound advice with other agents.

"My advice to anyone trying to get into the real estate business is to keep pushing and be consistent. Eventually, things are going to start flourishing," Pedro says. "For a flower to grow, you don't just need sunshine ... you need dirt too. Just don't give up, and focus on helping as many people as possible."



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▶▶ cover story

By Zachary Cohen  
Photos by Ryan Corvello

## WHAT YOU FOCUS ON EXPANDS

In 2005, Matt Leiva relocated to Northern Virginia with high hopes of building a successful real estate career. Before moving, he lived in Burlington, Vermont, where he sold luxury cars and coached soccer.

“In Vermont, I was selling high-end cars — BMWs, Porsches. I sold a couple of cars over a two-week period to REALTORS®, and both of them sat at my desk and said I’d be a great Realtor. That sparked my interest,” Matt reflects.

### False Start

Matt began his real estate career with high hopes, but he wasn’t able to turn his inspiration into success. He was young, inexperienced, and lacked the

work ethic to drive his business forward. When the recession began to unravel the real estate market, he allowed his license to expire, returning to the soccer field.

“With the market shift and not really understanding real estate as a business, not a hobby, I failed out of it in a year. Soccer took over,” Matt explains.

Matt coached soccer for a few years, and in 2010, he applied his entrepreneurial drive to the soccer world. For the next seven-plus years, he operated two businesses focused on youth athletics and after-school programs. One company ran soccer programs in preschools and elementary schools. Another brought kids from their schools to a facility where they played sports and did homework.

...

# MATT LEIVA





**“I always thought if I could get in front of someone who wanted to sell or buy, I was going to be the best option.”**



Matt and Jennette Leiva with daughters Sophie and Isabel

...

### **Second Time's a Charm**

Matt never truly left his real estate dreams behind. His athletics businesses were successful, but he didn't work in a super profitable industry. With his young family growing, he sensed an opportunity to revisit his passion for real estate.

“I felt like I should have been good at real estate and was disappointed I failed. So I almost had a bone to pick. I was running a small business, not making much money, and had a family. So I got curious. If I could do a few deals, it could make a big difference for us.”

Matt initially restarted his real estate career part-time. But this time around, his business picked up quickly. Just a few months later, he went full-time.

“I realized I really liked real estate. I liked the energy of it, the competitiveness,” Matt explains. “With my background — I played college soccer and was a high-level coach — I'm competitive. I always thought if I could get in front of someone who wanted to sell or buy, I was going to be the best option. And it kept snowballing.”

### **The Next Step**

In 2020, Matt took the next step in the evolution of his business, founding his own real estate team. His group now includes six agents, including Matt, who still produces heavily, and four support staff members. In 2021, the team closed \$82 million; in 2022, they closed over \$90 million. Matt has also been named Keller Williams' Luxury Ambassador for Northern Virginia, giving him greater exposure to the luxury market.

“It's going really well,” he smiles.

The success has changed Matt too. He's become more confident, more willing to take risks, and

...



Top producer Matt Leiva is a Realtor with Keller Williams Chantilly Ventures.



...

more optimistic. Those traits have allowed him to expand his horizons; for example, he's in the process of buying a small apartment building.

"I feel as though I can play on a bigger playing field," he says. "Networking with more successful business people has opened my eyes to what can be."

#### Continued Growth

When he's not selling real estate, Matt can be found hanging out with his wife, Jennette, and daughters, Isabel (6) and Sophie (3). The family lives in Clifton and enjoys going out to eat, traveling, and spending time with extended family.

Matt understands that the real estate market is shifting, but that hasn't put a damper on his high hopes. Professionally, he plans to continue growing the team and pushing forward. He believes they can weather the storm and come out ahead when the dust settles. Personally, Matt is excited to focus on the simple things in life, like spending more time and sharing more experiences with his family.

"What you focus on expands," he closes.

#### FUN FACT

Matt was born in Madrid, Spain. Although he moved to the U.S. at 2 years old, he is fluent in Spanish.

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