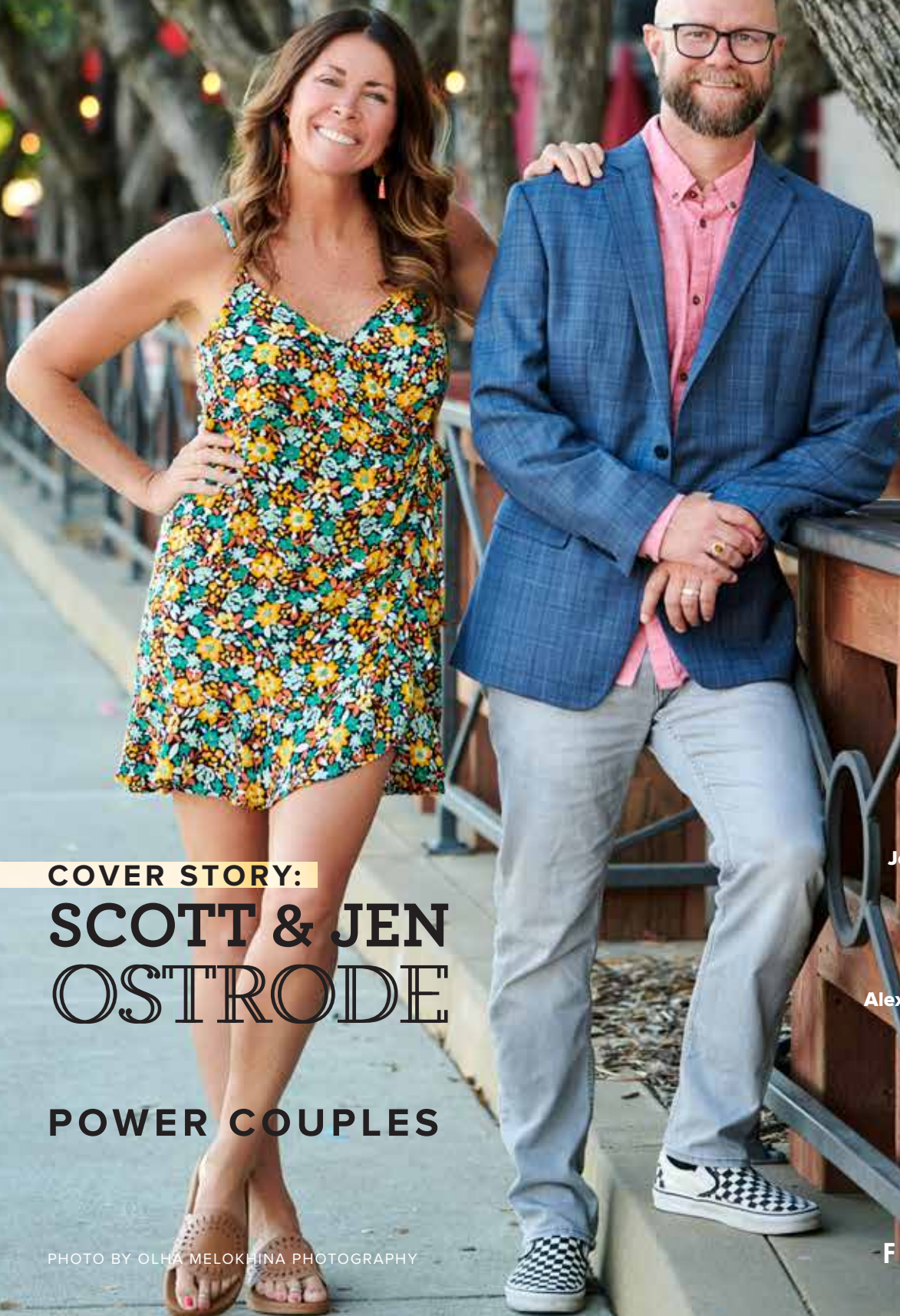


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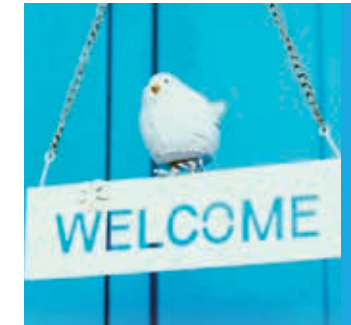
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First American Title Folsom Escrow Spotlight

DEBBIE THOMAS

When Debbie began her career in 1988 as a receptionist in a very busy escrow office, she had no idea what she was walking into. Back then, everyone still typed and faxed payoff and insurance requests. The office also had only one computer, so everyone had to sign up for a time during the day to input their files. But something about the industry intrigued her and she has never left. Although buying or selling a home can be stressful, she knows it's also exciting, and she loves being able to explain the closing process and help keep everyone calm as they move through the process.

Debbie and her husband, whom she has known since the age of 4, enjoy being with their five children and six grandchildren (with, hopefully, more to come). They also enjoy restoring cars, drag racing, and music, as well as all things related to the Christmas season, including collecting and displaying Christmas villages inside their home and putting up decorations outdoors that rival the Griswold's.

What was the hardest transaction you completed?

It was my first reverse exchange. I had never done a transaction like this before and we had to close within 14 days. With a lot of guidance, we made it happen and everyone was happy.

What is your favorite part of being an escrow officer?

I enjoy the people. Each file is different, and you never know what you are getting into. Helping people in one of the most important and stressful times of their life is awesome.

What sets you apart from other escrow officers?

I do not like voicemail. I try to answer each one of my calls during the day and I also return any emails received the same day. If I don't know an answer to something, I will find someone who does.

What types of closings do you do?

I handle residential sales and exchanges, refinances, and some commercial transactions.

What is one thing you wish real estate professionals understood about your job?

I wish they knew how important it is for us to have all the information for the transaction as soon as possible after the transaction opens. This communication is key in avoiding delays and ensuring that you and your clients have an experience that is as smooth and hassle-free as possible.

What makes you a strong escrow officer?

I enjoy my job, and I will do everything I can to make your transaction go smoothly and close on time.



TRACY FANIZZI

A 36-year veteran of the title and escrow industry, Tracy started her career in the Bay Area where she learned to handle all types of escrows, including refinance transactions, resale transactions, REO properties, short sales, commercial, land leases and easements. Tracy joined First American Title in Sept 2021, and has embraced the company's culture and the family environment where she is treated like her opinion matters and her success is important. She loves that the company helps you establish a plan to achieve your personal goals and then provides support and training to guide you.

Tracy has been part of the Folsom community since 2000, when she moved there with her two daughters. Now the proud grandparent of four, she enjoys going to all their various events. She also enjoys attending sporting events with her husband, as well as going to the movies.

What is the hardest transaction you have done?

I once handled a six-property exchange that included a property on the East Coast that was being handled by an attorney. It took 60 days to close, and I had to draw out a guide map of the transaction to see all the moving parts/people.

What is the single most successful transaction you have closed?

It was an easement for a billboard in San Francisco that sold for \$2 million and took 10 days to close. It was handled through attorneys and a realtor in San Francisco, and the document package for a single billboard was over 200 pages.

What's your favorite part about being an escrow officer?

I love getting to help people buy their home. It's very satisfying to tell them they are now officially a homeowner. That NEVER gets old.

What sets you apart from other escrow officers?

I am very organized and detail oriented. I keep track of every escrow and the timeline, and I run my files very proactively so we don't cause any delays. I am a good communicator and, as a notary, I can handle any signing in office.

What types of closings do you have experience in or your favorite to close?

First-time home buyers are my favorite because their excitement is typically so contagious. I like being able to help them navigate through the escrow process.

Anything you feel that makes you a strong escrow officer?

I am detailed-oriented and I am very good at communicating. I have many years of experience but am still thrilled to learn new things every day, so I am open to change and growth.



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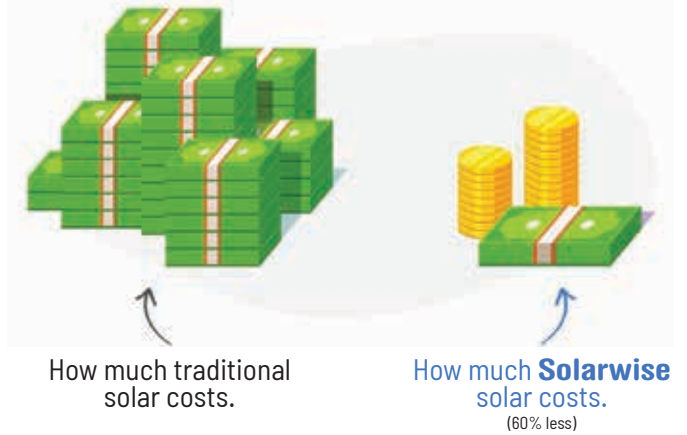
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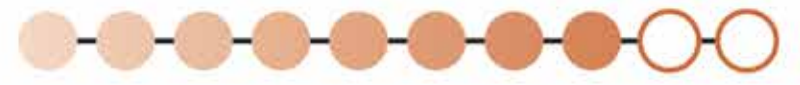
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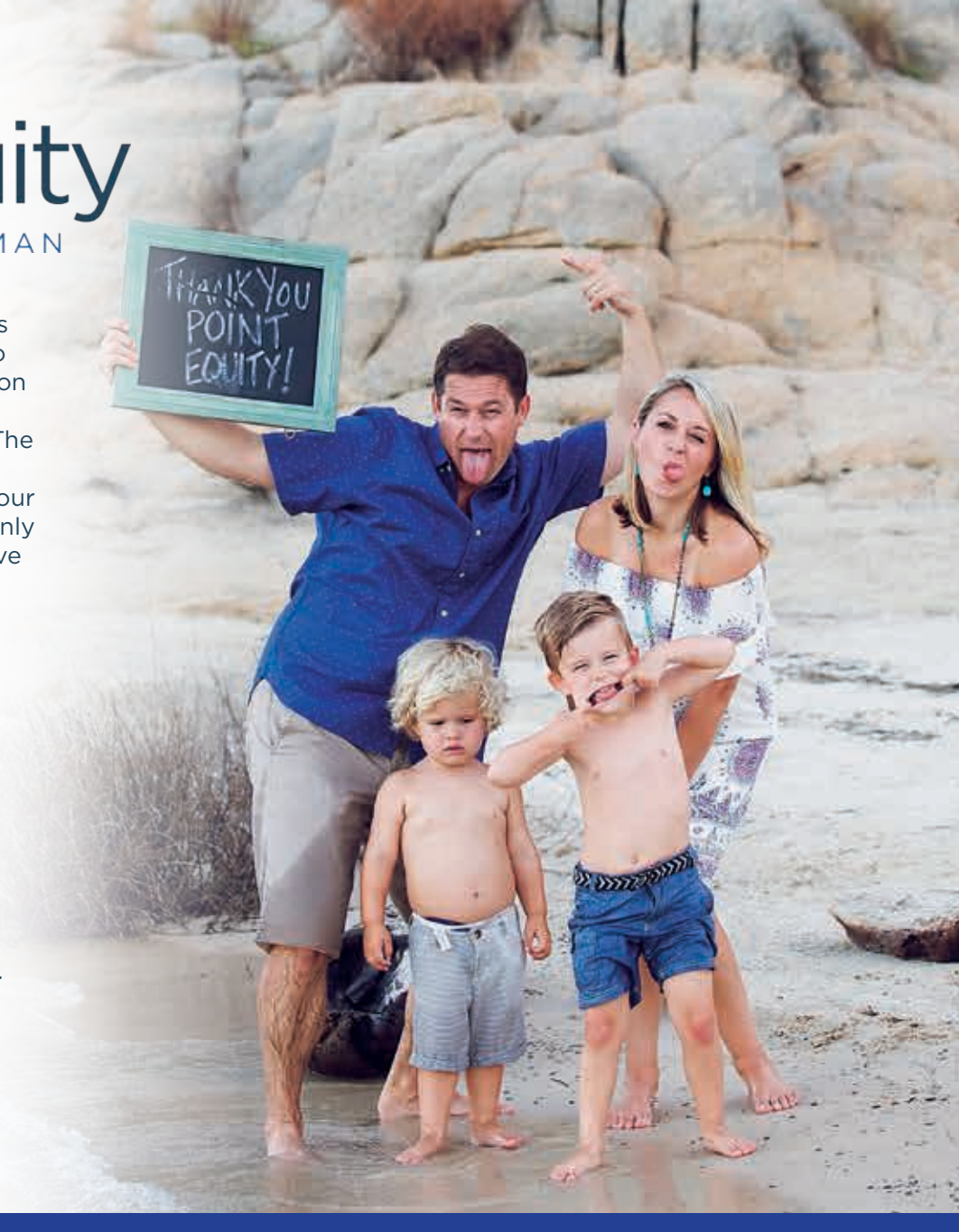
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LOVE CONNECTIONS

Love is in the air! We all know it's true, behind every successful business is a powerful team of trusted and talented individuals. We have spent the last 3 years knitting together a community of those individuals based on your recommendations and referrals and connecting, deepening and celebrating those relationships is literally the mission of Real Producers across the country.

You are only as excellent as the people you surround yourself with and though we've all heard it a million times, it is TRUE that a Rising Tide lifts all ships! So this month, the month where we all take a little extra time to celebrate the people we love and appreciate, we thought we'd 'get a little mushy' inside the pages of *Sacramento Real Producers* too! We asked you on our social media channels to publicly 'declare your love' for those who make your business better. And here's what you all had to say! Thanks for participating and Cheers to more Love Connections in 2023!

Katie MacDiarmid
Sacramento Real Producers
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"I second United Termite and Home Services. I've been using Paul Sr for almost ten years (yes even before he started United) and he's been an absolute rock and supportive vendor in our business!"



AARON RALLS -

"Mike Colenzo has genuinely helped my business in more ways than I can count. Thank you Mike for always being my Go-To Insurance guy."



MIKE COLENZO -

"Aaron Ralls I'm beyond words and full of gratitude. Thank you for your trust in my service to you, your team, friends and family."



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ANGIE CAROCCI -

"I'd like to call out Kellie Ames at First American Title. She constantly goes above and beyond as the best escrow officer. Even tonight working on docs at 6:30pm to get a deal closed by the New Year! She's Fantastic!"



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"Wolff Construction and Pepperjack Interiors were delighted to help one of Tricia Rossi's Bay Area clients settle into a new home locally. We appreciate the trust it takes to pass along a referral and worked very hard to take care of her client. Great collaboration!"



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"Emily Valdez with EXP is always one of my favorites to work with! She's honest, hardworking and a pleasure to be around! I'm always stoked to see an offer come from her!"



EMILY VALDEZ -

"Angie Carocci. CB is SO fortunate to have such a hardworking, intelligent, STRAIGHTFORWARD Agent as Angie."



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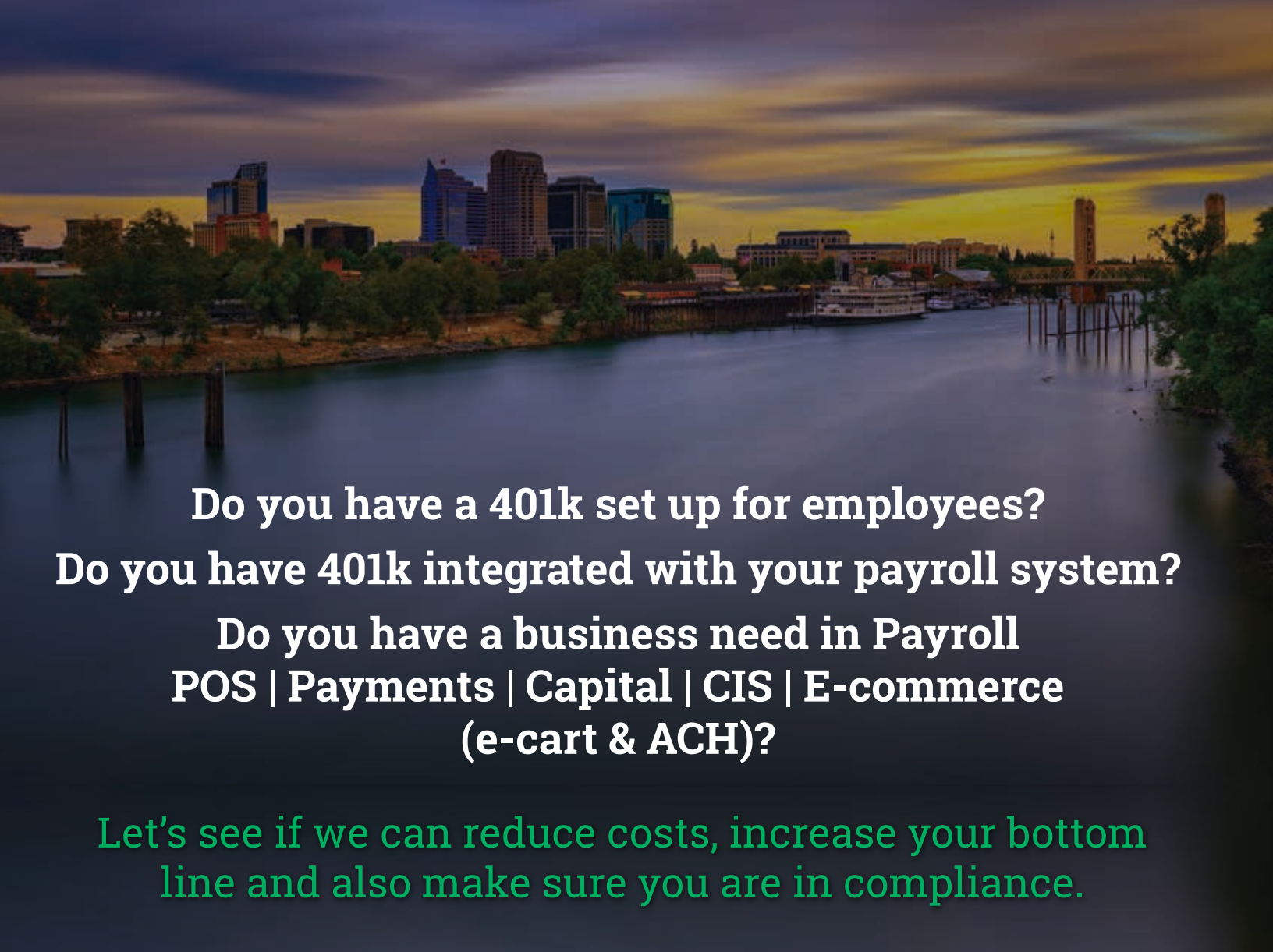
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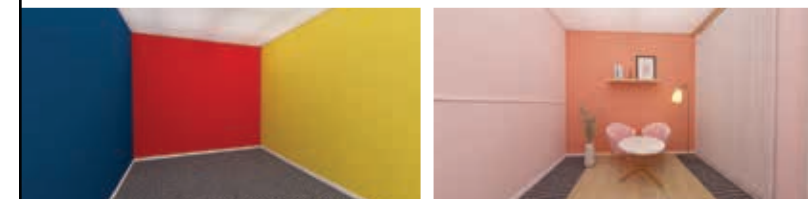
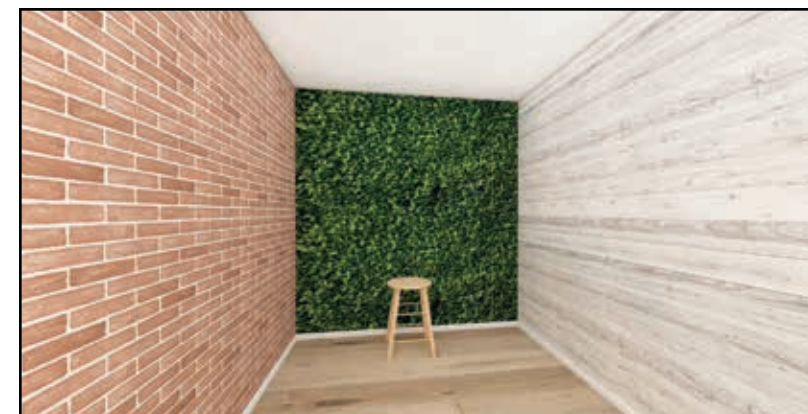
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JOHNNY & VALARY JENNINGS

MADE 4 MORE

By **Chris Menezes**
Photos by **Rachel Lesiw** – Indulge Beauty Studio

Johnny and Valary strive to live by the maxim “Chop Wood and Carry Water,” popularized by Joshua Medcalf in the book of the same name. In their everyday and personal experiences, they constantly ask questions, seek advice, and force themselves to learn. The ability to work through disappointment and defeat is what separates all successful people, including Johnny and Valary.

Most people look at Johnny and Valary and think that they are a successful power couple who have had everything given to them on a silver platter; nothing could be further from the truth. They have completely started over three times. They have made mistakes. They have failed, but what separates them from others is their grit. Johnny and Valary know defeat; they simply refuse to be defeated.

Despite numerous setbacks, the *Roseville Tribune* has named Valary the No. 1 real estate agent in Roseville for the past two years in a row. Valary is not one to rest on her laurels. She strives every day to be better, to be a valuable team member, and to put others’ needs before her own.



Valary doesn’t possess the typical “real estate agent personality,” and this has worked in Valary and Johnny’s favor. “We always get comments from other agents, lenders, and clients about how we are different from other agents. At first, many people think we are teachers, not agents.” Johnny explained. “Our clients like Valary’s patient style, her dependability, and her thoroughness when writing contracts and protecting them. Those qualities have also translated well for her when mentoring the agents on our team.”

Valary’s ability to work well with people makes her more of a “boots-on-the-ground” kind of person, while Johnny’s entrepreneurial drive makes him more of a visionary and goal-setter. When Johnny’s spirit pushes too hard, Valary is always there to pull him back, break down the steps and redirect, which works well for their team. Together they cast the dream and encourage their agents to reach for more and realize their objective to sell more houses. ...



“

SUCCESS FOR US IS KNOWING THAT WE HAVE DONE THE BEST WE CAN AND THAT WE DID IT TOGETHER.



married. While Johnny was fully aboard the investment train, he didn't consider becoming an agent until 2015.

“All the textbooks said to not get into sales; just invest. But after purchasing a number of properties and seeing what agents get paid, I thought, why not do both?” he explained. “I quickly realized I hated the paperwork, however, and recruited Valary to be my transaction coordinator. She got licensed shortly afterward.”

Johnny and Valary were living in Coalinga when they started in real estate. Wanting to move to a larger market, they decided to visit all 50 states before deciding on where to settle. Over the next few years, they visited every single state and changed

markets three times. After visiting Roseville, they fell in love with the area and decided that greater Sacramento was the best place for them to be.

While having to start their business over in multiple markets was challenging for Valary and Johnny, they stuck to what they knew and worked as a team to grow their business together. They weren't always on the same page. However, after reading the book, *Build an Empire: How to Have it All* by Elena Cardone, their vision of what they were working towards became clearer, and they became more united as a result.

“We have to consistently communicate and make sure we are on the same page, fulfilling each other's needs and ensuring we are pulling in the same direction,” Valary explained.

There is no confusion over where Valary and Johnny are heading next. All their efforts are going towards the growth of their team, Made 4 More. Their goal is to be the preeminent real estate team in the Sacramento area, with each of their agents making at least six-figure incomes. While they currently have ten agents on their team, they have never done any active recruiting. Some were friends

who reached out, and others reached out through one of the many networking events that Johnny and Valary have been organizing for the past few years.

Among the agents who have reached out to Johnny and Valary, longtime Sacramento top producer Brent Gove recently approached them, proposing a partnership to help take their business to the next level. Although Made 4 More has been the No. 1 team in Roseville for the past two years in a row, they know they can do more — just as their name suggests.

“We believe no matter if you sell one house or 100, we were all made for more,” Johnny explained. “Human beings have an infinite capacity, and we are always striving to live up to that.”

Johnny and Valary are focused not only on growing and developing their team but their family as well. They just had their first child, Jack, and are excited about what the future holds. When they are not working, Johnny enjoys going to cigar lounges, and Valary enjoys yoga and cooking.

No matter what the future unfolds for Valary and Johnny, they will always put each other first. “If our whole business burns to the ground tomorrow, we would be content living underneath an overpass as long as we are together,” Johnny said. “Success for us is knowing that we have done the best we can and that we did it together.”



•••

It was Johnny's entrepreneurial drive that first got them into real estate. Having grown up in the small, central valley town of Coalinga, the son of two teachers, Johnny saw the nice trucks that the welders in town drove and wanted to be like them. The thought of owning his own business never entered his mind. In fact, the day after he took his last final in college, he started work as a welder. It was around this time, however, that

he came across the book *Rich Dad Poor Dad*, and everything changed.

Johnny and Valary met in college in 2010. Valary was earning her degree in nutrition and planned to be a dietician. After reading *Rich Dad Poor Dad*, Johnny was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. He began renting out his own welding equipment and then bought his first investment property in 2013, the same year he and Valary



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Content is King” - Bill Gates, 1996.

Bill Gates said this in an essay on the Microsoft websites in January 1996. It’s clear that was and is a visionary ahead of his time. Some of my other favorite quotes from the essay include, “...the broad opportunities for most companies involve supplying information or entertainment. No company is too small to participate” and “If people are to be expected to put up with turning on a computer to read a screen, they must be rewarded with deep and extremely up-to-date information that they can explore at will. They need to have audio, and possibly video. They need an opportunity for personal involvement that goes far beyond that offered through the letters-to-the-editor pages of print magazines”.

So much of our success at United Wholesale Lending is because of the VALUE we create and put out, by way of content. I post frequently on Instagram with helpful information, I am a regular guest on podcasts to answer frequently asked questions about real estate investing and mortgages, and I have a monthly feature in Real Producers to provide value through content for REALTORS. Consistent content helps your audience build trust with you, developing relationships and sparking conversations, it lends credibility. That’s why my team and I put so much time into developing content.

Our referral partners are also direct beneficiaries of our content. My goal is to create as much value as possible for my referral partners. When real estate agents we work with see success, we know that we are going to see success.



United Wholesale Lending has full-time staff to provide resources and help our REALTOR partners grow their businesses. United Whole Lending does this in a few ways, and it all starts with having a robust in-house marketing team of content creators, videographers, and social media experts. Our marketing team works with UWL’s REALTOR partners on how to create and market their own brand for lead generation and nurturing.

As a real estate agent, it’s important to continually brand yourself to your clients, even after the sale or purchase is complete. You want to remain in their lives before they end up needing you again; you always want to be the first call when someone is thinking of buying or selling. The UWL marketing team is in place to support our referral partners grow their brands through content that keeps them relevant, social marketing, etc.

We’d love to connect with you and share our enthusiasm for great connection through content, let us help you! Shoot me an email and let us know how we can help bring value to your business.

-Shelby

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MIKHAYLEVSKIY

Alex's Carpet Cleaning Service: MORE THAN A BUSINESS

By Chris Menezes
Photos by Olha Melokhina Photography

For the past 25 years, husband and wife Alex and Elena Mikhaylevskiy have been providing clean and healthy homes and businesses through their company, Alex's Carpet Cleaning Service. As a family-owned company, Alex and Elena are devoted to providing superior service and care to the families they serve — because Alex's Carpet Cleaning is more than a business, it is a dream realized.

Alex and Elena both immigrated to the United States as teenagers. Alex was 15 years old when his family left former USSR Communism in 1989, pursuing religious freedom and opportunity. His grandmother survived a Nazi labor camp during World War II, and their family continued to struggle in the USSR until they were finally able to seek asylum.

Elena grew up in the USSR until the age of 12, not knowing that an entire world existed outside of its borders. When her uncle returned from the Army after being stationed in Germany, he was determined to get the whole family out of the USSR. Her father and uncle were driven to get out of the country to seek and provide a better life for their families. When they arrived in the United States in 1988, they did everything they could to survive. Elena recalled delivering newspapers at 4 a.m. and her father trying to communicate using hand motions and miming, not knowing English.

Alex also delivered newspapers with his family. And when he turned 16, he started working at a pizza place. Alex and Elena first met at the local Slavic community church. They married in 1996, and Alex went to work for a new carpet cleaning business that had just opened.

Alex immediately fell in love with carpet cleaning. And when he discovered that he could be

self-employed just a few years later, he immediately began taking steps to start his own business. He obtained his contractor's license, business license, and insurance and set out to achieve his own American dream. Thus, Alex's Carpet Cleaning Service was born.

With two young kids at home, Elena quit her job as a clerk at the Methodist hospital to help Alex answer phones and get their business off the ground.

"We got a bunch of loans, bought vans and equipment, made payments on everything once a month, and just kept going, supporting each other along the way," Elena explained. "We went door-to-door, invested in advertising, networked with other professionals, including real estate agents, and passed our business cards out everywhere we went. By 2005, we began to grow more and more, and by 2012, I completely took over all the office work and administration."

Alex's Carpet Cleaning Service uses cleaning systems that deep clean surfaces, flushing dirt and pollutants from carpet fibers with self-neutralizing cleaning solutions that are non-toxic and biodegradable. In addition to carpet cleaning, they offer tile and grout cleaning, upholstery cleaning, carpet repairs and re-stretching, stain and smoke removal, pet odor control, and more.



...

“I have learned a lot about carpet cleaning and have had a lot of training throughout the years,” Alex said. “But I truly believe that one of the biggest reasons why I am so successful in this business is because I trust the Lord with everything that I do. Aside from my wife being there through it all and helping me run the business, I trust in the Lord, and he has dearly blessed my life and business. I love what I do, and I also believe in a strong work ethic.”



While Alex’s Carpet Cleaning Service does both residential and commercial cleaning, from large office buildings and apartment complexes to restaurants, single-family homes and condos, Alex loves servicing homes the most because he loves talking with his clients and getting to know people. In fact, much of his business today operates on the relationships he has developed over the years.

“Alex is a very honest, loyal, hard-working, Godly man who loves people,” Elena explained. Alex takes

the time to talk with his clients and build those personal relationships with them. Building these relationships with people keeps his clients calling back and bringing back more customers because of referrals. He is a people person and is always honest in everything he does.

When Alex and Elena are not working in their business, they enjoy spending quality time with their four children — Victoria, Tania, Sofia, and Alex Jr. The one thing that brings them

all together is food, so they always take the time to go to different restaurants and try new foods. Not only that, Alex loves to smoke and grill his own meat, so the family is always cooking up something new and fun at the house.

To become part of Alex and Elena’s American dream and feel the love, passion, and pride that they put into their work, visit www.alexscarpettecleaningservice.com or call 916-225-0038.



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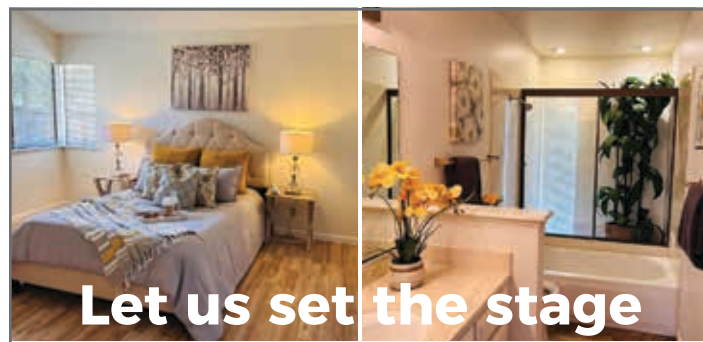
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- Mother Teresa

This month, let's honor the spirit of love that Mother Teresa embodied with her inspiring message; even small acts of kindness can make an extraordinary difference.

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JIM & SUMMER

BETLEY

IN THIS TOGETHER



Good things happen when you have someone on your side who shares your same vision and who is there to help you achieve your goals.

That's the strength that Jim and Summer Betley draw upon each day.

As REALTORS® with Coldwell Banker Sun Ridge Real Estate, Jim and Summer demonstrate the possibilities together.

As Summer says, "We enjoy being a team, and each of us has unique strengths that come together. Jim is really driven and great with sales and negotiating ... and I'm more focused on marketing, advertising, and staging."

GETTING THEIR START

Prior to working together, Jim and Summer worked for different organizations.

As Jim says, the benefits of sharing work take many forms.

"Working together toward the same goal allows us to have that team comradery that I enjoyed, and we are working toward the same goal," Jim says. "When I tell her about my day, she knows the people, and she has an understanding."

The two originally met in college while they were working at the same restaurant. During their college years at CSU Sacramento, Jim earned his bachelor's degree in business marketing and also started selling real estate. Plus, he earned his master's degree in finance.

"I thought I wanted to be a financial planner, but after I bought my first home in Orangevale and remodeled it, I loved the process so much that I wanted to help others build financial independence and improve their lives through real estate," Jim remembers.

Jim worked with Pulte Homes for more than 14 years.

In the meantime, Summer earned her degree in business marketing and worked as a marketing coordinator for a high-end builder. She first earned her real estate license in 2006, then after staying home to raise their children for a number of years, she renewed her license in 2018 and joined forces with Jim in the business.

REACHING SKYWARD

Through time, Jim and Summer have continued building their story of success based on the number of happy clients they have.

"We truly want what's best for our clients (whether that means a sale or not). Success is when a client trusts us to help them with a second or third real estate transaction or recommends us to their friends or family as that means that they had a wonderful experience," Summer points out.

...

•••

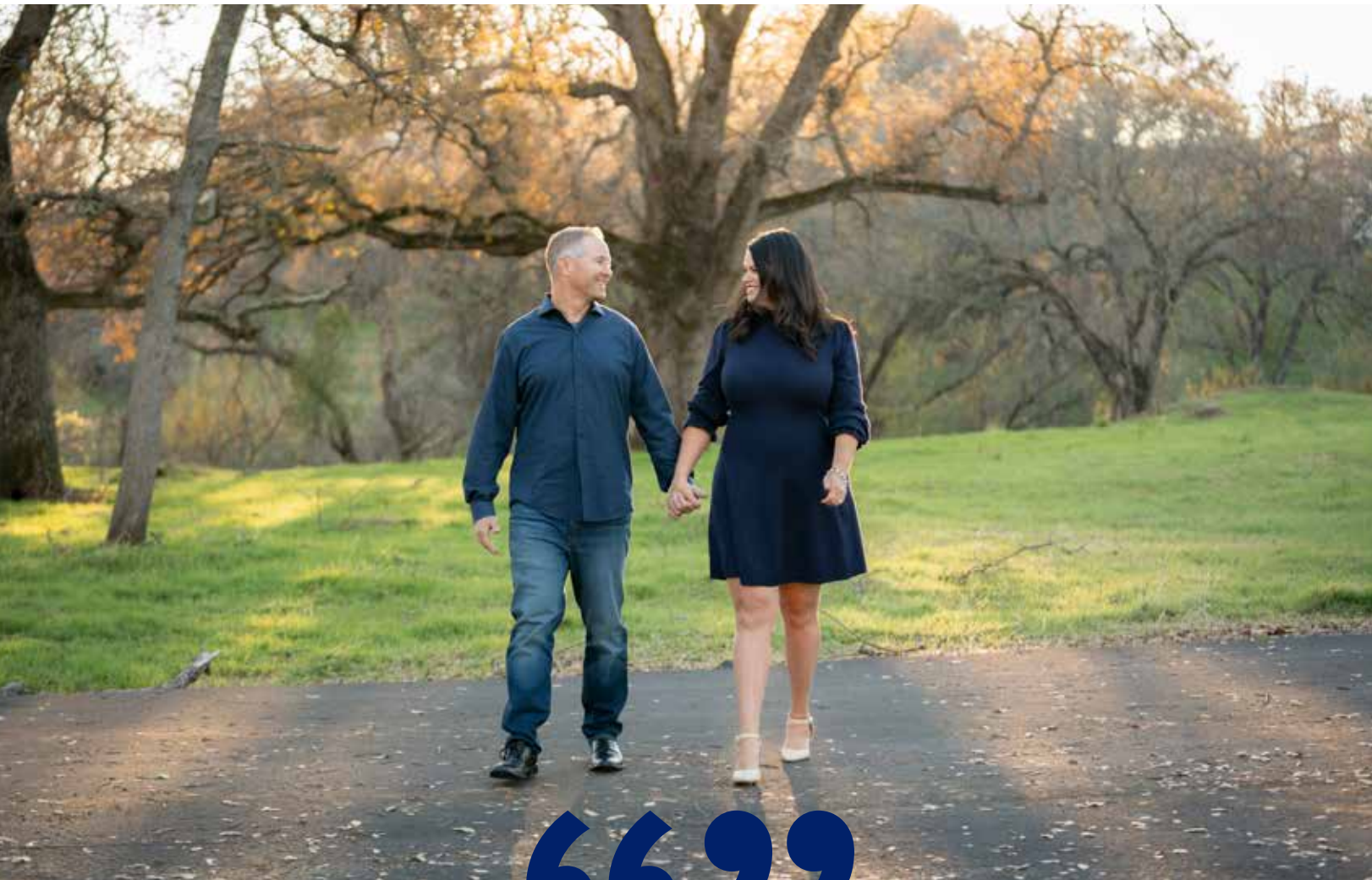
“The fact that we both grew up in the area sets us apart, as well as the fact that we love to support our local schools, youth sports organizations, and other charities in our own neighborhood.”

The results of their efforts have been truly rewarding all the way around. In fact, they have recorded over 695 transactions in their career, representing around \$345 million in sales volume, including \$45

million in sales volume representing 62 transactions last year.

FAMILY FULFILLMENT

Family makes life much richer for Jim and Summer. They look forward to time spent with their children — 11-year-old son, Dylan, who has a passion for golfing, skiing, and riding his bike; and 9-year-old



“ ”

WE ENJOY BEING A TEAM, AND EACH OF US HAS UNIQUE STRENGTHS THAT COME TOGETHER.

Jim is really driven and great with sales and negotiating ... and I'm more focused on marketing, advertising, and staging.

daughter, Marlowe, who has a love of skiing, golf, and playing softball.

In their free time, Jim, Summer, and their children enjoy traveling together. One of their favorite destinations is Maui, where Jim and Summer were married 15 years ago.

In addition, Jim has a passion for running. He has completed seven marathons and a number of half-marathons. Summer looks forward to opportunities to entertain friends and family. She also enjoys the beach and playing golf.

When it comes to giving back, Jim and Summer have a big place in their hearts for Junction Elementary School, Orchard Ranch Elementary School, Roseville Girls Softball, Roseville Pony Baseball, YBA (Youth Basketball Association), and Dorian's Angels for Foster Kids.

ELEVATING THE EXPERIENCE

As Jim and Summer continue to move forward on their successful path, they place extreme importance on the experience that their clients have with them.

“We always want them to understand how hard we are willing to work for them. They aren't just a number. We live in the community, and we like to see the people we help build wealth through their homes,” Jim explains.

“We are there in the community with them and love watching our community grow. It's awesome living in an area where there is so much growth. It's nice to see how it comes together in the community. They see how hard we work for them. Our experience helps them achieve their goals.”

Side by side, Jim and Summer share the same path in life and business. In the process, they make a lasting impact on the lives of those around them each and every day.



Jim and Summer, wedding in Maui



Skiing at Pallisades in Tahoe





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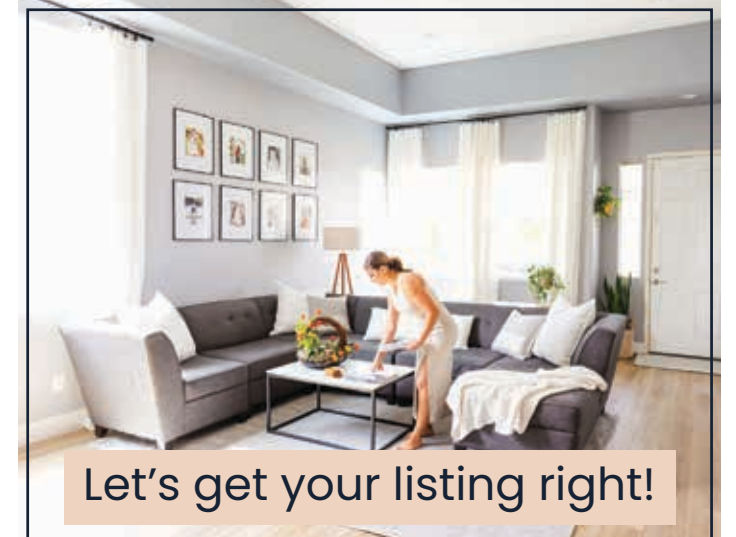
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Val Baldo,

President of the Sacramento Division of Placer Title Company

For over four decades, Val Baldo has been working in the title and escrow industry. For the past two, she has been Placer Title Company's Sacramento County Division President. She loves building relationships with REALTORS®, commercial brokers, homebuilders, and her Placer Title employees, whom she considers friends and partners.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Val Baldo was born and raised as a fourth-generation Oregonian in Oregon City, just out of Portland. Her great-grandfather and grandfather raised prize-winning Jersey cows on the farm known as the Gribble Prairie.

Val knew about “everything and everyone” in her small town. In need of a summer job after graduation, she followed the advice of a REALTOR®-friend and applied at two competing title companies in town. She was hired by Transamerica Title, located on Main Street, and started working the very next day as “The Tax Girl.”

It was a fascinating adventure for young Val to work in the title industry. She did administrative work and looked up information at the courthouse. While her former classmates vied for positions in food service and retail, Val's job offered both security and satisfaction. It also stirred up her unquenchable thirst for knowledge and her burning desire to connect with others and learn from them. She was determined to be indispensable.

“I didn't flirt with the job; I married it!” Val laughed. “I was fascinated by *everything* the team did and wanted to learn how to do *it all*. As the months passed, I apprenticed with different coworkers. I was intrigued by the entire process, and I liked to learn new things. I was constantly learning and serving faithfully. As I mastered new skills, I was naturally promoted to new positions. I have *never* asked for a promotion.”

BUILDING UP THE COMMUNITY

Her friendship with an escrow officer led to a connection with Bill Wirt from Sacramento. Bill offered her an opportunity to open a new title company in Portland, OR.

Val was only 20 years old when she helped Bill and his team open eight branches in the territory. They went from 0% of the market to 15% in a very short time. It was exciting and rewarding!

During the terrible recession (from '79 to '81), Val took on additional roles and responsibilities and avoided a layoff. She moved to Sacramento in the '80s and helped grow the Placer Title Company's footprint there; back then it was considered a quiet little “cow town”.

As the Kings relocated and brought basketball to the forefront of Sacramento's attention, Val was busy establishing mutually beneficial relationships with REALTORS®, developers, and homebuilders. The town began growing rapidly, and Val became personally involved in providing title and escrow services to developers on many of the new master-planned communities and commercial projects in the area.

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

These days Val and her partner, Matt Hargon, oversee seven residential offices and one commercial operation. Matt is the assistant vice president and county manager. Val admits that she could not do everything she does without Matt's help over the past 10 years. Prior to joining Val in Sacramento, Matt was division president in Amador, Alpine, and Calaveras County.

“Matt and I are good together,” Val stated. “Managing is very similar to being a movie producer. Even if you have a great script, the movie can be a flop if you do not have the right cast. Our

Sacramento escrow staff are ‘tops’ in the industry. Each branch actively gives back to its local communities. *They* are the reason for our success.”

Val is grateful for all those who took a risk on her, especially in her first few years. She has been fiercely loyal to Placer Title Company because she believes in what founder Leo French created, the way he brought people to the team, and the impact they are still having on the communities they serve.

PLACER TITLE COMPANY

Leo French had years of experience in the industry before he started Placer Title Company in 1973. He valued independent thinkers who were caring and creative. Leo's goal was to create a culture of caring that would motivate each member of his team to hold *themselves* to a higher standard.

...



▶▶ partner spotlight

By Ruth Gnirk
Photos by Aerial Canvas

...

He hired great people who thought like him and then got out of their way. Placer Title Company now has over 1,200 employees and more than 50 offices throughout California and additional title companies in seven other states.

People are truly the priority at Placer Title Company. Their overarching goal is to care for employees and customers. Placer Title Company is successful in *all* its markets, yet they do not have routine margin calls. Instead, they build trust and relationships. The average tenure for team members is 18 to 20 years.

Placer Title Company's founder was a very generous and community-minded man. Every Saturday, he encouraged team members to serve at the Loaves and Fishes food kitchen. He was passionate about supporting The Gathering Inn and Society of St. Vincent de Paul as well as outreaches of Glide Memorial Church.



Val and Matt Hargon — VP Sacramento County Manager Partner

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Val is a five-year breast cancer survivor, and that is a big deal because of her diagnosis. To celebrate, she joined REALTOR® Sally Dunbar and her team, *Hands Up For Hooters*, in raising funds for the Komen Foundation.

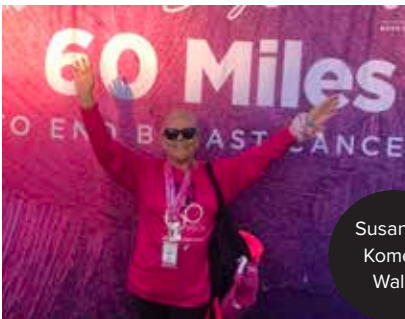
Val said, "Thank you, Sally and my Hooter team, for the friendship and support. And a big thank you to my PTC executive team, friends, family, employees, and customers who helped me raise over \$6,000 to help research and fight this disease."

She had started training with the team in May 2022, and by November, Val was ready to walk 20 miles *each day* for the three-day event in San Diego. There were 2,400 walkers, and the *Hands Up For Hooters* team took first prize for funds raised!

When Val is not working or walking, you might find her gardening, antiquing, or cooking up something French in the kitchen of her 1910 home. She collects 1950s cotillion dresses and still loves Jersey cows. When she travels locally, she enjoys the Napa wine region. Her favorite destination is France.



Val with her daughter Bridgette



Susan G. Komen Walk

Val is proud of her daughter, and the pair have a close friendship. Bridgette has followed in her mother's footsteps when it comes to loyalty to people and to her workplace. Bridgette is still close friends with some of her ballet classmates, and the five friends are still making memories together more than a decade later. And while others gave up or were let go, Bridgette has served faithfully with United Talent Agency since graduating from college. She was offered the job to expand their footprint to Atlanta GA as gallery director.

Regarding the recent market change, Val explained, "What we are experiencing in this post-covid market is an inevitable 'cooldown' due to several factors. This is my fourth go-around with a market adjustment, and I have learned how to flow with it. I chose to stay in this industry for most of my adult life because I love *what* I do, *who* I do it *with*, and *who* I do it *for*. I know first-hand that there is no substitution for hard work, teamwork, or loyalty.



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SCOTT & JEN OSTRODE

WITH TEAM OSTRODE PROPERTIES

Decades of Support, Expertise & Love

If there is one thing Scott and Jen Ostrode have learned in their 25 years together, both as a couple and as professionals in the real estate industry, it's the importance of having a team that works together and supports each other. While they didn't officially team up in the business until 2016, after Jen obtained her real estate license and joined Team Ostrode Properties, the support they have given each other from the very beginning and the synergy of their relationship permeates the culture of Team Ostrode today.

When Scott and Jen first met each other in 1997, they were college students at UC Santa Barbara. Introduced by mutual friends one night while out at a bar, they were instantly drawn to each other. Scott was finishing up his degree in environmental studies and working as a back-of-the-house chef in a restaurant, and Jen was a year behind him, studying communications.

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Scott had been killing himself with long hours at the restaurant after graduating, when he saw a couple of friends have success selling real estate. Drawn to the ability to create his own schedule and earn good money, Scott obtained his real estate license in 1998 and started building his business in Santa Barbara. When Jen graduated, she entered the industry as a sales rep with Fidelity National Title.

After marrying, Scott and Jen moved up to Sacramento to be closer to family. Scott grew up in Sacramento, where he was instilled with a strong work ethic, having his own paper route at 12 years old. Although Jen grew up in Dana Point, frequenting southern California beaches, she began skiing at the age of three and even became a pro snowboarder. Arriving in El Dorado Hills with Scott in 2000, Jen instantly fell in love with the community.

▶▶ cover story

By **Chris Menezes**
Photos and Cover Photo by
Olha Melokhina Photography



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When Scott joined Keller Williams El Dorado Hills (where he is now part owner) in 2003, Jen transitioned into the mortgage side of the industry, becoming a loan officer with Wells Fargo Loans. Scott first formed Team Ostrode Properties in 2007 as a way to offer more support to his clients. Jen often supported their clients on the lending side of the transaction.

Jen briefly left the industry in 2013, however, to become the marketing director with the El Dorado Hills Center, helping with concert series, Fourth of July fireworks celebrations, etc. She loved working in the community and meeting people and was always involved in neighborhood events, their kids' sports and practices, and volunteering at church and school. Even now, she coaches the high school snowboard team.

Scott recalls when Jen came into his real estate office to help with administrative support and marketing and how she knew everyone there, having established so many relationships in the community. "I call Jen, 'The mayor of El Dorado Hills.' If you go out with Jen, expect to be caught up in a conversation or two. She knows everybody!" Scott says.

While Scott and Jen work well together today, it wasn't always picture-perfect. Jen recalls creating a marketing postcard for the office one day and Scott not liking the font she chose for the text. "After discussing the issue, I said, 'OK, I will change the font and please accept my resignation; this is my last day,'" she says, laughing.

When Jen decided to get her real estate license in 2016 and start focusing on the listing and buying side of the industry, Scott insisted she return to Keller Williams to officially make Team Ostrode Properties a family team. Around the same time, a mutual friend and colleague was selling her staging company. So, they decided to purchase the company and add another layer of support to the team. Jen focuses much of her energy today on staging their listings and getting them ready for photographing.

As the leader of Team Ostrode Properties and part owner of Keller Williams El Dorado Hills and Keller Williams Sacramento Portfolio, Scott focuses much of his energies on lead generation, staying in touch with clients, looking for business opportunities, and ways to better serve each of their clients and agents.

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Today, Team Ostrode Properties consists of four agents and two support staff.

“We are so grateful for the team that we have now and are both passionate about educating our agents about the ever-changing market and the shifting that happens in the business. It is always a welcomed challenge to learn how to pivot in each market and remain client focused at the same time,” says Scott.

Having recently become empty nesters, Scott and Jen are working towards building such an efficiently run business that they can go to their home in Tamarindo, Costa Rica, for one or two months at a time. “Creating that ideal life for not just ourselves, but for our team members, while maintaining equal or even greater service to our clients is the ultimate goal,” says Scott. “Plus, we’re always looking for like-minded people to add to the team and help become even more successful.”

Given everything Scott and Jen have built and achieved in the industry over the last 25 years, some of the best advice they can offer other agents is to stick with it and plan for the long term. “We tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in one year and underestimate what we can accomplish in five,” Scott explains. “You can accomplish any goal you choose in the next five years. Time on a task over time will yield results. Too often, I see real estate agents giving up too early. It’s important to set boundaries to prevent burnout. In order to fill somebody else’s tank, you need to have fuel in your own.”

As Scott and Jen continue building their business and working toward maximum efficiency, one thing is certain: they will continue cultivating an environment of support for their agents, clients, and each other for years to come.



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