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RISING STAR

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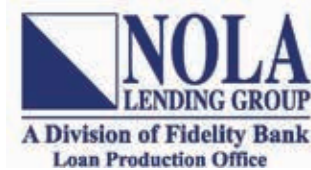


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<p>08 Preferred Partners</p>		<p>14 Preferred Partner Spotlight: Matthew Johnson</p>		<p>20 Rising Star: Bryant Manchack</p>
	<p>26 Preferred Partner Spotlight: Geaux-Local. GeauxRed-stick.</p>		<p>32 Cover Story: Rhett Sandusky</p>		<p>39 Home Matters: Observing Oosouji</p>



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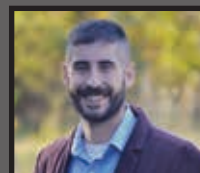
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MATTHEW JOHNSON

SWIFT PAINTING

One fateful day, Matthew Johnson sat at G&J's Drive Inn with his father having lunch. They were approached by Geraldine Taylor, who Matthew and his father knew from cutting her yard for years. After some small talk, Geraldine uttered a question that would change the trajectory of Matthew's life, and he didn't even know it. She said, "Do y'all know anyone who does any painting?"

Matthew grew up in Livingston, LA, in a tight-knit family surrounded by community. His father, Felix Johnson, was a pastor at the local church. After a big move when he was 12 years old, Matthew helped his parents renovate his new house,

his new church and a new rental property his parents acquired. Matthew had no idea the skill he was about to develop would later take him to places unimaginable. With a laugh, he remembered, "My parents looked at the house, looked at me, handed me a brush and said, 'Get started, dummy!'"

Matthew was a natural with the roller. After booking his first real painting job with Ms. Taylor, Matthew took up painting as a side job throughout high school to make extra money. "I did a lot of work as a teenager and saved a lot of money. I had already started building my credit, and at the time, I had no idea how helpful that would be later on when I started my business." After finishing high school, it came time to decide what path he wanted his career to take. The answer for Matthew was to try them all. He dabbled in bookkeeping, power washing, YouTube, photography, working at a daycare, working at a craft store, and

Matthew even tried a semester of college. None of these experiences felt quite right, and Matthew felt stuck. In 2018, Matthew started dating his now-wife, Natalie. What better to propel Matthew forward than love? He knew that he found the one, but Matthew needed to find his passion to create the life he wanted. With this motivation in mind, Swift Painting LLC was born.

"The writing on the wall was clear. I was good at painting, and I was good at talking to people." The first couple years of his business bled together as Matthew started from scratch, but soon things for Swift Painting would take a sharp turn in the right lane. "In 2019, I started educating myself and putting my name out

...

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▶ preferred partner spotlight

By Erin Phelps
Photos by Ace Sylvester



The writing on the wall was clear. I was good at painting, and I was good at talking to people.





... there. I took business classes, joined social media groups, started working with a business coach and learned about business finances. I took matters into my own hands to start seeing some success." All that self-education paid off. In 2020, Matthew and his marketing specialist, Jacob, revamped the company's branding. This rebrand propelled the business forward exponentially. In one year, Swift Painting LLC increased its profits by 1,329%. Each year, the success of Swift Painting grows, but it's not for lack of hard work. Matthew's team consists of Caleb, Mackenzie, Marley, Sam and his wife, Natalie. "I'm not a self-made man by any means. I have an amazing team, incredible painters and wonderful clients who have helped Swift Painting achieve success." This past year was Swift Painting's most profitable one so far, and

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Matthew has specific plans for 2023. "We want to reach a larger community. We're going to access our systems and quality so we can move into higher-end markets."

For Matthew, he hopes that 2023 brings him more time with family and more time to focus on the marketing side of his business. Matthew has captured us with his intelligent and creative video marketing taking on the persona of recognizable individuals like Mr. Rogers and Guy Fieri. "Community outreach has been one of the most rewarding parts of the job. I love it when people stop and say hello because they've seen me dressed up as Bob Ross in our commercials!"

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▶▶ rising star

By Erin Phelps
Photos by Ace Sylvester

PEACE
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BRYANT MANCHACK

Bryant Manchack has already made a name for himself as a force to be reckoned with in the Baton Rouge real estate market. As a self-disciplined, hard-working and innovative individual, Bryant has worked his way up as one of the top-producing agents with his firm in Louisiana. “Before real estate, I was working in the oilfield, and having a consistent check every week was very comfortable.” Despite feeling comfortable in his job, Bryant knew that he was good at sales; in fact, Bryant had been good at sales since a very young age. “Throughout my summers in high school, I would go door-knocking in my neighborhood to sell vouchers for my football team. I was the only one that did it, and I would sell them like crazy. One day, someone in my neighborhood mentioned that I should get into real estate. That’s where it all started.”

Fast forward to now, Bryant works with brokerage eXp Realty and is the leader of his team, LA Living. “Transitioning from my former job to real estate was challenging. Suddenly, I had to remember dozens of names, addresses, conversations and stories. It was complete chaos, but I quickly learned that I could find peace in the midst of it all through the relationships I was forming with clients.” Bryant knows that buying or selling a house is extremely stressful, and being the person who can guide clients through the transactional storm is important to

•••



“

MY FAVORITE PART OF THE PROCESS IS MEETING NEW PEOPLE.

Even if it's just a few minutes of getting to know the person, creating new relationships brings me happiness. ”

him. Although many agents appreciate the relief of closing a sale, Bryant knows that it's the challenging moments of a transaction that matter most. "My favorite part of the process is meeting new people. Even if it's just a few minutes of getting to know the person, creating new relationships brings me happiness. I could make a billion dollars in sales and still be unhappy. It's getting to know people's stories that is the most rewarding part."

Throughout his career, Bryant has taken examples and wisdom from those who came before him. "Growing up, my father always said that life is 99% mental and 1% physical. It's you versus you. At the end of the day, you either beat yourself down or pick yourself up." Through career changes and a pandemic, Bryant has always chosen to pick himself up.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BRYANT?

This agent's overall goal is expansion. "I want to expand my team into multiple cities and multiple states." Bryant truly enjoys the entire process of helping people through the world of real estate. With his determination and kindness, it's safe to say that very soon, Bryant will help people find their dream homes across the state and, one day, across the country.



What are you currently reading?

Discipline is Destiny
by Ryan Holiday

Your top three favorite books?

1. *Never Split the Difference*
by Chris Voss
2. *Can't Hurt Me* by David Goggins
3. *Blue Ocean Strategy*

What is the one book you think every real estate agent should read?

Never Split the Difference
by Chris Voss

What is on your "read next" list?

Courage is Calling
by Ryan Holiday

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▶▶ preferred partner spotlight

By Danielle Kidwell
Photos by Ace Sylvester

Ryan & Sheridan

Redstick Financial Inc. may have opened its doors in 2022, but the idea has been in the making for quite some time. Originally from Houma, Ryan Mott has been in the residential mortgage business for over 20 years.

Six years ago, he found himself growing at a pace that he wanted to take on an assistant to help him get to the next level. Enter Sheridan

Fay. “I was interviewing candidates for the position while working with a previous company. I knew the moment Sheridan and I got to talking that she had the ‘it’ you couldn’t teach,” he recalls. “But I didn’t know the full capacity of it yet.”

Ryan recognized her grit and determination and knew she would find a way to meet and exceed any goal she set. “I think that teaching the business from the beginning is the best way to train effective loan officers,” Ryan states. “Every client and every file is a new opportunity to learn.” Working with Ryan gave Sheridan the opportunity to learn the mortgage business from the ground up, one application and one file at a time. A native of New Orleans, Sheridan was new to the mortgage business altogether. “My previous career was in the service industry and even competitive bartending in the Houston market. That lifestyle can be overwhelming,” Sheridan says. “After having a baby, I suddenly found myself a single mother and knew I needed to find a career that would not only help me get back on my feet but would be an opportunity to grow and provide for my daughter and myself in a much more stable way.” During this season, she began her life of sobriety and has been vocal about this decision and the difference it has made in her life.

Over the next six years, the partnership that is Redstick Financial developed. The current market demands a team that understands the ins and outs of various loan programs in order to help the most borrowers. Ryan mentions that working through the crash of 2008 left him uniquely positioned

to understand people for whom home loans haven’t always come easily, and he understands the current market we are currently facing. “With faith in humanity, dedication to recovery and a true desire to help people, we understand lower income, lower credit and smaller transactions,” he explains. “The No. 1 complaint we get about clients is that no one called them back — like they didn’t matter.” He continues, “Each transaction truly matters to us — it’s personal. THAT’S how we are growing our business.”

Sheridan transformed her experience into motivation for becoming the best version of herself so she, in turn, can help others. She is particularly gratified to connect with and help women who have similar stories. “There’s no greater joy for me than helping another single mother or another woman in recovery who was told they couldn’t do this,” she says humbly. “I’m proof it is possible, and I’m blessed I get to share that with others.”

Whether it’s a class on homebuying basics and setting up to reach the homebuying goal or speaking to agents about non-QM products to reach more borrowers, Redstick Financial believes in educating others. It is a core value of the company to always have an open door to agents and other





loan officers with questions on files and scenarios because “bouncing ideas and situations off of each other is how we all get better.” The need to give back to their community is strong for the team. Although they are from outside the Capital City, both have chosen Baton Rouge as their home and want to continue to grow their roots here. Ryan wants to be a motivational speaker in the next evolution of his career. Believing his life experiences as an

athlete, a manager, and through recovery can benefit and inspire others in their own

journey. Sheridan recently spoke to the New Orleans Chapter of the United States Bartenders Guild about the importance of financial literacy, a skill that is not taught in the hospitality industry.

Ryan and Sheridan have another important thing in common — they are both raising daughters. Ryan’s daughter, Wren, is in fifth grade, and Sheridan’s daughter, Ivy, is in second grade. “We’ve watched each other’s kids grow up,” Sheridan says. “We will start teaching them the ropes of the business when they are in high school because it’s important that they become financially independent at a young age regardless of the paths they might take.” The pair laughs as they relay the bits of

“*Each transaction truly matters to us - It’s personal - THAT’S how we are growing our business.*”



business the girls have picked up by going to the office with them. Ryan chuckles, “Our kids sound like seasoned negotiators from years of hanging around the office and listening!” Sheridan adds with amusement, “I tell Ivy to come back to me with a different angle, and she’ll think about it and sharpen up her logic and argument!”

The most important feature the team wants to highlight is they are just that — a team. When you contact Redstick Financial

“*I’m proof it is possible and I’m blessed I get to share that with others.*”



Inc., you will get Ryan or Sheridan, or both. They are working hard to build their brand, and even in this uncertain market where other companies are laying off workers, they are actively growing their business. “We are problem solvers by nature, getting to know our clients and finding the right solution to fit their needs,” Ryan says. “That is the benefit of working with a local broker; you know where my office is.” Sheridan adds, “We are in the ‘YES’ business when so many of our competitors are quick to say ‘no.’” She continues, “Being a broker allows us to find the ‘yes’ or we figure out how to get us there.” They agree, “When an agent calls with a seemingly impossible scenario, being able to say ‘We’ve got a loan for that’ is an awesome feeling!”

In rebuilding their own lives, Ryan and Sheridan are in a unique position to both help those who qualify for loans and to teach financial literacy to people who need a little help to get there.

Fun Facts about the team — they’re both sneaker heads!

Ryan has over 48 pairs of Vans/skater-style shoes, and Sheridan has 37 pairs of different New Balance 327s!



Ryan Mott, Broker/President
NMLS#876641

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RHETT

► cover story

Photos by **Ace Sylvester**
By **Erin Phelps**

SANDUSKY

NEXT.

The Sandusky Group at Keller Williams Realty has an important mission statement: ***“To provide value, trust and efficiency in helping others achieve their real estate goals to become their forever advisor.”*** Rhett Sandusky has curated this statement for his team from 12 years of learning what truly matters in real estate and life. With Rhett at the helm of a small staff of great agents, it’s no surprise that the Sandusky Group is in the top 1% of Greater Baton Rouge real estate teams.

Rhett didn’t always want to lead a team. In fact, for most of his career in real estate, Rhett considered himself a lone wolf. “Up until my 10th year in real estate, I realized that I was treating every agent as my competition. I wasn’t very open to getting coffee with other agents or telling them about my experiences in the industry.” Rhett learned that real estate could be a lonely business if you let it. Sharing his hard-earned wisdom with a team would actually be of great benefit. Not only could Rhett teach the new generation of agents his ethos, but having a team has freed him up for important family moments. Rhett and his wife, Brandee, have two daughters, Madison and Cora Jane; they also foster children and are highly involved in

the fostering community of Baton Rouge. “Spending time with our daughters and making sure we have the time and freedom to take care of our foster children was an even deeper ‘why’ when it came to creating my team.” With these reasons in my mind, Rhett was quickly entrenched in developing his team and leading them to success.

So, how did Rhett get started in the industry? Like most agents, he caught the real estate bug from someone close to him. “I got the itch to get my real estate license from my father, Mason Sandusky, who also worked in real estate. He always presented the entrepreneurial route to me, and as I was going through college, it became more and more clear that real estate is what I wanted to do.” After getting a bachelor’s degree in finance at LSU, Rhett immediately got his license. The first few months of being an agent, though, were not as Rhett hoped. “Real estate is tough. I didn’t make any money for the first eight months.” It was around that time that Rhett sought out another full-time job and began putting in long days of hard work. “I was going to my full-time job at 7 a.m. After that job, I was cutting lawns; after that job, I finally did property showings. I think soon I realized that if I wanted to get a real outcome from real estate, I had to be all in.”

...

“

THERE'S A LOT OF UPS AND DOWNS IN REAL ESTATE. IT'S EASY TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE DOWNS - THE TOUGH DEALS, THE TOUGH CLIENTS.

”



...

Rhett went all in for real estate, and things started to get fun. Soon Rhett was drumming up clients and learning what it takes to be a force in the industry. As any successful agent knows, with the fun comes challenges. “Through real estate, I’ve learned that everyone is so different. I had to learn to see past the transaction because buying or selling a home is a really emotional process and it won’t be the same for everyone.” Rhett considers himself lucky to have had his father to turn to for advice in those early years.

“There’s a lot of ups and downs in real estate. It’s easy to get caught up in the downs — the tough deals, the tough clients. I would often tell my father about these moments, and he would sympathize, but at the end of the day, he would say, ‘Next?’ It was a reminder to not dwell on the downs and learn something from each experience.”

With all the lessons learned over a decade in the business, Rhett wants to expand the Sandusky Group.

Knowing that he’s created a great system with solid structures, Rhett is looking forward to mentoring more agents and seeing them succeed. For Rhett and his team in the new year, the only thing left to say is, “Next?”



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Observing Oosouji: Out with the Old

It's a new year, a transitional time to embrace the sentiment of "out with the old, in with the new." There's something about turning over the calendar page (hello, 2023!) that feels fresh and invigorating, like anything is possible.

In Japanese culture, the concept of *oosouji*, which literally translates as "ooo" (big) and "souji" (cleaning), presents a similar notion, with an emphasis on clearing out the old. In fact, it is considered inauspicious to welcome a new year with any "old business" (including dirt and clutter!) outstanding. How can we adopt this ritual of release as we march forward into a brand-new year?

Start with the right mindset. We often view cleaning as a dreaded task to be procrastinated as long as possible. Try to reframe this problematic mentality as one of forward-looking productivity. Much like a ritual, clearing out the physical dust of the old year means also clearing out the emotional and mental dust, wiping the slate clean for what is to come.

With that liberating viewpoint in mind, it's time to get your hands dirty:

- *Oosouji* is, traditionally, a top-to-bottom cleaning, so start at the top by dusting ceilings and fans, wiping down walls and dusting furniture and then vacuuming, sweeping or mopping floors.
- Designate several boxes in each room for items that are no longer meaningful, beautiful or loved, and when you've finished with your task, pass them along however is appropriate. Eliminating what you no longer use creates space for new ideas and frees you from unnecessary burdens. Also, include a bag or box for waste, removing it (symbolically taking out the mental "trash") from the house as soon as you finish that room. You will be surprised at how much lighter you feel!
- Last, remove stains from your home, whether on the furniture, carpet or grout. Old stains remind us of the past and have no place in a newly purged space.

If possible, every family member should be involved in your cleansing practice, making careful decisions about their individual possessions and benefitting from this fresh start. Happy New Year!



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