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EVENTS RECAP
Topgolf & Summer
Happy Hour

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT
Dan McKee
Keyrenter Property
Management

Location: The Press Room
Photo Credit: Cricket Pratt

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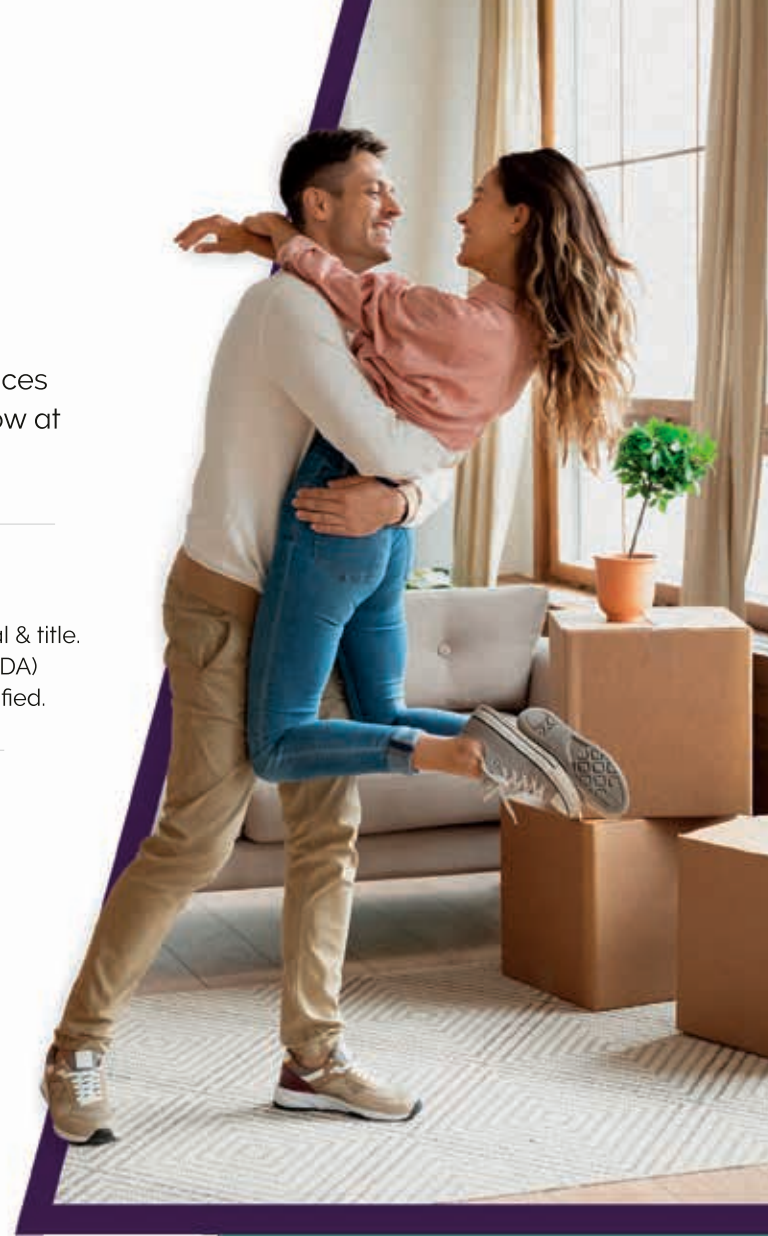
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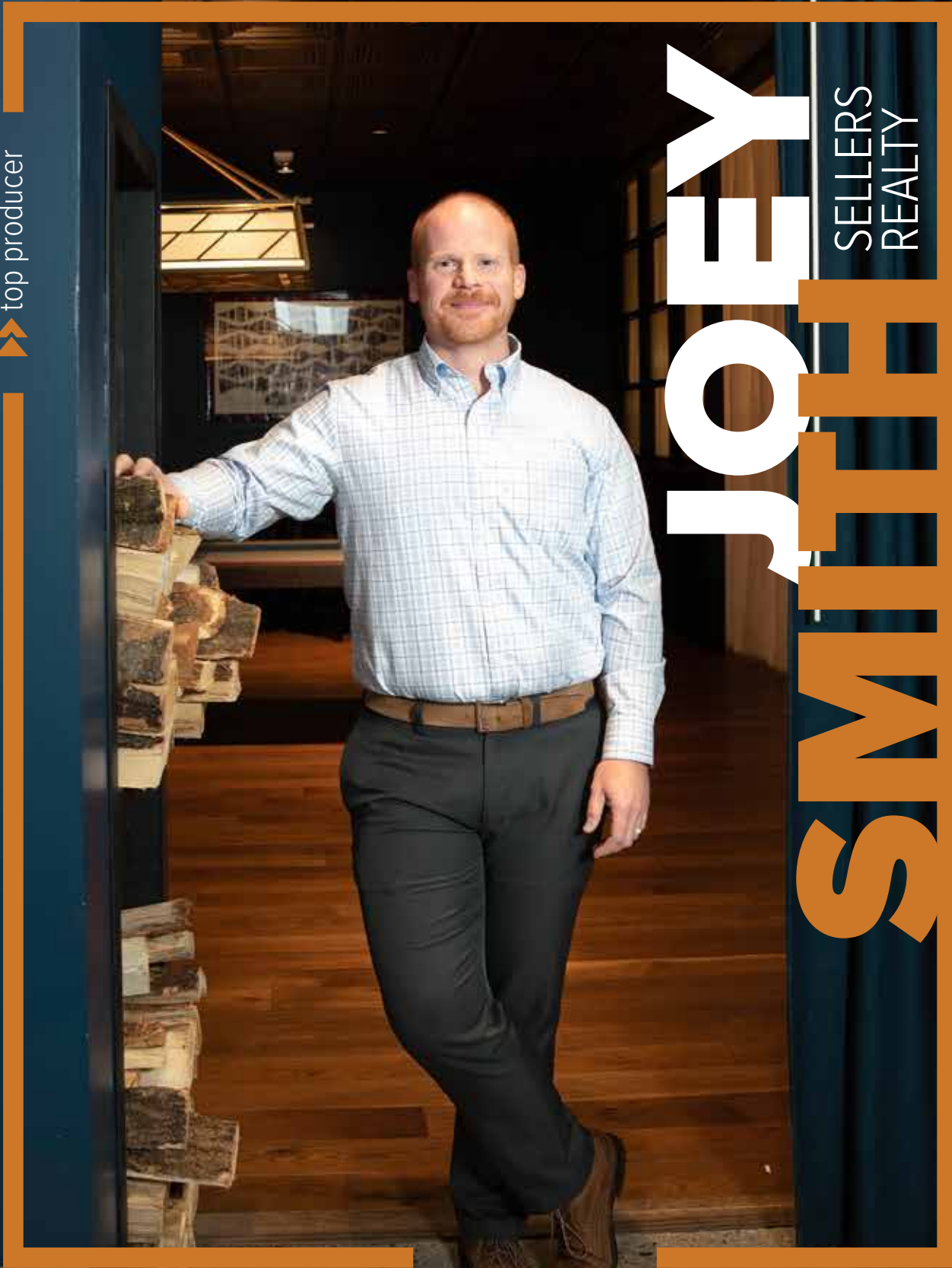
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top producer



Location: Hilton Knoxville

TELLING STORIES OF CLINTON

By Lucy Reynolds & Photos by Cricket Pratt

Joey Smith of Sellers Realty in Clinton wants to be remembered as someone who made a difference in his community. “I’m one of the local historians in Clinton, and I spend a lot of time reading about all the folks who came before me here,” he shared. “If I could do half the things they did to help build up the place we live, if I could be remembered as someone who did important things like that for my community, then I’d be thrilled.”

Joey grew up in Clinton and graduated from Clinton High School. After attending college in West Tennessee and living in Nashville with his wife when they were newly married, he eventually returned to East Tennessee to begin his career in real estate in the town he loves. “My folks and my brother are here,” he explained, “and my wife’s parents just moved here from Nashville. We all live near each other in the same neighborhood—it’s the 2023 version of the old homestead. Some people say I’m crazy, but I think it’s perfect.”

In addition to his love for Clinton and its history, Joey loves art, design, and historic homes. “I’ve always loved houses and architecture,” he remarked. “I used to pick up old house magazines and flip through them when I was a kid. Now, historic homes are my favorite houses to list. The structures are interesting, but so are the stories of all the people who’ve lived there.”

“People like to know those kinds of things,” he continued. “Even though I sell houses, I don’t say I’m a salesperson...I’m a storyteller. I like introducing people to this community and telling them about life here. To me, it’s not really selling—it’s just helping people put the pieces together.”

Joey is most proud of his family—his lovely wife and their two children, ages 10 and 8—and to him, success means raising two healthy, well-adjusted, kind, and loving children. “They are why I do everything I do,” he emphasized. “My goal in life is to give my family what they need to be happy and successful themselves.”

Keeping his family as his top priority is one way Joey keeps his work and home life balanced. He always puts his family first. If he’s got a dance recital or a ballgame to attend, then he might miss a listing appointment. But being there for his kids is as important in his schedule as anything business-related.

EVEN THOUGH I SELL HOUSES, I DON’T SAY I’M A SALESPERSON... I’M A STORYTELLER. ”



Location: Hilton Knoxville

Location: Hilton Knoxville

Joey finds absolute joy and pleasure every day in his morning routine: get up at 5:30am, go work out, come home and help get the kids up, take the kids to school (accompanied by the family dog). Then, at work, there's something different to do every day, never the same thing two days in a row. So there's a comforting mixture of routine and complete and utter chaos!

On Joey's bucket list is a visit to the Holy Land. If he had time to learn something new... professionally, he'd want to learn the ins and outs of how to run a real estate office, and personally, he'd like to become proficient at playing the autoharp, that Appalachian folk instrument (he owns one).

He's currently reading *Hank the Cow Dog* with his kids. "It sounds like a little kids book, but I have horse-laughed reading it to them," he admitted. The last book he read for himself was *This Promise of Change*, a memoir by one of the 12 Black students who enrolled in Clinton High School in 1956, helping CHS become the first public high school in the state of Tennessee to integrate in the 1950s.

If Joey had to change careers, he'd probably be a teacher. He's on the city school board in Clinton and enjoys getting into the classroom to sub occasionally as well. If he could have dinner with anyone, he'd choose one of Clinton's old mayors from the 1920s, Glen Medaris. "He was a really quiet, unassuming kind of guy," Joey described, "but he made lots of plans and improvements for the community—like paved streets and street lights and new schools. I'd love to ask him about how he managed the city."

Two of the greatest influences in Joey's life have been his parents and his broker, Bobbie Sellers. "Bobbie really connects deeply with the community," he said, "and that's how I feel also. I probably would never have tried to do this job with anyone but her. And my parents taught me and molded me into a good person, which is more important than being successful financially, so I've got to give them credit, too."

“
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ARE MY FAVORITE
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L to R back row: Dan McKee, Todd Huber, Billy Houston, Dave Campbell, Sam Winterbotham, Rebecca Ramsey McDonald, Lynette Bell, Tara Winterbotham, and Jamie Sutton.



Janette honoring the Winterbothams with their feature poster and gift.



L to R: Mary Campbell, Rebecca, Haley Van Edom, Billy Houston, Angie Merrick, Bedros Bozdogan.



Susan & Jackie



L to R: Sally Sparks, Mary, Billy.



L to R: Susan Bentley, Rebecca, Angie, Christie Reagan



L to R: Angie, Leslie & Jeff.



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L to R: Lainey Jones, Eleanor Cippel, Cheri Spinazzola



Mr. & Mrs. Smith (aka Melissa & Tim) and Donnie Bentley



L to R: Rebecca, Jackie McCarter, Marla Milsaps, Whitney Townsend, and Kiley Thomas. New partners from Unity Title & Concord Title.

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ELEANOR CIPPEL & LAINNEY JONES

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► celebrated leaders dynamic duo

By Lucy Reynolds & Photos by Cricket Pratt

Location: REAL Broker LLC office

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Location: REAL Broker LLC office

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TAKING CARE OF THEIR AGENTS

Eleanor Cippel and Lainney Jones of Real Broker LLC have known each other a very long time—they met as kids in Florida and first worked together at a bar where Lainney was a bartender and Eleanor was a cocktail waitress. Since that time, they both built impressive careers in the corporate world before joining forces once again in real estate in East Tennessee.

Lainney first delved into real estate as an appraiser for residential properties in Florida years ago. Later she became senior development manager for a software company that was recognized as one of INC 500’s “Fastest Growing Companies in America” for five years in a row. Meanwhile, Eleanor spent the majority of her career in digital marketing and sales innovation, first for EW Scripps and later as SVP of Sales and Marketing for Digital First Media.

It was 2007 when Lainney took her bartending, appraisal skills, and software affinity and chose to start a new career as a real estate agent. Later, after Eleanor left Digital First, the two decided to go into business together in 2017.

At first they opened an independent office and tried to do a lot of special things for their staff—such as rewarding agents for bringing on like-minded agents, trying to provide health insurance, trying to get investments for agents—all the things that are often missing when you’re a 1099 independent contractor. “We were happy with that and weren’t really looking around,” Lainney said, “but then we saw the eXp model. They were already doing it and doing it better than we could, so we joined them.”

More recently, Eleanor and Lainney have made the move to The Real Brokerage, another cloud-based brokerage that better resonated with them. “They have a great financial package for agents,” Lainney explained. “Their technology is super intuitive and extremely fast and simple. The education is very much about people sharing openly about how to be successful—and their core values are to work hard and be kind. It’s a very agent-centric firm with the tools, the ease, and the camaraderie. They recognize we’re in a consumer-facing business and encourage us to be mindful of the privilege of being invited into people’s homes to be part of their home decisions. There’s a lot of focus on connectivity with other agents, buyers and sellers, and vendors—that’s a beautiful part of the business.”

Eleanor has always come from an environment of abundance, a place of considering how she could help other people grow, so she is most proud of the list of amazing people she's been able to help get to the next level in their careers. "I've worked for a lot of folks who didn't have that philosophy," she admitted, "people who were very controlling and really wanted to hold you back so they didn't lose you, but I've never approached business that way. For me, it's always been

"Where do you want to go and how can I help you get there?"

As for Lainey, she's proud of everything she's done to grow into the person she is today. "It's been a long journey," she said, "and I still have a long way to go—but I'm a productive member of society. I'm good to my agents and the people I work with. I think my mom would be proud of where I am today."

“

WE LOVE THE CORE VALUES

OF WORKING HARD, BEING

KIND, AND PROVIDING SIMPLY

GREAT SERVICE.

”



Location:
REAL Broker
LLC office

On that note, if Lainey could have dinner with anyone, she'd choose her late mom... and she's not afraid to get sentimental about it, tearing up a bit as she shared the idea.

Eleanor would choose dinner with Dolly Parton. "I love what Dolly has done with her career and how she has continually reinvented herself," she exclaimed. "I love the strength she exudes as a woman."

Eleanor counts Ellen Smith, a strong woman she worked for early in her media career, as very influential in her life. "She championed me and believed in me. She was the kind of leader who expected more from you than you knew you had in you. That was very good for me when I was young. She helped me find in myself what I already had."

Lainey named Eleanor as one of her greatest influences, along with fellow REALTOR Hope Cudd. "Eleanor always helps me get my head around what I need to do," Lainey said, "and Hope helped me move up leaps and bounds as a real estate agent."

Now, Lainey and Eleanor are leaders and mentors themselves. "For us, everything is about our agents," Eleanor summarized. "We're focused on innovation and really looking to the future. We've got an agile company with great technology and a great vision for people. And we love the core values of working hard, being kind, and providing simply great service. For us, being in collaboration is currency. We really believe in that. We believe that we should all be able to lift one another up. No matter what brokerage you're with, there's room for everybody."

DAN MCKEE

Keyrenter
Property
Management



MCKEE

For Dan McKee, president of Knoxville's Keyrenter Property Management, it's important to be known as a man of his word, a good father, husband, and friend, and someone who helps make his community better.

Dan's first experience with investment real estate was years ago when his mom and step-dad were selling ocean-front condominiums in Myrtle Beach. Later, he spent 15 years owning and self-managing a couple of his own investment properties while enjoying his previous full-time career. "That was a great experience for me," he remarked. "There's nothing else out there where the bank will loan you the money and then a tenant pays that loan for you. You can have an incredible asset appreciate over time for retirement."

After 30+ years in radio sales and sales management, Dan decided he wanted to do property management full-time. In evaluating franchise options, he found that Keyrenter really stood out. "They're the only people who talked about values," he shared. "They have a great process in place, and their people are absolutely outstanding. Nationally, they manage more than 8,500 properties with less than a 1% eviction rate because their process is so solid. It was important to me to have all that backend support; I felt it would allow me to grow my business faster."

For REALTORS, Dan offers a \$300 referral and a return client guarantee. "I partner with agents; I don't compete with them," he explained. "I take care of their clients, and when the client is ready to sell or buy more, I refer them back to that agent. Also, I do a lot of free rental analysis reports for agents, anytime they have investors or a client who is trying to sell a house that might be a good investment property."

In addition, Keyrenter offers five different guarantees for owners: 1) Leasing—they guarantee a signed lease within 30 days; 2) Service—owners can cancel at any time; 3) Tenant—if a tenant breaks a lease within the first six months, they'll find another one for free; 4) Maintenance—things are fixed right the first time or they fix it for free; and 5) Pets—they'll cover the first \$1,000 in damages over and above the security deposit.

"Again, core values are big with Keyrenter," Dan emphasized. "They're all written out, beginning with 'relationships first' and ending with 'do the right thing, period.' Their focus on integrity is important to me; that's something I've always lived by."

“THERE'S NOTHING ELSE OUT THERE WHERE THE BANK WILL LOAN YOU THE MONEY AND THEN A TENANT PAYS THAT LOAN FOR YOU.”



INVESTING IN OTHERS

▶ partner spotlight

By Lucy Reynolds & Photos by Cricket Pratt

Dan counts several people as influential in his career. “My father, for sure, and my brother,” he mentioned. “Another mentor and family friend, Jim Massey, was an accountant who invested in the companies he worked with; he built a great business for himself by partnering with his clients.”

Dan’s most rewarding moments are seeing the lightbulb go off in people’s minds when he helps them see what they can accomplish. “There are a lot of people just getting their first investment properties,” he said. “They’ve heard that owning real estate can be a great long-term investment and they want to know how to do it. I love being able to show them the path to get there and how they can often have cashflow from day one. I’ve also helped people lease their existing home, helping their debt-to-income ratio, so they can then buy their dream home.”

If Dan could have dinner with anyone, he would choose Ronald Reagan. “I had the honor of meeting him after he left office, and I was in absolute awe,” he shared. “He had such vision, and he was such a great communicator. I would love to soak up all of his life experience.”

Hiking the Appalachian Trail is on Dan’s bucket list—and he’s proud of his new hiking accomplishment: He just recently joined the 900-Mile Club, a group of less than 1,000 people who have hiked every trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Dan is a big John Grisham fan, and he loves country music, especially the Zac Brown Band. “Country music artists are hands-down the most genuine down-to-earth people,” he said. “They always pay it forward and help other artists along the way. I love that attitude of trying to lift people up.”

That’s Dan’s attitude, as well, and one reason he’s passionate about property management. “I love the impact I can make in people’s lives, helping them build their own wealth through real estate,” he said. “I think when we help other people then we get our own reward, too.”



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Kelly WHITE

A Woman of Her Word

The Real Estate Firm

By Lucy Reynolds & Photos by Cricket Pratt

When The Real Estate Firm's Kelly White was young, she didn't know what she wanted to do when she grew up, but she certainly never thought it would be a sales position—because she couldn't talk in front of people. "I'd take a zero rather than get up in class to read a report," she admitted. "It wasn't until I was in my late 20s that I could talk to people. I realized I could talk about things I knew about, and then it became about helping people."

Kelly was in the wireless phone business for 27 years; then, an auctioneer friend invited her to come work for him, so she got her auctioneer's license. "When I got my first real estate property to auction, he said, 'Bad news—you can't get paid on this because you don't have a license to sell real estate,'" she remembered. "So I got my real estate license, but that was during the market crash, and people weren't happy during the auction process. In fact, a lot of people were crying. That wasn't for me because I like making people happy. So that's when I decided straight real estate was my forte."

Now, as an affiliate broker and REALTOR in Sevier County, Kelly wants to be remembered for always being an honest person. "I want to be able to look at you in church on Sunday and not run and hide because I've not done the right thing," she said. "I want to be the person that people say, 'You can take her word to the bank.'"

Kelly counts two people as particularly influential in her career: first, Dale Carr, a friend, local politician, and auctioneer—the one who got her to get her auctioneer's license and real estate license—and secondly, Rich Levenson, who was her broker for eight years.

Kelly's most memorable time was the birth of her son. "He had a massive head injury at seven months old," she shared, "and they only gave him a 50 percent chance to live. Then they said he might never walk or talk, but he graduated from high school with honors and became the first person in our family to go to college. Now he's got a wife, two thriving boys, and a very successful career with KPD. He's my pride."

In her professional life, Kelly is proud to have been installed into the RPAC Hall of Fame in May. "There's a plaque on the top of the NAR building with my name

SUCCESS

MEANS HELPING OTHERS AND
HAVING PEOPLE LOOK UP TO YOU
AND RESPECT YOU.

Location: The Press Room



on it from Tennessee,” she shared. “I’ve also served as the Region 3 DVP for Tennessee Realtors as well as most of the board positions for the Great Smoky Mountain Association of Realtors.”

If Kelly could have dinner with anyone, she’d choose Donald Trump. “I’ve admired and respected him for 25 years or more, and I always said he needed to be our president. He takes risks and always pulls himself out of his struggles. I’m not saying I agree with him on everything, but I think he’s a phenomenal business person.”

As for Kelly, she finds it challenging to balance work with her personal life. “My husband would say I don’t balance it,” she laughed. “He’d say it’s all real estate!”

“Seriously,” she continued, “I try not to work on Sundays; I want to give that day to the Lord. But I don’t do a great job, honestly—I mean, I was putting up a sign last night at 10:30 an hour away from my home. I need more balance.”

Kelly tries to start each day with a written plan, but time management is her biggest challenge. “My hard drive is full,” she exclaimed. “I just need to learn to slow down!” On the other hand, her biggest rewards are the smiles she sees at the closing table, when clients are happy and excited about their new purchase.

And how does she spend her time away from work? At the lake! “We’ve got a place on Norris Lake, and we’re there almost every weekend in the summer. We also love to get away to Orange Beach three or four times a year, take our boat down and fish—I love trying to catch bigger fish than my husband.”

Kelly’s bucket list includes a trip to Greece and to Cabo San Lucas. Her

favorite music era is the late 70s/early 80s, and her favorite song is anything by Kenny Chesney—who, incidentally, used to be one of her phone customers years ago!

Kelly doesn’t plan to retire, but maybe she’ll slow down a bit in years to come. Right now she reads books on her Kindle every night before bed just to help turn off her brain. “It’s just to make my little hamster go to sleep,” she joked, “otherwise my little hamster’s in there running around telling me everything I haven’t done today and all that I need to do tomorrow!”

If Kelly had to completely change careers, she’d consider nursing or perhaps something in the pet industry or volunteering

I TRY NOT TO WORK ON SUNDAYS; I WANT TO GIVE THAT DAY TO THE LORD.

with Appalachian Bear Rescue since she loves animals.

At the end of the day, to Kelly, success is not about money. “Success means helping others and having people look up to you and respect you,” she said. “It’s about what people think. I want people to trust me and know that my word is good.”



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