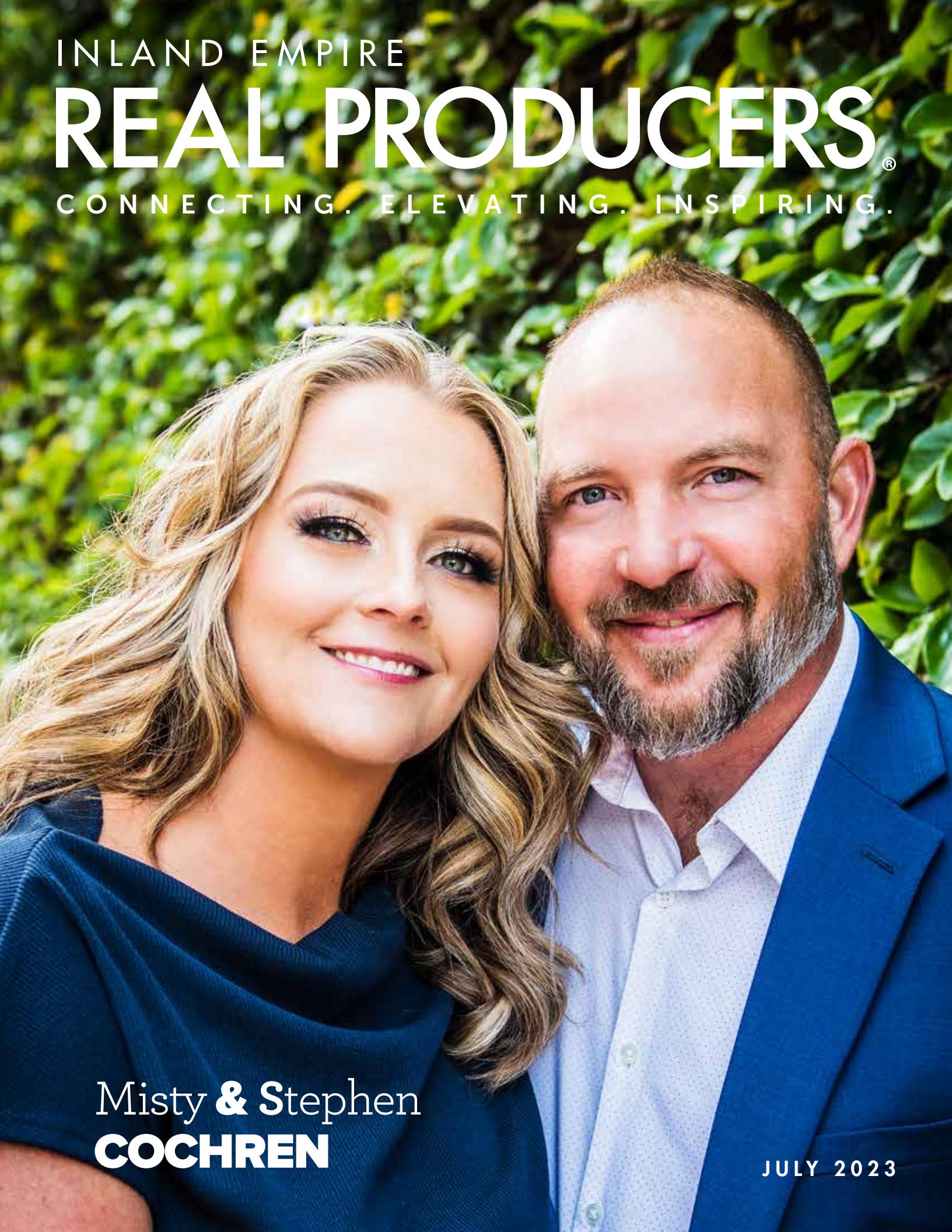


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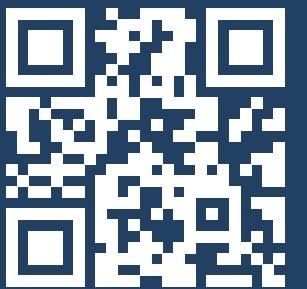
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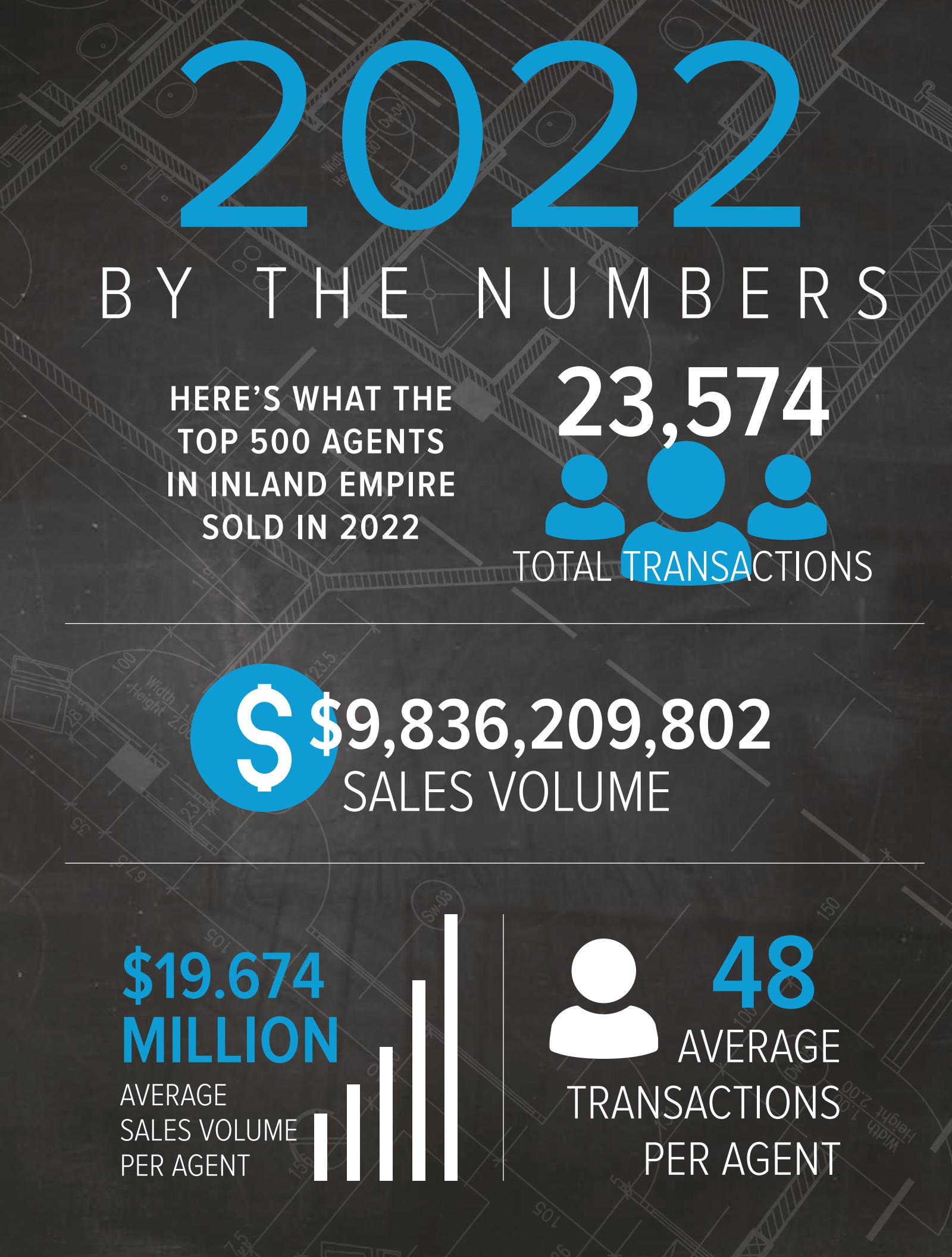
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MISTY & STEPHEN COCHREN

► cover story

Written by Zachary Cohen Photography by Marissa McCutchan

The team model has become commonplace in the real estate business, offering agents the collaboration and support often lacking in a single-agent model. And yet, teams have their limitations, too. Agents often outgrow the model; as their personal business strengthens, they may become less reliant on the support of a team. Thus, a higher commission split and more independence become attractive.

After nearly a decade leading a team with Keller Williams, Misty and Stephen Cochren took the next significant step in their business in 2022, launching their own brokerage, Just Listed SoCal with Side. Misty and Stephen continue to run Cochren Realty Team, but now, their agents have multiple options in terms of business structure. Those who outgrow the team structure have the choice to remain with Misty and Stephen, growing an individual business or starting a team of their own under the Just Listed SoCal brand.

"We got to a point where agents were hitting a ceiling and didn't want to be on a team forever," Misty explains. "Some wanted to be on their own, and it was a bummer that we may lose those people. Getting the brokerage allows us to continue to be their role models and guide them but allow them to be out there on their own, building their own brands, too."

Misty and Stephen bring a wealth of experience to their roles as team leaders. Misty started her real estate career in property management at 17 years old. After over 20 years in property management, she transitioned to selling single-family homes in 2013.

Stephen joined his wife the following year. His professional background as a football coach has helped him as a leader in real estate.

"I enjoy the team dynamic here with agents, encouraging them to do their best. Coaching younger agents, I've pulled some of that coaching experience over and poured it into our agents here," he explains.

At Just Listed SoCal, Misty and Stephen are building a culture of collaboration, camaraderie, and authenticity. They describe the environment as "family-like." The group often eats lunch together, masterminds new ideas, and shares lessons learned.

"We learn a lot from them, too," Misty says. "We're always learning. I don't feel we know more than them. We learn in both directions."

Misty and Stephen have taken their time adding agents during their first year with Just Listed SoCal, but they have big goals for the future. They plan to open five more office locations within the next five years. Misty and Stephen also recently launched an escrow company alongside a few partners, The Local Escrow, giving them another avenue to serve clients through real estate.

While real estate is a huge part of Misty and Stephen's life, their family is their top priority. They have four sons, Austin (22), Evan (19), Brady (12), and Landon (4). Austin and Evan are both agents on the Cochren Realty Team.

“Getting the brokerage allows us to continue to be their role models and guide them but allow them to be out there on their own, building their own brands, too.

“

I enjoy the team dynamic here with agents, encouraging them to do their best. Coaching younger agents, I've pulled some of that coaching experience over and poured it into our agents here.



"Considering the age gaps, we are a tight-knit family. We're all about togetherness. We vacation together. Football and sports are a huge part of our lives," Stephen says. "It's neat to see the dynamics of our family. Outside looking in, you see a big age gap, but all four seem like the best of friends. It's super cool. I feel they lead with their hearts, and that's what's so

special about them. They are heart-focused and want the family to thrive as much as possible."

One of Misty and Stephen's top goals is to build a business their sons can take over. After growing up without much financial abundance, Misty and Stephen are changing the future for their family.

"I want to make sure my kids know their parents are hard workers, genuine, that they have everything possible that we didn't have," Misty says, emotions rising. "We want them to have love and respect for everyone, and they have such big hearts."



“

I want to make sure my kids know their parents are hard workers, genuine, that they have everything possible that we didn't have.

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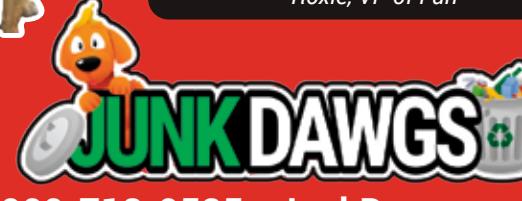
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Danny Forster was still a young boy when his grandfather, Ray, founded A Better Home Inspection in 1988. Over thirty years later, Danny is at the helm of the company, leading the company into the future with modern innovation and a commitment to the values his grandfather founded the company upon.

"My grandfather and I were best friends," Danny reflects. "I was involved in the business with him from the time I was just six years old, hanging out on jobs on the weekends. From there, my involvement grew."

As the years passed, Danny was given more responsibility. By eight years old, he was tasked with testing outlets during inspections. By the time he was a young teen, he was doing entire portions of the home inspection on his own.

"It got to a point where I'd do the inside of a house, and my grandfather would do the outside of the house. I remember one day when I was 16, I showed up at his house, and he wasn't feeling well, so he sent me out to do the inspection we had scheduled. I doubted myself,

but he knew I could do it," Danny reflects. "When I came back, he seemed like he was feeling fine... and he admitted he wasn't sick. He knew I was ready."

Danny soon became the third generation Forster to officially join the company, joining his mom, Chris, and grandfather. As an employee, he had the chance to see the inner workings of the family business. Danny's grandfather and mom taught him how impactful their role in real estate transactions is, how to serve clients, and how to communicate well.

In 2010, Danny became a part-owner at A Better Home Inspections, working alongside his grandfather until he passed in 2018. Danny learned a great deal from his grandfather during these years, but he also had ideas of his own on how to improve the company. Once he became the sole owner, things started to really take off.

"Those eight years were fantastic, but the business changed drastically when I took over completely. The health of the company improved, and I started bringing my youth into the company — changing software, implementing new systems, bringing on new services like sewer scopes, mold inspections, pool/spa inspections, and irrigation inspections," Danny reflects. "That really changed the experience our customers were getting from us, and I began truly developing my attributes as an owner."

“

So how do we make people's lives better for the two to three hours we are with them? Are they going to remember the inspection? Maybe. But they will definitely remember the experience. **We want to be remembered for changing people's lives.**



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Today, A Better Home Inspection is a team of six inspectors and a strong leadership team. They do inspections seven years a week, offer 24-hour scheduling, and provide on-site reports. Under Danny's leadership, customer service has taken a front seat.

“The interesting side of the business is who we are and what we stand for. Our values are big in our world,” Danny says. “We use an acronym for our values: ABHI, which also stands for A Better Home Inspection. Always deliver a ‘wow’ experience. Build a positive team and family spirit. Humility, community, and empathy. And finally, Integrity. Know and do what is right.”

If there's one thing Danny wants people to know, it's how much he cares about his clients and community. A Better Home Inspection gives back to organizations like The Semper Fi & America's Fund, a nonprofit that serves wounded veterans. The team is continually finding ways to give their clients and partners a best-in-class home inspection experience.

“What matters to me is how do I change the lives of the people around me?” Danny explains. “You only get one life, and you have to live it to the fullest. So how do we make people's lives better for the two to three hours we are with them? Are they going to remember the inspection? Maybe. But they will definitely remember the experience. We want to be remembered for changing people's lives.”

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The story of how ABHI started being called ‘The Avocado Guys’ begins with Danny’s grandfather. Be sure to ask him about it the next time you see him!



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Margery Velasquez

Written by Zachary Cohen Photography by Marissa McCutchan

By 2014, Margery Velasquez was ready for a career change. She had been working in customer service at Loma Linda University Medical Center for the previous 16 years, and despite her love for the work, she recognized it was time to move on.

"A lot of my coworkers at the time were going to school to be nurses, doctors, and therapists. I got to a point where I thought, 'What do I really want to do?' I really didn't know. That was my high school job, and I worked there for 16 years. It was time for something new."

As Margery racked her brain for a career that would fulfill her, one option rose to the surface: real estate sales.

"Real estate wasn't something I always wanted to do, but as I considered my

options, I realized I had the experience to make it work," Margery reflects. "It took us years to find the right house, and that sparked an interest in real estate. I thought, 'What if I sell real estate?' It just clicked."

Margery's first taste of real estate came through her journey when buying a home. She and her husband set out to purchase a home soon after the recession. Cash buyers flooded the market, making it difficult for Margery and her husband to get their VA loan-supported offer accepted.

Margery cycled through four REALTORS® before finding someone who could help her find the home of her dreams. Some of those agents were focused more on their own paychecks than Margery's needs. Others wanted to push her to buy in areas she wasn't interested in. After three failed attempts, Margery and her husband took a breather, setting aside their hopes of buying a home as they searched for a REALTOR® who could provide the guidance they needed.

“ I never want to be pushy. I don't want to force or push people to do things they don't want to do or into a city they don't want to go to. I want to be genuine.

“

I believe in putting people's needs first, and people notice that. I believe clients work with me because I'm patient. I'm not pushy. I'm not salesy. I always focus on what their needs are.

Finally, Margery found a REALTOR who offered what she desired. This agent was patient, genuine, and not pushy. She cared about Margery's needs and, ultimately, helped her find her family a house.

Margery had a deep understanding of the impact an agent can make on the lives of families. She had first-hand experience with the pain of struggling to find a home. She also had a positive experience to draw on; the REALTOR® who finally listened to her desires made a profound positive impact in her life.

So as Margery began her real estate career in 2014, she set out to be like her last REALTOR® — kind, patient, and caring.

“I never want to be pushy. I don't want to force or push people to do things they don't want to do or into a city they don't want to go to. I want to be genuine,” Margery says.

Over the past nine years, Margery has stood by her commitment to integrity, allowing her to become one of the area's top agents.”I put my buyers and sellers first. They are my priority. Most of my business is referral business now, and that reassures me that I'm doing the job right. I believe in putting people's needs first, and people notice that,” Margery explains.”I believe clients work with me because I'm patient. I'm not pushy. I'm not salesy. I always focus on what their needs are.”

Margery recently obtained her broker's license. While she has dreams of one day opening an independent agency, for now, she's happy where she is. Keller Williams offers her the support and camaraderie she seeks, allowing her to grow as an agent and a human being. Margery is leaving it up to God to determine where her career goes next.

“Most importantly, I want people to know that I am a very caring person. I put God first, and I put my clients' needs first. I treat all people with respect. And I think that means a lot, especially in the times we are living in right now.”



Nick Cardenas

Written by **Zachary Cohen**
Photography by **Marissa McCutchan**

Nick Cardenas has been surrounded by the real estate business for as long as he can remember. His uncle has owned Century 21 King for the past 15 years, and his aunt is also a REALTOR®. Despite Nick's clear affinity for entrepreneurship and business, he didn't take an interest in real estate until his mid-twenties.

Nick's initial draw to real estate was financial, but as he stepped deeper into his real estate career, he realized that the business was about much more than making a quick buck. He saw an opportunity to better the lives of his clients, his family, and himself.

"When I first went full-time, I had a baby on the way and had just bought my first house. Being able to be at every one of my wife's appointments for the baby, that right there, was an eye-opener on what the future could hold. If I were still at my other job — three rotating shifts, set schedule, vacation days were hard to get — that just wouldn't be possible. Then suddenly, I had this flexibility and time freedom."

Nick has been thriving in real estate for over a decade, but his path to success hasn't been without struggle. Early in his career, he had a young child, had recently bought a house, and had quit his full-time job. The pressure was high to succeed, and there were real financial struggles. During this time of hardship, his wife and his faith were his guiding lights.

"I've always been the type to go out and sell things. I was in eighth-grade selling pop rocks on the bus for lunch money. But it just didn't click for me that real estate could be my career until later," Nick reflects.

When the real estate market began to recover from the recession in 2011, Nick watched friends and family members find success in the business. At the time, he was working as a crane operator for California Steel and was newly married. The opportunity to earn more and provide for his family suddenly became enticing.

"I had that shiny penny syndrome. I thought, 'Maybe it's my time,'" Nick continues. "So in 2011, I finally decided to give it a shot. I love selling things, working for myself, and being my own boss."

“I've always been the type to go out and sell things. I was in eighth-grade selling pop rocks on the bus for lunch money. But it just didn't click for me that real estate could be my career until later.”

Fast forward to the present, and Nick is thriving with Century 21 King. He closed 23 transactions for \$17 million in 2022. Perhaps even more impressively, he's done it while achieving true work/life balance.

Most days, Nick drops his daughter off at school and is in the office by 8:00 am. He closes his computer to pick her up again at 2:30, which is generally the end of his work day. He does occasional client appointments after 3:00 pm, but only when necessary.

Nick's commitment to his family is strong, but his achievement of balance has been a learning process. Early in his career, he spent many evenings grinding away at work, and then, he had a realization: he was missing some of the most exciting years of his two kids' lives.

"So I focus on them now," he explains. "If my business slacks a little bit, I'm okay with that right now. I have the rest of my life to work on my business, but my kids won't be young forever. I don't let my business control my life, but let my life control my business."



"When I focused so hard on my business, I realized the grind wasn't worth the stress of it all. When I started to let go and trust and lean into faith and let God take control... things really started working."

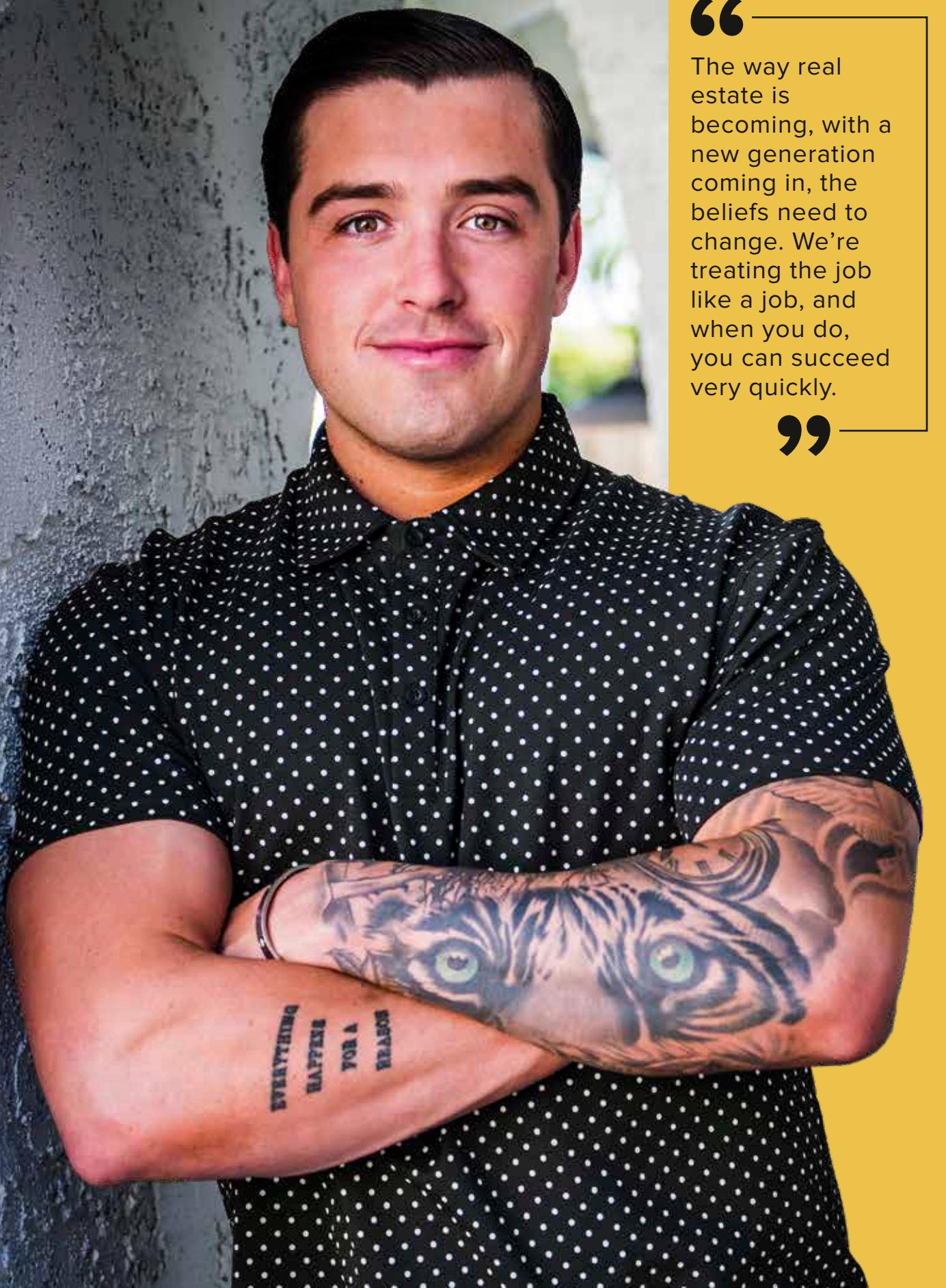
Nick and his wife, Daleena, have three children — two on Earth and one in Heaven. Aubriella is now ten, and Jameson is four. Nick and his family enjoy traveling, camping with their RV, and watching sports.

"Honestly, I don't want to be known for what I do for work. I want to be known as a great husband and father. That's my focus — being here for my family no matter what."



If my business slacks a little bit, I'm okay with that right now. I have the rest of my life to work on my business, but my kids won't be young forever. I don't let my business control my life, but let my life control my business.





“

The way real estate is becoming, with a new generation coming in, the beliefs need to change. We're treating the job like a job, and when you do, you can succeed very quickly.

”

Fiorese

Real estate is in Jake Fiorese's blood. Growing up, he witnessed his father thrive in the industry, and Jake was drawn to the relationship side of the business in particular. Watching his dad interact with clients — and make a genuine impact in their lives — inspired him to follow a similar professional path.

“My dad even told me that I'd one day be a great real estate agent when I grew up,” Jake reflects. “I took that to heart.”

Before entering the real estate business, Jake spent three years in phone sales. While that didn't end up being his long-term calling, it was an important steppingstone on the path to eventual real estate success. Jake has taken his relational attitude into real estate, allowing him to hit the ground running and achieve success quicker than most.

“This business is just building relationships, and I love that,” he says with a smile.

Jake officially began his real estate career in April 2021, joining good friends Dillon Hall and Nick Anselmo at Abundance Real Estate. The success of his two long-time friends finally convinced him to take a leap of faith and enter the business he's always known and loved.

Rather than cold calling or door knocking, Jake built his business the old-fashioned way — developing relationships with his boots on the ground, talking to friends and family members about what he does while not making every conversation sales-focused.

“I love having an impact on newer agents, showing them what is actually possible,” Jake offers. “When I got into the business, people said, ‘Save for six months or save for twelve months,’ and I personally don't agree. I feel that hard work can set you aside, and that's not the perspective you should have going into something new. As long as you outwork the people around you, you will succeed. The way real estate is becoming, with a new generation coming in, the beliefs need to change. We're treating the job like a job, and when you do, you can succeed very quickly.”

Jake's sphere of influence and his willingness to connect with those around him have been his keys to success. His strategy is to become the most well-known REALTOR® among those he's already connected to, treat everyone like a best friend, and create relationships that look more like family connections than business associations.

“Those are free leads, people that know and trust you. Be a knowledgeable resource. Post content. Go to open houses. Network with other agents. I talk to everybody that I see, and that really helps my business.”

Another key to Jake's success has been his morning routine, which begins with a trip to the gym. His favorite saying is, unsurprisingly, "Win the morning, win the day."

As Jake heads into his third year in the business, he's excited for what's to come. Although the market is shifting, he's not concerned. He's keeping his

head down, his focus sharp, and his attention on the goal in mind.

"I'm not worried for when times get tough in real estate, and I'm even excited to put myself to the test. The people I'm surrounded by will figure it out. I'm surrounded by good people, and we've brainstormed [about the changing market] as a brokerage."

Things can get rough in the real estate market, but I believe there is always opportunity, and we will figure it out.

"So what does the future hold? It's hard to say, but one thing I know. I'm so happy with where I am at. I want to be known as a person that leads with a positive impact. I'm driven to consistently serve."

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

Jake and his fiancé, Riley, have a one-year-old daughter, Prestin. Her presence has been a big inspiration for his success in real estate.



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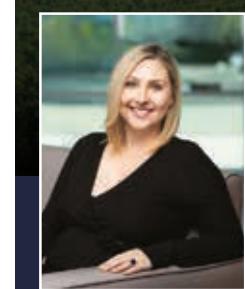
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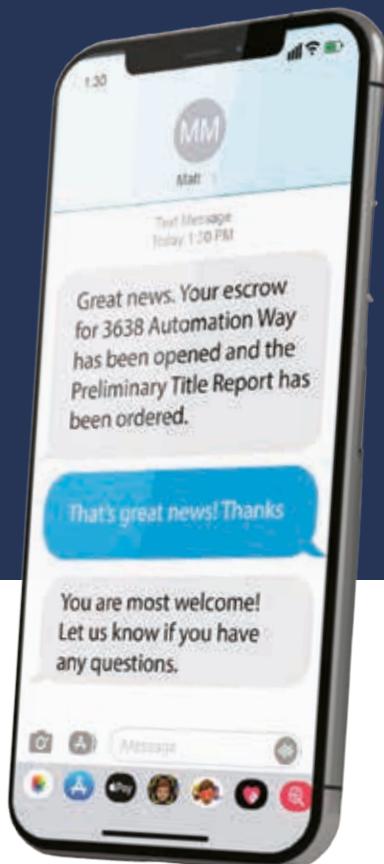


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Tania Gonzalez
Sr. Account Executive
Tania@NewVentureEscrow.com

619.807.0711

Courtney Louis
Vice President of Sales
Courtney@NewVentureEscrow.com
858.229.9035



For more information please
visit our website:
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