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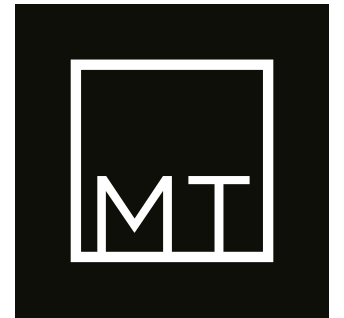
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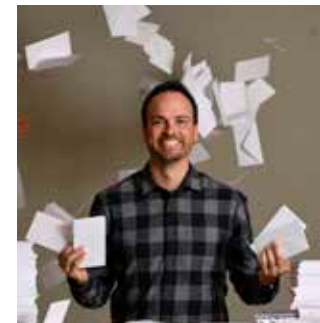
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# MEET THE MEMPHIS REAL PRODUCERS TEAM



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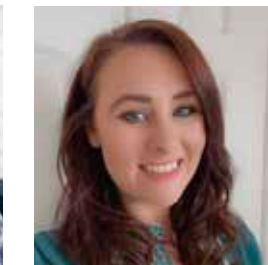
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# DEAR READERS,

Welcome to our latest edition, sharing the stories of the Real Producers of the greater Memphis area! As we dive into this vibrant market, we want to take a moment to celebrate the power of strong, trusted partnerships that fuel its growth and create a sense of camaraderie among professionals.

The real estate industry thrives on collaboration, and at the heart of this collaboration lie the invaluable relationships built with partners who share a common vision and passion. Whether it's agents, brokers, developers, or service providers, these partnerships are the lifeblood of our industry, infusing it with energy, innovation, and, of course, a dash of fun!

Why are these partnerships so crucial, you ask? Well, think of them as the secret ingredient that elevates a real estate venture from good to extraordinary. In an ever-evolving landscape, where trends shift faster than a New York minute, it's these strong bonds that help navigate the complexities and seize opportunities that lie in wait.

Trusted partnerships provide a solid foundation for growth, allowing individuals and companies to leverage each other's strengths and expertise. By pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and collaborating on projects, partners create a synergy that propels them toward success. Together, they become a force to be reckoned with, capable of achieving feats that would be unimaginable alone.

Moreover, these partnerships cultivate a sense of trust and reliability, traits that are highly valued in an industry where reputation is everything. When clients see a group of professionals working seamlessly together, they gain confidence in their ability to deliver exceptional results. Trust becomes the currency that fuels referrals, opens doors to new opportunities, and paves the way for long-term success.

But it's not all business and serious matters. Building strong partnerships in real estate is also about fostering a sense of community and enjoying the journey together. From networking events and industry conferences to team-building activities and celebrations, these relationships create a lively atmosphere that makes the real estate world so exciting.

So, let's raise a glass to the power of collaboration, to the bonds that transform colleagues into friends, and competitors into allies. Let's celebrate the shared victories, the late-night brainstorming sessions, and the triumphs that come from working hand in hand.

Join us on this journey as we seek to CONNECT, ELEVATE and INSPIRE our local real estate community. Together, let's unlock the possibilities, set new standards, and continue to build a future that is vibrant, prosperous, and filled with endless opportunities.

Happy reading!

Jeff White, Owner/Publisher




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# Meet Home Surety Title & Escrow

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**“Real estate is the stuff of dreams, and there’s nothing more satisfying than helping people unlock that dream.”**

Jeff McEvoy, founding partner of Home Surety Title and Escrow, is a dreamer. Twenty-five years ago, his dream to start his own real estate law practice planted the seed of what we now know as our Real Producers partner, “Home Surety.” With locations in Memphis, Tennessee; Southaven, Mississippi; and Jackson, Tennessee, Home Surety’s employees and six attorneys unlock dreams every day. Their team even includes several Spanish-speaking employees who are able to take Spanish-speaking clients and agents from contract to close. “It’s my dream to be a superhero, helping people unlock their dreams. I’ve done that for my family, my staff, and my community for my entire career.”

As a child growing up in Chicago, Illinois, McEvoy idolized superheroes. “Just when you believe all hope is lost, that you’ll have to accept your fate, in swoops Superman, Spiderman, or my personal favorite, Captain America to save you and ultimately change your life by restoring your hope that there is goodness in this world.”

McEvoy’s family moved to Memphis when he was 12, and though he still ‘Flies the W,’ when the Cubs win, Memphis

became near and dear to his passion for helping people achieve homeownership. After graduating from CBHS, McEvoy earned his degree in political science at the University of Tennessee where he met his wife, Emily. Emily wears many hats in her role with Home Surety, but essentially serves as the team’s ‘den mother.’ Jeff and Emily married in 1986 and since Jeff couldn’t be a professional superhero, he did the next best thing, attended Cumberland School of Law at Samford University.

Though his initial legal practice varied in scope, he knew practicing real estate was his ultimate calling, and after working for other attorneys, opened Home Surety in 2005. “When you’ve seen the market ups, downs, changes, crashes and surprises I have seen over my thirty-plus years of experience, you can better protect your clients. I’ve lived it, and that experience matters when our clients’ largest asset depends on it.”

Home Surety’s legal expertise and experience mean that they are able to issue-spot like no other and recognize the ultimate need to adapt in the market. That is why they are continuously upgrading their technology and security to keep up with market fraud schemes and increase client comfort and efficiency.



“Captain Surety is our new artificial intelligence ‘superhero’ who can answer questions about your file via text message any time of day or night in over 53 languages.” Home Surety is able to remotely accept IDs and earnest money through an app, so no more driving checks across town. They work with a third party to ensure wires and payoffs up to one million dollars. Home Surety became SOC-2 certified after the passage of Dodd-Frank, and its procedures remain at the forefront of wire and cyber security.

“I adore working at Home Surety because my personal values are aligned with everything that’s most important to Jeff and Emily. We ‘make the ball bounce higher,’ and strive to ‘enjoy the journey’ while ‘being the superhero’ to our clients, agents, lenders, and team. Those phrases are just a few of the values we hold dear at Home Surety” Stacy Montegut, Home Surety’s ‘superhero’ of Business Development says. Montegut works with Home Surety’s Tennessee agents to make sure their experience at Home Surety is absolutely stellar. “We have a wonderful team at Home Surety. Our experience makes it easy to talk to agents and lenders about why Home Surety should be their preferred closing attorney.”

Jessica Crawford, Director of Business Development in Southaven, MS says, “We add a different value in the Mississippi market by making our attorneys available to agents who need legal expertise outside of the normal 9-5.” As a past educator herself, Crawford is passionate about the education Home Surety offers to agents which ultimately further protects buyers and sellers.

McEvoy and his team are very passionate about protecting and promoting the real estate industry. MAAR awarded McEvoy the 2019 Affiliate of the Year, and he currently serves on the MAAR governmental affairs committee. The Tennessee Mortgage Bankers Association also recognized him in 2022 for his steadfast dedication to their organization. McEvoy is currently TNMBA legislative co-chairman. Nationally, he is the Chairman of ALTA’s Title Industry Political Action Committee. “The national recognition and awards are an honor, of course, but it’s my ‘dash’ that matters,” McEvoy says.

“There’s a poem about trying to figure out what to do with the dash between when you were born and your death. It’s not about numbers and volume. It’s really about if you can make a difference. Will I be looked upon one day as someone who helped do



something good? I want to make sure that I am a superhero to everyone. I love working with people and making this industry better. That’s all part of my dash.” McEvoy is passionate about helping everyone achieve the dream of homeownership which led to his involvement with a national pilot, Convergence Memphis, a local non-profit connecting lenders, agents, investors, builders, and community and religious leaders with potential buyers who thought homeownership was otherwise impossible.

“We are in the spotlight. There are many grants and programs that could assist in homeownership. Homeownership gives people hope and builds generational well-being. If the entire industry works together, we can demonstrate to the nation how to build healthy communities.”

McEvoy is the sort of person that leaves a lasting impression on those he meets, as are Stacy Montegut, Jessica Crawford, and the other members of Home Surety Title & Escrow, LLC. Their emphasis on support, education, empowerment, and empathy makes them an excellent title company to work with and partner to have. McEvoy says, “Everyone in the real estate transaction has a dream no matter the size of the deal: the buyer, the seller, the agent, the lender, my staff and the community. Really good stuff to facilitate those dreams!”



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▶▶ how does memphis real producers work?

# CONNECTING. ELEVATING. INSPIRING.

For those who may be new to *Real Producers*, or if you are just curious, here are some quick facts about *Real Producers*:

**THE HEARTBEAT:** We seek to elevate the culture of our local real estate community by **INSPIRING** us to **KNOW ONE ANOTHER BETTER**, creating stronger **CONNECTIONS**, more trusted relationships, and more repeat business for everyone involved.

**DISTRIBUTION:** This magazine is sent free of charge to the top 500 agents in the greater Memphis area based on MLS productivity. Within this area, there are over 5,000 active agents, but everyone who receives this publication is part of an elite group. You are remarkable. Just to be in this group is truly a badge of honor!

**CONTENT:** This is all about you, the Memphis real estate community. We do personal and unique stories on members of this community, giving you a platform to inspire others. Our goal is to go beyond the numbers and take a deep dive into the personal side of the industry, to inspire us to know one another better. It costs absolutely nothing for a real estate agent to be featured in the publication.

But to be featured, an agent must be nominated by a peer or leader in the Memphis real estate community. We are always taking nominations and encourage you to nominate individuals who are making a huge impact on our local real estate market.

**OUR PARTNERS:** Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the publication is a part of this community. They will have an ad in every issue, attend our events and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred partner you see in this publication. We do not meet with businesses until they are vetted by one of the agents in our community and receive a "stamp of approval." If you are looking to add to your arsenal of incredible vendors, look no further.

**CONNECTIONS:** We love connecting REALTORS® and BUSINESSES in a variety of creative ways. If you ever would like a personal introduction, we would love to arrange it.

**EVENTS:** Along with the monthly publication, we host various social networking events where top agents, along with our top preferred partners, get together at reputable local venues to rub elbows, mastermind, have a good time and strengthen our greater Memphis community. We communicate information about the events through the publication, emails and social media.

**CONTRIBUTION:** If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® for certain features, know of top-notch affiliate partners who should be a part of our community or would simply like to network, please email me at any time. I look forward to hearing from all of you!



**Jeff White**  
Owner/Publisher  
*Memphis Real Producers*  
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MEET  
*Erin*

BAKER



▶▶ rising star

By Christina See  
Photos by Mike Berry

## *A Light All Her Own*

**Meet Erin Baker – A bright, young, energetic REALTOR® and this month’s Rising Star! 31-year-old Erin was born and raised in Memphis, TN, and has lived in several areas of the Mid-South: Bartlett, Olive Branch, Germantown, by the University of Memphis, East Memphis and Collierville. Erin can knowledgeably guide her clients toward the home of their dreams anywhere in the county.**

She did not attend college after graduating from Germantown High School in 2009. She jokingly says she went to Huey’s University because she waited tables there for seven years after high school. In 2018, she married Brandon Baker, who is a Memphis Police Officer and a Marine Corps veteran.

As she recounts, “I got into real estate on a leap of faith. I have always been interested in sales because my dad has been in sales his entire life. I just didn’t know what I wanted to do and where to start. I had a dear friend in real estate, and she talked me into giving it a shot over margaritas. The next thing I knew, I was working on getting my real estate license.”

“I was licensed in 2016 and hit the ground running selling new construction for Grant & Company Builders Realtors. I just recently made the transition into the “traditional” real estate world at Coldwell Banker Collins-Maury, Collierville, where I have the opportunity to stay in new construction where my passion is, while also working in resale.”

Erin has been a member of the MMDC for four years, and after this year, she will officially be a Lifetime Member. Her career volume is over \$88,000,000 in sales and over \$23,000,000 for 2022.

She looks up to her father and older sister. Her dad, Lee Feil, has always been in sales. According to Erin, “My dad has always worked hard for everything he has. He is so humble and has a heart of gold. My sister, Mary Katherine, is the hardest worker I know. She works multiple jobs, one of which is her own business while taking care of her 3 children. My sister also has a heart of gold. They have both made a living staying true to who they are, and I hope I emulate their strong work ethic.”

Erin’s first real estate love is, and continues to be, new construction. She is passionate about constantly learning. She wants to remain a sponge, and never stop learning



something new. She enjoys every aspect of this business and swears she learns something new every day. Erin wants to educate herself to serve her community to the best of her abilities. She also wants to make sure she can touch the lives of everyone she works with. “The most rewarding part of this business for me is helping make the dreams of another come true. I believe everyone deserves a safe place to call home.”

When she’s not doing real estate, Erin is a fitness enthusiast, and loves working out! She takes classes at Orange Theory when she can, or she hits the gym when she can’t. She strives to always do and be better. She says exercise keeps her mental health in check. Fun Fact: Erin used to train and compete in bodybuilding competitions. Nowadays, she enjoys her wine and pizza!

She also loves spending time with her family, and providing for her daughters is very special to her. They are the beat of her heart. Her husband, Brandon, loves to work out, fish, ride his side-by-side, watch sports, and spend time with his three favorite girls. Daughter Madison is their sassy “threenager” and the boss of everyone! She loves her GammaPops (grandparents), wearing a princess dress every day, playing, watching Disney movies, and eating pink Starbursts. Baby Lillian (LilyBeans), who turns one in July, is the world’s happiest baby! She laughs all day, is working hard at crawling, and will be walking in no time! Erin is sure she will be the mischievous one!

Being present and involved in their lives is very important to Erin, and working in real estate provides that flexibility.



“

I dream that one day my husband and I will be able to retire and travel the world together. My business in real estate will allow that dream to come true.

”



“Watching them learn, grow, and experience life together is so special to me.” Erin also loves quality time with her husband. “We try to do date nights as much as possible. We also love going to sporting events together. Both born and raised in Memphis, we love all teams Memphis and Tennessee, except the Vols, no orange over here! We love the Memphis Grizzlies, Memphis Tigers, Tennessee Titans, and Nashville Predators!”

“I dream that one day my husband and I will be able to retire and travel the world together. My business in real estate will allow that dream to come true. I enjoy real estate so much, I don’t believe I will ever truly retire. Even if my husband and I are traveling in an RV retired one day, I will still have my MacBook in my lap, and my phone in hand.”

Erin loves to have a good time and believes life should be fun. “I try to make life fun for everyone around me. I enjoy getting to know people from all walks of life. I have a true appreciation for everyone, who they are, and how they came to be. I try to make the real estate process fun and enjoyable for my clients as well. But I also wear my heart on my sleeve. I truly care about people. I care more about others than I do myself, sometimes to a fault. I hope that I make a positive impact on everyone I meet, even if it is small.”

Erin’s advice to new rising stars is to stay true to yourself in your business.” Let your personality shine bright like a diamond! Never deflate yourself for anyone! Don’t let the words and thoughts of others discourage you. If you struggle with insecurities or negative inner thoughts like I have, STOP IT and be kind to yourself! Work hard and be consistent!”

We at Real Producers are confident that this Rising Star will remain a beautiful, bright shining star for years to come.

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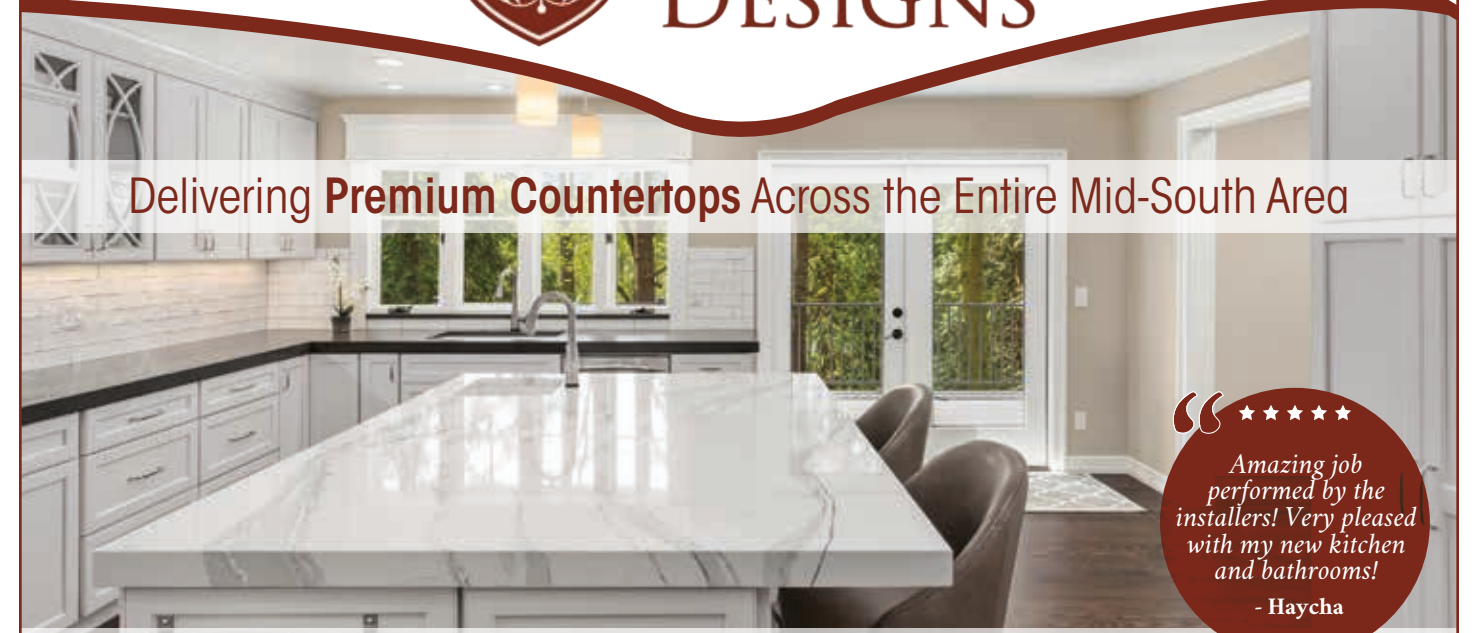
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meet ▶ partner spotlight

# MARK LOUDERBACK

**FIRST COMMAND FINANCIAL SERVICES**

In the bustling world of real estate, it's not just about buying and selling properties—it's about understanding people's dreams and aspirations. Meet Mark QL Louderback, a charismatic and experienced financial advisor who brings his passion for making a difference to the real estate industry. With a diverse background and a genuine desire to help others, Mark is a

top-notch professional whose expertise extends beyond the realm of finances. Join us as we dive into Mark's journey and discover why he's an invaluable asset to his clients and colleagues alike.

**From Seminary to Financial Advisor:** Mark's career path has been anything but conventional. After graduating from

the University of Virginia with a degree in History, he embarked on a journey to serve God. Mark attended Seminary and dedicated himself to being a Lutheran pastor, serving communities in Statesboro, GA; Springdale, AR; and Arlington, TN. However, life took an unexpected turn when his congregation couldn't provide the necessary support.

Undeterred by the change, Mark shifted gears and embraced the role of a financial advisor. Starting with Edward Jones, he later transitioned to Ameriprise Financial before finding his place at First Command, where he currently thrives. With a focus on assisting active and retired military personnel, Mark's dedication to serving those who serve is evident in his commitment to his civilian clients as well.

**A Dynamic Team:**

Mark doesn't work alone; he has a remarkable team that supports him every step of the way. Collaborating with Austin Beard, a fellow advisor hailing from Mississippi with a background in the Army, they create a synergistic partnership that enhances their clients' experience. Additionally, Shamia Walker, the experienced assistant, plays

a vital role in the office's seamless operations, demonstrating her invaluable contribution behind the scenes.

**Passion for Coaching and Helping Others:**

When asked about his passion for his business, Mark's response was clear: coaching people to achieve their goals. Recognizing that everyone has unique dreams and aspirations, he believes that helping them navigate the financial landscape is an essential part of making those dreams a reality. Mark's clients appreciate his sincere approach, as he focuses on understanding their needs and providing personalized guidance.

**The Rewarding Side of Business:**

For Mark, the most rewarding aspect of his business is witnessing the

impact he has on his client's lives. Rather than pushing for sales, he takes the time to listen and ask thoughtful questions. It's this genuine approach that often surprises his clients, who find in him not just a financial advisor, but also a trusted partner.

**Real Estate Professionals and Financial Preparedness:**

Understanding the entrepreneurial nature of real estate professionals, Mark acknowledges the daily hustle they face to secure new sales and provide for their families. As busy as they are, he highlights the importance of financial preparedness. Mark emphasizes that while it's crucial to make the most of prosperous times, saving and planning for the future is equally essential to weather any downturns.



**Making a Difference Beyond Business:**

Outside of his career, Mark is actively involved in his church and supports organizations like HopeWorks, which helps former prisoners reintegrate into society. Giving people a second chance is a cause close to his heart. When he's not working or involved in charitable endeavors, Mark enjoys playing chess, running a chess club for kids, and participating in tournaments with the Memphis Chess Club.

**Success Defined:**

To Mark, success lies in the ability to help others achieve their dreams. It's not about where you start or finish in life, but the impact you have on the lives of those you meet along the way. This philosophy shapes his approach to both his personal and professional life, ensuring that he leaves a positive and lasting impression on everyone he encounters.

**A Genuine Expert and Supporter:**

In the realm of real estate, Mark Louderback stands out as a genuine expert and supporter. He wants to be remembered as someone who people genuinely enjoyed being around—an individual who exudes authenticity, expertise, and a strong desire to help others. With his bow ties adding a touch of charm, Mark brings a unique blend of professionalism and approachability to his interactions.

Looking to the future, Mark recognizes the importance of financial stability for real estate professionals. He advises them to take their finances seriously and stresses the significance of having a good financial advisor by their side. Retirement planning is a crucial aspect that should not be overlooked, as it provides the foundation for a secure future.

Mark's top tip, "Givers gain," encapsulates his approach to life and business. He believes in the power of giving and the ripple effect it creates. By going above and beyond for his clients, Mark has built a reputation as a trusted advisor who genuinely cares about their well-being.

Beyond the achievements and accolades, Mark cherishes his family. He takes pride in his daughters' accomplishments—the oldest working in a lab in Boston with a specialized focus on mRNA, and the younger one excelling as a stage manager in theater. He adores his stepson, who shares his love for jazz, and his stepdaughter, who impresses him



with her creative prowess in Minecraft. Mark's parents have been his unwavering support system, and he cherishes the memories of his late mother, who remains dearly missed.

The bottom line, Mark Louderback is not your ordinary financial advisor. His journey from ministry to finance is a testament to his resilience and adaptability. With a passion for coaching and helping others achieve their goals, Mark has found his calling in making a difference in people's lives. His commitment to serving his clients and the wider community is inspiring, and his expertise in financial matters is invaluable.

So, if you're a real estate professional seeking financial guidance and a partner who genuinely cares about your success, Mark Louderback is the go-to person. With his expertise, dedication, and warm personality, he will help you navigate the financial landscape and work toward securing your future. Remember, you only get one shot at retirement, so let Mark and his team at First Command help you make the most of it.

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# Meet *Lisa C.* Thomas

▶▶ standout realtor®

By Christina See  
Photos by Elizabeth Looney Photography



**YOUR  
AGENT  
FOR  
LIFE**

This month's Standout REALTOR® is Lisa C. Thomas, Broker with Best Real Estate Company. Lisa was born and raised in Arlington, TN, and married her high school sweetheart, Kelvyn Thomas in 1988. Lisa received a degree in Paralegal Studies from the University of Memphis in 2003 and had plans to go to law school.

In 2006, they started planning for Kelvyn to retire and decided to buy a home in their home state of TN. Lisa's cousin, the late Lynette Benjamin, was already a Tennessee REALTOR®, and Lisa called her daily with homes she wanted to see. Lynette worked full-time and could not constantly show all the homes Lisa wanted to see. Lynette told her "You seem to be really good at finding homes, have you thought about getting your real estate license?" That was her way of saying Lisa was getting on her nerves (ha!) Eventually, Lynette retired her license and years later, Lisa became Lynette's REALTOR®.

The plans for law school were deferred when Lisa got her real estate license in 2006. She worked at the brokerage of the owner of the real estate school she attended, Real Estate Mart. She transferred to First National Realty around 2008. That name changed to Realty One Group and now it is Best Real Estate Company. She is still there because for Lisa, "If it's not broken, don't fix it!"

Lisa is licensed in Tennessee and Mississippi, where she works as a residential and commercial agent. Her awards include C2ex, Multi-Million Dollar Club (MMDC) Lifetime Award, National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) Multi-Million Dollar Award for multiple years, and Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors® (NWMAR) Million Dollar Award. She has a career volume of over \$64 million and a little over \$9 million last year.

When Lisa was in real estate school, a man that the school's owner said was his most successful student spoke to their class. They ended up talking afterward, he showed her around the city where he owned and managed over 600 homes, and they became great friends. Together, they went



“ I cannot see myself doing anything but Real Estate. I am still having fun and changing lives for the better. ”





to Real Estate seminars and classes all over the US. He taught her so much, and Lisa will always consider him her mentor and friend.

Lisa's passion is helping as many people as possible realize that homeownership is attainable. She says, "It's very rewarding when clients call me and are ready to make a real estate transaction." She's been in the business long enough to see her clients' children grow up and call her when they're ready to buy a home. She marvels at the 100's of reviews where clients over the years have shared their stories of buying or selling a home with her. Lisa says, "I cannot see myself doing anything but Real Estate. I am still having fun and changing lives for the better"

Talking about her family, Lisa says, "My amazing husband of 35 years, Kelvyn Thomas, served in The US Air Force for 24 years and was awarded many medals and distinguished honors. He retired at the age of 46 in 2012. He wanted people to enjoy 'great' BBQ, so we opened Up Town BBQ and Fish in Covington, TN in 2015."

Lisa's youngest daughter, Alexis Thomas, graduated from Loyola University New Orleans, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology. She has decided to join both family businesses and is now the COO of Up Town BBQ and Fish and studying for the real estate exam.



Lisa says, "Alexis is so smart and intelligent; she was invited to attend a special program at Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth while in elementary school. Her free spirit and bubbly personality afford her many opportunities in all walks of life. Alexis and I enjoy traveling, attending basketball games and nail spas together."

"The hardest thing in my life," says Lisa, "was the loss of my oldest daughter, Porscha Thomas, at the age of 27 in 2018. It was 3 days before her 28th birthday. Losing a child is something I never thought would happen to me. My husband and I had plans for our daughters to finish school, work in their career fields, marry a man that loved and adored them, give us beautiful grandkids that we could spoil rotten and as we got older, they would be the ones to take care of us. God had another plan and our angel was His angel and He wanted her back with Him."

"She had obtained both a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health and Human Services and a Master of Science Degree in Child and Family Studies from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She was a caring and loving school teacher that touched the lives of many young students from kindergarten to fourth grade. There is not a day that I do not think about and miss her. Porscha and I enjoyed laughing, shopping, traveling and going to concerts together. We support St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Porscha L. Thomas Scholarship Fund." The website can be

found at: [https://journey.utk.edu/s/1341/alumni/interior\\_form.aspx?sid=1341&gid=2&pgid=12529](https://journey.utk.edu/s/1341/alumni/interior_form.aspx?sid=1341&gid=2&pgid=12529)

Lisa is proud to come from a long line of successful women and men. Her Paternal Grandmother, Aunt and Uncle were the founders of what is now "Gus Fried Chicken." They have no affiliation with the current owners but that is her family's recipe. Her maternal grandparents owned land and property during a time when it was difficult for African Americans to be landowners. Her Father, Arthur Cunningham, may he rest in peace, always taught Lisa to be dedicated to whatever she did and to be a hard worker. Her Mother, Ivy Cunningham, is Lisa's biggest cheerleader and role model. Without all the hard work, love and support of her family, she would not be the person that she is today.

Fun Fact: Lisa named her daughter Alexis after the sassy, smart, go-getter character on the night-time soap opera, "Dynasty." Coincidentally, Lisa recently found out that she was named Lisa after a popular, attractive, fully in-charge character from "As The World Turns." Lisa and her mother had the same mindset when it came to naming their daughters after people they admired, but with a fifty-four-year difference!

Lisa wants to be remembered as someone that cared about her clients. "I was told early in my career that I was like a lioness when it came to my clients. When you are represented by Lisa C. Thomas, you are represented to the fullest. I will be Your Agent For Life."





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# MEET LEON DICKSON SR.

cover story

By Christina See  
Photos by Tracey Simpson

A REALTOR® for 35 years, Leon's extensive experience spans the national, state and local levels. For the National Association of REALTORS®, he currently serves as the Professional Standards Committee Vice Chair, served as the Chair of the Ideal Exchange Council, a Director, and a member of the Risk Management Committee. For Tennessee, he was President in 2018, President-Elect in 2017, Secretary-Treasurer in 2016, and a Division Vice President in 2013 and 2014. In addition, he has served as a TREEF trustee, a Director, a Budget & Finance Committee member, and more. Locally, Leon served as President of the Memphis Area Association of REALTORS® in 2011, among many other leadership roles. He was also selected for REALTOR® of the Year honors in 2012 by MAAR and again in 2020 by the Tennessee Association of REALTORS®. He received the highest award achievable, The Lifetime Achievement Award, from the Memphis Area Association of REALTORS® in 2021. As another mark of distinction, Leon is the first African-American President in the nearly 100-year history of the Tennessee Association of REALTORS®. Unsurprisingly, Leon also was recently inducted into the National Association of REALTORS® RPAC Hall of Fame in May 2023.

Life's road for Leon was not always paved with such accolades – he had to earn them the hard way. He was born and raised in a small shotgun house in South Memphis and has 9 brothers and 2 sisters. His family was a loving, church-going family, and despite the size of the family, they were always fed, clothed and well-loved. Although he was the fifth child, he was always given the responsibility of governing the rest of the brood, given his natural leadership ability.

Once his parents told him he would be responsible for his brothers, he assumed the duties and has been leading one way or another for the rest of his life. In school, he was Captain of the football team and received All-City, All-Conference and All-Metro awards as a defensive back. In business, he's the boss, but his wife, Mary, thinks she's the boss and he plays along. Currently, Leon Dickson Sr., ABR, ABRM, C2EX, CRB, CRS, e-PRO, GRI, is the Owner and Principal Broker of BenchMark REALTORS®, LLC in Memphis.

Leon was a star defensive back and fine track athlete in high school and had dreams of being a professional football player. He was encouraged by his football coach, but an unfortunate injury dashed his dream.

He started out as an apprentice tile setter in his father's business. Although he learned a lot, tile work did not excite him. Always a hard worker, Leon tried several other avenues of making money. He worked in transportation for Baptist Hospital for a time and he owned a vending machine company. Leon's real gift, however, was styling hair. He opened a beauty salon and was very successful for many years. He became so successful that Revlon sponsored him to demonstrate their hair products, and soon he was winning accolades at hairstyle competitions around the U.S. and internationally.

Leon's sister got her real estate license and was building her business quite nicely when she suggested that Leon, with his impressively long list of salon clients, might try selling real estate on the side. So, Leon got his real estate license in 1988 and worked mostly just for his salon clients and their





“  
 IF I WAS OFFERED MONEY IN PLACE OF  
 RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDS, SOME  
 WOULD SAY I'M CRAZY, BUT I WOULD  
 TURN DOWN THE MONEY AND KEEP  
 THE RELATIONSHIPS & FRIENDS.  
 ”

her dad is a silly man who loves to have fun and plays too much. We at Real Producers think this just makes us love him even more!

Leon is still as passionate about his work as he ever was. He takes pride in knowing he's been productive, has helped scores of people into their dream homes, and takes particular joy in training new agents. At 65 years of age, Leon travels, plays golf, grows plants and builds things. Fun Fact: He used to love to sew and the last garments that he made were all of his wife's maternity clothes when she was pregnant with their now 30-year-old daughter. He made some of his own clothes as well as clothes for other people. He can also beat the teenage boys at church in a footrace!

In his own words: "When I served as President for Tennessee REALTORS®, my goal was to leave the association better than I found it and to build on what was accomplished by those that came before me. I was able to fulfill that goal during my tenure. In addition to other accomplishments, I was able to start a Leadership program that was designed to develop and prepare REALTORS® in the state of Tennessee to become leaders, not just on a state level but on a

referrals. He was able to make pretty good money with very little overhead since he didn't have to market anything to his ready-made clients. He affiliated first with Heritage Homes for about 15 years before he was heavily recruited by friends at BenchMark.

Over the years, the often-caustic chemicals necessary in a salon were taking their toll on Leon's health, particularly his eyes. He had to have Lasik eye surgery in 2003. There were major complications with the surgery and as a result, he needed a cornea transplant to

correct the problem. His doctor suggested that he find another career. Once again, an injury sidelined him from a job he loved, but transitioning to real estate full-time was a great off-ramp from the salon.

While at BenchMark, Leon worked for 3 years in Collierville, before opening his own office in Southeast Memphis. He was able to buy out his partner and is now the sole owner/broker of BenchMark REALTORS®, LLC, with a beautiful, newly renovated office in Cordova. He is licensed in Tennessee and Mississippi. His oldest sister, Earnestine, his youngest brother, Aaron, and his son, Leon Jr., all work with Leon Sr., in Cordova. He also has a daughter (Morgan) who works in Human Resources in Springhill, TN. She thinks

national level as well. I was also able to launch a scholarship program, in honor of two individuals that were the backbone of our state association. The Linda Woods and Steve Harding Scholarship Fund is still active and provides tuition assistance to three graduating high school seniors each year."

"I'm often asked how much I get paid for the amount of time I spent serving in leadership and my answer is always the same. I've never received a penny, but what I received is priceless. The relationships that I've developed and the friends that I've made around the world are priceless. If I was offered money in place of relationships and friends, some would say I'm crazy, but I would turn down the money and keep the relationships and friends."

Leon is still engaged with his community and volunteers at Habitat for Humanity, Youth Village, and Hopeworks. He serves as an Elder at South Germantown Road Church of Christ.

Leon was also appointed to serve on the MLGW Board of Commissioners by Mayor Strickland in 2016 and is currently serving as MLGW's Board of Commissioners Chairman.

At 65, Leon Dickson, Sr., is a happy and fulfilled man. At the end of the day, he likes knowing that he's been productive, has helped someone, is surrounded by love from his family and friends, makes his own decisions, and controls his own life. He is a firm believer that your circumstances should not dictate your destination.

Philippians 4:13 is where he gets his drive and motivation when goal setting or starting any new projects (I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me). He believes this 100%. Christ may not tell him how to do it, but He gives him the mental and physical strength to accomplish anything he sets out to do, that's not contrary to His will.





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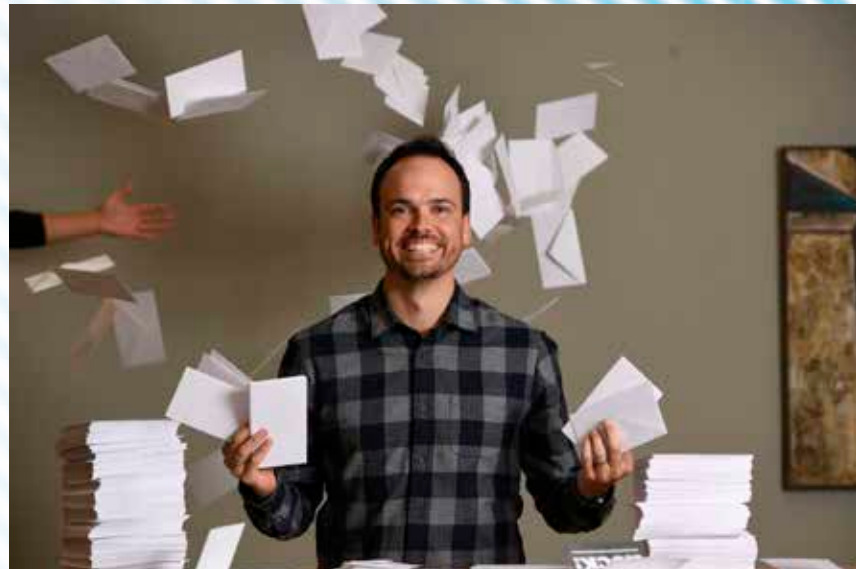
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# A down market isn't your foe. But it doesn't hurt to strategize.

If this market is squeezing out your buyers, you need a divergent thinker and problem-solver. **Lets talk.**



**John Brawner**

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