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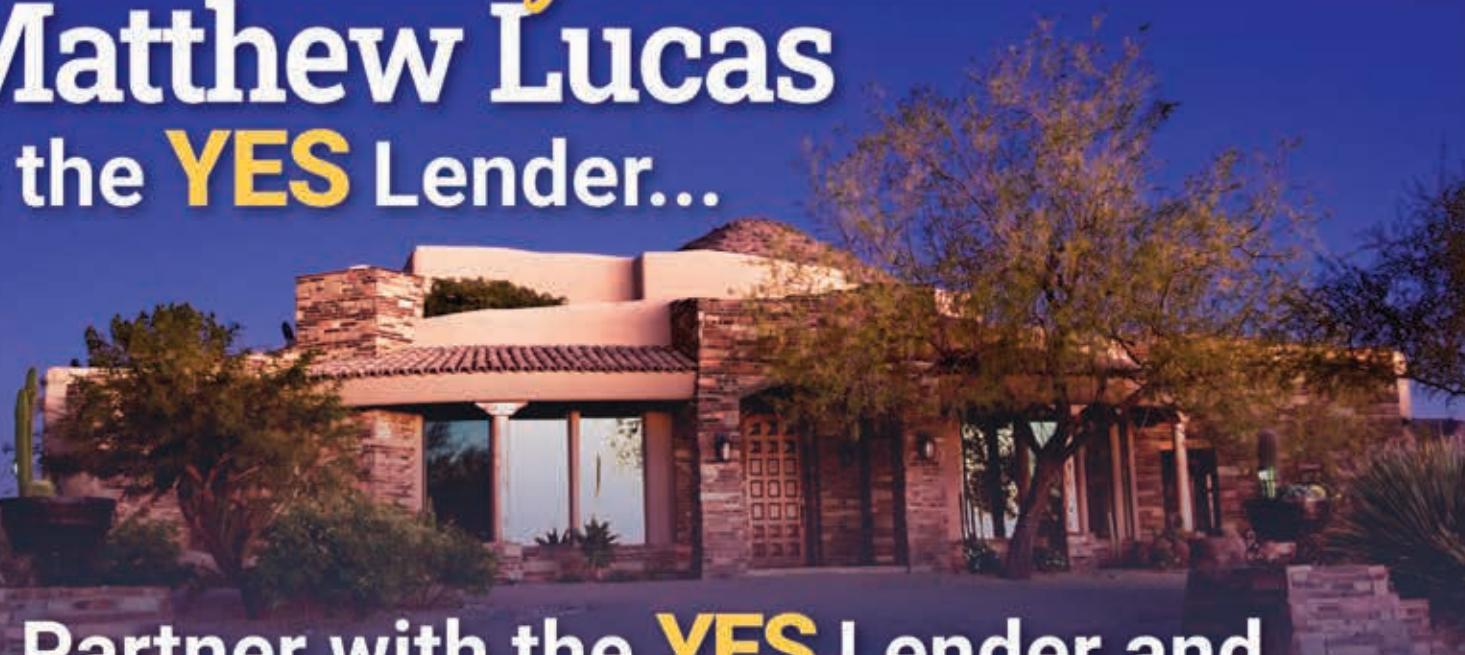
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► rising star

CESAR OCHOA

THE UP AND COMER

Cesar Ochoa has only been in the real estate game for three years, but he's already making strides at becoming one of Phoenix's top agents. Last year, he was ranked as one of the top three agents out of HomeSmart Premier's sixty and he's on the radar for the top 50 Hispanic realtors in the Greater Phoenix area.

HOW HE HAS ASCENDED SO QUICKLY?

"I love to take care of people," he says, telling me about one example. "For all the transactions I close, I give a percentage back to my clients by paying for a local moving service. I have a few guys — who are close friends of mine — and they have their own company." Overall, it's a simple approach, but a difficult one to master. Cesar was born and raised in south Phoenix and while his family struggled financially, they had a strong familial core.

"I didn't grow up wealthy or in a middle-income class," he says.

"Both my parents were born in Mexico and migrated here. We didn't have a lot, but we made the most of it." After graduating from Fairfax High School, he got his associate's degree from South Mountain Community College and then transferred to ASU for his bachelor's degree. He didn't come from a lot, but had the drive to achieve the goals he set for himself.

FINDING HIS GROOVE IN THE GAME

Growing up, Cesar loved to watch sports. This naturally led him to a Community Sports Management major. After he graduated, he started working in the recruitment office for ASU football.

"When you're recruiting, you're competing against USC, Alabama, LSU — all these big-time schools," he tells me about his first job out of college. "When [the player] comes out on a visit, I'm responsible for organizing his visit. Making sure he goes to these nice restaurants, making sure he hangs out with players, and coaches, and meeting

with our academic staff and the nutritionist. I create his itinerary, so it's my responsibility to make sure he has a great experience."

He liked the work, but it was a fight to get noticed. "Part of what I've learned in a competitive industry is you have to have a network," he says. "I grew up where I didn't have a successful network at all." This job required him to work unpaid for a year, only to get hired on for a small salary while he continued to put in 80 to 90 hours of work each week.

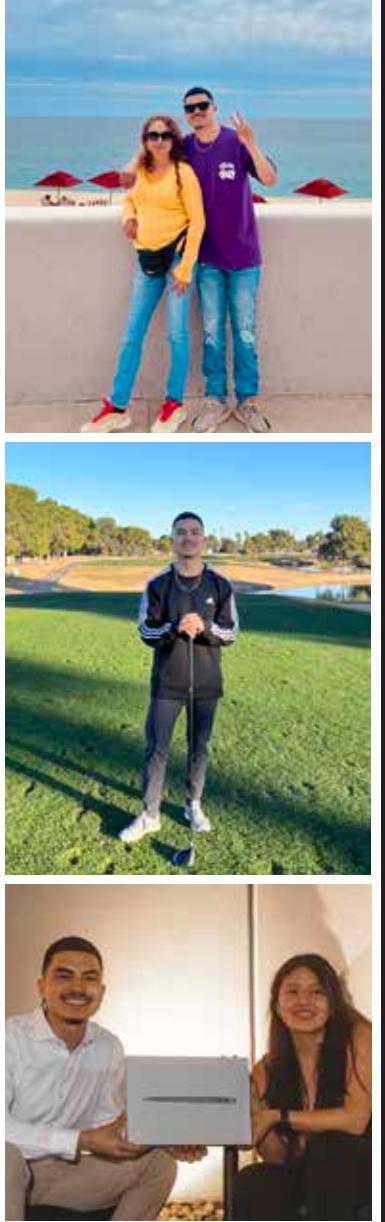
This experience helped him realize it wasn't something he wanted to do for the rest of his life. He took a step back and realized he wanted to have more control over his life and his future. Enter Real estate.

"I did a lot of research into what an agent does on a day-to-day basis," he explains. "You're managing all your transactions, and there's a lot of communication that's involved, with clients, other agents, inspectors, things that go on during the





“
I always try to take time and go to a few high schools and speak from the heart. Especially low-income areas. A lot of kids need somebody like me to talk to them.
”



whole process. And all of that really correlates to my personality.”

After three years of being a realtor, he's still in love with the job and doesn't see it slowing down — he even finds himself working on it in his free time. “Finding and making adjustments for ways to get better and improve my career,” he says, talking about sharpening his skills and pushing himself to reach his fullest potential.

GIVING BACK

Cesar cares about his community and feels a duty to give back. “Going to college,” he says, “I didn’t have a lot of money, so I applied for a lot of scholarships and thankfully, a lot of

different organizations awarded me.” To this day, he continues to be grateful for the assistance and the generosity isn't lost on him. “I've always told myself when I become successful I am going to do something similar for other students.”

So now, Cesar goes around to high schools to speak and offers students the chance to apply for his scholarship: \$3,000 toward their tuition. Taking it a step past monetary support, he also mentors the student through their college journey.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Cesar doesn't have a singular goal for the future. This speaks to his

openness to learn and become better. When Cesar becomes one of the top agents in town, he'll probably still think about what he could've done better with his transactions.

On a personal level, he wants to be a living example of what's possible. “I always try to take time and go to a few high schools and speak from the heart,” he says. “Especially low-income areas. A lot of kids need somebody like me to talk to them. Someone who's transparent about life and tells it like it is.”

It's clear that Cesar already is a role model, and I can only imagine that he'll become a bigger and more influential one as the years go on.

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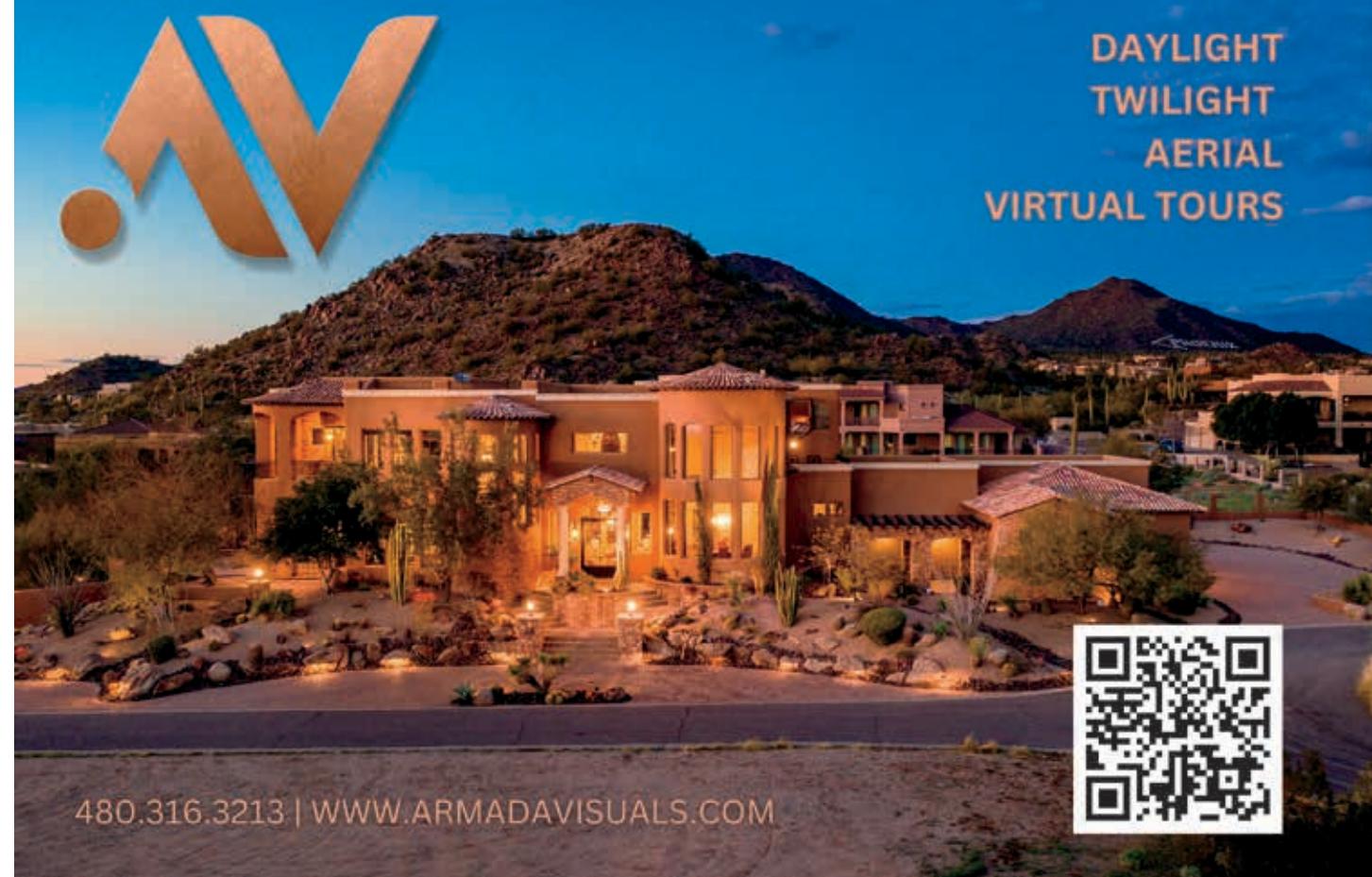
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DENISE MONTEFORTE

AN ARIZONAN BORN IN NEW YORK

Denise Monterforte may not have been born in Arizona, but more than forty years later, she certainly considers herself an Arizonan. "This is my home," she says. "I have lived here more years than I have ever lived back in New York City."

Back in Brooklyn, she faced a choice at the end of high school. "I had quite the dilemma because I could have gone on to work for a President or CEO of a large company or study to be a high school teacher." Being young and full of energy, she decided to keep her options open and did both.

"I went to the City University of New York Brooklyn College two full days a week and also worked part-time for the President of Hartz Mountain Pet Foods in New Jersey three days a week. I took a bus, subway, and train to get there."

After leaving her position at Hartz Mountain Pet Foods and getting her college degree, she taught history before shifting to a human resources position on Wall Street. This was a serendipitous move because at Merrill Lynch she met Gary, who has now been her husband for more than forty years.

MOVING HOME FOR THE FIRST TIME

In 1980, Gary had the opportunity to work for a law firm in Phoenix, AZ. They got married, packed

up, and moved west. Three months later, they bought their first home. "I picked a house that had a Scottsdale mailing address," she says, "but no one told me it wasn't really in Scottsdale." After living in the area for about a year and a half, Denise had a much better grasp of the city's layout and its different areas. "I said to Gary, 'We need to go toward the McDowell Mountains, a little further east.'" And it was this conversation that opened the door to her new career.

Gary told Denise to get a real estate license and sell their house. Denise is someone with a lot of gumption, ambition, and smarts, so the decision to go to real estate school and how much she flourished made sense. "I sold that house, but I didn't really do much with my license back then," she says. "I had small children and I used it basically for myself, buying and selling. In about fifteen years, I moved eight times." Interspersed within all this moving, Denise spent many weekends going around town attending open houses, just to see what else was out there. At one point, realtors even started calling her to get her opinion on where to take their clients.

In the nineties, Denise went back to work in full force. "I helped someone for three months — organized his business and then I went back and got my real estate license because I let it expire," she reminisces. "I was there all the time, so I signed up with Realty Executives and I've been with them ever since."

...



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THE REASON BEHIND THE WHY

When I asked what Denise finds most fulfilling about her job there isn't a moment of hesitation before she says, "helping people." This makes sense looking at her work as a teacher. Real estate is the mending of the choice she faced in high school: business or education. She combines her love for helping people with her drive for business.

"I deal with people all over the country," she says. "Many times, people come in and they have four or five days to look at houses. It's a very big decision — they have a family, they need to get settled for their job transfer, and they're depending on me for everything."

Denise does not take this responsibility lightly, and this is proven



through her actions, even when it comes to her day-to-day operations.

"The first thing I do is check and see what popped up on the market. What sold and what went pending in certain areas. While I'm doing that, I'm thinking about the buyers I'm working with. Maybe something might fit their needs," she explains. "Then I look at my emails, which I get about a thousand a day."

Even under the weight of this chaotic business, Denise is never too busy for her clients.

“I will always go the extra mile for my buyers and sellers. I’m here for them 24/7.”

"Always picking up the phone, helping them, delivering something if they need it, helping them stage their house. Taking them to see houses when they may not be in any position to buy. Picking them up, taking them to the airport," she pauses, then continues. "I mean anything — anything I can do to make their home search or their selling process easier."

This sounds like a common answer a lot of realtors would give because it sounds good, but when Denise says it, you believe her. She has a conviction that makes me know she's telling the truth, and anyone would be lucky to have her in their corner.

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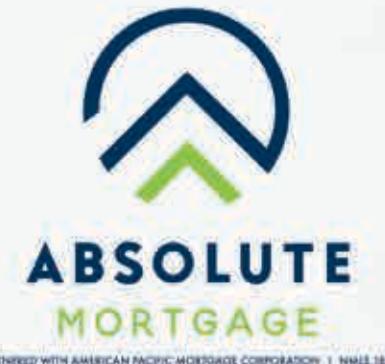
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From day one, they've looked to elevate the way people experience real estate media. They started out taking sleek, engaging photos, and now, they've become a one-stop shop offering photography, video, 360

tours, floorplans, and virtual staging. Whatever a realtor might need for their listing, Red Hog Media delivers.

THE MASTERMIND BEHIND RED HOG MEDIA

Lauren Gettman started Red Hog Media seven years ago as the sole photographer. I originally assumed she was a photographer who wanted to better utilize her skill in the business world. Only, that assumption was completely backwards.

"I grew up in a real estate family," she tells me. "My mom has been a realtor for almost forty years and my dad is

probably about ten or fifteen years behind her." She attended Boise State University and majored in Health Promotion, but after graduating had a hard time finding a job. This pushed her to lean on her life-long experience with real estate. "Throughout college, I worked for a real estate team helping them with their marketing," she explains. "When I couldn't find a job, I was like, 'I'll just go get my real estate license.'"

From 2004-2014, Lauren found herself dabbling in pretty much every aspect of the real estate business. She's been a realtor, a buyer's agent, a

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listing agent, transaction coordinator, as well as helping her mom with the books when she worked as a broker. When she and her family moved back to Coeur d'Alene, she felt like she'd grown out of the realtor position and started looking for something new. It was relatively uneventful because Lauren looked at real estate photography and thought, That'd be a fun gig.

"It felt like the best of both worlds," she tells me. "I'd still get to see the really cool houses and meet really nice people — without the six to nine-month commitment."

There was just one problem: "I knew nothing about photography," she says. She made up for this lack of skill with an even more important one. "I've built my business on the fact that I know the real estate side. I know what realtors have to go through to get listings and I know that process, so I can see it through their eyes." Lauren knew she could learn photography, and it was all going to be catered to the needs of Realtors.

MOVING UP AND OUT

In 2015, when it was just her, Lauren thought about ways to expand her thriving business.

This was in the early days of drone photography and there were strict rules about who could operate them. One such rule was the drone pilot had to have a pilot's license.

But lucky for her, Brett Gettman — publisher of this very magazine, in fact — her husband, was a fixed-wing pilot. "He was taking photos and flying the drone," she says. "He had a background in video, so he started doing video and upped the game entirely for the business."

Folding Brett into Red Hog Media was the moment they started being that

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one-stop shop for realtors, and it was the beginning of their great expansion.

PIVOTING THE BUSINESS

After years of dealing with harsh Idahoan winters, the Gettmans were ready for a change in scenery. It was that simple.

"We'd go somewhere warm every February just to get out of the dreary north Idaho winters," she explains. Generally, they found themselves in California every year, but in 2019 they decided to visit Scottsdale, and something clicked for them. They spent the trip looking around Gilbert, then came back in March during

spring break to sell their kids on the idea of relocating. In July, they packed up and moved south.

Now, when the Gettmans aren't helping realtors or small businesses boost their visibility with professional media services, you can find them exploring Arizona with their two daughters.

The family loves hitting the open road in their jeep and making weekend memories.

After they moved, instead of shutting down the Red Hog Media Idaho location, they left it in capable hands and opened an Arizona branch in

addition, and business in both states hasn't seemed to slow down. "We're in a growth mindset this year, trying to diversify," she says. "We're focusing on helping small businesses with their online presence in both states. We're Google certified, so we can add 360 tours, videos, and photos to small business Google pages and we love to help these small businesses with any relevant digital content."

Combining this with the booming real estate side of the business, Red Hog Media is going to continue helping agents and small businesses look good and stand out, and at the end of the day, that's what we're all shooting for.

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