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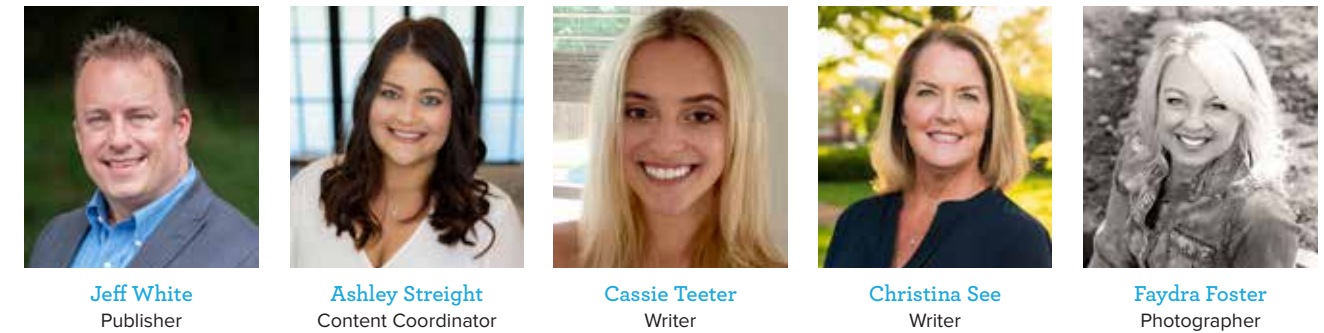
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Jeff White Publisher
Ashley Streight Content Coordinator
Cassie Teeter Writer
Christina See Writer
Faydra Foster Photographer



Michael Berry Photographer
Tracey Simpson Photographer
Molly Cobane Writer/Client Relations Specialist
Meagan Bailey Project Coordinator


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►► publisher's note

HONORING MOTHERS

How it takes family teamwork to make the family dream work

In honor of Mother's Day, we are excited to feature 5 local mothers/daughters or mothers/sons that work in real estate together.

It's no secret that real estate is competitive and demanding, and success often requires a strong team. But what could be more powerful than the bond between a mother and her child?

Teams of this type bring a unique dynamic to the table. They often share a deep understanding and connection, honed over years of shared experiences and conversations. This strong bond translates into a powerful work partnership that can make all the difference when it comes to closing deals and building relationships with clients.

In addition to their shared bond, mother/child teams also bring a diverse set of skills and perspectives to the table. While the mother may bring years of industry experience and a wealth of knowledge, the daughter/son may offer fresh insights and innovative ideas. Together, they form a powerful duo that can offer clients a personalized and well-rounded approach to buying and selling homes.

So to all the mother/daughter/son real estate teams out there, we applaud you! Your bond and hard work are truly inspiring, and we encourage you to continue making your mark on the industry. And to those considering teaming up with a family member, we hope you'll find inspiration in the power of the unique partnerships you read about in this month's edition.

Jeff White, Owner/Publisher



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NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITE AGENT:

We are always accepting nominations for feature stories! If you know a colleague who is absolutely ON FIRE and deserving of celebration, we would love to feature them in an upcoming edition of *Memphis Real Producers* magazine! Categories may include Top Producer, Rising Star, Team Leader, Broker, Giving Back to the Community, etc. To nominate a fellow REALTOR®, simply scan this QR code and follow the prompts. We look forward to receiving your nominations!

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» partner spotlight

Meet Ben Cunningham with Cutco Closing Gifts

The Joy of Gift-giving

Ben Cunningham is a highly successful Cutco sales representative who has been empowering real estate professionals in the Mid-South region for the past five years. With his passion for coaching agents and business leaders, he has helped clients elevate their businesses through gifting with Cutco. Born and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana, Ben attended Hendrix College, where he graduated with a degree in business and economics and a minor in history (including knifeology.) He married his wife Sarah in 2021, who is a full-time assistant and cheerleader for his business.

While in college, Ben sold Cutco knives during the summers and was drawn to the premium kitchen product. He quickly became hooked on the company's sales philosophy and became a full-time Cutco sales representative after graduation. However, he took a break from Cutco and pursued real estate with Berkshire Hathaway in his hometown until he was drafted to play professional football in Europe.

Moving to Memphis to build his Cutco business was the biggest obstacle in his career. However, he overcame it with years of relationship-building, time, and effort. His genuine interest in his client's success and unique perspective on gifting allowed him to establish strong relationships and establish

himself as the go-to person for Cutco closing gifts in the Memphis market.

Ben is passionate about coaching agents and business leaders in effective gifting strategies that help them elevate their businesses. His coaching and relationship-building skills have helped him achieve great success in his role. He holds the record for being the top-selling rep in his division for the past three years and has won three all-American scholarships through the company to pay for his college education. He has also earned the Court of Honor, a prestigious recognition given to a Cutco representative who has sold \$1 million of total products.

Ben looks up to John Israel, his business coach, who exemplifies the businessman and dad he always wanted to be. His father has also been a source of encouragement throughout his Cutco career, as he has been in sales his whole life. His college football coach Buck Buchanan was a father figure to him and challenged him and his teammates to push themselves not only on the football field but also in the real world.

For Ben, the most rewarding part of his business is the joy of gift-giving. Gifting Cutco closing gifts to agents out of the blue with a message of appreciation attached to the gift lights him up to see their faces of





“

Cutco closing gifts have grown his love language of gift-giving, and he has built a book of business of raving fans who love and trust him.

surprise and gratitude. He believes that Cutco closing gifts have grown his love language of gift-giving, and he has built a book of business of raving fans who love and trust him.

Ben's future goals include partnering with real estate companies all over Midsouth on delivering signature talks on follow-up and gifting. He is also interested in real estate investing and would love to partner with some of his clients who are the best in that area of real estate. He supports his church, New Heights Memphis, and his sister, who teaches special ed students through a ministry in Romania.

Ben is happily married to Sarah, and they have a four-legged pup named Maggie. They enjoy hunting, smoking on their Trager, and trying different recipes. They also work out at their CrossFit gym, read, and travel on Cutco trips together. Ben also coaches lacrosse at Briarcrest Christian School, where he has been coaching the varsity team for three years. They won the state championship in 2021.

In conclusion, Ben Cunningham is an inspiring entrepreneur who has built his business on the values of hard work, discipline, and the power of gift-giving. He is passionate about helping others achieve success in their businesses. His dedication to his family, community, and interests outside of work makes him a true role model for aspiring entrepreneurs and is truly a "cut above the rest."



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GaNelle Roberts & Mary Anne Gibson:

A REMARKABLE, DEDICATED PAIR

By Christina See | Photos by Mike Berry

powerful partnerships

Memphis REALTOR® icon, GaNelle Roberts, was born in Alabama but did most of her growing up in Gainesville, Florida. GaNelle returned to the state of her birth to receive her BS degree from the University of Alabama in 1963. She started her professional career as an educator which, in part, explains her meteoric rise in 1979 when GaNelle began her real estate vocation with Jacobson & Lovitt specializing in new home construction. In 1990, she formed her own company, GaNelle Roberts, REALTORS®, and has been helping Memphis area families invest in their future for the past 44 years.

GaNelle is now with The Firm. Selling real estate for so long has earned GaNelle practically every award that MAAR can offer, and she has worked tirelessly with the MAAR Board for the benefit of the entire Greater Memphis area.

GaNelle says she had two wonderful mentors, Margie Coleman and Frannie Etter. In 1979, women were a small group compared to the number of men in the real estate industry. That has certainly changed as these days, strong women are on a more equal footing with our gentlemen colleagues. While some things have changed over the years, serving

“

I'd seen my mother work tirelessly and with great devotion to her clients who often became good friends of our family. She and my dad both instilled in me a strong work ethic and lived out the Golden Rule in thought, word and deed.

”

clients and enjoying the respect of her fellow REALTORS® is still what drives GaNelle with the same dedication and passion to help clients achieve their goals as when she began 46 years ago.

When she's not working, GaNelle loves to entertain with her husband, Clyde, spend time with her grandsons, going to their basketball games and golf matches. She also enjoys painting, plant cultivation and landscape design.

One of GaNelle's greatest achievements is her daughter, Mary Anne Gibson. Born in Mobile, Alabama, Mary Anne grew up in Germantown and is now her hometown's Vice Mayor, currently serving her third term as Alderman. She has been married for 37 years to her husband, Steve, a senior project engineer at FedEx. "We met at Federal Express as two college kids working our way through school. He was fresh out of the Marines and Paris Island and adorable, with a sweet smile and a heart for Jesus and for me." They have three children - daughter Morgan, who lives in Salem, Oregon, son Marshall, who lives in Memphis, and daughter, Madison, who lives in Nashville. Their almost two-year-old granddaughter, Junie, is thriving way out in Oregon.

In addition to her public service commitments, Mary Anne is also a REALTOR® extraordinaire, just like her mother. After working in customer service for FedEx, Mary Anne decided to join her mom's real estate business, GaNelle Roberts, REALTORS®.

"For years and years, my parents cajoled me about going into real estate. My mom was a top producer and my dad, Jim Roberts, had one of the top 50 State Farm agencies in the country. I balked until dad asked me this question- 'Mary Anne, do you think I try to sell insurance to people who don't want or more importantly, NEED insurance? He and GaNelle, as I call her in the biz, much to my sisters consternation, went on to remind me how good I was at my job with FedEx. I'd moved into an area called Manager Assist where if our customers were so upset that FedEx had lost their wedding dress or something else precious, they'd ask to speak with our CEO, Fred Smith. I was able to calm them down and work toward resolving their problem. The words 'please bear with me' and 'I can help you with this' were a major part of every discussion. I learned that in the real estate business, I was a natural at shepherding my clients to closing and resolving the inevitable problems that pop up along the way."

"I became a REALTOR® in 1996 because I finally felt that I had the skills to be successful. I'd seen my mother work tirelessly and with great devotion to her clients who often became good friends of our family. She and my dad both instilled in me a strong work ethic and lived out the Golden Rule in thought, word and deed. They were both so heavily involved in MAAR as we were growing up so we got to see, up close and personal, what it looked like to advocate and truly care for your clients. What a joy it is to work with my biggest cheerleader my entire life - my mom!"

“GaNelle and I have always worked independently but there’s no question that we work in tandem with each other. If she needs something, I’m here for her and vice versa. When we merged with The Firm in 2022, we felt like we were coming home from the minute we walked in the door. We are honored to work with true professionals who encourage us each and every day to do our best work!”

“My mother has been my mentor from the day I was born! Picture Wonder Woman walking in dressed to the nines in a suit and heels, an MLS book as big as the Yellow Pages in one hand and talking on a cell phone that looked like something out of a James Bond movie in the other. THAT was my mother! She looked like a supermodel before there were supermodels, and anyone in the business would say she was a master negotiator who advocated for her clients better than anyone. GaNelle was a collaborator. She communicated well with both her clients and her peers in the business, and I saw what cooperation among agents looked like. A true believer in “you get more flies with honey” and “iron fist in a velvet glove.” Her word is her bond. You never had to question it. Integrity with a capital “I”. Others looked up to her with respect as a leader in our industry but also as someone they wanted to do business with.”

Mary Anne has always loved working with first-time home buyers. “While I’m not a teacher, I very much enjoy explaining the process to clients who have not gone through the experience before. Those young homeowners grow up and now I’m working with 2nd and 3rd generations of friends and families I have helped over the years. I think that’s what

is so rewarding to me. Establishing relationships with clients who trust me with what typically is their biggest investment. Their HOME is certainly their most important one because it’s where they find solace after a long day, where they raise their families, where they dream their dreams. I love being a small part in that journey for them, and I pray I’ll be helping people buy and sell their homes forever. A wise young man (at the ripe old age of 82) told me once, “A body in motion stays in motion.” That stuck with me so I’m going to keep doing what I love- helping folks with the most important investment they can make - their HOME!”

For GaNelle, success is “achieving your goals and loving what you’re doing. Mary Anne says she defines success each and every day. “Have I lived my faith in a way that my Creator would be proud of, that my family would be proud of? Since I know I’m not perfect, I am on a constant path of “striving to perfection” as John Wesley once said or maybe an even better sentiment from Ann Bell Graham, “I am a constant work in progress.” For me, success is setting high expectations for myself. Daily. Methodically. Intentionally.

GaNelle and Mary Anne are both champions in their own right. GaNelle was the Florida Junior Skeet Champion at the tender age of sixteen and Mary Anne is a two-time World Champion Chuckwagon Cook with her husband, better known as Cookie!

One thing we know at Real Producers is that both of these remarkable women will continue to make outstanding contributions to their community as long as there is breath in their lungs.

“

**For me, success is setting high expectations for myself.
Daily. Methodically. Intentionally.**

”

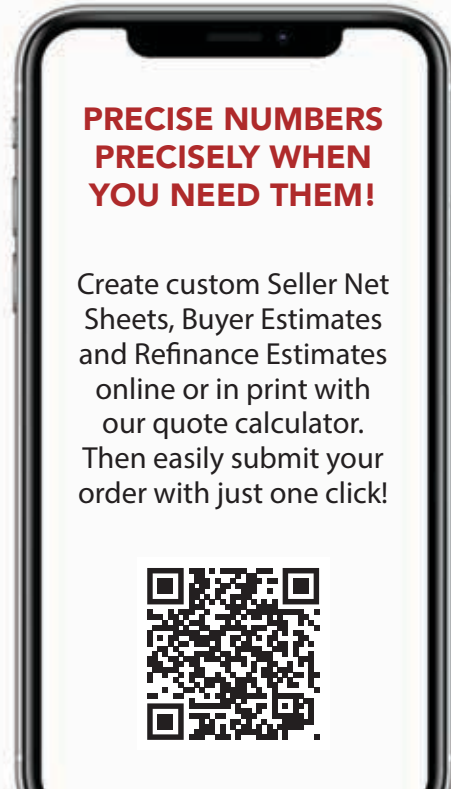




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LEIGH & BARTLETT GRAVES

ABSOLUTE PURPOSE

Members of the Graves family all wear many different hats, including one for farming. Leigh and her husband, Joe, co-lead the family's farm, approximately 3,800 acres. Their children, Bartlett, Jake, and Ellen, operate with them as a team in countless ways. Leigh and Bartlett, for instance, have become "The Graves Team" at Crye Leike Hernando. They have consistently ranked within the top teams in their office and overall top producers at Crye Leike.

Leigh grew up in Tunica before completing a finance degree at the University of Mississippi. She has since used her knowledge of finance to do bookkeeping for the farm. While overseeing these finances, she earned her real estate license

in 2008. Her husband has supported her endlessly since her start. He is her "best cheerleader." When Leigh is down, Joe reminds her that quitting is not an option.

"The worst thing you can tell me is that I can't do something. I will try, with absolutely all of my energy and might, to prove you wrong."

She first formed The Graves Team with another agent, who has since moved. Eventually, she began operating as a solo agent, where she has been recognized as one of the top 25 agents at Crye Leike. About Crye Leike, Leigh says:

"When someone needs help, we all stop and see what we can do to help each other. Our office really is here to help everybody. People have helped me, so I feel that it is my job to help other people when they're just starting out. You know, God has put many new agents in my path who are now very successful. It's very encouraging building each other up."

Leigh and Joe raised their son, Bartlett, and the rest of their children in Tunica. Bartlett attended the University of Mississippi, like his mom, where he graduated with a business degree. He then joined the Marines in 2015. After an ankle injury, followed by surgery, it was time for him to travel down a new path. He decided that he wanted to help his mother run The Graves Team.

The mother and son pair, The Graves Team, didn't form immediately. Bartlett had proven himself to the National Association of Realtors® by earning his license in 2017, but his mother wanted more from him. Purpose is absolutely essential to Leigh and the rest of the family. Bartlett worked as a lone agent for about a year to prove his motivations to her.

"Have you ever read the book *The Why?* You've gotta know your 'why.' Why are you doing what you're doing? Why are you working? I knew my why. You cannot be any more motivated than helping your children. I had to get my children through college."

Their two personalities have always been compatible, but they had to get into the swing of things when they started working together. Their relationship at work is based on mutual respect, efficiency, owning up to and learning from mistakes, and professionalism. Neither Leigh or Bartlett have specific assigned jobs because they both do it all!

"When I walk into this office, I'm not your mamma, I'm your business partner. The same respect is there, but this is business. You have to treat it like a business. I will never correct or humiliate him if I think he's said something wrong in a meeting. It is my job to encourage Bartlett to be better than I am. That's my entire job as a parent."

"We do all of our own tasks because we all have our own clients. If he gets the lead on a client, that's his client. I may follow up with the paperwork, but that's still his client. If I get a client, they're my client. Our job is getting it to closing, so we do whatever we've gotta do to get it to closing."



This dynamic is a very special one. Leigh and Bartlett manage their real estate careers together, as well as working together on the family's land. Leigh as the bookkeeper, and Bartlett as a farmer. For three or four months during each year, Leigh happily carries the team while her son plants and harvests cotton.

"We're a family farm and we do family real estate. We will always do whatever we can do to help each other. We're a family. That's it. That's just what we do."

"I'm very blessed really, really more than I could have ever expected. Every day when he leaves, he says, 'Mom, I love ya.' How many moms can get that with their working partner?"

Another of the Graves' values at home and in the office is following the example set by Christ. Each relationship is an opportunity to pour love and encouragement into others. Leigh will pray, cry, and celebrate right along with her clients, all for the glory of God. About success, she says:

"When I get through with this thing called life, I want to know that I've done my best. Whatever I did, I've done my best. It won't be perfect, but it will have been my best. When I stand in front of my Heavenly Father and He looks at me, and He says these words: Well done, well done my good and faithful servant...That, my friend, is my success. That is success."

When they are able, both Leigh and Bartlett passionately support Klondike Preparatory Academy in Memphis. Leigh is also involved in Walk to Emmaus ministry and plans on doing prison ministry soon. Bartlett helps support an organization for free Christian counseling to those in need, and he is also very involved in real estate investment. So far, he has flipped 13 houses.

With farming, real estate, investing, charity, ministry, and more, all the hats that this mother and son wear are impossible to count. The Graves Team at Crye Leike and the family at home certainly know how to work well together, even if they need to get their hands dirty! Leigh and Bartlett Graves prove that teamwork really does make the dream work.

"We're a family farm and we do family real estate. We will always do whatever we can do to help each other. We're a family. That's it. That's just what we do."

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▶ how does memphis real producers work?

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONNECTION.

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

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, with the purpose of inspiring 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!



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mother/daughter team

By Christina See | Photos by Tracey Simpson

MARY JEFFREY & KATY JEFFREY MCALEXANDER

A Reputation You Can Count On

Mary was born and mostly raised in Chicago, but moved to Memphis when her dad took a new job here. They left Chicago when she was 16, with two weeks left in her junior year of high

school. It was a difficult transition, but as the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and Mary realized that it was possible to make new friends and create a new life. She always thought

she would move back to Chicago, but never did because she found she loved it here. She attended Memphis State, but after two years, she decided she was ready to get out into the world.

She started out in the restaurant business where she worked first as a waitress and then as an assistant manager at a nightclub in Overton Square. In 1983, she and her husband, Michael, moved back to New Jersey for his career, and they remained there for the next eight years. Mary landed a job with FedEx as a customer service agent in their call center. She loved FedEx, but the job was fairly limited and she wanted more. She just didn't like a sit-down-at-the-desk, 40-hour-a-week job.

Mary decided to get her real estate license in New Jersey in 1988 and went to work for Weichert REALTORS®. She ran one of their rental offices as New Jersey's real estate market was floundering and that's where the money was. She did very well in rentals, but always knew that in a different market, she'd like to pursue sales. When the family moved back to Memphis in 1991, she immediately got her TN license, went to work for Crye-Leike, and has been there ever since.

Katy was born while the family lived in New Jersey, but she was raised in Memphis. She graduated from UT Knoxville with a degree in Management and a focus on Entrepreneurship.

Katy moved back to Memphis and started her first job within three days of graduating college. She went into the transportation industry because the economy was in the very beginning stages of recovering from the Great Recession, and that field is where most of her contacts were. She started as an "Appointments Specialist," which is the position for which she had interned the previous summer. She quickly moved up the ranks and then switched companies. She was an Operations Manager when she started doing real estate part-time. After a year and a half of being a part-time agent, she decided to make real estate her full-time job in April 2018.

Katy says she always wanted to be a real estate agent. For as long as she can remember, her mom would throw her in the backseat and take her on showings whenever childcare fell through. Katy loved looking at all the houses. In college, she spoke to her academic advisor about pursuing real estate, but this was during the housing crisis, and she was dissuaded from it. She started studying for her real estate exam in 2014. She studied for it for two years because she couldn't stand the idea of not acing it the first time around. She was definitely over-prepared when she finally took the test in 2016.

Katy started out part-time because at that age, she didn't have very many friends interested in buying real estate. She wanted the stability of a regular income but absolutely hated her desk job. Every time she would talk to her mom on the phone, she would be out doing something cool in an exciting part of town, working with interesting people and dealing with problems that were vastly different than the ones she had faced the day before. Katy knew pretty early on that she wanted to make the leap to full-time, but it wasn't until she got married and was eligible for benefits through her husband's job that the timing felt right.

Mary recalls when Katy first told her that she was considering a career change and getting her real estate license. "I didn't think much about it. She kept bringing it up every so often and I finally let her know, it's not my decision. I just reminded her that she knows what this life entails – the long hours, nights, Sundays, sudden changes of plans, having to be on the phone while on vacation, etc. I just reminded her what she's grown up with, that she knows what real estate life is like, and that it was a decision that she had to make on her own. I didn't want to influence it one way or the other. But I also let her know that if she decided to become an agent, I'd 100% be in her corner. I'd help her out, but it absolutely had to be her own decision. She chose to do it and I've been thrilled ever since!"



Mary and Katy are a very well-bonded team. They share clients and responsibilities but have separate spheres of work. For a long time, Mary was always at the office while Katy preferred to work some days from home, but they were constantly in touch by phone.

That has changed, however. Since Katy became a Broker, she's in the office much more now. Mary loves working with Katy and has tremendous respect for what she has learned and accomplished. "She brings so much insight to the role. She is very deliberate, knowledgeable, careful and responsible." Mary admits it's a little weird to have her daughter be her boss! Katy says, "I grew up in the office for which I am now the broker. I work very closely with my mom; however, due to the fact that she is licensed in MS and I am not, we are not officially a team. I hope to get my MS license in the not-too-distant future."

Katy is grateful that her mother has been her mentor throughout her real estate career. "While working with a family member can be an interesting dynamic, I know I'm incredibly fortunate to have her by my side. As a veteran agent who knows her way around the sales contract better than most attorneys, she is a go-to person in our office for both new and seasoned agents struggling to navigate tricky transactions. She has impressed upon me the importance of knowing the paperwork and being able to explain it to my clients so they always know what they are signing. She has taught me to never take the easy way out and that shortcuts usually amount to more headaches on the backend. She shows me so much grace when I make mistakes, and every failure is turned into a learning opportunity. She challenges me to work through my own questions but is always there to provide guidance when the answers come up short.



“
She brings so much
insight to the role.
She is very
deliberate,
knowledgeable,
careful and
responsible.”

She has taught me to always stand up for my client's best interests, even when that does not make you popular among other agents. Her career motto, 'No commission is worth my reputation,' which I have adopted, is reflective of the type of agent she is and the type of agent she has taught me to be. People tell me all the time how lucky I am to have her as my mentor, and I feel it every single day. She makes me more confident. She makes me better."

As a working mom herself, Katy looks back in awe at the way in which Mary was able to work 60+ hours a week, be a consistent top producer, and still manage to stay so hands-on with the kids. Mary was always the Room Mother at school or the Team Manager of the soccer teams. She worked around the clock but made it to every soccer game.

Katy continues to tackle the aspects of her new role and stay well-informed. "While I've always prided myself on staying up-to-date on current events, I am now hyper-focused on industry changes in a way I haven't been before. There's a lot happening in the economy and in the legal system that is going to shape our day-to-day activities, and I want to be on top of it all so I can share that knowledge with our clients and fellow agents."

Katy adds that the most rewarding part of the business is that their office has so many agents whose careers are just taking off right now and absolutely flourishing. As a new broker, she admits she has little-to-nothing to do with it, but still finds it so exciting to see their hard work translate into big success.

As for the rest of Katy's family, she and her husband Jeff have been together almost ten years and have been married for five. They have a two-year-old daughter, Jillian, and another, "Baby No Name", that they are expecting in June. They love going to the park together, and Jillian is just starting to get into extracurriculars. She is currently signed up for soccer. Right now, she just has a weekly practice, and while she understands the shuffling back and forth is grueling, it's given Katy a tiny glimpse of what it will be like to attend various sporting events for her when the time comes, and she simply cannot wait to chase her around from activity to activity.

Mary still loves every aspect of her business and thoroughly enjoys working with clients together with Katy. She hopes that her clients will become Katy's clients when she decides to retire because she knows they will be in very capable hands. Mary is looking forward to playing with her grandchildren and traveling more with her husband.

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Vicki & Thomas GANDEE

▶ mother/son team
By Cassie Teeter | Photos by Michael Beck

THE POWER OF DEEP ROOTS

Vicki and Todd Gandee have five sons: Danny, Dave, Andrew, Thomas, and Jackson. Every family is a team at home, but Vicki and Thomas have taken that one step further by also working together at Crye Leike REALTORS®. This mother and son duo form the successful “Team Gandee.” Both are licensed REALTORS® and members of the Multi-Million Dollar Club. Even their dog, King Louie, models for Team Gandee’s ads!

Vicki got her start in real estate in August of 2007 by diving into it headfirst. She had been very active in ministry and leading children’s worship for many years. She had expected this career to last for her entire life, but God had other plans for her.

“It’s a really big church, so I had a lot of things to do each Sunday. I had finished the children’s sermon that morning at 8:30, and I was going down the stairs to set up the music for worship for Sunday school. As I was going down the stairs, I had my head turned to talk to the music director. He said something about new music and, when I turned my head to look at him, I fell down the stairs. And these were concrete stairs, so I thought I had broken every bone in my body! I didn’t actually break everything, but my knee injury turned out to be pretty bad. I was coordinating nerve blocks with all of my events. After a while, I just couldn’t have any more. I had to say goodbye to my career, which was very hard.”



Her call to real estate came from her long-time friend, Carmen Brown, at Crye Leike. Vicki and Carmen joined forces to become what was known as “The Blonde Team” or even “the twins.” When Carmen had to step back and focus on family, Vicki gradually took on more and more responsibility. After about five years, she was working as a lone agent. This experience has proven invaluable in working with her son and the many new agents that she has taken under her wing.

“I like working on my own, but I also love bouncing things off of other people when questions come up. Carmen was a wealth of knowledge so I would call her. I’ve found myself, now, becoming that after 16 years. I’ve had a lot of stories and experiences that I can tell people like she did with me.”

Thomas didn’t originally start in real estate either. Throughout high school and college, he was involved with Malco Theatres. After graduating from the University of Memphis with a degree in Political Science and History, he opened his own theater in Louisiana. When he decided to come home, he also opened Malco Powerhouse Cinema Grill & MXT in Memphis.

In 2020, when COVID emerged, the movie theater scene changed drastically. It was then that Thomas decided, having talked about it for years, to form Team Gandee with his mom at Crye Leike. Like his mother, Thomas loves to form meaningful connections with his clients and the agents he works with.

“My eyes are on public service someday and real estate is teaching me more about people and working with clients.”

“HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL SAY NO TO A PAYCHECK FOR MONTHS TO MAKE SURE THEIR CLIENT IS HAPPY? THAT’S MY MOM.”

Thomas and Vicki had been considering teaming up for years. The two bring separate strengths to the table, which makes them an excellent pair. As family members and coworkers, they have each other’s backs and emphasize each other’s skills.

Vicki: “He’s multi-talented and does so many things, including real estate with me! He loves to write contracts, run numbers, present the contracts... And he’s so much better than me about it, too. He loves to sit down and go through every line of a contract and he explains it so beautifully. I’ve been doing this for a long, long time and I don’t do that anywhere near as well as he does. I’m the negotiator. I can come up with ideas for figuring out what to do when things aren’t going so well, which he doesn’t enjoy as much. I also work very well with other real estate agents.”

Thomas: “My mother would give away ‘the farm’ for her clients. She will tell a client not to buy a house if she thinks it’s a bad fit. How many people will say no to a paycheck for months to make sure their client is happy? That’s my mom.”

Vicki and Thomas work so well together because they love and respect their clients as well as each other. For Team Gandee, the client’s full satisfaction at the end of a deal is the most important part of the job.

Vicki: “My clients become my friends. I’m such a big talker and my clients like me. It’s just so fun to go see them after they’ve moved in. It’s so cute how excited they are to show me everything they’ve done. I love that. I want to be remembered by my clients in a good way. I’m a very relationship-centered person. I would not do it if I didn’t love it.”

Thomas: “Real estate is more than showing houses. You are as much an asset and a resource to your client as most professional services, but you help them find where they will be every day, making memories and having new experiences for years to come. It becomes more than just finance and numbers and that’s important to keep in mind.”

For Vicki and Thomas Gandee, it doesn’t stop there. Vicki is also passionate about ministry, theater, interacting with kids, and advertising at the local radio station. She talks about the housing market on KWAM, or “the Mighty 990,” with Todd Starns about once a week. Thomas is a huge movie buff, enjoys lighting design, and is involved with politics. He just recently became the head of Shelby County Young Republicans. Suffice it to say, this mother-son duo is worth keeping up with. As their catchphrase goes, Go Team Gandee!



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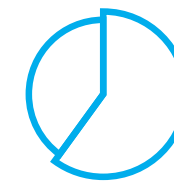
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Cindy Ward

▶▶ mother/daughter team
By Christina See | Photos by Tracey Simpson

& AMANDA JANE CANNON

RIVER CITY GIRLS

“At a very young age, I developed my fondness for real estate and all things lovely about a home. In addition to the love of architecture and aesthetics, I fell in love with what a home represents.” - Cindy Ward

Thanks to her “Midwestern mama with a Southern soul,” to Cindy, “home” represented a magical place of security, peace and serenity. It was a place to dream and plan with those who love you the most. She would build pillow forts and practice her selling techniques with her dolls. She would fashion “for sale” signs with her Lite-Bright and use her Etch-a-Sketch to draw up contracts. This passion has stuck with her from childhood to adulthood.

After some university studies in Tulsa, Cindy moved to Houston, TX, and earned her real estate license at 19 years old in 1993. She assisted buyers and sellers with Gulf Coast Real Estate until the birth of the first of her 3 children. Over the next several years, she lived in many exciting and interesting places – mainly for her husband’s job - before returning to Oklahoma to be near family. It was when she returned to the heartland that she decided to pick up her real estate career again since her children were all in school and her familial support system was strong.

In her first year back in real estate, she was awarded “Rookie of the Year” in the “Mid States Region” of RE/MAX with a gross closed volume of over \$8 million, helping over 60 families achieve their real estate goals that year! Within a few years, she became CEO and Principal Broker of Keller Williams in Oklahoma City, then Fayetteville, AR, until Tennessee called. Memphis became their new home in 2008 when Cindy was called to be the Team Leader for Keller Williams to turn around their struggling office in Germantown. After a couple years, the region decided to bring the Southaven, Memphis, and Germantown market centers under one umbrella. Cindy, of course, was very honored when asked to be the Team Leader for all three market centers, and

she remained there until June 2018. Cindy loved being the Team Leader and was proud to help grow so many of today’s top agents’ businesses with them and have a hand in their success.

Cindy’s daughter, Amanda Jane, has very fond memories of all three children accompanying mom when she was meeting clients, showing houses, and staging open houses in the early years. Amanda Jane laughs that she knew what a “coffered ceiling” was by the time she was 8 years old. She feels it was written in the stars that she was meant to be a REALTOR®, but it was a winding road.

After graduating from Houston High in 2015, she went to Mississippi State to study Business, switched to Psychology, went through three semesters, and decided she was on the wrong path. What she knew she wanted to do didn’t require a college degree. She came home that Christmas and told her mom she wasn’t going back to MS State. Cindy, of course, told her to talk to her dad – a highly educated man with a Masters degree in Business. He was understanding of his beloved daughter’s plight and told her she didn’t have to go back to college, but she did need a plan for her future.

So, Amanda Jane got a job in a restaurant working until 2pm, then she would go to the Keller Williams office and be an office assistant from 2pm to close of business. Cindy had told all of her children that they needed to work in a restaurant for at least a year in their lives because it develops important public relations skills and makes you appreciate the value of hard work.

Amanda Jane lasted a month at the restaurant, but luckily, the KW office needed her skills. She handled the challenge, she really enjoyed it and decided to get her real estate license and work with the team at Keller Williams. In the beginning, and during the slow real estate periods, she could always go back and work at the restaurant to support herself.





About the same time, Cindy decided to move out of her “corporate” position and step back into production, where her heart had always been. So Cindy and Amanda Jane created a team – a dream team, as it turns out. Their skill sets compliment each other perfectly. Amanda Jane likes details, spreadsheets, and everything organized a certain way. Cindy loves talking to people and initiating new ideas. They laugh that every day,

Cindy comes up with at least 15 new exciting plans, and Amanda Jane notes all the details. Then they’ll review the “idea sheet” in a week or so and decide what is feasible and what needs to go.

Amanda Jane also created a better system for onboarding new agents while at KW. Some months saw 15 new agents and some months saw 25, which was very taxing on the current staff. Amanda Jane’s system made sure that the new members didn’t just feel like part of a machine, but that they were all unique and important to the team. Amanda Jane developed a handbook for new agents of everything

they needed to know about the office, their role on the team, their passwords, and what they needed to know to be successful. She even gave them all her cell number to call anytime they felt lost. Cindy, of course, was proud to see Amanda Jane flourish in her role at the agency.

After a time, both Cindy and Amanda Jane were ready to launch their own independent team. They did a lot of research and discussed in detail what and who exactly they wanted to be. They separated from Keller Williams, incorporated their own business, did their own branding, and on March 1, 2020 “River City Girls” was born! Together, they do residential sales and purchases as well as investment properties in Tennessee.

Like any startup, the first years can be lean and difficult, but they learned how to be frugal and patient. It was a great life lesson, but they’re grateful for the knowledge that they gained and grateful to God for the experience. They can laugh now about what a cool and interesting time it was pulling their new business all together despite the hard work and cost. They now laughingly refer to threat time as “The Year of Reduced Circumstances”! They really hit their stride last year, and they still feel like “newbies” because before they were always the “women behind the curtain” making sure all of their agents were getting the support they needed from

the office. Now, they are both the agents and their own support staff.

Amanda Jane is now a newlywed, and Cindy is happy to help her build her career and help Amanda Jane as she looks to growing her family. Cindy says she’s thrilled to be helping Amanda Jane build her career and have children and still be with them as much as she needs. Real estate offers the opportunity to have children and still make good money unlike most other careers. They’re also not chained to a desk and so much can be done over the phone.

Right now their communication is unmatched. They are constantly on the phone and they know their clients’ every need so they can backstop each other with any detail. Their clients are definitely happy that they both know every detail and they can call either of them and get the same answer. They back each other 100%.

Their clients are definitely getting a two-for-one with their well-oiled machine! Several agents have asked to be on their team, but they’re not ready to expand just yet. They want to make absolutely sure that everything is perfect before adding any new moving parts. Cindy will have her Brokers license later this year, and they currently are with eXp and plan to stay with eXp and not start their own company.

Amanda Jane feels like she won the lottery in being able to work with her mom who taught her everything, and Cindy gets to spend quality time with her daughter every day. They work so well together because they complement each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The early challenges were living in the same home and working together, but now that Amanda Jane is married, both of their lives are just better. Their complimentary duties make the relationship work so well. Amanda Jane wants to be behind the scenes, doing the details and making sure every I is dotted and T is crossed, while Cindy loves the networking. Cindy also has so much more experience discussing the whole process and helps their clients feel good about the transaction.

This mother/daughter pair are truly best friends. A dynamic duo. Cindy loves working and hanging out with Amanda Jane, and also loves helping her make money and build her career. For Amanda Jane’s part, she says that she struck gold by having such an amazing teacher and business partner. Cindy’s biggest challenge is not to “mother” Amanda Jane



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too much while they are at work. She trusts her implicitly as her business partner, and works hard to let Amanda Jane learn things on her own rather than telling her how to do everything. Cindy tends to dominate the conversation, whereas Amanda Jane needs to add to the conversation. She needs a little push to be more extroverted, and she gets better every day. Cindy wants to make sure Amanda is in the conversational mix. Amanda Jane appreciates how Cindy pushes her, probably much harder than any other business partner would. Amanda Jane focuses on holding Cindy down, but she doesn’t hold her back. Cindy says Amanda keeps her grounded.

Happiest of Mothers’ Days to this beautiful, loving, fun Dynamic Duo!

announcement

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