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COVER STORY

Crystal *Bonin*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

RISING STAR: Tammy Lezak

CAREER MOVES: Conrad Green

BROKER SPOTLIGHT: Shaelisa Bradley-Hunt

OCTOBER 2023

GET TO KNOW...

Trey Hereford

What made you decide to become a loan officer? Lending has always been my favorite part of the job since day 1 in the banking industry.

Favorite part about being a Mortgage Loan Officer? Being able to assist in fulfilling the dream of homeownership.

What is the best advice you would give to an agent when it comes to the lending side of a transaction? Open communication is so vital to the process. I would advise to urge your buyers to use your local lenders.

What has been your greatest work accomplishment while working at NOLA Lending? Consistently being on the top producers list.

What is your favorite hobby? Softball

What is an interesting fact about you that other people may not know? I am an auctioneer.



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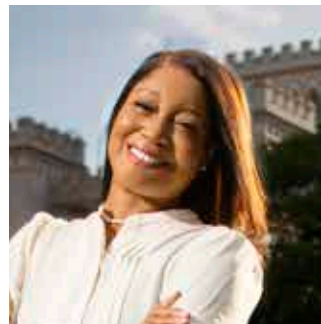
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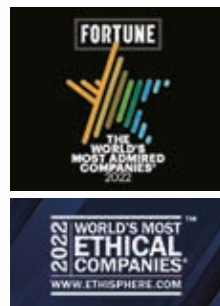
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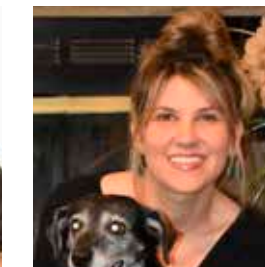
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Common Questions About *Baton Rouge* *Real Producers*

Real Producers is a national concept currently open in 125 markets across the country. With over three years in production, I wanted to take the time to answer some pretty common questions we receive about Baton Rouge Real Producers.

What is the purpose of Real Producers magazine?

The mission of *Baton Rouge Real Producers* is simple. We strive to inform and inspire the top-producing real estate agents in the Baton Rouge market and connect them socially. We do this by telling their personal stories. How they have succeeded and failed. What drives them to achieve year in and year out. Where do they spend their time when they are not working and what are they passionate about other than real estate. We give local top-producing REALTORS® a platform to tell their story in a way they have not been able to do so before.

The secondary focus is to provide an avenue for our affiliate partners to create and continue relationships with these top performers on a level that they might not be able to achieve on their own.

Who receives this magazine?

This magazine is mailed to the top 300 producing agents in the greater Baton Rouge area according to volume each year. This is based on the 2022 MLS; the ranking is annual and resets every year. This year, the minimum production level for our community was over \$6 million. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication and proficiency.

What is the process for being featured in the magazine?

It's really simple — you can nominate other REALTORS® (or yourselves!). We will consider anyone brought to our attention; we don't know everyone's story, so we need your help to learn about them! A nomination currently looks like this: You email us at gina.miller@realproducersmag.com, with the subject "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)." Please explain why you are nominating them to be featured. It could be that they have an amazing story that needs to be told; perhaps they overcame extreme obstacles, they are an

exceptional leader, have the best customer service, or they give back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with us to ensure it's a good fit. If it all works out, then we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and write an article and for our photographers to schedule a photo shoot.

What does it cost to be featured?

Zero, zilch, zip, nada, nil. It costs absolutely nothing! We are not a pay-to-play model whatsoever. We write real stories about Real Producers, so nominate away, friends!

Who are the preferred partners?

Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and a top professional in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, 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 won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval." Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area but the best affiliates, as well, so we can grow stronger together.

How can I refer a preferred partner?

If you know and want to recommend a local business that works with top REALTORS®, please email us to let us know at gina.miller@realproducersmag.com



Still have questions?

Don't hesitate to reach out!

Gina Miller

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CONRAD GREEN

Conrad Green of the Borne2Sell Team with Keller Williams Red Stick Partners has always loved solving problems, and he's never more contented than when tackling new challenges. With an "anything is possible" outlook, Conrad has managed to build quite a unique resume, and, today, he utilizes the many life lessons gleaned from his eclectic professional background to excel in the realm of real estate.

Having fostered an entrepreneurial spirit early on, Conrad launched two fruitful businesses as an ambitious youth: a pet care service and a landscape operation, which he maintained well into early adulthood. While in college, he found the inspiration for a third business venture after breaking his iPhone during a night out dancing with friends. Faced with the pricey predicament of replacing the device - not an ideal scenario for a student on a budget - Conrad tried repairing it instead, and the attempt proved successful. Soon friends were asking him to work his magic with their mobiles, which led him to parlay his skills into an official side hustle.

In 2008, Conrad expanded his horizons and began working as a commercial real estate agent intern while still operating his lawn care and phone repair businesses. During this time, the repair operation took off,

and Conrad decided to sell his landscape company, put his real estate career on hold, and devote his full attention to the art of phone resuscitation. He scaled the enterprise to impressive heights, learning the ins and outs of the new business, and, eventually, growing to twelve brick-and-mortar retail stores, throughout Louisiana, over six years.

Conrad ultimately sold his company to a national retail chain but maintained ownership of one of his locations. Though the reduced responsibility was originally refreshing, his work life soon started to feel stagnant without the hustle and bustle of running multiple stores. "When I finally took a step back and smelled the roses, I quickly realized that I missed planting, watering, and tending the rose bushes," he recalls.

True to form, Conrad's solution was to find a fresh challenge, and, without much preamble, he decided to become a firefighter. "I had a strong sense of urgency to give back to the community, continuing to learn and doing both on a tight-knit team. The nearest and next most logical step was to become a firefighter," he says of his motivation for the undertaking.





Though his stint as a public servant was rewarding, Conrad found his way back to the REALTOR® path a little over a year ago, and he hasn't looked back. Now a top-producing agent, he attributes his accomplishments in the industry to a specific trifecta: grit, a trustworthy network of contacts, and a genuine desire to serve others.

“

WHATEVER MAKES YOU HAPPY AND FULFILLED, WORK EVERY DAY NOT TO LOSE TOUCH WITH THAT PART OF YOURSELF.

”



Of course, navigating the multi-facets of any deal is always better with the benefit of a team who has your back, and Conrad says having Borne2Sell to lean on also plays a crucial role in his success, as does setting the right systems in place. “As I began to grow and scale, it became apparent that the problem wasn't gaining more business; it's organizing and arranging my business to continue to provide first-class experiences for my clients,” he explains.



When asked what he loves most about being an agent, Conrad points to the opportunity to lessen stress for his buyers and sellers. “At the end of the day, for me, it's getting clients where they need to go, and, when they get there, have them leave with a smile on their faces,” he says.

Though he considers being accessible a necessary benchmark of quality client care, Conrad consciously tries to carve out time for the things in life that replenish his spirit. “To stay engaged and fulfilled, I have to check myself and rediscover my inner self routinely. Whatever makes you happy and fulfilled, work every day not to lose touch with that part of yourself. The compass constantly changes, and we must adapt or fall victim to self-pity and destruction. God and family are my cornerstones.” he shares.

As for what his treasured family time looks like, Conrad says he and his wife, Ann, along with their two beautiful daughters, Jane and Frances, enjoy unplugging together in the great outdoors, whether they are hiking, biking, camping, fishing, or simply gardening in their backyard. An interesting assortment of pets rounds out Conrad's crew, which includes a flock of chickens, two ducks, two dogs, a hamster, and a bearded dragon named Taco.

With a work ethic that keeps him on the go and the wherewithal for putting out fires (figuratively and literally), it's fair to say that Conrad is well-suited to the ups and downs of real estate. And while it's always possible that new problems in need of solving may tempt him toward other ambitions down the road, for now, Conrad has his sights set on continuing the climb up the real estate mountain and creating positive experiences for his clients along for the ride.

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SHAEILISA BRADLEY-HUNT

» broker spotlight

By Jamie Taylor
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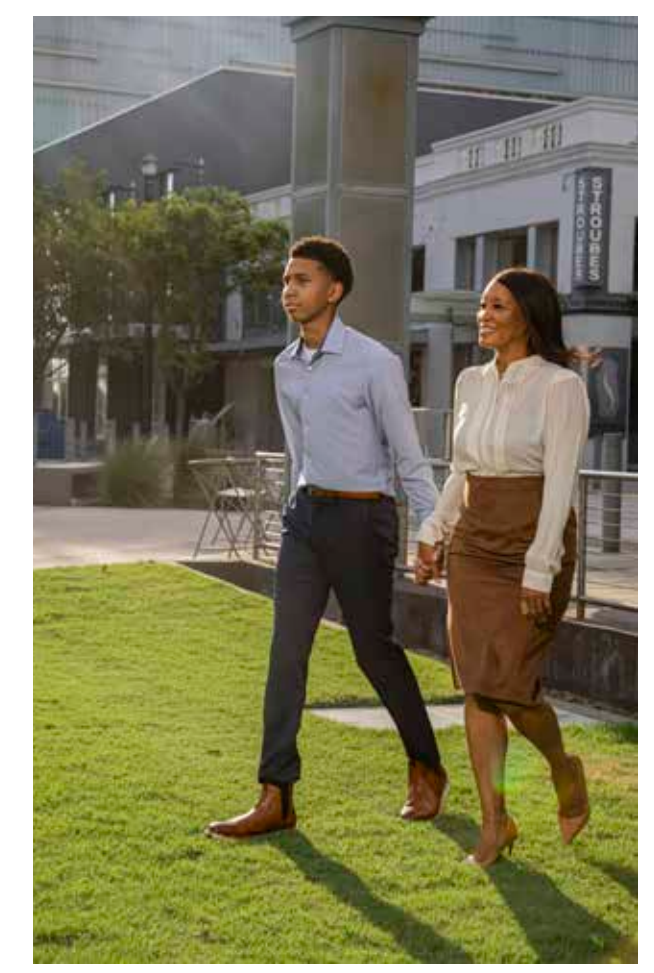
BRADLEY-HUNT AND ASSOCIATES

With a passion for business and a penchant for perennial professional growth, Shaelisa Bradley-Hunt, REALTOR® and owner at Bradley-Hunt and Associates is charting a real estate career that knows no limits. Her ever-evolving skill set and outgoing personality pack a one-two punch when it comes to helping clients realize their goals, and her go-getter drive is showing no signs of taking a back seat any time soon.

The observation resonated with Shaelisa, and she decided to take a chance at real estate school. After completing her coursework, she jumped into her new venture as an agent, while simultaneously maintaining her salon, and though charting a fresh career path was an elating undertaking, Shaelisa's excitement would soon be overshadowed in 2011, when her husband tragically passed away. "I did my second sale right after he passed," she recalls. "He was a big motivation to me. He really pushed me to be a REALTOR®, but he didn't get the opportunity to see me go all the way through. And even though he's not here, he's still my motivation."

Growing up, Shaelisa had a solid introduction to entrepreneurial best practices, as she watched her father build a thriving dump truck enterprise from the ground up. The example he set deeply resonated with Shaelisa, and she points to those early lessons as the building blocks of her own success. "Watching my dad be an entrepreneur and the way he focused was [inspiring]... He would say 'You treat people how you want to be treated; We never know how God is going to bless us,'" she recalls.

Guided by that insight, Shaelisa opened her own barber shop and hair salon at the young age of 21, and the fruits of those labors soon positioned her to become a homeowner at 23. As she prepared to sell that same house a few years later, the agent she worked with took note of Shaelisa's upbeat nature, and he offered her a little career advice. "He said, 'That personality is killing it. You would be a great REALTOR®,'" she remembers.



Shaelisa and her son Rodney



“I put my faith in God, and guess what: The year that COVID hit, I sold 41 houses.”

When she isn't helping homeowners make their dreams come true, Shaelisa enjoys shopping, reading, spending time with her mom (her "biggest fan"), her brother (also one of her main cheerleaders), her son, Rodney (who will soon be attending college with plans to pursue a path in business), and the rest of her family. She also enjoys doting on her pup, Rich Hunt, who is her disposition doppelganger in canine form. "His personality is my personality. I'm all over the place, and he is all over the place right with me," she jokes. Additionally, Shaelisa devotes time to community initiatives, including being active in Junior League, Southern University's alumni chapter, Zachary Kawana's Club, Baker Chamber of Commerce, and her church, New Pilgrim Baptist.

Considering her ever-present hustle, there is no doubt Shaelisa will continue her rise in real estate and eventually realize her professorship ambitions. And with her true heart for sharing her knowledge and helping others, it's an equally safe bet that her future students will be in excellent hands.

Honoring her husband's faith in her, Shaelisa shifted to an all-in mindset. "I said, 'This is where you have to put your faith in you.' I put my faith in God, and guess what: The year that COVID hit, I sold 41 houses," she recalls. The numbers grew from there, and in 2021, she hit 52 transactions, only to increase to 72 the following year.

That trajectory allowed Shaelisa to finally hang up her shears and clippers (though she does still own her barber shop/salon and hires out stylists). With her focus then fully rooted in real estate, she opened her own brokerage, and, while it was a big decision, Shaelisa says it was the next natural progression. "I was with a big brokerage. I was selling a lot of real estate with the idea of being my own boss and being able to move how I wanted to move. Just to be Shaelisa and be in my comfort zone."

Throughout her real estate career, Shaelisa has placed a focus on continual professional development, and, over the years, she has earned two degrees in business administration and interdisciplinary studies, from Southern University Shreveport and Southern University New Orleans, respectively. She recently decided that the time is right to reach for new heights, and she is pursuing an advanced degree in administration at the Southern Baton Rouge College of Business. "I'm so into business. Anything that's about business, I'm in it," she shares, adding that she hopes the undertaking will serve as a stepping stone to larger objectives. "I would love to teach in the College of Business. That is my actual goal to teach real estate or even entrepreneurship."

Until that time comes, Shaelisa contents herself with supporting the professional development of others through her brokerage, though she admits that welcoming new agents offers a dual advantage. "It actually motivates me

as well. I don't know everything, and I'm always learning from other people, so just to have extra people on my team is always good."

As for her favorite aspect of real estate, Shaelisa says helping clients reach unexpected milestones is always rewarding. "I love seeing people move into homes, especially those who thought they couldn't get a home. You would be amazed by the number of people who think it will never happen," she shares, giving a special nod to the fond memory of a client who bought her very first house at 70 years old. "That had everyone in the closing office crying," she recalls.



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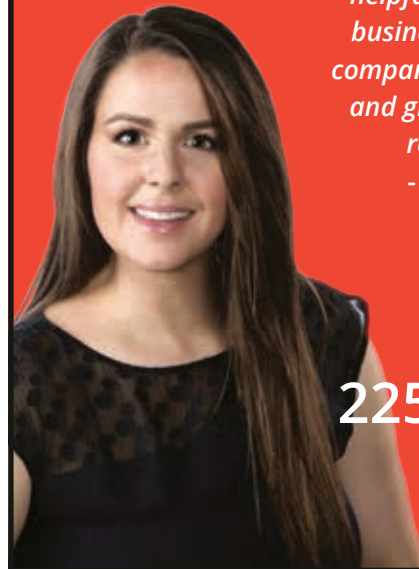


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Crystal

B O N I N



By **Breanna Smith Pizzolato**
Photos by **Ace Sylvester**

Driving down Highway 61 to Lake Rosemound, just before the Mississippi line, you might catch sight of Crystal Bonin blowing by in her tiny sports car chock full of her furry companions – two golden doodles and a Pomeranian. Whether on weekends between their lake house or weekdays in the office, Crystal is living her best life.

She radiates bubbly energy and enthusiasm, but behind her happy-go-lucky style is a competitive drive like no other.

Plans Change

Crystal's journey to becoming a real estate powerhouse is as unexpected as it is inspiring. In her early career, Crystal rose to the ranks with Cato Corporation, where she became the company's youngest top district sales manager. She was responsible for their clothing stores across the Southeast in Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Mississippi, and with the company headquartered in North Carolina, she traveled a lot.

"I had a great future going there, but I had a bigger dream of being able to stay home with our kids, and we made that happen," she said.

Crystal and her husband, Joey, established themselves in New Iberia, where he began his career with the Cardiovascular Institute, and they built their forever home. Or so they thought.

They began raising their children, Bryce and Brea, "and I was living my best life," Crystal said,

laughing. "I was shopping at Delchamps, the local grocery store, in my \$500 suits because I didn't know what else to do with them, and I definitely didn't know what to do without a phone ringing off the hook." As Bryce and Brea got older, she began teaching classes at the local gym and volunteering at their schools. "I was living my dream," she said.

When the CEO of the Cardiovascular Institute invited them to St. Francisville, Crystal was sure it was to treat them to dinner in one of their favorite places for a getaway. "I was super excited," she recalled. "And when we got there I realized we were in Zachary."

After 15 years with the Cardiovascular Institute, the CEO tapped Joey to begin the heart program in Zachary. Soon, he realized the need for a primary care physician in the area, as many of his patients were waiting weeks or months for a sign-off on necessary care from their physicians. The new venture would take dedication, patience and sacrifice to get it off the ground, and one of those sacrifices was a steady paycheck.

"When Joey told me it was time to go back to work, neither of us wanted me to travel like I was with Cato because I was gone all the time," she said. As she thought through different options, she kept coming back to real estate. "We managed all of our own transactions and properties," she said. "And I had all of this management and marketing knowledge from my corporate days."

She started the licensing exam classes on September 7, 2010, her daughter's birthday. "She was less than thrilled that mom was returning to work," Crystal explained. But she figured it would only be for a year or two. "Then, once I got started later that September, my competitive drive kicked in," she laughed.

After nearly a year of working with a brokerage, she wondered whether she could make it on her own. "I called Burk Baker, and we went to the real estate commission that day," she said. And Burk served as her sponsoring broker, becoming the first person she would call.





In December 2011, she opened Crystal Bonin Realty.

Weekendin'

For Crystal, success is cherishing every moment of life, whether she's in the office, at the beach house, or sharing a meal with her family. With three decades of marriage to Joey under her belt, they now occupy adjacent offices at the Copper Mill Office Park. Initially, they shared a workspace until a pivotal moment when Joey, in the most compassionate manner, encouraged her to either find a way to stop working past midnight or consider closing the business. She recognized that maintaining her pace while gaining more personal time required a team and a dedicated workspace. Determined, Crystal stayed up all night devising a plan and secured the neighboring building the following day.

This year, the Bonins celebrated several significant milestones as Bryce completed medical school, embarking on his first year of residency as a neurosurgeon in Shreveport. Brea married in June, and is now entering her second year of medical school in New Orleans.

"It's been a lot - and all good stuff. We are still in love, our businesses are good, and our family is healthy. We're thankful. I wake up every morning and think, 'What do I get to do today?' and that has only come with age," she said.

On the weekends, they're either at Lake Rosemound, their new beach house, or traveling to Shreveport, relishing time with Bryce's family, particularly their one-year-old grandson, Beckett. On the rare solo trip to the beach house, she drives right past the seafood shacks and local dives, headed straight for Olive Garden. "They have the best pup cup!" she explained. "And no one else in the family likes Olive Garden. So I go there with the dogs for what I call 'noodle doodle time.'"

Amid the gravity of the real estate industry, Crystal offers an air of lightheartedness, infusing professionalism with her infectious joy and exuberance for life.

Crystal's journey from corporate professional to stay-at-home mother to real estate broker embodies her diligence, tenacity, and unapologetic pursuit of happiness. Her story underscores that triumph isn't confined to figures and transactions; it's about embracing life with open arms and a heart brimming with delight. So, when you spot Crystal cruising along Highway 61 with her furry companions, remember she embodies more than a high-achieving real estate agent; she's a force of nature, a wellspring of laughter, and a living embodiment of the phrase "living your best life."



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By Attorney **Charles G Blaize Jr**

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- Property acquired by a spouse with separate funds;
- Property acquired by a spouse by inheritance or donation to him individually;
- Things acquired by a spouse as a result of a voluntary partition of community property during the community property regime.

Broker/Agent Tips

Real estate brokers and agents who are assisting a Seller would be well advised to ask the following facts prior to executing a listing agreement or a purchase agreement:

- 1.) Is the Seller Married? Divorced? Separated? Is there any Judgment between the owners?
- 2.) If the Seller is married, Was he/she at acquisition of the property?
- 3.) Does the Seller have a prenuptial agreement? If so, get a copy, and submit with Purchase Agreement to the title agent.
- 4.) Will the client's non-acquiring spouse come to the closing to sign the necessary papers? If so, set reminders to ensure the other spouse will come.
- 5.) If the other spouse will not come to the closing, will this lender agree to lend its money to finance the sale if the acquiring spouse makes the double declaration?

Since all Owners of property must execute a Purchase Agreement as Sellers, knowing who the owner is, is a critical component of any Purchase Agreement. Our quick advice is when in doubt, have everyone sign! But sometimes that task is tricky. Below is a quick reference guide to assist agents in making the determination.

If you are unsure, call your favorite title attorney.

Louisiana is a community property State, meaning the presumption is that property owned by married persons is community property. Property of married persons is either community or separate. Marriage alone does not define the ownership regime of the parties. The rights of married people when buying or selling property are regulated by law.

Community property includes some of the following:

- Property acquired during the existence of the marriage through the effort, skill, or industry of both or either spouse;
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» rising star

By Breanna Pizzolato
Photos by Kyle Rome

Tammy Lezak

In real estate, competitive drive is often touted as the top trait for building a successful business. Tammy Lezak puts that myth to rest. Her genuine kindness is infectious - and you'd never know without a bit of prodding that her gracious spirit was forged in the fires of some of life's most difficult challenges.

Not long ago, Tammy was in a fight for her life, confined to a hospital bed in her living room for more than a year after a boating accident. "I broke my neck. My heart was pushed out of my chest. I shattered 7 ribs - and still have them. I had a punctured lung and a 2% chance of surviving," she said with a gentle nod. "But I knew God wasn't finished with me yet." She was right.

Trials & Triumph

Even before the boating accident, Tammy was no stranger to the long, arduous road of recovery. At just two years old, her son Keaton, now 22, suffered severe burns to 60% of his body. She was there for him then, and she was determined to continue being there for him and her oldest son Elijah.

Slowly but surely, with unwavering determination, Tammy regained her strength and began rebuilding her life. She started with her home, repainting furniture to bring new life into her home. "I was pretty impressed with myself," she said, laughing. So she posted a few photos on Facebook. Soon, she had a bustling furniture repurposing

business. She sourced second-hand pieces and reimagined bedroom suites, tables and other fixtures people would drop off, trusting her with the final design. With each brush stroke, she began to feel whole again.

"I was depressed for a long time," she explained. "I thought I would never be the same, but I kept my faith in God, and I kept asking Him to make me whole again. It was hard. At times I wanted to give up. But I buckled down and kept telling myself: 'You've got to do this. You've got people who are depending on you.'" She had no idea that in a few short years, clients would be depending on her, too.

Give It a Try

When Tammy met Brandi Phillips, the two became fast friends. Tammy staged all of Brandi's listings, and when she opened the NextHome Solutions brokerage, she knew just who to call to decorate and furnish the blank space. Tammy immediately knew she wanted to work for NextHome Solutions, "because they have this saying, *Humans Over Houses*, and that just resonated with me. Plus, they have the cutest mascot, Luke, a French Bulldog. Most people love animals. That gets their attention, as do the signs. The brand of NextHome just stood out to me."

“I knew
God
wasn't
finished
with me
yet.”

Growing up, Tammy's mom was a Realtor, so she was familiar with the industry, but she never imagined that her desire to add life to empty houses would become her own bustling career in real estate. Brandi encouraged her to get licensed and test the waters. "She told me it would be hard and that it's not for everyone, but I said, 'I'm gonna try,' and I started from there."

Tammy's heartwarming resilience and kindness are nothing short of superpowers. "She surprised me," Brandi said. "She's someone I can count on to get the job done because she has a hustle like no other." The early success swept Tammy off of her feet. Though, make no mistake, it has been hard-earned. "If there's something I can do to help, I'm going to do it. Even if it doesn't meet my schedule or is inconvenient, it's important to me to show others how much I care about them," she said. "I fought so hard to be here for the people who depend on me, so I'm going to be there for them."

For Tammy, the steadily rising sales volume takes a backseat to the fact that her clients have become some of her most cherished friends. They often drop by for dinner, share their top-secret fishing spots, and one client even took her on an all-expenses-paid cruise. "Having people who invite me over for dinner and include me in their birthday celebrations, that's what is so special to me about this journey," she said. "Nothing could replace that feeling and what I get from creating these friendships."

She's helped many clients move to the boot from out-of-state, a feat requiring additional coordination, assistance getting settled, and a ton of trust. One of the most popular places people are moving from? Illinois. This year alone, she's helped three families move from Illinois to South Louisiana. "They want to move down here because it's always sunny," she said, laughing. "I'm sure to warn them it's not just sunny, it's HOT!"



Her commitment goes beyond the transactional; it's rooted in genuine concern and support. Even amid her triumphs, Tammy remains grounded by the joy of creating these meaningful connections, underscoring the true essence of her journey.

Kindness Wins

Tammy isn't defined by her professional successes but by the friendships she's cultivated, the lives she's touched, and the heartfelt moments she's shared. When she finds the time to get away, she can be found with a fishing pole in hand, spending time with her sons, or working on a new furniture flip.

These days, she spends a lot of time on the road, too, both for her clients and her family. Her father recently underwent a triple bypass, and despite living four hours away, she makes the long haul to see her parents as often as possible. "My dad is my world, he's my hero, and I just love him so much," she said. "I spend a lot of time going back and forth to visit my parents because I want to spend as much time with them as I can."

With a heart of gold and a spirit that refuses to give up, Tammy continues to leave a lasting impact on the lives of those around her, proving that being genuine, kind, and helpful can get you to the top. Tammy

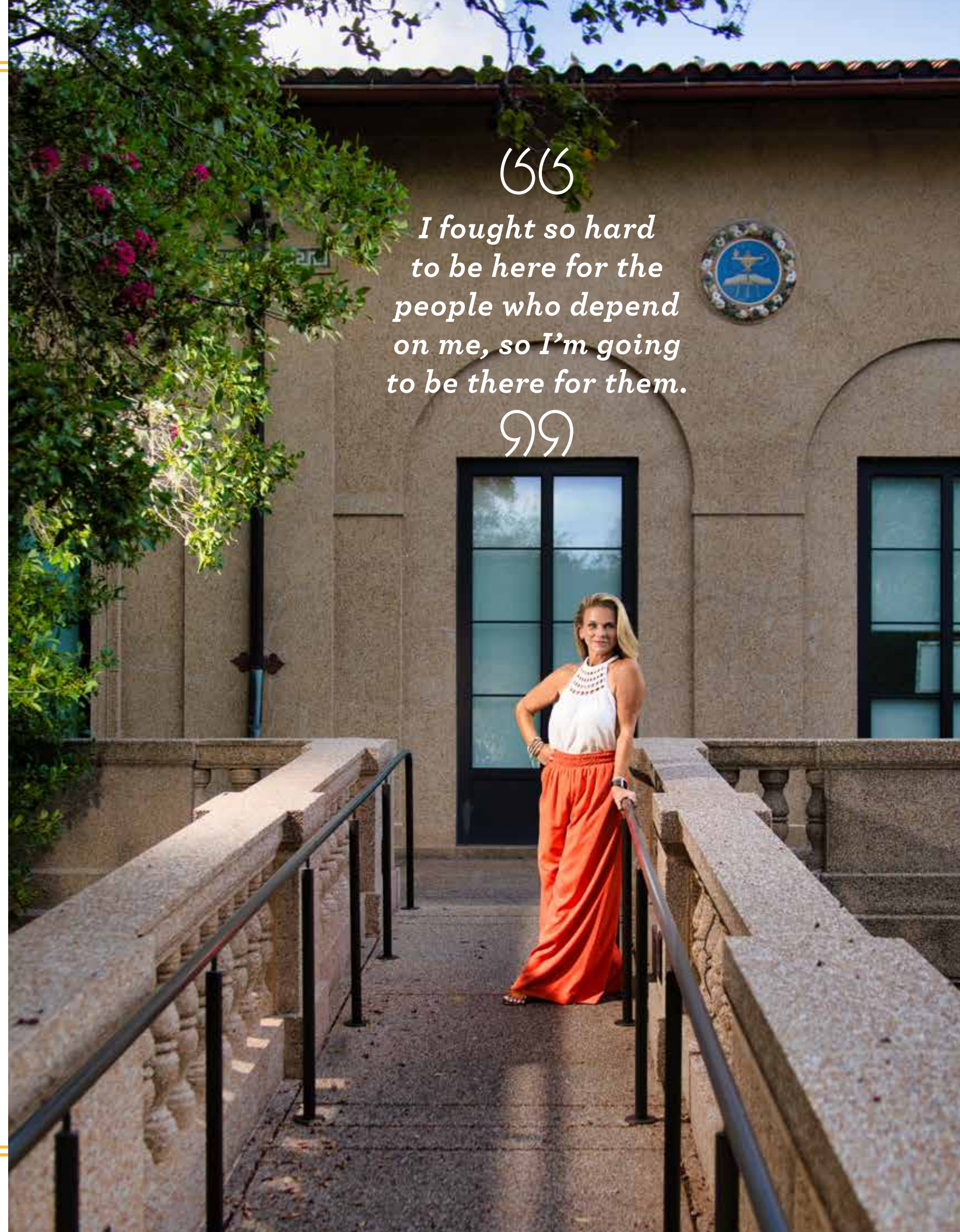
reminds us that the true reward lies not just in the destination, but in the meaningful relationships and connections we nurture along the way.

"Always be nice," she said. "You never know what someone is going through. People put on a smile and push through every day, but you never know what's going on deep inside of them or in their lives. I'm a people person, and helping people is what makes me happy. That's what gets me through each trial and setback."

“

I fought so hard to be here for the people who depend on me, so I'm going to be there for them.

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