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ASHTON ERNST BALLARD

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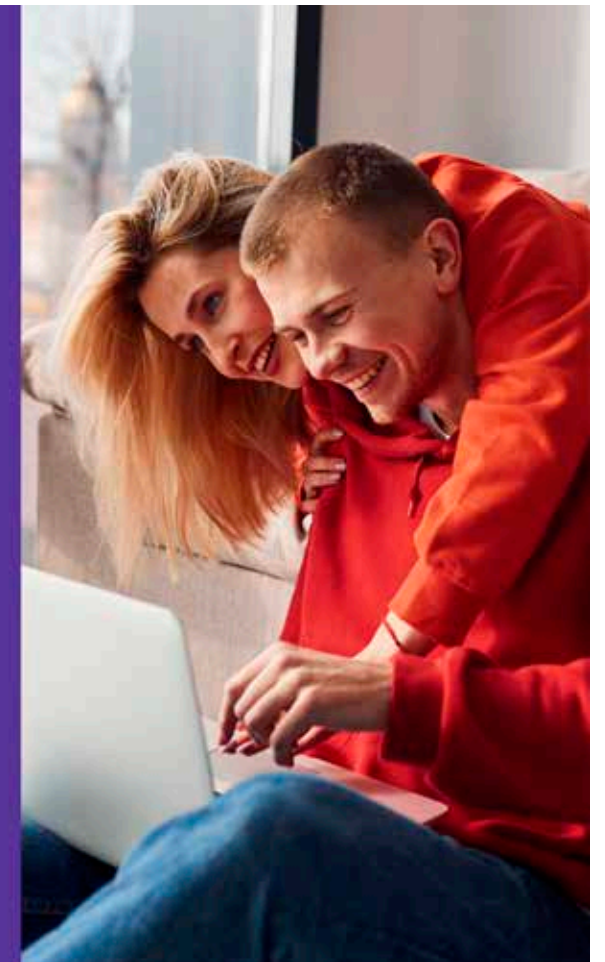
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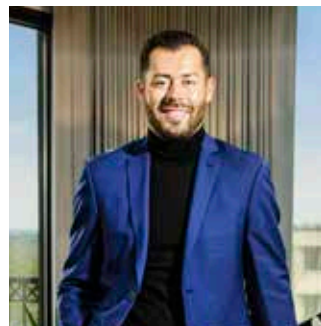
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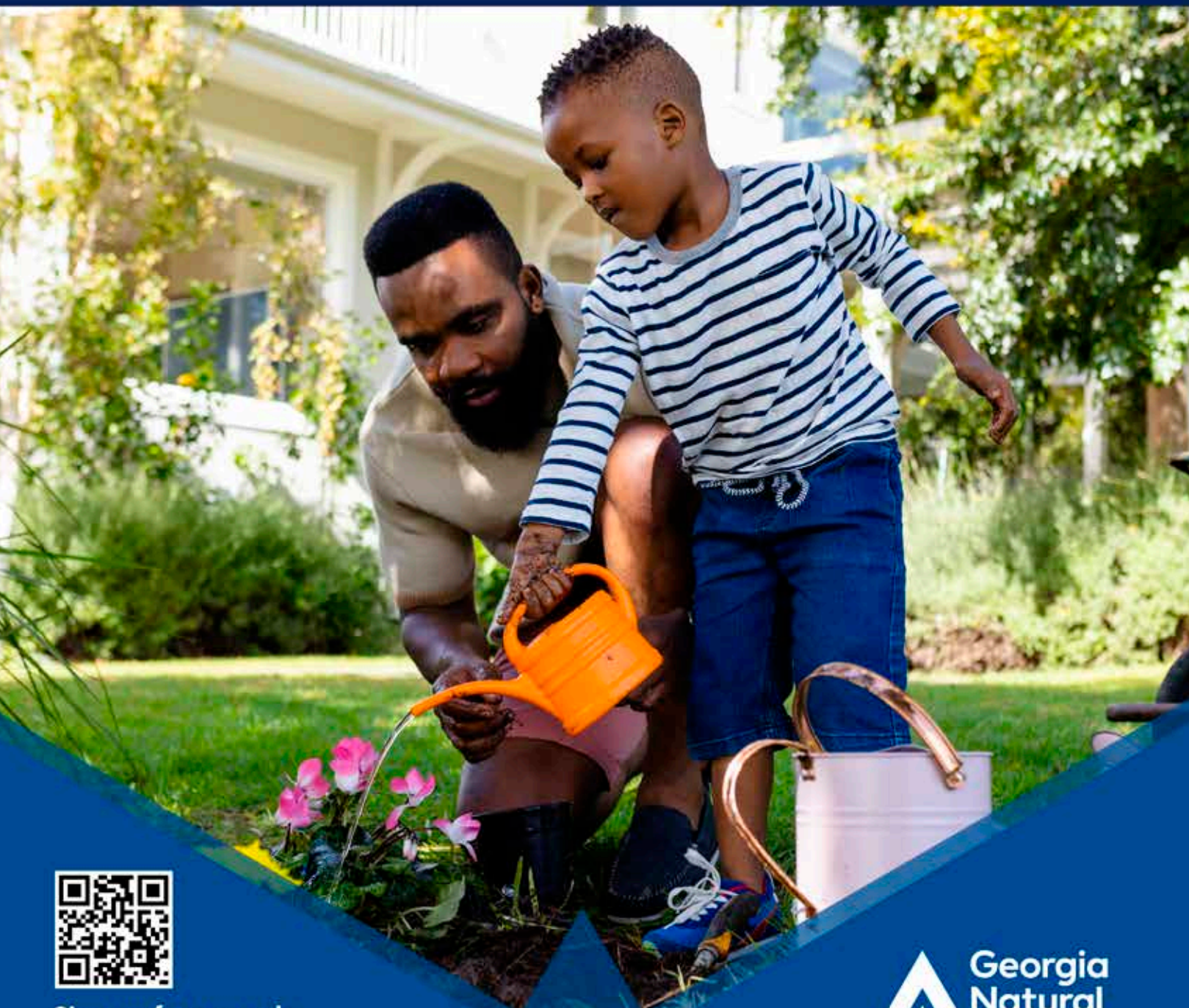
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ASHTON ERNST BALLARD

▶▶ cover story

Photos by Allie Santos



“
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WHAT IS REALLY
GOING ON IN
THE MARKET IS
WHAT DRIVES ME.

”

FROM PROFESSIONAL SINGER TO TOP REALTOR®

Ashton Ernst Ballard's journey from the melodies of the stage to the dynamic world of real estate is nothing short of captivating. With an infectious passion for helping others and an unwavering commitment to excellence, Ashton's story is a testament to hard work, resilience, and the pursuit of one's dreams.

Born in the heart of Huntington, West Virginia, and raised in the quaint town of Milton, Ashton's roots run deep in the Appalachian region. A proud alumna of Marshall University, where she studied Business, Ashton's early years were marked by diverse experiences, from gracing the stage as a professional singer since the age of eight to navigating the realms of luxury retail and personal training.

However, it was Ashton's innate desire to make a meaningful impact in people's lives that ultimately led her to pursue a career in real estate. "I had always known I would enter into real estate at some point," she reflects. "After working multiple jobs to make ends meet, I received a strong nudge from a friend to pursue my passion." And pursue it she did, obtaining her real estate license in 2011 and embarking on a remarkable journey that would see her become a stalwart in the industry.

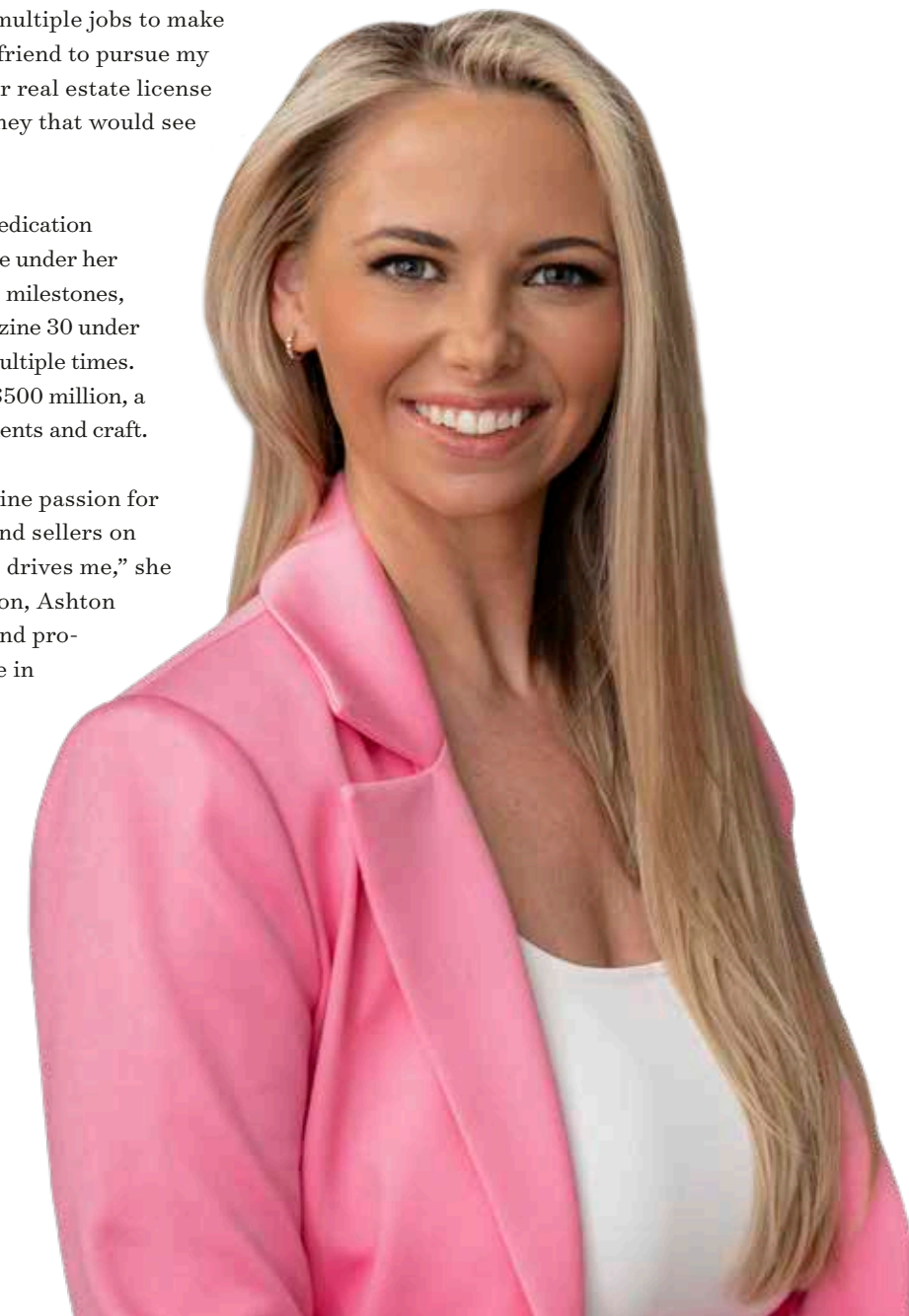
Ashton's accolades speak volumes about her dedication and expertise. With over 12 years of experience under her belt, she has consistently achieved remarkable milestones, including being recognized as a Realtor® Magazine 30 under 30 Honoree and Atlantan Top Luxury Agent multiple times. Her total career volume exceeds a staggering \$500 million, a testament to her steadfast dedication to her clients and craft.

Yet, beyond the accolades lies Ashton's genuine passion for serving others. "Helping to educate buyers and sellers on what is really going on in the market is what drives me," she affirms. In a world inundated with information, Ashton prides herself on cutting through the noise and providing her clients with clarity and confidence in their real estate endeavors.

For Ashton, the most rewarding aspect of her business transcends transactions; it lies in the profound impact she has on her clients' lives during pivotal moments. "Helping clients overcome difficult situations is truly an honor," she shares. Whether it's navigating through a loss, divorce, or significant life change, Ashton's unwavering support and empathy resonate deeply with those she serves.

As a former Keller Williams Maps Coach, Ashton's passion for educating individuals in

the real estate industry knows no bounds. She's had the privilege of coaching up to 22 individual agents simultaneously until the end of 2021, instilling in them the skills and knowledge necessary for success. Hosting training events, particularly centered around listings, brings her immense joy as she empower agents to excel in their careers. Moreover, her commitment to education extends beyond agents to her clients and the local community.



“

TO ME, SUCCESS IS DOING THE HARD THINGS,
BEING CONTENT WITH YOUR JOURNEY, YET
NEVER COMPLACENT IN YOUR GROWTH.

”



“Every Friday, I engage with my audience through ‘Martini Minute,’ a social media video series where I candidly address questions ranging from the intricacies of real estate transactions to lighthearted inquiries like what to do when nature calls during a house viewing. This platform allows me to disseminate truthful insights about the market, fulfilling my mission to educate and inform with transparency and integrity,” she says.

Ashton’s vision for the future is as ambitious as it is inspiring. Alongside her husband, Dr. Brandon Ballard, a prominent Chiropractor, Ashton envisions further expanding her team within The Justin Landis Group and spearheading


new ventures alongside her business partners. Additionally, her commitment to community service remains unwavering, with Ashton actively supporting organizations such as the ALS Association and The Atlanta Mission.

Outside of her bustling career, Ashton finds solace in an array of hobbies, from perfecting her swing on the golf course to indulging in culinary adventures as a self-proclaimed foodie. However, amidst the whirlwind of her professional and personal endeavors, Ashton remains grounded by her defining principles of success. “To me, success is doing the hard things, being content with your journey, yet never complacent in your growth,” she asserts.

Ashton’s story proves the power of perseverance, passion, and purpose. From her humble beginnings in West Virginia to her illustrious career in real estate, Ashton Ernst Ballard exemplifies what it means to embody excellence in every facet of life. As she continues to leave an indelible mark on the industry, one thing remains certain: Ashton’s dedication to her clients and her craft will continue to inspire generations to come.

In the words of Ashton herself, “Focus on the clients, and the money will come.” And indeed, it is this commitment to serving others that defines Ashton’s legacy.





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JEREMY SMITH

Photos by Regis Lawson

A heart for community and fun-filled transactions

Jeremy Smith, a vibrant and accomplished Atlanta native, is not your typical real estate professional. With a career spanning over 12 years, he has not only climbed the ranks to become a leading Realtor® but has infused the industry with a unique blend of passion, humor, and a commitment to community.

Jeremy's journey in real estate began unexpectedly during his college years at Georgia State University. His transition into the realm of property dealings took off when he connected with Atlanta Intown Real Estate Services, the only brokerage that responded to his outreach. This pivotal moment led him to meet Julian Rather, now his business partner and mentor, who played a crucial role in shaping his flourishing career.

Reflecting on his career path, Jeremy shares, "I delved into real estate and never looked back. It's been over 13 years of fantastic collaboration with Julian, and I've cherished every moment of it."

But what made Jeremy take the leap into real estate? For him, it was all about the people. "My decision to become a Realtor® stems from my passion for diverse interactions and cultivating relationships with people," he says. Networking has been the backbone of his real estate endeavors, connecting him with clients and colleagues alike.

With his real estate license secured in March 2012, Jeremy has navigated through different teams and brokerages, leaving a lasting impact wherever he went. His journey started at Atlanta Intown Real Estate Services and later transitioned to Engel & Völkers Atlanta in 2019 with his business partner, Julian Rather.

Reflecting on his achievements, Jeremy beams with pride, "This year, I'll be receiving the prestigious Phoenix award, granted

for achieving ten consecutive years of qualification as a top producer within the Atlanta Realtors® Association. I'm excited to be one of the youngest recipients ever."



In addition to the Phoenix award, Jeremy has garnered recognition from various quarters, including top producer awards from Engel & Völkers Atlanta and Atlanta Intown Real Estate Services. Notably, he was named the "Best Dressed Realtor®" by Atlanta Agent Magazine in 2018 and dubbed the "Most Agent on the Scene" by Modern Luxury Interiors Atlanta Magazine in 2023.



“My decision to become a Realtor® stems from my passion for diverse interactions and cultivating relationships with people.”

Despite last year's challenges, Jeremy's upbeat attitude remains intact. "Last year's volume was \$6,000,000+. It was tough, but I'm ready to bounce back stronger this year," he declares.

When asked about his mentor, Julian Rather, Jeremy is effusive in his praise. "Julian has been instrumental in teaching me everything I know about real estate, particularly specializing in condominiums. Beyond business, Julian is a fantastic individual, and I'm grateful to count him as a close friend."

Overcoming challenges, especially in the beginning of his career, Jeremy notes, "Starting out in real estate, I often found myself being perceived as inexperienced due to my young age and baby face. I quickly realized the importance of leveraging the success of my mentor to establish credibility in the industry."

But it's not all about business for Jeremy. He is deeply passionate about community involvement. Jeremy and his partner, Cody Alcorn, actively support charitable causes. "Recognizing the success I've been fortunate to achieve in my business, I felt it was time to pay it forward. We decided to support the Alzheimer's Association and raised over \$55,000."

As a firm believer in mentorship, Jeremy is honored to serve as the vice president of the mentorship program for the Buckhead Business Association. "Mentorship is something I firmly believe in and advocate for within the business community," he says.

Family plays a significant role in Jeremy's life, and his partner, Cody Alcorn, his mother, Kristina Minter, and his grandmother, Brigita Rowe, share a close bond. Their lake house on Lake Allatoona serves as a cherished retreat where they gather for holidays and leisure activities.



“My goal is to ensure every client feels at ease, and I willingly shoulder the stress on their behalf.”

Away from the hustle of real estate, Jeremy finds solace at Lake Allatoona. "There's no better way to unwind and find clarity than sitting on the deck, gazing out at the serene waters," he shares.

For Jeremy, success is not just about professional accomplishments. "Success, to me, means enjoying a comfortable and tranquil life surrounded by loved ones, with family and friends nearby."

As a top producer, Jeremy's advice for newcomers is simple yet profound: "Seeking out a mentor is crucial! Collaborating with someone who possesses expertise and a respected reputation within the real estate community is indispensable."

Jeremy wants to be remembered for his kindness, integrity, and concierge service. "My goal is to ensure every client feels at ease, and I willingly shoulder the stress on their behalf. After all, buying or selling real estate should be a pleasant and enjoyable experience for everyone involved."

As we celebrate Jeremy Smith's journey and upcoming Phoenix award, it's clear that he not only excels in real estate but also shines as a beacon of positivity and community engagement. In his own words, "Approaching situations with enthusiasm and empathy can significantly brighten the atmosphere." And for Jeremy, that's the key to a successful and fulfilling career in real estate.



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▶▶ leader spotlight

LOREDANA GHETE

A Trailblazer in Real Estate Empowerment

Photos by Allie Santos

Loredana Ghete stands as a true exemplar of resilience, determination, and unbridled success. Born and raised in Romania, Loredana’s narrative from modest beginnings to becoming a top producer in the real estate industry is nothing short of remarkable.

With roots firmly grounded in Romania, Loredana began her academic journey with a major in Sociology and later secured a Masters in Human Resources Management, graduating in 2005. Little did she know, her life would soon take a turn toward entrepreneurship and the pursuit of the American Dream.

At the tender age of 21, Loredana tied the knot with Mircea Ghete, her husband and fellow entrepreneur. Their union bore fruit with the birth of their daughter, Karina, at 22. A happy marriage spanning 21 years ensued, with Mircea evolving into a successful businessman overseeing ventures both in the United States and Romania.

The couple’s journey into entrepreneurship commenced with the purchase of their “first home,” an investment property that kickstarted their foray into real estate. The journey involved

buying, flipping, and selling properties, coupled with diversification into other ventures such as the car industry, restaurants, and clothing businesses. Their flagship enterprise included franchise stores in the Transylvania Region for Romania’s largest cell phone provider, Orange. By 2014, the Ghete family decided to embark on a new chapter, making the move to the United States.

Loredana’s entry into the real estate realm was a natural progression. Growing up with parents who thrived on passive income through various investment properties, the allure of the real estate industry was deeply ingrained in her. “Real Estate was in my world since I was a child,” Loredana reminisces. In 2015, she obtained her real estate license, marking the commencement of a transformative journey.

However, the road to success wasn’t without its challenges. Transitioning from an accomplished businesswoman to a novice Realtor® demanded humility, hard work, and perseverance. Loredana’s first six months as an individual agent were a humbling experience, characterized by sweat, tears, and a series of failures. Undeterred, she embraced the grind, from door knocking to cold calling, adapting to a new economic, social, and business environment.

Loredana’s pivotal moment arrived when, after experiencing some success, she sought guidance from her team leader and broker, Melba Franklin. Recognizing her potential, Melba offered Loredana a position on the leadership team, a proposition initially met with hesitation but eventually accepted after a thoughtful weekend reflection.



“
Real Estate was in my world since I was a child.”

Under Melba's mentorship, Loredana's trajectory soared. Her commitment to leadership roles within Keller Williams North Atlanta led to remarkable growth, propelling the office from 137 agents in 2015 - to over 700 agents today, and ranking #1 in profitability in the world.

For Loredana, embarking on a mission to create millionaires isn't just a lofty ambition; it's a passionate pursuit that defines her purpose. "With "Millionaire Maker" as my tagline, I've delved into the financial landscape, uncovering a fascinating truth: the \$500,000 threshold tends to breed complacency among achievers. At this point, individuals seem content with their lifestyle—luxurious homes, extravagant vacations, and ample investments. Yet, I firmly believe in transcending this comfort zone. Beyond this milestone lies a transformative journey where individuals evolve into extraordinary beings driven by altruism and impact. This realization sparked a fervent dedication to guide others on this path, leveraging proven strategies outlined in Gary Keller's seminal work, "The Millionaire Real Estate Agent." Witnessing the metamorphosis of our first MREA Master in 2019 to now nurturing a community of 12, with ambitious plans to double by 2025, is not just a testament to our success but also a testament to the power of collective growth. Together, we're elevating conversations, fostering collaboration, and unlocking boundless possibilities for agents worldwide—a truly beautiful journey to behold."

When we asked her about others who have mentored her along the way or if there was anyone she looks up to, she excitedly told us: "There are several people who I keep learning from, who have helped me raise the bar and always pushed me to become more, and have helped me compress time. My coach, Matt Teter, who is always raising the level of my thinking. Aubrey Bailey, whom I've learned a lot from by working with him every day for several years. Andy and Lesley Peters, who I admire and look up to for their leadership style. Lynn Tortorigi, my business partner, who always has my back. Amanda Charlesworth, our Director of Growth, who is showing me strength and resilience every day. And of course, my entire team: Robert Doyle, Harrah Brown, Hailey Widener,



Photo submitted by Loredana Ghete

Leanza Baccala, Preston Gant – who show me every day what team work looks like.

Reflecting on her nine-year journey as a Realtor®, Loredana emphasizes the importance of overcoming challenges. "I've learned that success and money expose who you truly are, and failures are just life lessons we need to learn," she shares. Two pivotal moments, the 2008-2009 financial crisis and the move to the United States, shaped her perspective, underscoring the significance of surrounding oneself with supportive individuals.

Passionate about education, Loredana's goal extends beyond financial success. She aspires to create opportunities for ten underprivileged students annually, providing them the chance to attend top schools in the United States. Family remains a core value, with Loredana cherishing moments with her husband Mircea, daughter Karina, and an extended family of entrepreneurs.

Beyond the world of real estate, Loredana's pursuits involve a deep love for travel and creating lasting memories with loved ones. Her definition of success transcends financial achievements; it involves being someone worth following, making a difference in people's lives, and finding joy in both personal and professional pursuits.

Looking toward the future, Loredana envisions continuous self-development and international contributions to the real estate industry through teaching and coaching. As she strives to inspire others to choose their destinies and live better lives, Loredana's mission, vision, values, beliefs, and perspective encapsulate her essence.

Loredana Ghete's story is not just a tale of triumph in the real estate industry; it's a testament to the transformative power of passion, hard work, and a commitment to making a positive impact. Her legacy, rooted in family values and an unwavering belief in putting people before profits, will undoubtedly resonate for generations to come.

“I've learned that success and money expose who you truly are, and failures are just life lessons we need to learn.”



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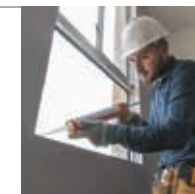


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