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cover story

Story by Maddie Podish
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WENDY WALKER

The Wendy Walker Team | Jamestown Realty Group



“My word for this year is peace, and I’m really creating that for myself,” smiles Wendy Walker, Associate Broker with The Wendy Walker Team | Jamestown Realty Group. For the first 17 years, Wendy poured herself into real estate and strived to help more families year after year. Originally from New York, Wendy moved to Williamsburg in 2003, repeatedly falling in love with the area after visiting her grandparents, who worked in Colonial Williamsburg.

Born with a genuine heart for caring, she’s always been drawn to professions that allow her to help others. Before diving into real estate, Wendy worked as a respiratory therapist at Riverside and in home health care. The long hours kept her from her two young daughters, prompting a life-changing decision. “When my second daughter was born, I was still working 12-hour shifts and hardly saw my daughters,” she recalls. “That’s when I decided to take real estate classes and got my license in 2005.”



As she interviewed different brokerages, someone told her something she has continued to prove wrong. “I remember telling a broker that I wasn’t a salesperson but could be super excited for clients, and that person said I had to be a salesperson to be successful in real estate,” Wendy shares. “I’ve never been one to push anyone to buy or sell a home if it’s not right for their family. I believe you can be successful in this field without being a salesperson as long as you care about your clients.”

Wendy’s journey has not been without personal trials. In 2008, she went through a

divorce and became a single parent just as the real estate market crashed. Instead of giving up, she pivoted to help those upside down in their homes. Her resilience and dedication saw her through the tough times, allowing her to provide for her daughters and continue growing her business.

This mindset fueled the exponential growth of her business throughout her career, making her one of only three agents still practicing out of the 20 who joined her previous brokerage at the same time. When agents ask her how she does it, she explains, “You have to look at each client as an individual and not just know their needs but understand them.” Wendy’s husband, Rob, to

whom she has been married for three years (together for 11), admires her relentless spirit. “When we first got together, she was already killing it in real estate and was one of the top producers in her office. I didn’t start working for her until five years ago, and to be clear, I do work for her,” he chuckles. “But she continued from year one to year 17 to increase her productivity every year. She sold more houses, did more business and kept going up and up. People always ask me how she does it, and the answer is so simple. She’s a genuine, caring person, and she falls in love with every client she takes on.”



Along with her caring personality, education elevated her career, including receiving coaching from the Brian Buffini program for the past nine years. This program perfectly aligned with what she was already doing, creating unique approaches to staying connected to her clients.

Now, after 19 years in the industry and having navigated two of the toughest markets in real estate history, Wendy describes herself as being in the fourth quarter of her real estate career. "The COVID market was insane even for the most seasoned agents," she states. "I realized I was ready to start pulling back so I could enjoy more of my life." This transition was more than just cutting back on transactions; it led to a change in brokerages after being at her original one for 18 years.

Though she's cut back, one thing hasn't changed—her caring personality. Working strictly off referrals, her priority is still caring for her clients and giving back to the community. In 2018, she started donating \$100 per transaction to local nonprofits like Hospice House and Meals on Wheels, now amounting to nearly \$40,000. Hospice House holds a special place in her heart as both her grandparents passed away there.

To Wendy, enjoying life is creating lasting memories. As empty-nesters, she and Rob love spending time at home with their core group of friends, enjoying their pool and traveling to 10 different countries, Iceland being a standout destination. Though retirement is still a while off, Wendy looks forward to this next chapter and creating peace in her life.

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EDDIE HERB



GARRETT REALTY PARTNERS

The first impression one gets from Eddie Herb is his open and engaging sense of humor, either from meeting him in person or from his nickname printed on his business cards. “I’m kind of a jokester,” he admits. “Most people call me ‘Eddie Bag of Donuts.’ I had a client from Philadelphia call me that one time because he thought I looked like a mafia boss, and, of course, it was so funny I ran with it.” The nickname stuck and has proved so popular that many don’t know his actual name. “Most people don’t even know me as Eddie Herb, or Edward Herb, my real name,” he laughs.

Although he may personally be bit of a joker, Eddie never kids around when doing the right thing for his clients, even if he has to tell them something difficult to confront or what they don’t want to hear. “I’m not a rainbows and unicorns guy,” the Peninsula native chuckles about his direct approach. “I’ve walked into a house, turned around before the client even looked at it and said, ‘Hey, we might want to start looking somewhere else, and here’s why.’”

The goal is to find his clients the best house possible for them, not to push them into a quick sale with a property that isn’t right for them, he explains. “I want them to feel they got what they paid for, and I do my due diligence and the best I can for them,” Eddie asserts. “I’ll see something that’s in no way up to code, and while ultimately, it’s up to the clients if they go with the house, I can warn them about it and other things that will be major repairs so they know if they want to take that on if the seller is not willing to take care of it.”

When he identifies these kinds of issues, Eddie speaks to his clients from a position of career experience, not just as a REALTOR® but from his 27-year career in the fire service. “I was a structural collapse technician for 20

years,” he elaborates, an essential part of the fire service in which a variety of techniques are used to shore up a collapsing structure with wood or metal props, necessitating an extensive knowledge of building codes and structures that he uses to the benefits of his clients.

“They say the craziest ones go on a specialty team for 20 years, and I loved it,” Eddie laughs goodheartedly about his service, crediting it for the level of professionalism and preparation he puts into efforts for his clients. “I’m definitely a preparer,” he states. “When I’m doing showings, I know as

much as possible about every building we’re going into.” In the event of challenges with transactions, he rarely has one that genuinely stresses him, allowing him to swiftly find solutions. “Other REALTORS® have told me I don’t get overly stressed,” he remarks, “which is probably the best attribute I have in real estate. If something goes wrong, I get it done and handled.” Having spent a career dealing with life-threatening situations, he has a perspective that allows him to keep his cool even in the most convoluted of real estate issues. “I’ve seen much worse,” he wryly states.



A third-generation firefighter whose late father served for 30 years, he also served as a medic, and during his last few years as Training Officer for the city of Hampton, he conducted fire academies and company trainings. "It's the family business," he smiles. "I joke that my father went for 30 years, but I could only last 27." Although his retirement from the fire service was indubitably well-earned, it was extremely short-lived. "I lasted two months," he laughs. "I like to stay busy; it was just too boring to me." Looking for a new challenge, he reached out to a former colleague from the fire service, Adam Triplett at Garrett Realty Partners, and after one conversation, he found himself on the way to his new career, one he wishes he'd known about sooner. "If I'd known how much I would have liked and enjoyed real estate, I probably would have gotten into it much sooner," Eddie laughs. "The fire service does a lot of damage to your body. I've broken every bone in my body except for my collar bone at one point or another."

Ironically, taking his real estate classes and test in the same building as the brokerage, for Eddie, the choice to become part of the Garrett team was easy. "I've never looked anywhere else," he recollects. "I joined them because Adam used to work for the same fire department as I did. He's a real stand-up guy with integrity. He helped me buy my home that I currently live in roughly 15 years ago. Eddie praises the culture at Garrett, citing its emphasis on training and assisting newer agents as a major factor in his choice and his success. "It was an easy transition due to the fact that it felt like the family atmosphere of the fire service to me," he affirms, "and I've helped people all my life, which is why it was easy for me: It's still about helping people. There's nothing better to me."



MOST PEOPLE CALL ME 'EDDIE BAG OF DONUTS'.



When not helping people find their next home or making them laugh, Eddie loves watching Joe Rogan and is an avowed history buff, learning everything he can about both ancient and recent history. He is passionate about traveling, once flying out to San Francisco by himself just to see Alcatraz, and enjoys immersing himself

in the local culture as much as possible. "There's nothing better than going to other areas when they are having a cultural fair," he declares. A family-oriented person, he relishes spending time with his sisters and his son, and they enjoy continuing the family tradition of vacations together whenever they can.

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Story by Maddie Podish
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Trez Robinson

Staged2Sell Elevated Home Staging

Whether in a seller's or buyer's market, presentation is everything. Homes that captivate, inspire and evoke emotions attract eager buyers while fetching top dollar for the seller, which is where Trez Robinson and her company, Staged2Sell, come in. As the owner and Master Certified Home Stager, Trez has spent nearly two decades perfecting the art of transforming vacant properties into inviting sanctuaries that buyers can envision as their own. "It's a passion I love to do, so it never feels like I'm working," smiles Trez.



Her journey into home staging comes from deep roots in her personal experiences and family dynamics. After serving 21 years in the United States Air Force, she retired, eager to find her next path. With the knowledge she learned as a Commander from running military operations, including overseeing 800 military personnel and managing finances, she strived to be an entrepreneur.

"During my time serving, I was moving locations every two to three years, and I personally understand not only the stress of moving, but also the challenge of preparing a home for sale quickly," she shares. In 2006, she established Staged2Sell, drawing inspiration from her sisters, who continually sought her expertise in organizing and decorating their homes.



“

We're respectful, show up on time and present ourselves with professionalism in the client's home and in the neighborhood.



Trez's family, including her three adult children and a rescue dog named Mowgli, has been an integral to her entrepreneurial venture. From witnessing the business grow from its infancy to occasionally lending a helping hand, her children continue to witness all the steps to running a successful business.

Staged2Sell specializes in vacant home staging, a process that goes beyond mere decoration. Trez and her team meticulously curate each space, transforming it into a model home that beckons prospective buyers. With a vast inventory in her warehouse, also known as her happy place, Trez ensures that every staged home reflects its full potential. Whether preserving the charm of an older home or infusing modern elements into a property, her keen eye for detail ensures that each staging project is a masterpiece in its own right.



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One key aspect that sets Staged2Sell apart is the team's dedication to providing five-star customer service. For REALTORS®, Staged2Sell is more than just a staging service—it's a strategic partner committed to simplifying the selling process. Focusing on education and staying ahead of industry trends, the company remains a trusted resource for agents seeking to maximize the appeal of their listings. Trez explains, "We're respectful, show up on time and present ourselves with professionalism in the client's home and in the neighborhood, as well." As a fully licensed corporation covering an expansive area from Virginia Beach to Williamsburg, Trez and her team proudly offer turn-key solutions that alleviate the burdens of preparing a home for sale.

At the heart of Staged2Sell lies a mission to elevate both homes and lives. By helping sellers achieve maximum value for their properties and assisting buyers in forging emotional connections, Trez and her team are reshaping the landscape of real estate staging. Driven by their core values of integrity, professionalism and excellence, they strive to continue providing affordable solutions that give unparalleled returns for homeowners. Their motto, "Speed & Ease," encapsulates their commitment to delivering exceptional results with efficiency and precision. With Trez Robinson commanding, the journey from vacant space to welcoming home is a transformation and a testament to the power of vision, dedication and the art of staging.

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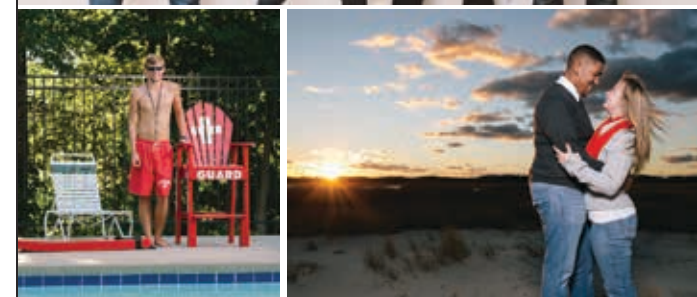


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- Lacey Whitaker, Aweigh Real Estate
- Maria Christian, eXp Realty
- Julie and Leah Crist, RE/MAX
- Dan Clark, Douglas Realty
- Chuck Dunlap, Managing Broker, Garrett Realty Partners





We also celebrated the mother-daughter team Tina Carneal and Maddie Podish with Achosa Home Warranty.

We sincerely thank Hayashi Sushi & Grill for hosting the party and doing an amazing job. The food was terrific, and the mixology skills at the bar were top-notch. Did you all know this location has a private room in the back for parties like this one?

And a big thank you to our event sponsors:

- Creekview Home Inspections, Craig Brown
- Off-Load Moving, Chris Valianos and Briar Baughman
- The LensHouse (formerly 360 Tour Design Photography)
- Debbie Jones, Murawski Photography, for the terrific photos
- Charles Townsend, Townsend Videography and Photography, for the amazing video recap.

If you see one of your friends featured in Real Producers and you would like to receive an invitation to their celebration party, please contact the featured agent or Joni (757-348-7809 or joni@realproducersmag.com) to join the guest list. Space is limited, but so far, we have accommodated everyone who wants to attend. When we outgrow our current venues, we will upsize because we love seeing all of you at our events!



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NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITE TOP AGENTS!

By Publisher Joni Giordano-Bowling

People often ask me, “How do you decide who you feature each month in Real Producers?” My answer: “Through our nomination system.” Top real estate agents and the preferred partners who invest in this publication through advertising and sponsoring our events decide who we feature each month through their nominations. Additionally, we have multiple events throughout the year, and top agents with top numbers are present at these events; we receive many nominations here among those who attend. **Please contact Joni Giordano-Bowling at 757-348-7809 or joni@realproducersmag.com to nominate top agents.**

Of those nominated, our team meets with and gets to know each nominee in person or via Zoom. In this meeting, we collect all the cool facts about the agent and gather nominations for other top agents and businesses we should consider for our vetted preferred partners’ list.

Our selection team decides who gets into each issue. We use the “5 C” criteria below as a guide. An agent must meet the first three. The fourth and fifth items are not required; however, we love celebrating successes of a giving or victorious nature.

- 1. Collaboration:** The number of nominations usually indicates that nominees are respected by their peers and work well with other agents and our preferred partners.
- 2. Competition production numbers:** Let’s face it; the name of the publication is Real Producers, so folks need to be top producers to get into the magazine
- 3. Character:** While most in the industry have great character and integrity, we will not feature anyone—agent or business—who has not been recommended or nominated by top agents as a person or business operating with integrity.
- 4. Contribution:** We adore inspiring stories about agents who give back to the real estate and local/global community.
- 5. Compelling story/ Conquering a life challenge:** Who doesn’t love an against-the-odds success story?

We also get to know the agents engaging in our private Facebook group for top REALTORS® and partners. Please contact me if you would like an invitation to that page, as membership is limited to agents on our past and present Real Producers list, real estate brokers and current preferred business partners.

In planning each issue, we try to make sure we don’t feature agents from the same brokerage or firm in the same issue. We also try to cover the territory geographically so that agents from each area we cover are featured proportionately. With so many wonderful nominated agents, our monthly decisions are difficult, so make sure we know who you are!

Remember, real estate agents and brokers do not pay anything for feature stories; everything we do for them is free. While other programs may look similar, we are not a pay-to-play model. We select most articles six to 12 months in advance (sometimes years in advance for cover agents) and notify folks one to two months before their feature appears that we have selected them. Please don’t be discouraged if you have met with us and have not received the call to be featured. Keep those nominations coming.

We would love your feedback about how we are doing and what, if anything, we can do better to help everyone in the industry **Collaborate, Elevate and Inspire** each other. Please email, text or privately message all suggestions and feedback directly to me.

Joni Giordano-Bowling
757-348-7809
joni@realproducersmag.com

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REALTOR®

REVIEW

Leigh & Liv Barefoot
RE/MAX Connect

“Tina and Maddie are incredible to work with. They are both extremely knowledgeable, responsive, attentive and dedicated to taking great care of our clients. They make us look good! One of them will always answer your call, which is such a relief in today’s busy world. We rest easy knowing they are always there to help.”

Tina Carneal
Senior Sales Executive
22' & 23' Diamond Elite Producer
C: 757-291-4398

Maddie Podish
Senior Sales Executive
C: 757-634-8998

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E: tina-maddie@achosahw.com

RP FAQs

WELCOME TO REAL PRODUCERS!

Some of you may be wondering what this publication is about, so we have created this FAQ page to answer the most asked questions regarding our program. My door is always open to discuss anything regarding this community—this publication is 100% designed to be your voice!

Q: WHO RECEIVES THIS MAGAZINE?

A: The top 300 agents on the Peninsula in Hampton Roads, VA. The Peninsula extends from the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel in Hampton to the greater Williamsburg area and everything in between. We pulled the MLS numbers (by volume) from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, in the Peninsula and Williamsburg area. We cut the list off at #300, and the distribution was born. For this year's list, the production level

for our group was between just below \$5 million and \$50 million in 2023. The list will reset at the end of 2024 for next year and will continue to update annually.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BEING FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: The process is simple. Every feature you see has first been nominated. You can nominate REALTORS®, agents, affiliates, brokers, owners or even yourself. Office leaders can also nominate real estate agents. We will consider anyone you bring to our attention because we don't know everyone's story and need your help to learn more. A link to our nomination form is on our Facebook page (facebook.com/peninsularealproducers).

Q: WHAT IS THE COST TO FEATURE A REALTOR®, AGENT OR TEAM?

A: Zero, zilch, zippo, nada, nil. **The feature costs nothing**, my friends, so nominate away! We are not a pay-to-play model. We share real stories of Real Producers based on achievement and nominations.

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS?

A: Anyone listed as a preferred partner in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and will have an ad in every magazine issue, attend our quarterly 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 preferred partner you see in this publication. In a sense, we won't even meet with a business you have not vetted and stamped for approval. We aim to create a powerhouse network for the REALTORS® and agents in the area and the best affiliates so we can grow stronger together.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A PREFERRED PARTNER?

A: Please let us know if you want to recommend a local business that works with top real estate agents. Send an email or text to joni@realproducersmag.com or call **757-348-7809**.

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