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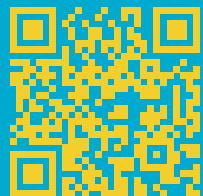
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DUKE CITY INSPECTIONS

EMPOWERING HOMEOWNERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

By Beth McCabe | Photos by Ponc Photography

“I love helping people find their success,” says Matt Williams, founder and owner of Duke City Inspections in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Whether he’s assisting homebuyers with their inspections or coaching other business owners, Matt brings a blend of optimism and dedication to his work that sets him apart. “I’m an optimist — sometimes to a fault,” he laughs. “But waking up each morning excited about helping others is what drives me.”

Born in Portland, Oregon, Matt moved to Albuquerque at age 13 and quickly grew to love his new home. By age 14, he’d already taken his first steps into entrepreneurship, mowing lawns in his neighborhood. “I always knew I was going to be an entrepreneur,” he recalls. He loved the independence and being able to build something from the ground up. From his earliest days, he had a natural ability to lead, a quality that carried him through a varied career where he owned and managed over ten different companies, from gyms and car lots to construction and electrical contracting.

After navigating the 2008 financial crisis — which forced him

to close his electrical contracting business — Matt remained resilient as a go-getter and a risk taker, embracing both his successes and setbacks.

“I’ve been fortunate enough to win more than I’ve lost,” he reflects. This entrepreneurial spirit brought him to home inspections in 2019, a field he chose after recognizing a need in the industry for high-quality service and competition. “I did my research and talked with friends, and home inspections felt like a great fit for me.”

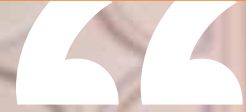
Since founding Duke City Inspections, Matt’s business has grown steadily, now employing six inspectors and a dedicated operations team. The company has become a one-stop shop for inspection needs, offering not only standard home inspections but also ancillary services like termite inspections, radon testing, mold assessment, and lead-based paint testing. “Our mission is to bring peace and confidence to every environment by providing unmatched customer service so that others can make fact based decisions,” he explains. “We work hard to conduct quality inspections

and deliver our findings in an easy-to-digest format, which we hope reduces anxiety and brings clarity for our clients.”

In addition to running Duke City Inspections, Matt hosts a podcast in the home inspection space, Empire State of Mind, where he shares insights on building a business empire. “It’s a platform where I can connect with other inspection companies and share strategies to grow and succeed.”

For Matt, success is about operating from a place of purpose and alignment. “I’ve learned that the most fulfilling ventures are those that match my gifts, talents, and who I am as a person,” he says. “If you’re working in alignment with your purpose, success naturally follows.”

Looking to the future, Matt plans to expand his coaching and consulting work, helping other business owners achieve the freedom and success they desire. “I have a commitment to excellence in everything that I do,” he comments.



If you're working in alignment with your purpose, success naturally follows.



Personal Pastimes

Outside of work, he enjoys traveling, playing the drums, piano, and bass, and recently picked up pickleball and golf. "Music has always been a big part of my life. I can't read music, but if I can hear it, I can play it," he says, recalling his years playing drums in rock bands and even recording on a few albums.

Leading With Impact

For Matt, Duke City Inspections is more than a business; it's a way to make a positive impact on others, whether through an inspection that brings peace of mind or advice that helps another business owner thrive. "Helping people is at the heart of everything I do," he says with a smile. In helping others, Matt Williams has truly found his calling by making the world a better place through being a natural leader and serial entrepreneur.



For more information on Duke City Inspections, check out their website, www.dukecityinspections.com, or call (505) 587-3535.



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LALAINE

STONE

giving back

By Beth McCabe | Photos by Ponc Photography

Growing up in the Philippines, Lalaine Stone knows what it was like to come from nothing. Living in a third-world country in poverty was challenging. She shares, “There were days when my dad would worry about what we were going to eat tomorrow. I went to bed not to sleep, but to forget about my growling stomach,” she admits.

Despite her upbringing, Lalaine always had a dream in her heart. “I always dreamed big and wanted to go to the United States,” she smiles. “And here I am.”

BIG DREAMS

Although she initially aspired to become a nurse, financial hardship prevented her from pursuing that path. “In the Philippines, the only way to change your life is through education,” she explains. Unable to afford nursing school, she decided to become an accountant, earning an accounting degree. Her hard work paid off when she was offered a position as an assistant at the university where she studied. This led her to pursue a master’s degree, and eventually, she became a teacher at the same institution. “I’m very fortunate. God had a plan for me,” she says with gratitude.

Even though she didn’t initially plan to become a real estate professional, her educational background in accounting and law provided her with valuable skills. “Having my accounting helps me with analytics and understanding market comparisons. My master’s degree proved invaluable in running my business. My time in law school—though I didn’t finish—taught me how to read

contracts, which is crucial in real estate. I understand contracts and resolve issues by going back to the agreements,” she explains.

Lalaine’s transition into real estate was motivated by a desire to spend more time with her daughter. As a senior analyst at The Gap Inc., she traveled to San Francisco quarterly, which took her away from home. “My daughter, who was about thirteen at the time, told me it was difficult when I traveled. That hit me hard,” she recalls. Determined to be present for her family, Lalaine took a pay cut and stepped down from her position. Initially, she considered becoming a CPA, but she reevaluated her path. “Why work 60 hours a week as an accountant when I could do something I’m passionate about?” she thought. That’s when she decided to take the leap into real estate.

Lalaine took her real estate exam, and before even passing, she was already interviewing with Coldwell Banker. Lalaine started Hitters at Coldwell Banker in July 2016 and had her first transaction by September. At first, she balanced two jobs—working 8 to 5 while pursuing real estate on nights and weekends. By March 2017, she made the full-time switch to real estate and sold ten homes that year.

PEOPLE, NOT PROFIT

It is not about profit, but people to this dedicated and driven REALTOR®. She recalls helping the buyer’s agent correct a mistake so her client could close the deal. Lalaine’s seller, who was battling cancer, needed to sell the house to pay his medical bills.

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”





SUCCESS IS ABOUT HELPING PEOPLE.

My dad always told me to leave the place better than you found it.

CHANGING LIVES

Lalaine is determined to live a life of contribution. In 2008, after two years in real estate, she started the Life Is Beautiful Scholarship Program in the Philippines. Her first scholar graduated from the University of San Agustin in Iloilo City, Philippines, in July 2022. When people sell and buy houses with Lalaine Stone (HomesbyLalaine), they become partners in changing lives in the Philippines, one student at a time.

AN INSPIRATION

Lalaine Stone is living proof that, with hard work and determination, it's possible to rise above challenging circumstances. As an immigrant who came to the United States with big dreams, she wants to inspire others. "We can do so much in this country if we work hard and do the right thing," she says.

Lalaine, with her million-dollar smile, is an inspiration. From poverty to prosperity, she is a shining example of what can be achieved with hard work, hope, and hustle.

"I shared my commission because it was the right thing to do," she says. This example highlights her belief in integrity and always doing what's right for her clients.

"Success is about helping people," she says. "My dad always told me to leave the place better than you found it." Having come from humble beginnings in the Philippines, Lalaine understands the importance of lifting others up.

Her 21-year-old daughter remains Lalaine's biggest motivator. "One of the reasons I work so hard is to give her a more convenient life and to show her that life is what you make it," Lalaine says.



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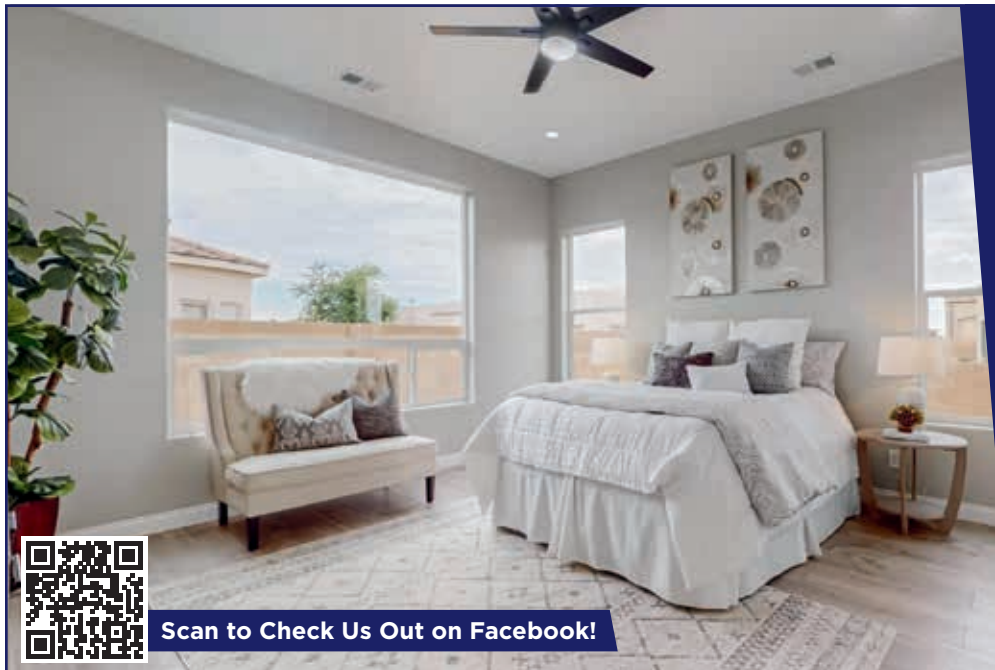
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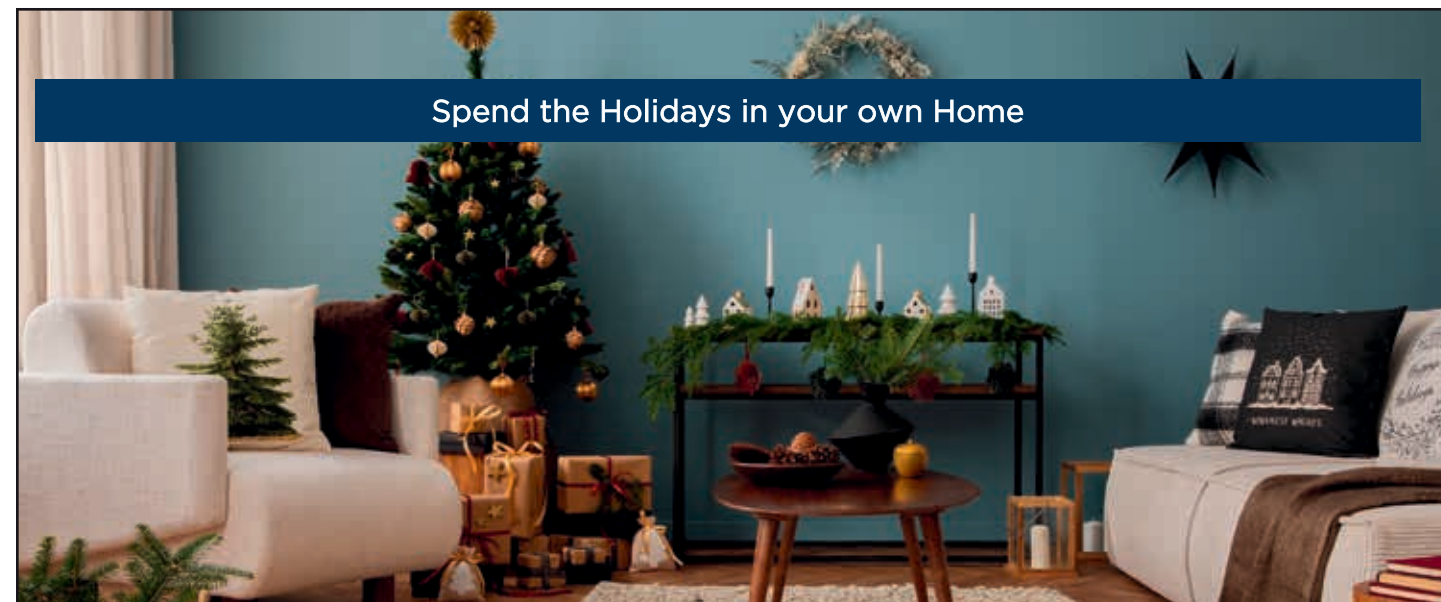
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DEE & DARIN RASBERRY

By Dan Clark | Photos by Liz Lopez Photography

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In the vibrant heart of Albuquerque's real estate scene, Darin and Dee Rasberry stand out not just for their successful brokerage, D Realty (under R1 New Mexico), but for their unique, faith-driven approach to the business. Their story, however, isn't just about closing deals; it's a telling tale of the power of partnership, both in business and in life.

Dee, a seasoned REALTOR® with a background in sales and a passion for home design and staging, had already been informally involved in real estate for years. "Honestly," she confesses, "while I wasn't working as a REALTOR®, I was helping people with real estate the whole time, just not getting paid for it!" She was always drawn to the industry, staging homes, hosting open houses, and offering her expertise to friends and family. But it wasn't until she met Darin, a web developer with a knack for house flipping, that she took the plunge and got her license.

Having his own web development company, Darin initially remained on the sidelines of D Realty. As Dee's business flourished, they recognized the need to join forces. "It just blew up," he recalls. "It got so busy that Dee asked me to come along full time." Their shared interest in real estate quickly blossomed into a beautiful partnership – both in marriage and in real estate.

Their complementary skills and personalities have proven to be a winning combination. Dee, with her extensive network and natural empathy, excels at building relationships with clients. Darin, with his technical expertise and project management skills, handles the logistical aspects of the business, including marketing. "He does the stuff I don't want to do," Dee laughs.



**ALL IN
WITH HEART**

**WE DON'T BELIEVE IN
DABBLING. WE BELIEVE
IN BEING ALL IN.**

But their synergy goes beyond dividing tasks. Darin and Dee share a deep commitment to their faith and family, which permeates their personal and professional lives. When Darin married Dee, he became stepdad to triplet children – Alexa, Christa and Trey. Now they have two new additions to the family, son-in-law, Cory and their first grandchild, Conrad. Dee and Darin also host Bible study groups in their home, mentor young men in their community, and offer genuine support and counsel to clients facing life's challenges.

Their faith also reflects their perspective on competition within the real estate industry. "We have multiple brokerages at our Bible studies," Dee shares. "We're friends with them all. We do not look at them as competition – just look at them as friends, associates." This collaborative gathering extends to sharing ideas and supporting each other, fostering a sense of community within the Albuquerque real estate landscape.

What truly sets Darin & Dee apart, however, is their commitment to going above and beyond for their clients. They see themselves not just as REALTORS®, but as counselors and friends, offering support and guidance through what can often be a stressful and emotional process. "We end up working with a lot of widows, divorcees and other people that are really struggling," Dee explains. "We end up praying with people, even people that don't pray, but somehow they let us pray." This approach, rooted in their deep faith and genuine care for others, has fostered a loyal client base and a reputation for integrity and compassion.



Their dedication extends even beyond the closing table. Offering personalized closing gifts, they often include engraved items and home warranties, tailored to each client's needs. They also provide complimentary staging and professional photography for their higher-end listings, recognizing the value of these services in maximizing their clients' returns.

Despite their demanding schedules, Darin & Dee prioritize their relationship and make time for fun and relaxation. They are avid supporters of New Mexico United and enjoy exploring the city's vibrant culinary scene. They also prioritize travel, fitting in trips to Mexico and overseas whenever their busy schedules allow.

For those considering a career in real estate, the Rasberrys offer some sage advice: be realistic about the challenges, be prepared to invest time and resources. Above all, they emphasize the importance of genuine care and commitment. "We don't believe in dabbling," Dee asserts. "We believe in being all in." This philosophy, coupled with their unwavering faith and dedication to their clients, has cemented Darin and Dee Rasberry's place as unique and respected figures in the Albuquerque real estate landscape.

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cover story

Rene KESSEL

Coldwell Banker Legacy

BUILDING TRUST WITH EVERY TRANSACTION

By Dan Clark | Photos by Liz Lopez Photography

RENE KESSEL, a seasoned REALTOR® with Coldwell Banker Legacy in Albuquerque, isn't your typical broker. With a career spanning back to 2014, Rene brings a unique blend of life experiences and construction knowledge to her real estate endeavors – from teaching in a Montessori classroom to working on the Yucca Mountain project for a government contractor. But it's her early exposure to hands-on construction and a deep-seeded belief in prioritizing her clients' needs that truly sets her apart.

Rene's passion for real estate was ignited early on. Growing up, her family would purchase and rehabilitate

bank-owned properties, instilling in her a deep understanding of construction and a love for transforming houses. This hands-on experience, coupled with her father's guidance (he was a general contractor), equipped her with invaluable skills that set her apart in the real estate world.

After relocating to New Mexico from Las Vegas, Nevada, and later going through a divorce, she found solace and empowerment in her work. Even her ex-husband, upon returning to New Mexico, entrusted Rene with helping him find a new home – a testament to their amicable relationship and her professional reputation.

I Want What's Best For My Client, Not For Me.



Rene's construction expertise provides her with a unique advantage. She can readily identify potential issues in a home, offering valuable insights to her clients and effectively navigating repair negotiations. "When I walk into a house, I'm pointing out the flaws," she explains. This ability to assess and address potential problems not only protects her clients but also demonstrates her commitment to transparency and honesty.

Her dedication to her clients is unwavering. She genuinely enjoys getting to know them, understanding their needs and guiding them through the often-complex process of buying or selling a home. Rene's

philosophy is simple: "I want what's best for my client, not for me." She recalls an instance where a buyer terminated contracts on two expensive homes before finally finding the perfect fit. While others expressed sympathy for the "lost" deals, Rene remained focused on her client's happiness, solidifying her commitment to putting their needs first.

Rene lives by a simple but powerful motto: "blessed and grateful." This steadfast dedication to positivity stems from a deep-rooted belief in the power of gratitude and a philosophy she calls the "prayer of Jabez," inspired by the Bible and a belief in praying for future blessings – similar to "The Secret" in attracting positivity and success.

This positive outlook has served her well, both personally and professionally. She recounts a story about manifesting the sale of a house in her neighborhood, a property she ended up selling three times throughout her career. Her license plate, which reads "BL3SSED," serves as a constant reminder of her gratitude and the abundance in her life, as well as being a tribute to her three children.

Beyond her professional life, Rene enjoys traveling, spending time with loved ones, and exploring new hobbies. Recent adventures include trips to Scotland, Spain and South Korea where her eldest son graduated from college. An avid Green Bay Packers fan, she has also embraced the world



of fantasy football, thanks to her boyfriend, and enjoys the camaraderie and competitive spirit it brings.

When asked what she would do differently if she had to start over, Rene contemplated endeavoring in commercial real estate, but ultimately acknowledges that her passion lies in residential real estate and the meaningful relationships with clients where she is able to make a tangible difference in their lives.

Rene's story is a reminder that success in real estate goes beyond transactions and market trends. It's about building genuine relationships, providing valuable expertise and approaching challenges with grace and an optimistic mindset. Rene exemplifies these qualities, making her a true asset to the Albuquerque real estate community and an inspiration to those seeking a fulfilling career in the industry.

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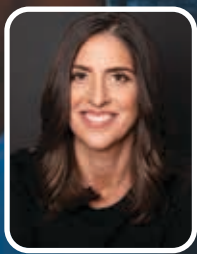
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