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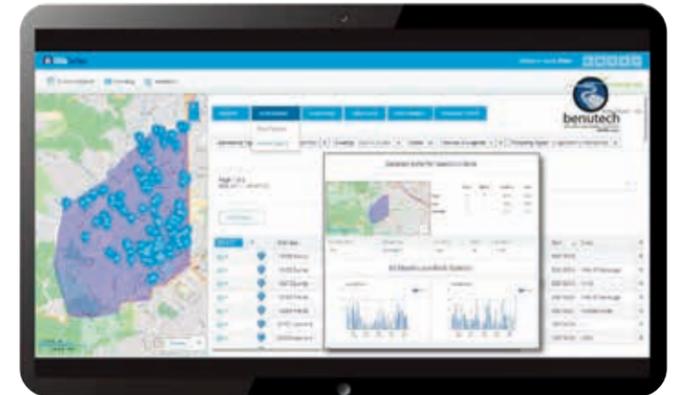


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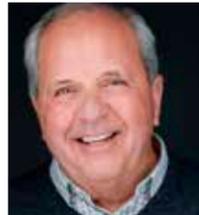
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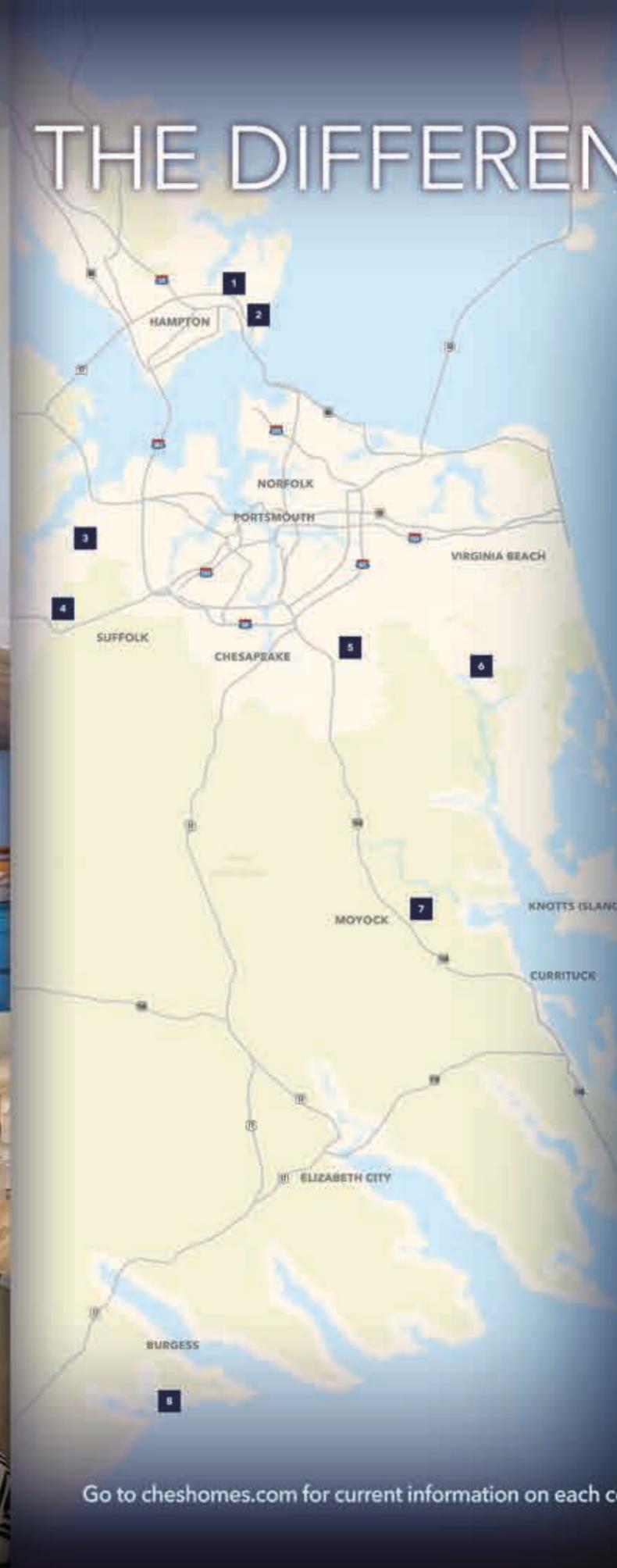
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LJ HUNT

IRON VALLEY REAL ESTATE NORFOLK

In 2021, LJ Hunt turned to his wife, Tory, and said, “Give me three years to make a career in real estate work.” Her unwavering support set the stage for LJ to become one of Hampton Roads’ top real estate producers, driven by a singular mission: to cultivate success through inspired leadership.

Growing up, LJ developed a passion for teaching at a young age, guiding his younger brother through life as their parents worked to support them. A Hampton Roads native, he stayed close to home, attending ODU and earning his teaching degree. Yet, life initially took him on a different path.

LJ began working in hospitality as a host and dishwasher, gaining valuable skills for a future career in management. “Despite my previous experience, I started as a server at YardHouse but kept working forward,” LJ recalls. One day, his manager approached him about a promotion. LJ hesitated. “I didn’t want to do that,” he explains. “I had my teaching degree, and I wanted to use it.” But his manager’s response was a game-changer: “What do you think I do every day?”

That conversation began a whirlwind journey taking LJ and Tory across the country—from Virginia Beach to Florida, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and finally back to Virginia Beach—all in fewer than five and a half years. Along the way, LJ learned important lessons about leading people. However, as his responsibilities grew, so did the toll on his health and personal life. “COVID hit, I was running the whole restaurant with five other managers, and Tory was at home with our daughter, Elle,” LJ recounts. “On Mother’s Day of 2020, Tory and I looked at each other, and I knew I needed a change of pace.”

The turning point came later that year, on his birthday. After opening the restaurant early, he received a call from a manager who was not able to come in. LJ had to stay late and close. “Tory said to me, ‘LJ, if you keep going like this, you’re going to have a heart attack,’” LJ recounts. “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back.” LJ realized his career had drifted away from what drew him to hospitality: connecting with people.

A local broker and longtime customer at the restaurant had been encouraging LJ to explore real estate, and LJ finally decided to take the leap. With no prior real estate experience, LJ and Tory lived off their savings and retirement funds while he studied for his license.

With two decades of experience in hospitality and a teaching background, real estate felt like a natural fit. LJ’s approach to leadership reflects his teaching roots—he loves educating his agents and ensuring they have the tools to succeed. “I believe in being the source to the source,” he comments. “If it’s not something I do every day, I always redirect my agents to someone who specializes in that area.”

LJ started his team, Hunt for Homes, out of necessity, recognizing he needed more than just a transaction coordinator. He brought on an executive assistant and a showing agent to better serve clients and expand his brand. Now Principal Broker and Owner of Iron Valley Real Estate Norfolk, LJ has two team managers, Kristine and Lauren, who handle daily operations with his guidance. The Hunt for Homes team has grown organically





It's never been about the money to me. It's always been about the people. I'm happy I can pour back into others.



through recommendations and comprises five dedicated members. While the brokerage and team share core values, LJ focuses on balancing growth with high standards, shaping agents and future leaders.

LJ emphasizes that his role as a broker is to create an environment where his agents can thrive. "That's why Iron Valley works—because it forces me, as the broker, to ensure you, as an agent, do business," he states. "Without my agents grinding and building their peak lives, we wouldn't

"I have had the pleasure of personally being by LJ's side every step of the way on his ascension in the real estate industry. I watched him walk away from a full-time, six-figure job and come to work all day every day for months until we connected and he started as a showing agent under me. He quickly blossomed as a top producer, then a team lead. He then obtained his broker's license and became an owner, opening Iron Valley Real Estate Norfolk. LJ bet on himself, remained humble and teachable, and is now a top-producing principal broker. I couldn't be happier for him and his office's current and future success!"

— Mike Little | Principal Broker/Owner, Iron Valley Real Estate Hampton Roads

exist." His philosophy is not about money; it's about helping people. "It's never been about the money to me," he asserts. "It's always been about the people. I'm happy I can pour back into others."

A deep commitment to service underpins LJ's journey from hospitality to real estate. Alongside his business partner, Julian Rivera, LJ has formed a leadership team that balances his system-oriented, task-driven approach with Julian's social,

outgoing personality. While LJ focuses on retention and training, Julian leads recruitment efforts. Together, they have created a thriving, dynamic brokerage.

One of LJ's guiding principles comes from a quote by motivational speaker Eric Thomas: "Don't let your talent take you where your character can't keep you." Launching his brokerage in his third year



as a real estate agent while welcoming the arrival of his and Tory's youngest daughter, Zoey, proves that success comes from pursuing what you love. But for LJ, the journey is about more than personal achievement. "We don't live forever," he emphasizes and

asks, "What are you doing with your life? Whose life are you impacting so your legacy lives on?" For him, real estate is a calling to make a lasting impact on his clients and the agents he mentors, helping them build their legacies.



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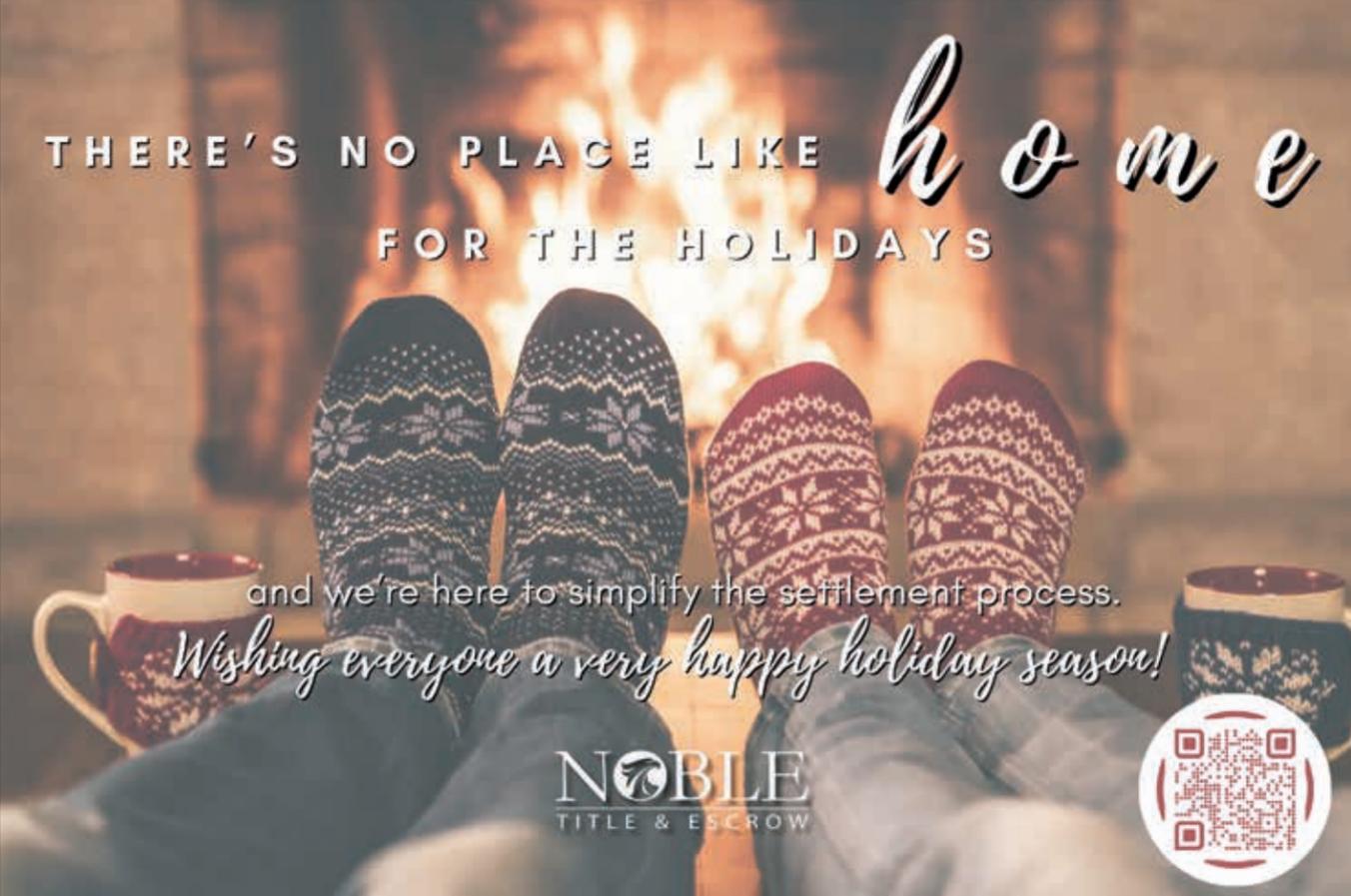
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Barbie Summers

LONG & FOSTER REAL ESTATE

▶ featured agent

Story by Jacki Donaldson
Photos by Rick Cordero



Barbie Summers holds many titles. Wife, mother, daughter, aunt, sister, and friend are just a few that she places at the top of her list. Then, she mentions her work as a top-producing REALTOR® and Associate Broker. One might surmise that the Miami native who has closed a remarkable volume of sales in her career would rank her professional endeavors higher, but Barbie has good reason for not doing so. “Whatever success I’ve had professionally, it’s not where I find my purpose or value,” she reveals. “I find my purpose and value through the unbreakable bonds of family and my unwavering Christian faith.”

The youngest of five children born to Cuban immigrants, Barbie dabbled in real estate with one of her older brothers, a broker in the South Florida real estate landscape. “He exposed me to real estate in my late teens, early 20s,”

she shares. “My brother believed I’d excel in real estate and urged me to pursue it, but I was apprehensive about relying solely on commission-based income.” Living on her own since age 18, Barbie took the corporate avenue, working in project management and administration for companies like Burger King Corporation and as a contractor for NASA before she embarked on a new season: marriage, motherhood, and business ownership.

After meeting her husband, Steven, more than 17 years ago, Barbie knew she had found “the one.” After dating for a few months, they married, and she relocated to Hampton Roads, where Steven, a native of the area, lived with his two preschool-age sons. Barbie eagerly embraced her new role as wife and bonus mom, diving into the uncharted waters of a

Photo by Stacey Pryce



blended family with excitement. Despite the challenges of infertility, they grew their family with an additional son.

Inspired by the joy of building a family, Barbie boldly left corporate America to pursue real estate full-time. She aimed to replicate her corporate successes, make a significant impact as a business owner, and do what she loves most: helping others. After welcoming their youngest son, she earned her real estate license. She embarked on an incredible journey filled with rewarding experiences from creating meaningful work that has a lasting impact.

New to the area and without a sphere, Barbie embraced her steep learning curve and hustled. “The first thing I did was figure out who was running a business similar to what I wanted to build for myself,” she recalls. “I met with top-producing and highly respected REALTORS® in our market over coffee or lunch, asking questions and learning about their systems and structures.” Barbie poured herself into building relationships and investing in her business. “These seasoned professionals were generous with their time and insights, providing me with invaluable guidance that helped shape the foundation of my own successful real estate venture,” she continues. “I remain good friends with all of them, and our mutual support continues to be a valuable resource.” Today, the multi-million-dollar producer is a respected top performer within her firm. She has consistently been honored with HRRR Circle of Excellence awards and other prestigious industry accolades and ranks among the top 1-4% of all Hampton Roads agents each year—a distinction that reflects her unwavering commitment and exceptional performance year after year. She has cultivated enduring relationships with clients who trust her guidance and eagerly recommend her to others.



“Barbie joined Long & Foster with a clear dedication to her clients and a commitment to excellence. Her corporate background has been a valuable asset, enabling her to serve clients thoughtfully and effectively at every stage. From day one, she’s shown a remarkable ability to turn insights into action, always working to improve and achieve the best outcomes. Barbie’s approach is both disciplined and heartfelt, focused on building lasting connections with clients and colleagues alike. Her dedication to doing what’s right and creating meaningful relationships truly sets her apart.”

— Tina Holt, Managing Broker & Regional VP, Long & Foster Real Estate

Barbie’s rave reviews result from consistently welcoming and servicing all clients and making a difference. “I aim for clients to start as clients and end up as friends,” she remarks. “I always do what’s in their best interest. I’ve even talked clients out of a sale if I thought it wasn’t a good move for them. I am all heart, but I’m also a bulldog for my clients.”

While Barbie continues to excel in her real estate career, she is embarking on a new, deeply personal journey. “My parents passed when I was in my early 20s, and I went straight into the workforce after high school,” she shares. “I never had the chance to

graduate from college. Two years ago, I began to dream about my encore career—a path that would allow me to pour my heart into my passion for children and families, drawing on my own experiences to create a legacy of purpose, connection, and impact. I am super proud to say that in December 2023, I finished my A.S. in Social Sciences with a 4.0. I am pursuing a bachelor’s in psychology to work with children and various family structures, particularly foster care, adoption, and blended families. I have a deep love for families and a strong understanding of the complexities of blended family life. I’m committed to fostering and supporting family unity.”

When Barbie carves out time away from real estate and her studies, she spends time with her sons and Steven, Engineering Director for Verizon, or friends. She enjoys supporting her older bonus sons, Avery (20) and Owen (18), as they navigate their exciting journey at Virginia Tech while also having fun with her youngest son, Honor (9), who keeps busy with sports and extracurricular activities. She finds joy in beach days, exploring new destinations, and diving into real estate investments with Steven. Grounded in gratitude, Barbie remains committed to making a difference—both in her personal and professional life and in the lives of those who cross her path.

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their way, knowing they are among the most highly recommended pros.

We also thank all the brokerages that came out to support their colleagues that we have recently featured in Hampton Roads Real Producers. This "collaboration over competition" spirit makes our events truly inspiring. We're grateful to all of you for the integrity, professionalism, and camaraderie you bring to these gatherings. And a special shout-out to those we met for the first time—we're thrilled to welcome you to the Real Producers family and look forward to learning more about your stories.

We're gearing up to refresh our Top 500 list next month. While some familiar names may step aside,

others will rise to join the ranks, and a few will secure their second, third, or even sixth consecutive appearance. No matter the outcome, we're here to cheer you on and can't wait to raise a glass together in March at our "Toast to the Top" event, where we'll celebrate our newest top performers and honor those returning for another round of success in 2025.

Here's to finishing 2024 strong. We can't wait to usher in a new year of accomplishments with all of you! Cheers!







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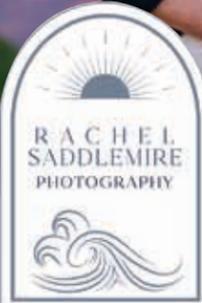

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RAFAEL CUBAS

PERFECTING HOMES FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS



▶ partner spotlight

Story by Dan Steele
Photos by Mason Murawski Photography



Although Rafael Cubas loves every part of his work, the best part of remodeling a home comes when the customer sees the transformation for the first time. “I enjoy seeing the client’s satisfaction at the end of the project when they look at the residence, whether a new paint job, flooring, or remodel,” he shares. “I feel the most joy when they step into the home or the facility and see the same structure but also a whole different home or space.”

Rafael and his team do it all: drywall, painting, finishing, and power-washing, to name a few, and every job they take on receives the same level of care and attention as the others, driven by Rafael’s deep faith in God and dedication to his customers to deliver top-notch workmanship and quality. “The work and quality in everything we do comes from the heart,” Rafael testifies. “We do everything to bless God and from there to please our customers that we’ve worked so hard to earn to provide what they’re requesting.” The most important thing to remember, both in remodeling and real estate, is not to focus on the financial aspect of the work but, instead, on the customer’s needs. “Always keep the vision, goals, and dreams of the client in mind,” Rafael recommends. “That’s what helps create better bridges between you and the client.”

Rafael’s work allows him to help his clients and his team achieve their dreams. Originally from Honduras, he and his father came to this country about 30 years ago to escape the poverty and hunger they faced there. He hasn’t forgotten the opportunities he received and wants to share that good fortune with others.

“I learned to work in this trade, and ever since then, I’ve thought about those who come to this county looking for a better life, so I’m glad I can provide a job for them,” Rafael explains. “It’s the American dream; I’m providing jobs for them and also providing good products for the clients.”

Although his clients’ appreciation and joy stem from Rafael’s skill and hard work, the success he’s found comes first and foremost from his faith. “In my perspective, the success comes from having faith in God, trusting in him that everything will be good, that He is our provider, putting in the work,” he declares. “Getting in there, seeing what’s needed, and getting it done—no excuses—and helping those in need, whether providing a job or a discount for them or just working with them in their circumstances because Jesus asks us to help our neighbors and love them.”

Rafael is grateful for his life and the opportunity to be a blessing and help others, and he hopes people remember him for his faith, his craft, and his ever-present smile. He wants to be a reminder to everyone that one can come from somewhere tough and still live the American dream.

When he isn’t helping clients achieve their dreams and living his faith, Rafael loves to spend time with his family, whether going to church together, camping, or supporting his son. “We attend a lot of events for him

and encourage him to continue his dream of becoming a professional soccer player,” Rafael proudly reveals. “He’s going to Madrid for Real Madrid Foundation Soccer Camps, so hopefully something good comes out of that.”

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An Interview with a Secondary HRRR Member



MATTHEW RATHBUN
 SECONDARY HRRR MEMBER
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Joining HRRR as a secondary member wasn’t a requirement—it was a strategic decision. As our company expanded across the state, we joined the REIN MLS in addition to our other network to ensure our agents who lived and worked in the Hampton Roads area would have the minimum they needed to serve their clients. And more than that, I feel that my secondary membership dues are a small investment in the local representation and advocacy that HRRR offers myself and my firm.

It quickly became evident that the MLS is only a small part of the toolkit that one needs to be successful in a marketplace. The Hampton Roads REALTORS® association offers so much, that it was an easy choice to join as a secondary member, even if it wasn’t required.

Being part of a REALTOR® Association means access to exclusive tools, resources, and events. As brokers, we already juggle a million hats—from team leader to marketing guru to part-time therapist for stressed-out agents. So, when I realized the added benefits of joining a secondary association (think expanded tools, advanced training, local information and yes, even more networking), I thought, why not? After all, you wouldn’t show a house without opening all the doors, right?

So, while some might see a secondary membership as an optional “extra,” I see it as a smart investment. If being in real estate has taught me anything, it’s that the more you invest in your own growth, the more you get out of it. Plus, who doesn’t love a few extra resources to be more effective and connected in your role as a leader?”

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▶▶ leader spotlight

Story by Danielle Kidwell

Photos by Leah Wallace, Leah Ariel Photography

COSETTE LAMBOURNE

KELLER WILLIAMS COASTAL VIRGINIA

“We are all at different places in our journey, and our duty is to help one another along the way,” says Cosette Lambourne. “When you have the opportunity to share and care about someone else, you should always rise to the occasion.”

Cosette is one of six children born into a military family. Growing up as a “military brat,” she developed resilience and a love for new challenges, qualities that would play an essential role throughout her adulthood. Cosette doesn’t like to wait around for life to happen. She is ambitious and driven. She enrolled in college courses while still in high school and worked at a law firm, learning how to be a provider early on. To further her opportunities, she signed up for real estate school at 19.

Obtaining her real estate license at the age of 20, Cosette and her then-fiance invested in their first home, a \$46,000 property in Norfolk Highlands, which they turned into a live-in flip with their baby girl, Erika. They took on every role—investor, agent, tenant, contractor, and parent. They sold that property one year later for \$98,000 in 2001. When Cosette was 21, she had her second daughter, Ashley. Ashley’s birth date was Cosette’s final day at the law firm, and she focused entirely on the family’s construction company. “We balanced construction, real estate, investments, and three kids for the next 13 years,” Cosette reflects.

A son and some years later, life changed course, and Cosette parted from the contracting world, looking to recreate herself as a career REALTOR®. “I traded my truck and trailer for stilettos and a pencil skirt,” she says. She found her home at Keller Williams. Even though she had been licensed for 13 years, she requested the team train her from the ground up like a new agent.





Outside of her real estate career, Cosette is deeply rooted in her passions. She is a proud mom and devoted yogi with a solid connection to nature. Her backyard, a certified wildlife habitat, is her sanctuary. Gardening, enjoying nature, birding, and practicing yoga are just a few ways she nurtures her soul. Cosette remarks, "Peace is found in the quiet moments." She is always up for an adventure, from sunrise yoga to festivals in far-off places. "Experiences and the memories of those experiences are the only true possessions we have," she smiles.

Cosette's favorite people to share experiences with are her family members. She and her husband, Ian Woods, have a blended family of five children, Erika, Ashley, Brooks, Lex, and Harper, ages 12 to 25, and their beloved cats, Gucci, Luna, and Ginger. Cosette hopes to bring all of their children into the world of entrepreneurship, teaching them how to build businesses and the lives they want to live.

She wanted to build a business. Just 18 months after starting with the company, Cosette joined the Agent Leadership Council as a top producer. Her passion and commitment were evident, and she subsequently stepped into the leadership role of CEO at Keller Williams Coastal Virginia. Cosette spent eight years as the team leader and CEO, growing the office into one of the top brokerages in Hampton Roads and closing out as #2 in REIN for volume in 2023. For the last four years, her Keller Williams market center has been #1 in profitability for the Keller Williams VA/WV Region.

Cosette just celebrated her first year as Operating Principal for Keller Williams Coastal Virginia. She is passionate about building people and businesses that make a positive impact within their families, their communities, and hopefully the world. Cosette is a certified market center trainer, motivational speaker, and natural educator who inspires those around her to grow and thrive. As an avid traveler, she takes her passions with her. She has taught internationally at Keller Williams offices worldwide, including Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. Cosette approaches each opportunity with the mindset of abundance, sharing her experiences and lessons to lift others. "You should leave people a little better than when you found them," she believes.

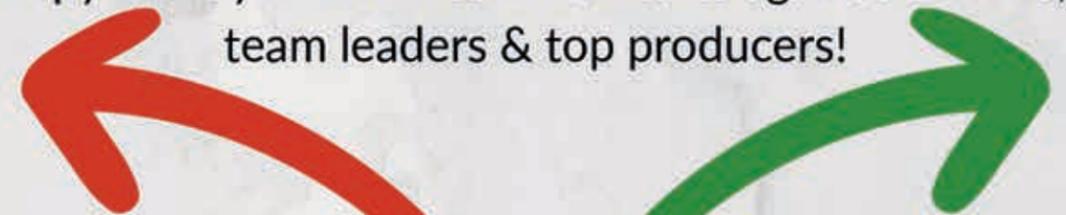


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UNLOCKING INCLUSIVITY IN REAL ESTATE WITH AT HOME WITH DIVERSITY (AHWD)

This fall, HRRRA had the privilege of hosting the At Home with Diversity (AHWD) certification course, marking an important step toward fostering a more inclusive and equitable real estate environment. This course, offered by the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), equips REALTORS® with the knowledge and skills to work effectively with diverse communities, addressing the unique needs of clients from various cultural backgrounds. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, being attuned to diversity is not just a benefit—it is essential for long-term success in real estate.

The AHWD certification course emphasizes the importance of understanding, respecting, and embracing cultural differences when working with clients. Real estate professionals play a pivotal role in the home-buying journey, which for many individuals is one of the most significant financial and emotional decisions of their lives. This course prepares agents to navigate these critical moments with empathy and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that every client feels valued, understood, and supported.

The Experience of Attending AHWD at HRRRA

The in-person format of the course added depth to the

learning experience. Participants studied the core materials and also engaged in dynamic discussions and interactive exercises that highlighted real-life scenarios they may encounter in their businesses. The lively exchanges of ideas fostered a collaborative learning atmosphere, which enriched the experience for everyone involved.

Several attendees expressed how eye-opening the course was, revealing biases they hadn't been aware of and giving them practical tools to address these issues in their work. Through these hands-on activities, attendees were able to recognize how small changes in their approach—such as refining their communication methods or considering cultural factors in home preferences—can help them guide buyers and sellers with greater care and precision. The conversations that these in-person classes make space for are exactly what HRRRA hopes all its members can experience as they become the most trusted voices in Hampton Roads real estate!

Implementing AHWD Content in Real Estate Businesses

The true impact of the AHWD course extends far beyond the classroom. It provides agents with actionable strategies they can implement immediately to

better serve a diverse clientele. It also fosters the ability to anticipate challenges before they arise, creating smoother transactions.

For businesses, implementing AHWD principles can lead to stronger client relationships, an expanded client base, and an enhanced reputation within the community. In today's market, clients are looking for a REALTOR® with expertise in real estate transactions and also someone they feel comfortable with and respected by. The ability to connect authentically with a wide range of clients increases both business opportunities and client loyalty.

Furthermore, a commitment to diversity positions a real estate business as a leader in ethical practices. Clients from all walks of life want to know they are working with professionals who understand and appreciate their individual needs, and implementing

what was studied in the AHWD course is a clear indicator of this dedication.

The Importance of Attaining Specialized Certifications

In a competitive industry like real estate, specialized certifications offer REALTORS® a significant edge. Courses like AHWD are about more than adding another credential to your name; they are about enhancing the quality of service you provide. In a market where clients have more options than ever, REALTORS® who take the time to pursue certifications like AHWD demonstrate their commitment to continuous learning and personal growth.

Specialized certifications signal to clients that you possess expert knowledge in specific areas, whether working with diverse communities, handling luxury properties,

or guiding first-time homebuyers. They also foster trust, showing that you are invested in honing your skills to better serve their needs.

As the real estate landscape evolves, those who continually invest in education and professional development are more likely to thrive. Certifications like AHWD differentiate agents in the marketplace and elevate the industry's overall standards.

A Step Toward a More Inclusive Future

The AHWD certification is more than just a course—it's a commitment to creating a more inclusive, respectful, and culturally aware real estate industry. By hosting the course right here in Hampton Roads, HRRRA took a meaningful step toward

promoting diversity and inclusion in our community. Those who implement the knowledge they gained from AHWD into their businesses will both enhance their own practices and contribute to a more equitable real estate environment for all.

For agents and brokers who missed the opportunity to attend, investing in this certification is highly encouraged. The skills gained are beneficial for individual success and vital for building a business that embraces the future of real estate, where diversity and inclusivity are key drivers of success. For more information about this course, visit nar.realtor/ahwd.





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