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GIVING is a YEAR-ROUND AFFAIR

publisher's note

*"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."
—Hebrews 13:16 (NIV)*

Dear Real Producers of South OC,

As we enter the holiday season, the spirit of giving is in full swing. It's a time when we come together, enjoy the camaraderie of family, friends and community, and appreciate the joy that comes from giving. The holidays bring a sense of warmth rooted in the connections we value and the generosity that marks the season.

Your dedication to giving — of your expertise, your time, and your resources — makes a meaningful impact. When you sponsor a local youth sports team, provide supplies to a shelter, or volunteer at a community event, you help lay the foundation for a stronger, more resilient community. As REALTORS®, your commitment to South Orange County helps build and strengthen our thriving, interconnected community.

In the face of natural disasters and unexpected crises like we've seen around the country this year, the real estate community

has consistently stepped up, not just with donations, but with time, resources, and heart. Whether it's helping a neighbor or supporting local schools and nonprofits that shape the future, the spirit of giving goes beyond financial support, emphasizing the importance of really being there for one another.

During this holiday season, I hope you take pride in the impact you've had, not just in December but throughout the entire year. You inspire others to give generously and remind us all that small acts of kindness create ripples that reach far beyond the moment.

As you close out the year, may you find joy in both the giving and receiving that fills this season. Here's to a new year of continued generosity and community connection — cornerstones of South OC and the spirit that binds us all together.

Warm regards,



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TARA JOHNSON & BERNADETTE KERKES ESCROW OPTIONS GROUP

Building Trust and Fostering Exceptional Service

In the competitive and ever-evolving world of real estate, a reliable escrow partner can make all the difference. At Escrow Options Group, Tara Johnson and Bernadette Kerkes embody the company's ethos of exceptional service, a family-oriented culture, and commitment to building lasting relationships that enhance each transaction. Through their leadership and dedication, they ensure Escrow Options Group stands out as a trusted resource for agents and clients across Southern California.

A FOUNDATION OF SERVICE AND INNOVATION

Founded in 2005, Escrow Options Group has grown into a prominent independent escrow company, providing a

full range of escrow services across five major counties in Southern California. With 12 locations and over 60 employees, Escrow Options Group offers a seamless support system to meet client needs at every stage of the escrow process. The team includes seasoned escrow officers, administrative staff, and sales specialists, all committed to making each transaction smooth and efficient.

"Our commitment to service is unmatched; we continually strive to provide the best service possible," says Tara Johnson, president of Escrow Options Group, who has been with the company since 2011.





Tara Johnson is the president of Escrow Options Group.

natural aptitude and dedication, Tara transitioned to an escrow officer role in just two and a half years and then transitioned into operations six years later.

Bernadette began her career in Orange County, discovering her love for real estate early on, while working in escrow during high school. After earning dual bachelor's degrees in interior design and marketing from California State University, Long Beach, she was drawn back to escrow. "It was the perfect fit," Bernadette explains. "Escrow allows me to combine my passion for service with the excitement of real estate."

CULTIVATING A STRONG CULTURE AND LASTING CLIENT PARTNERSHIPS

A defining characteristic of Escrow Options Group is its supportive, family-oriented culture, which Tara and Bernadette both consider crucial to the company's success. "If our employees are happy, our service will always be great," says Bernadette.

Education is also a core component of Escrow Options Group's values. With Tara's experience as an escrow officer, she understands the importance and is committed to keeping the team current with the latest developments in the field. "We have mandatory training days to ensure our team stays up-to-date with industry advancements. It's part of our commitment to

Bernadette Kerkes, vice president of marketing and business development, joined the team in 2014 and brought a fresh perspective to client experience and engagement. "I like the satisfaction of knowing I've provided an agent with a service that exceeded their expectations, making them want to work with us again," she shares. "Trust and rapport with agents are incredibly important, as strong relationships lead to successful partnerships."

UNIQUE PATHS TO ESCROW

Both Tara and Bernadette have forged inspiring, distinct paths into the escrow industry. Raised in Orange County, Tara was first introduced to escrow by her mother, who was the controller at an independent escrow company in Orange County at the time. "She encouraged me to consider this field, so I started as a receptionist and quickly advanced," Tara recalls. With



Bernadette Kerkes is the vice president of marketing and business development at Escrow Options Group.



really good to their clients, that's referred business for them ... and that's a big thing for us," she adds.

LOOKING AHEAD

With their steadfast commitment to service and relationship building, Tara and Bernadette are poised to continue steering Escrow Options Group toward new heights. As they look to the future, they remain focused on strengthening client relationships, staying adaptable in a changing market, and expanding the company's reach.

"It's not just about closing deals," Bernadette reflects. "It's about building trust and making a lasting impact." Tara agrees, adding,

"Our goal is to provide the best possible service and uphold our motto to be 'the best option' for our clients."

For more information, visit www.escrowoptions.com.



staying current and providing the best service to our clients," she shares, adding that the team is equipped to meet evolving market needs and client demands with ease. "We prioritize working smarter, not harder, and strive to support one another and provide the highest level of service to our clients," Tara notes.

Bernadette views relationship building as essential to Escrow Options Group's success. "In this business, nothing is more important than the connections you make and the service you provide," she notes. Participating in industry events like those sponsored by *Real Producers* showcases the company's commitment to agent success and offers valuable networking opportunities. "Engaging with top agents and supporting their growth helps us position ourselves as trusted partners rather than just service providers," Bernadette shares.

For both Tara and Bernadette, personal fulfillment lies in the opportunity to make a difference in their clients' and team's lives. Tara's focus is on supporting her team, which she sees as fundamental to her role. "I enjoy helping consumers and, on a personal level, supporting the team members within our company," she says. "I believe in taking care of people from the top down."

Bernadette finds deep satisfaction in helping agent partners grow and succeed. "If I can assist agents in any way — to improve their business, streamline processes, or help them gain more business — I'm always there," she says. Bernadette's marketing background enables her to offer fresh perspectives on agents' business plans, helping them maximize their impact. "If you provide great service and can make agents look





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BRANDON HALPERIN

INSPIRING ACTION

A true hallmark of leadership in a community is the willingness to be dedicated to others' dreams. In turn, that selfless kind of service inspires positive action. That's the spirit that Brandon Halperin brings to life each day as a REALTOR® with Talavera Real Estate.

The path to becoming one of the top producers in his field has been filled with unexpected twists, hard work, and a deep commitment to personal growth. A former college athlete and

Denver transplant, Brandon's story is a testament to the power of determination, consistency, and finding the right mentorship.

A NEW BEGINNING IN REAL ESTATE

Brandon's journey into real estate didn't start in the way many might expect. Moving from Denver to his new home in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brandon initially found himself working as a bartender. While he enjoyed the social aspects of

the job, the long hours and instability of service industry work made him yearn for something more. "I knew I wanted to get out of bartending, but I didn't know what that would be," he says.

In 2021, after a brief stint working as a utility consultant, Brandon realized that he was meant to do something different. "I was sitting at a desk every day, feeling stuck," he recalls. "I wanted to work for myself, control my time, and control my income.





Brandon Halperin is a Realtor with Talavera Real Estate.

That’s when I started listening to real estate podcasts and became inspired.”

Motivated by the idea of a career where he could control his own success, Brandon decided to pursue real estate. By September 2022, he had his license and was ready to dive into the industry, despite knowing that it would be a challenge.

THE TRANSITION: A LEAP OF FAITH

The transition from the stable paycheck of a traditional job to the unpredictable world of real estate was anything but easy. “It was a challenge at first,” Brandon admits. “I was used to having that guaranteed paycheck every week, but real estate is a whole different ballgame.”

Brandon joined a team, where he found a mentor and broker who helped guide him through the early days of his new career. “Having a mentor who pointed me in the right direction made all the difference,” he says. “I learned so much from them in terms of the day-to-day mechanics of the business.”

Brandon’s persistence paid off when he closed his first deal in January 2023. The hard work he put in — showing up

every day, no matter how difficult — began to show results. “I kept showing up and doing the little things,” he says. “Eventually, it all started to take off.”

After working with two other brokerages, Brandon joined the team at Talavera Real Estate.

CONSISTENCY AND DISCIPLINE

One of the driving forces behind Brandon’s success is his belief in the power of consistent effort. “The secret to success in real estate is putting in the work,” he says. “When I first started, I had no idea what I was doing. But I made it a habit to talk to new people every day. Just having those conversations and showing up every day, that was key.”

Building relationships is central to his business. Whether it’s reaching out to potential clients, networking with other professionals, or simply staying in touch with past clients, Brandon focuses on maintaining a steady flow of communication. “Consistently talking to people day in and day out is vital. You have to show up and put yourself in a position to have the opportunity.”

Brandon believes that real estate is a business that rewards the habits you build. “It’s not about luck or talent,” he says.



“It’s about doing the work every single day. When you treat it like a job, you’ll find that success becomes a byproduct of your effort.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

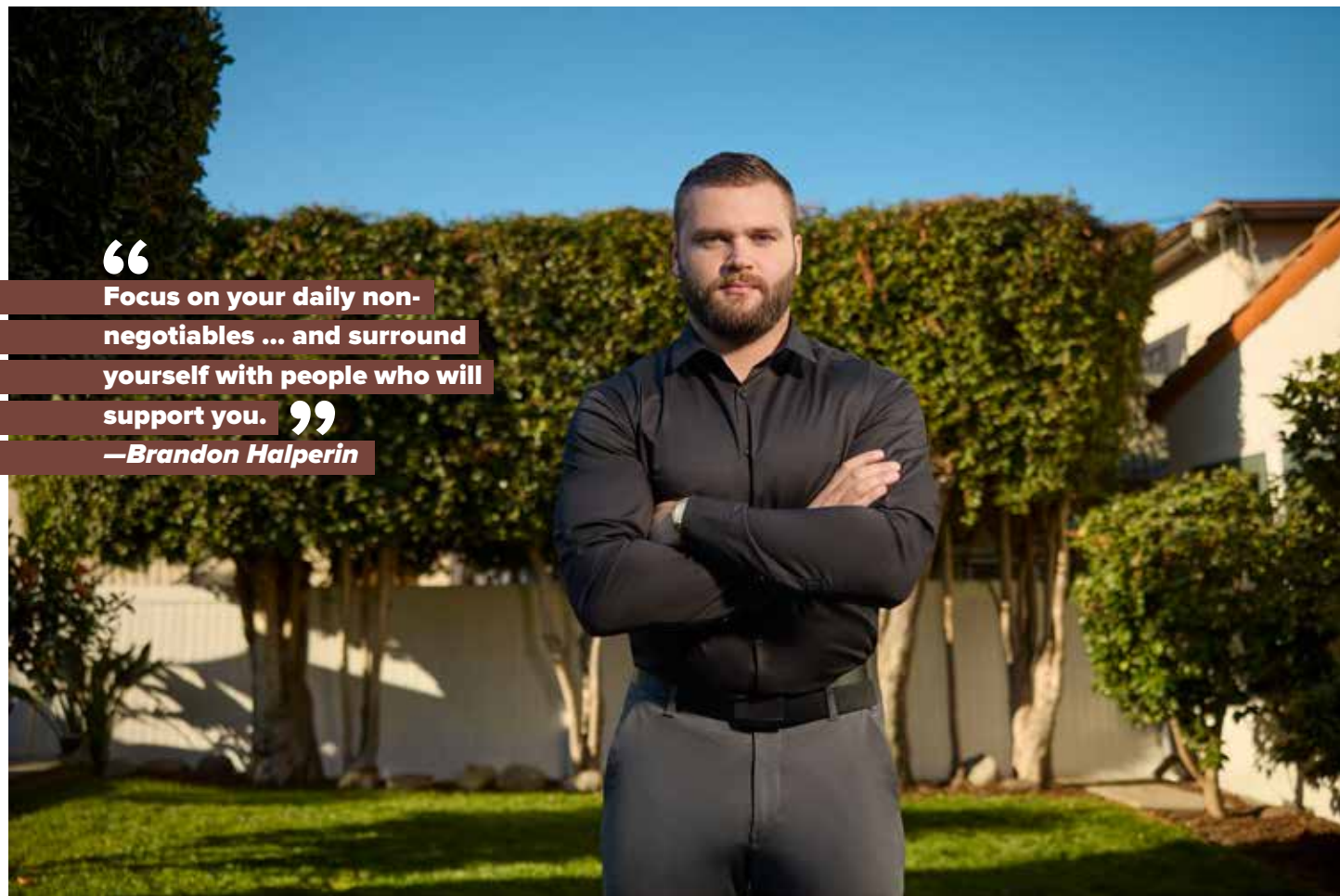
What excites Brandon most about real estate is not just the deals he closes, but the tangible impact he has on his clients’ lives. “Real estate is a business where you’re always doing something that matters,” he says. “Whether it’s helping someone buy or sell a property, or providing a consultation, I know I’m making a genuine difference in people’s lives.”

In 2024, Brandon’s hard work paid off in a big way — he closed over \$20 million in sales, a milestone that solidified his place as a rising star in the industry. But while the numbers are impressive, it’s the relationships he builds along the way that mean the most. “It’s rewarding to know that the work I do is helping people at such an important time in their lives,” he says.

STAYING GROUNDED: A FOCUS ON HEALTH AND FAMILY

Outside of work, Brandon is committed to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. A former college football linebacker at Fort Hays State University, he stays active by hitting the gym every morning. “I’m a big gym guy,” he says. “It’s important to have a routine





“
Focus on your daily non-negotiables ... and surround yourself with people who will support you.”
 —Brandon Halperin

and take care of your body, especially when you have such a demanding career.”

Brandon also values his time with his girlfriend, Rachel, and their two dogs, Jackson and Molly. “They keep me grounded and remind me of what’s truly important in life.”

GIVING BACK

In addition to his thriving real estate career, Halperin is passionate about giving back to the community. One organization close to his heart is Paws for Pets, a local nonprofit that helps rescue and care for animals in need. “I really appreciate the work they do,” he says. “Animals have always been a big part of my life, and I love supporting causes that make a difference in their lives.”

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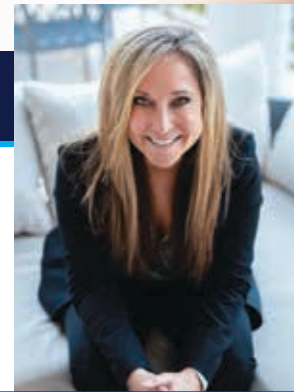
For those looking to follow in his footsteps, Halperin offers some valuable advice. “Get a coach or mentor,” he says. “Pick your environment wisely. You’ll rise or fall to the level of the room you’re in.” He also emphasizes the importance of discipline and focus. “Focus on your daily non-negotiables, follow through with them, and surround yourself with people who will support you.”

Above all, he encourages new agents to be honest with themselves and their clients. “I want to be known as someone who is honest and forthcoming — even if it means saying something that’s hard to hear,” he says. “In the end, that’s what builds trust and leads to long-term success.”



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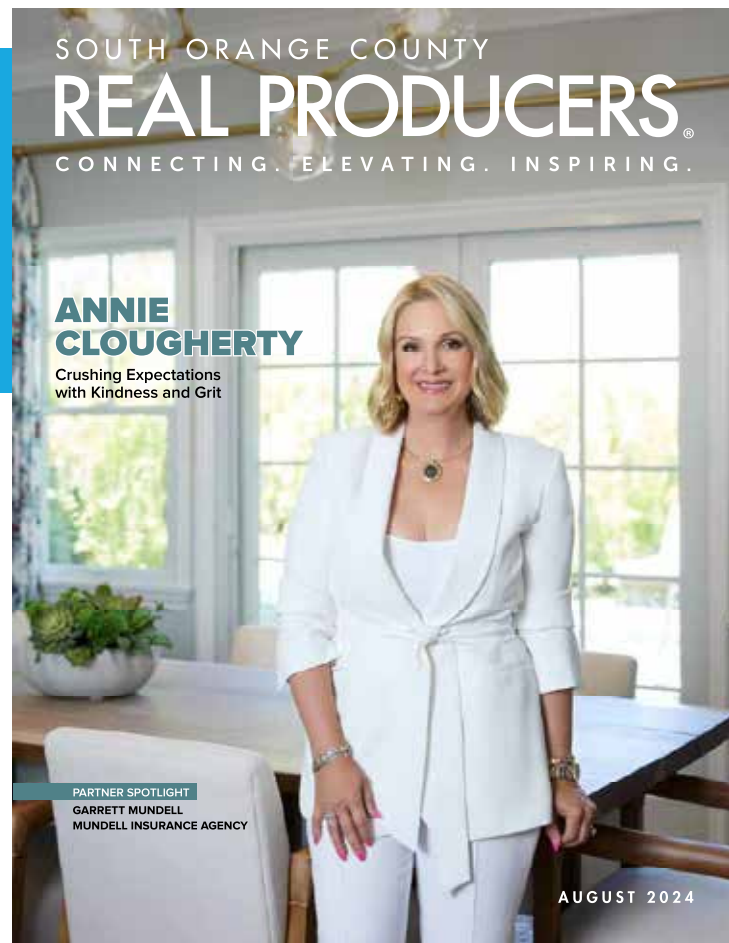
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