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Partner Spotlight:
Emerald Coast Title Services

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WHAT IS REAL PRODUCERS?

Welcome to Emerald Coast Real Producers!

It's my honor to bring Real Producers back to the Florida panhandle area and to celebrate everything that makes you all an outstanding part of the Emerald Coast Real Estate Community. I look forward to highlighting your accomplishments, encouraging your dreams and recognizing you for your continued excellence in serving your clients.

Real Producers started as a simple idea in 2015 in Indianapolis and has spread across the nation like wildfire. The Real Producers community is now available in over 130 locations and is changing the way the real estate community interacts across America. As we embark on this journey together, I promise to create platforms to connect this community and forums to recognize and celebrate what makes each one of you iconic. In years to come, I hope to interview every one of you so that I can share your success stories in future issues. I also look forward to celebrating you at our events, providing tools and connections to help you grow your business, and representing your passion for this industry that we all share.

Here are some quick facts about Real Producers:

DISTRIBUTION: This magazine will arrive in the mailboxes of the TOP 300 agents along the Emerald Coast each month. These 300 agents are determined through compiled MLS data from 2022. If you are receiving a hard copy of the publication, it is because you belong to an elite group and represent the best of the best in our industry!

CONTENT: This publication is all about YOU, the Emerald Coast real estate community. We will be writing personal and unique stories about members of this community, giving you a platform to inspire greatness in others. As we grow, we will continue to add fresh content focused entirely on the top agents and our Preferred Partners. We have NOTHING to sell to real estate agents as it is absolutely FREE to be featured in this publication. To be featured, the agents must be nominated by a peer, leader, or influencer in the local real estate market. We always encourage nominations and love to hear about agents who are making a huge impact in our market.

PREFERRED PARTNERS: Anyone listed as a "Preferred Partner" in the index of this publication will also be a part of this exclusive community. You will see them advertised in every issue, attending our private events, and being a part of our online community. We do not cold call businesses off the street to join us, nor do we allow any business that approaches us to be a part. One or many of you have recommended every single one of these Preferred Partners that you see in this publication. Our goal is to give you as many resources as possible to add to your arsenal so that you always remain that trusted referral source to your clients and customers.

EVENTS: Along with our monthly publication, we will be hosting various social and educational events throughout the year. Our goal is to bring the best of the best together while supporting our local communities. And we fully intend to have a good time doing it! We will be communicating information on upcoming events through the publication, monthly emailed newsletter and social media.

CONTRIBUTION: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® for certain features, know of additional top-notch affiliate partners who would be a great fit for our community, or would simply like to learn more, please reach out to me anytime. I look forward to meeting with every one of you in the future. I would also like to give a HUGE THANK YOU to the Preferred Partners who jumped on board with us so that we could bring *Emerald Coast Real Producers* back to life. Also, a huge shout-out to my team that pulled this together without much guidance. You all are incredible and this first issue is dedicated to you!

I appreciate you all and I look forward to seeing you all at our launch party coming soon!



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▶ partner spotlight

Written by Lindsey Hardman
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ECTS

Homegrown and Here for You!

Local Title Company Setting the Bar (No pun intended)

What do you get when you combine a few home-grown professionals and a community that doesn't realize it's missing something?

It might sound too good to be true for Realtors, buyers and sellers, but that's exactly what Emerald Coast Title Services (ECTS) is here for - to bridge the gap between the legalities of property deals and that closing table relief.

Having served the Emerald Coast for 40 years and counting, ECTS has grown and developed exponentially to meet the needs of the community. With no plans

of slowing down, they continue to build offices to meet their clients where they are and provide a one-stop shop for all of your real estate needs.

"There is no problem we can't solve for someone coming in for a closing," ECTS president Dion Moniz says. "With everyone you need in-house, it is exceptionally simple to have all your needs addressed in one place."

Put simply, if you are a client of ECTS, you can receive free legal advice and assistance with your real estate deals. Have a governance issue? Contract dispute? Probate problem? With in-house attorneys, ECTS is equipped to pull in the expert they need for the situation at hand. Everything (and everyone) you need is right here.

ECTS is owned by a group of the Florida partners of Hand Arendall Harrison Sale LLC, a regional law firm with 100+ lawyers. ECTS has four locations to serve you: Santa Rosa Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Freeport, and Destin, with plans to continue expanding. And with a dynamic and empathetic team in place, clients can expect nothing less than thorough, end-to-end service.

Director of Operations, Ashley Bowen, is passionate about providing ample resources to the community. She is heavily involved in



the local REALTOR® association, and regularly attends legal and underwriting events to keep everyone up to date on any changes that may have an impact. Having started with the company in 2013, she has worn most of the hats in the office-- allowing her to have an intuition about what is needed, and stepping in before anyone needs to ask.

She started as the receptionist, answering phones and directing calls. When she moved on to pre-closings, she learned under ECTS's founder, Delys Dearman, who took the time to show her the ropes. It was important to her to ensure the client experience would always be stellar whether or not she was in the driver's seat. When Delys sadly passed away, Ashley wanted to carry on her legacy by continuing her education, which drove home her passion for learning. It's become her favorite part of her role. In January, she will be auditioning with Florida REALTORS® to become a licensed instructor to teach for CE credits.

"Learning and then teaching is my favorite," she says. "Every transaction is different, and I get to learn from each one."

Alison Etheredge is the resident Closing Attorney for the Santa Rosa Beach office. After graduating from the University of Florida and later the Cumberland School of Law, she began her career in insurance defense. But it didn't take long for her to realize that it wasn't the right fit.

"Litigation did not work well with my personality, goals, and how I wanted to feel at the end of the day," she recalls with a chuckle. In 2003, she had a mutual friend of Delys' who mentioned that Delys needed an attorney on staff. Alison quickly found her path in title, and has since never looked back.



"It was a much better fit!"

Now, she can't imagine doing anything else. She is committed to her craft, and has been known to stay late at the office to ensure her clients are well taken care of. During the real estate "Covid boom", she was among many in the industry who worked well into the night and made the best of it.

"There were days I knew I'd be at the office until 9:00 pm. I worked late on Thursdays a lot because there was a bar across the street that had live music on Thursdays and I could hear it from my desk!"

The long hours don't slow her down, though. She is adamant about her personal time and on top of having two awesome teenagers, she is also an avid runner and marathoner. It's a hobby-turned-passion she picked up after having kids, and has since completed 9 marathons - 8 full and 1 Ultra. Her best time to date is 4:14 and she was the 4th overall female in the Ultra!

Both Ashley and Alison bring a comforting yet tenacious energy to the team, welcoming anyone who walks in with an unspoken feeling of "We've got your back." They know every client has a story, and it's their mission to guarantee everyone feels heard, understood, and has an experience that exceeds expectations.

The ECTS commitment to the community extends far outside the office. With regular events, celebrations and classes, their impact on the industry is not unnoticed. Whenever a new statute passes, they are teaching a class on it. They have created and taught several new classes this year alone based on legislative changes in Florida. New agent classes? They've got 'em. Growing up as natives makes a substantial difference; their knowledge of both the land and the laws is far above the average Floridian's, which is crucial considering that Florida is a non-attorney state.

"You don't have to be an attorney to own or run a title company in Florida," Ashley points out. "There are lots of title



companies that don't have attorneys on staff, or if they do, they aren't local to our area. Being local, with attorneys on staff, sets us apart." With Florida being extremely unique in its properties, out-of-state attorneys, or even attorneys from a different region of the state, are not familiar with Florida or the Emerald Coast's eccentricities - something this team is fluent in.

Despite current market conditions, Dion does not subscribe to the idea of a crisis.

"I don't hold the position of 'the sky is falling,'" he says. "I think we need to get through this next election cycle and then maybe interest rates will calm down. If we can see rates get back to 5, I think 5 is going to be the new 3. The floodgates should open up again at that point."

Despite the downturn, however, Florida is still better protected than other markets. People are still rapidly moving to Florida from all over the country, and with a heavy military presence as well, it maintains its attraction for both in and out-of-state movers.

"We're still the cheapest gulf-front property in the country," Dion adds. "We still have that allure for a lot of high-end people moving here from places like New York."

A "Panama City Boy" himself, he agrees that the difference you can make in the lives of your clients is exponentially larger when you're a local. Having earned his undergrad at Gulf Coast State College (then Florida State University) and his law degree at FSU College of Law, he knows the area like the back of his hand.



“With everyone you need in-house, it is exceptionally simple to have all your needs addressed in one place.”

When he's not focused on clients, you'll often find him working on his podcast. *Let's Talk Title* is available on most podcast platforms, and provides information and education surrounding all things real estate and title. He and Ashley regularly bring on different guests, insurance brokers and agents to discuss market trends and updates to best equip their clients with the most up-to-date news. *Let's Talk Title* also happens to be one of the top 30 title insurance podcasts nationwide, according to FeedSpot.

And when he's not working on *that*, you can generally find him outside. Camping, boating, shooting, or riding ATVs...you name it, count him in.

Ashley on the other hand, you'll find quilting or crafting. Or at the annual Destin Fishing Rodeo, which her mother has helped operate for the last 25 years. The rodeo itself is celebrating 75 years this year!

Whether it's running, camping, quilting or fishing, it's these differences that keep this well-rounded team connected. Their unique qualities and gifts keep the operation growing and thriving, and Dion says it's about time for another office. The 'Westward Expansion' (as he calls it) may involve a new office in Navarre, Crestview and/or DeFuniak Springs in the near future.

With a love for their team and community at the heart of all they do, Emerald Coast Title Services is a staple of the Florida real estate community. Having such star players in one organization is hard to come by, and Dion has ensured that it's not just his clients who receive the very best. His team does too.

So what's next?

"Nothing is off the table at this point," he says. "I dream big."

COACHES CORNER

Confrontation

Harness the might of confrontation to supercharge your journey. Don't shy away from challenging conversations. Instead, identify who's been holding you back and set the stage for constructive dialogues.

Confrontation doesn't mean aggression; it means being calm and clear. State your thoughts precisely while respecting others.

The key to success is clarity. Know what you want and where you're going. Visualize your desired outcome and let it guide you.

Embrace confrontation to unlock your potential. Deals become attainable, and relationships strengthen. Confidence grows, and success follows.

So, I challenge you: Confront, confront, confront! Face obstacles head-on, and watch them crumble. Your journey to real estate greatness begins with one courageous conversation. Seize your destiny and let nothing deter you. Your success story awaits.



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RICK GONZALEZ

cover story

Written by Lindsey Hardman
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

KINDNESS ON THE HOMEFRONT

Work hard. Be kind.

It's not just a catchy slogan, even though you'll see it on his shirt often. It's simply a way of life for Rick Gonzalez. There isn't another option for him. Between growing up a military kid, serving in the military himself, and now being a dad of 3, he's seen a few things.

Each of those things has had an impact on his mindset, outlook on life, and career.

His calm demeanor is one of the many reasons his buyers choose him - some without ever meeting him in person first. Just recently he received a message on Instagram from a family who decided to work with him only after watching all of his YouTube videos first... and then following him on Instagram for three months to just be sure. When they finally met in person, he was in for a surprise.

"Three generations showed up to the meeting! The wife immediately hugged me. I'd never met her before. The husband was dressed almost exactly like me. They later told me as he was getting ready that morning, his wife had asked him what he was going to wear. His response was 'Like Rick.' He'd noticed my casual attire in my videos, and he wanted to match that."

Having such a personal online presence brings the clients to him. He is open and honest, and it welcomes people into his life without ever having to set foot in an office or drive all around town for meetings. It gives them ample time and space to get to know him before taking the leap of putting him in charge of the biggest transaction of their lives.

"It's so different," he admits. "They know about my dogs, my kids, my cats. They know so much about me. It's like we've already known each other for so long. I still have to ask them questions to get to know them, but it's so much easier because they feel like they know me and already trust me."

It makes a massive difference in the relationship and life cycle of the transaction. In both the good and the inevitable bad, having the foundation of a solid relationship with your clients can make or break their experience.

"It's so much more fun. You get to enjoy the transaction, and you don't have to prove yourself. It even makes the tough conversations easier."

With the majority of his clients being military, those tough conversations are inevitable. Having grown up in that lifestyle before pursuing it himself, he gets it. His dad was in the Air Force for 22 years. He was born in the Netherlands and grew up in the UK while his dad was stationed there, but moved around so many times until he was old enough to join himself that he already had a solid understanding of how to uproot, plant somewhere brand new, and make new friends no matter where he landed. He is a bit of a chameleon in that he can vibe with pretty much anyone, but don't expect him to dress up for the occasion.

"I am not a suit guy," he chuckles.

It's that unworried and easygoing attitude that reels people in. It's a bonus breath of fresh air for the military families he serves; their transition is chaotic enough as it is. It is immensely helpful to have someone involved who can guide you from start to finish on your real estate transaction, and lead the way throughout the entirety of your move to keep the stress levels (and blood pressure) down. A PCS move (or Permanent Change of Station) is never painless nor stress-free, but Rick's knowledge and education on both sides of the fence have served him and his clients well.

He has now been in Real Estate for over 12 years. His team includes his beautiful wife Katrina, and Steve Padilla, an Army veteran. Together, they operate as The Gonzalez Group under REAL Broker, LLC and place a heavy focus on fostering relationships

within their community and surrounding areas, especially when it comes to the fellowship that comes with the military community. Rick places a big emphasis on ensuring their clients are welcomed home far beyond their closing date. This means taking it a step further, every time, and having answers for their clients before they even ask. He reminds them at the closing table that even though the transaction is closed, he is still just a phone call away...and he means it.



"I like for them to know they have at least one person they can call," he says. From scheduling movers to lawn care, Rick and his team are on it without hesitation. "Whatever we can do to help make a difference, we try to do that."

That innate desire to serve stems from more than just a calling - it's a mutual understanding. He knows what it means to sacrifice, and has a different level of empathy than the average Realtor. Life does not discriminate from trials, tragedy and grief, and Rick is no exception. Over time, however, he began to see that how you choose to handle those challenges ultimately makes or breaks the rest of your life. After his dad retired from the Air Force, his parents moved to Florida where they began working with a resort management company that Rick was familiar with - it had been one of his high school jobs. When Rick got out of the Navy after 6 years, he went back to Florida to be closer to them and figure out what he was going to do next.

Not long after, he received the devastating news that his best friend, Robert Elortegui, had been killed in a helicopter crash.

In an effort to try to make sense of it all, he took his first 'next step' in door-to-door sales for a phone company that took him all over the place. At any given time he could be in Atlanta, Boston, Jacksonville...it didn't matter to him. At the time, he didn't know what else to do.

"It was more of a 'get out of town and deal with emotions' kind of thing," he recalls.

Eventually, he realized he had it in him to do more. So he gave his dad a call, who was more than ready to have his son back home. Rick returned to Florida and joined his parents at the resort, starting his desk job at \$10 an hour. His plan was to work his way up to a salaried manager position, and he was successful. But as life would have it, the catastrophic BP oil spill occurred not long after - and as a newer manager, his position was among the first to be eliminated.

“ WE REALLY PUT A FOCUS ON BRINGING IN REALTORS WHO HAVE A PASSION FOR THE MILITARY. ”

Serendipity had different plans, though. As he was leaving the building with his box of belongings in tow, he ran into Marilue Maris who, after offering her condolences, mentioned that if he was ever interested in getting into real estate to give her a call. She thought he'd do a great job. He thanked her but thought nothing of it. When he walked out of the office it was out of sight, out of mind.



leave the bad, and once I settled into 'this is me and this is how I want to do real estate,' the change was almost overnight. People started listening, calling, and I started getting more engagement on my videos. The last 6 years have really been fun."

And he's just getting warmed up. With the hunger to serve the military community at an even greater level, he teamed up with 4 others to create the REAL Military Division. With VA loans being such a large part of the buying and selling market, several veterans within the brokerage wanted to establish a division led by those with a personal connection to the military. With a goal of offering a more catered, personal and informed experience to military clients, these agents are hand-picked because their niche *is* the military.

"We had no desire to create just another marketing scam," Rick says. "We really put a focus on bringing in Realtors who have a passion for the military."

Just launched in June 2023, the REAL Military Division is already sitting at over 360 members and growing rapidly. It's comprised of 90% military veterans and 10% civilians who have been vetted to ensure their military-first mindset. Most have a personal tie to the military in some way. In less than six months, it is already making waves in the military and Realtor community, and applications to join haven't stopped rolling in.

"I'm sitting with 20 applications as we speak!"



With so much on the horizon, what's next?

A long-term goal of being able to retire when his youngest daughter turns 18 (in about 7 years), is a possibility, but he knows he has a lot more in store - and still isn't completely sure he will want to retire then, either. He's found that he loves this business and the people in it far too much and that he can still enjoy life to the fullest because of it. He also loves legos,

baseball and anything outdoors, and makes a point to enjoy those simple pleasures any chance he gets. After his dad passed, he decided he didn't want to wait any longer to travel the world and is already knee-deep in what's next for their passports.

He garners much of his current inspiration from the quote, "There's go-go, slow-go and no-go." Once you get into the slow-go and no-go chapters of life, it doesn't take long for the trips and adventures to get harder - and sometimes fade away completely. He knows he is living in the go-go chapter of life right now, and has every intention of staying on that track for as long as he can. He's got three kids who are confident he is a superhero (a sentiment also shared by clients) and who give him purpose far greater than any commission. And while the money is certainly an added bonus, it's not what gets him out of bed in the morning.

It's that overwhelming drive to serve. The uniform may be hung up, but his giving-back muscle is one he continues to exercise daily.

"It's hard to not want to help," he says. "I've been there."

Honor, courage, and commitment aren't just words plastered on a wall for Rick; nor are they just core values he upheld while he was in uniform.

They are a lifestyle. A way of life that is encapsulated by an immense love for *people and community*.

Still serving. Still honoring.

Just in a different way that brings the impact closer to home.

When he was still struggling to find a job 6 months later, he gave her a call. She wasted no time in becoming his mentor and helping him get licensed. Getting his business off the ground was no easy feat, and for the first few years, Katrina was the provider for the family. It was only because of Katrina that he had the opportunity to grow and become the Rick Gonzalez he is today. She never batted an eye, making sure he had everything he needed to succeed - even as he was waiting tables at night his first 2-3 years of being licensed. With the financial load of the family on her shoulders, that meant he was the stay-at-home dad - memories he still cherishes and doesn't take for granted.

"I was taking them to school, picking them up, helping with homework. It made me realize how much maintaining flexibility for my kids was important to me. I know it won't be long before all their friends are more important than me. I want to maximize daddy-daughter

and father-son time as much as I can while still making a living."

It's safe to say he's winning at both. With Katrina, two daughters, one son, three cats and four dogs at the forefront of his mind, his desire to be able to be wholly himself at home and at work has proven to not only be attainable, but profitable. Every transition and change along the way has helped him hone in on the type of leader he wants to be as he continues to grow, and those lessons aren't lost on him. It took every one of those adjustments and detours to find his sweet spot, and it wasn't until he moved to Freeport 6 years ago that he started building his business his own way - which proved to make all the difference.

"It's when I started building my business the way I wanted to do it. Doing social media, wearing the T-shirts, and being ok with who I was. I'd learned along the way to take the good and

▶ rising star

Written by
Laine D'Souza
Photography by
Faltisek & Gloria



ROBBIE TRUAX

@realproducers



In the world of real estate, one name is currently setting the industry ablaze—Robbie Truax. Her story is not just inspiring; it's a masterclass in fearlessness, relentless pursuit of knowledge, and a resolute spirit that refuses to back down. Robbie Truax has carved her own path to success that's nothing short of rockstar.

SERVICE: A ROCK-SOLID FOUNDATION

Robbie's journey didn't begin in real estate. Before she started conquering that arena, she spent a commendable 11 years serving in the Air Force, stationed at Hurlburt Field. It was during this time that she met the love of her life, Shawn, and together, they planted their roots and expanded their family with three beautiful children in Fort Walton Beach. This is where Robbie's story takes a unique turn.

Growing up in a large family, Robbie was no stranger to the concept of service. She learned early on that service wasn't limited to the home; it extended to the local church, non-profit organizations, the community, and her country.

Robbie's military service instilled in her core values that continue to drive her today, with one principle

shining brightly: "Service before self." Her roles in the Air Force evolved into leadership and education, where she had the privilege of imparting her wisdom to new supervisors. Her passion for learning and teaching found a home, but alas, her military tour was limited.

As she grappled with the decision to stay in the military or explore new horizons, Robbie turned to her faith for guidance and received a heartfelt call to fulltime ministry. Her prayers were answered in a most unexpected way. The church she had been devoted to for almost a decade created a permanent full-time position tailor-made for Robbie, recognizing her leadership, education, and gifts. This role allowed her to serve her community while remaining rooted with her family—a dream scenario.

ALL IN: BRAVERY MEETS AMBITION

Robbie's faith is the bedrock of her existence, a steadfast guide throughout her life. In 2021, she faced a monumental leap of faith—leaving her ministry position for a completely new career challenge. Armed with a wealth of experience in operations and marketing, she accepted a co-executive position as Director of Operations and Marketing, working for a top real estate team on the Emerald Coast.



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I DON'T WANT TO EVER STOP LEARNING.



But this was just the beginning. To truly understand her role and provide exceptional support, Robbie decided to obtain her real estate license. Little did she know that this decision would lead her down an entirely new path—a path of real estate sales. With a foundation in contracts, transactions, and concierge service, there was one aspect she hadn't tackled yet—sales.

Robbie's life philosophy centers on maximizing every moment, recognizing that every season in life is temporary. Supported by her husband and extended family, she took the plunge into sales. Robbie went all in.

"ALL IN IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THAT LIFE'S JOURNEY CAN TAKE US IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS. NO MATTER THE SEASON, IT'S CRUCIAL TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT,"

Robbie's commitment? To always say, "I made the most of it," and that means giving her absolute best to her customers, seizing every opportunity in every season to grow, learn, and share.

TEACHER AND STUDENT FOREVER

Every epic tale needs a wise mentor, and Robbie found hers within her own family. Her brother, Willie Davis, also a real estate professional in Atlanta and Detroit markets, became a sounding board. Willie lit the fire under Robbie's ambition, urging her to fully embrace real estate sales and serve clients with unwavering dedication.

"I DON'T WANT TO EVER STOP LEARNING,"

This statement encapsulates Robbie's relentless drive for self-improvement and excellence.

Robbie believes in providing access to homeownership for everyone, customizing her approach to cater to each client's unique needs. Her nurturing spirit eases the home-buying process, and her collaborative mindset shines. She doesn't view others as competitors but as fellow travelers on the same path. Her broad network

allows her to connect first-time buyers with the right lenders and multi-million dollar clients with the perfect properties.

Transparency is Robbie's hallmark. She doesn't make empty promises but instead pledges to do everything within her power to ensure a peaceful home-buying process. Her leadership skills shine as she navigates obstacles with empathy, finding solutions and guiding transactions with integrity.

Robbie's current home is Realty One Group Emerald Coast, a company that values education and collaboration. The innovative 24/7 broker policy, cutting-edge technology, and a culture of teamwork align perfectly with Robbie's goals of becoming a Florida Realtors Faculty Instructor one day and give back to other agents.

"WHO I AM DOESN'T LEAVE ME REGARDLESS OF MY JOB,"

Robbie Truax speaks with unwavering grounded confidence. Her calm spirit, unyielding commitment to growth, learning, service, and infectious drive are a source of inspiration to anyone seeking to make the most of life's opportunities. Robbie Truax is not just a rising star; she's a trailblazer, illuminating the way with her brave and fearless journey, lighting a new path that we could all learn from.



Based in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida



Capturing stories,
Crafting moments

Your journey, our lens

» featured agent

Written by Jennifer Delzer
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

Tessa SAVOY

Star Power

Star power comes in many forms. After meeting Tessa Savoy, none can deny that she has it. A calm and powerful presence that radiates confidence in who she is and where she is headed. The self-described workaholic took a round-about journey to find her niche in the military relocation world of Real Estate, giving ultimate credit to the generational tradition of service to country-- in which her family has a long and proud history.



Having her name in lights was Tessa's identity from a young age. Her family's connections in Hollywood did not hurt and it seemed she had a promising future ahead of her. Her parents were not as excited about her Hollywood dreams and wanted a more realistic plan for her life, so Tessa enrolled in college-- first majoring in theater, then journalism.

Tessa landed her first big "on-air" opportunity on Newstalk radio, then later television news, but Tessa was determined to turn this opportunity into something more. Tessa never turned down an assignment nor shied away from difficult subject matter. She was the first to arrive at the station and she always wore a suit. She felt if she looked the part, she would eventually get the part. Her theory worked and she would soon get her big break. An army unit was returning home after a long deployment overseas, and they didn't have any reporters on hand to cover the story. The News Director told Tessa to come back with a story and be ready to go live at noon! The camera loved her, and it did not take long for her talents to be recognized up and down the coast.

Specializing in crime and corruption, her beat was not for the faint of heart. As Tessa will gladly tell you, she does not come from weak stock. She knocked on doors with a microphone in hand and

a cameraman in tow. She was tasked with turning multiple stories a day, and always started and ended with a live shot. Little did she know, her "storytelling" on air would play largely into her future real estate career.

It was during her reporting days that Tessa would soon meet her then-husband. She was covering one of the largest drug busts in the state of Florida, and he was the undercover agent in charge. Although her career was on a swift upward trajectory, Tessa was now faced with the reality of balancing marriage, career, and motherhood. Her husband's job was unpredictable and required long hours away. With no family in sight and a new baby in tow, she walked away from a career she loved, for the love of her family which she loved more.

The marriage did not last, but the divorce was amicable. With very little money in the bank, not a newsroom in sight, and 2 little girls depending on her, Tessa knew she needed to very quickly convert her skills into a new career. She began researching.



During her time as a stay-at-home mom, she loved stalking real estate listings online. She had been a visual storyteller in her news days, so she decided she could use those same skills to tell the story of any house. She would make the house newsworthy and sell the heck out of it. She passed her real estate exam and began knocking on doors again, only this time to gain a listing. For Sale by Owner signs were soon replaced with For Sale by Tessa signs. It was a start, but she needed to grow her business in other ways.

She evaluated the market and recognized a large local military presence. It was a lightbulb moment that illuminated a new path and would soon change her business trajectory.

"These were my people. Every generation on both sides of my family tree served in the military in some form or fashion. My Grandfather, a WWII fighter pilot against the Kamikazes; my Dad, a Marine during the Vietnam days; my cousin also a marine; my Uncle and Aunt, both career Air Force; and my other Grandfather, a notorious WWII soldier in the Army Air Corps. I want to work with these people."





or seller, I get to work! I research and I come up with a plan to remove all stress from this process because their career choice is tough. Buying or selling a home should not be.”

She recognizes that many real estate agents do not share her passion for relocation because they do not want to give up a percentage of their paycheck (which is a requirement). She looks at it differently. “Why wouldn’t I want to give up a percentage of my pay for someone who is risking their life for our country?”

The 2 daughters that inspired Tessa’s real estate career are now 14 and 11. One recently started middle school and the other high school. “I wanted to keep them in their school. I didn’t feel like they should be penalized or transplanted just because their father and I couldn’t work it out.”

That decision means Tessa commutes 45 minutes every morning and afternoon to a small country school near the Florida/Alabama border. Although Tessa claims to lack balance in her personal life, it is evident that she goes above and beyond to provide balance for her children and anyone else lucky enough to be in her circle. Is there a significant other in her life? “I have a public presence, but I’m very private.”

Tessa is the team leader for the Tessa Savoy Team and Broker and Vice President at ERA American Real Estate. In her own words, she wears many hats. But she might wear humility and appreciation best. This Louisiana Cajun defines success as never losing sight of her family roots, remembering her humble beginnings and hopefully one day achieving true peace.

**MILITARY ROOTS.
BIG DREAMS.
STAR POWER.**



I deeply appreciate what the military does for this country, so when I am handed a relocation file on a potential military buyer or seller, I get to work!

Tessa soon earned the Military Relocation Professional designation (MRP) and spent months negotiating with company higher-ups for the chance to join their military relocation team. Tessa was relentless and eventually earned her spot. With 100% conversion in her first year, military relocation company affiliates like USAA took notice. USAA flew Tessa to their headquarters in San Antonio, TX to use her in promotional media and interview her about her formula for relocation success.

Tessa says her USAA experience confirmed that she was on the right path. “I deeply appreciate what the military does for this country, so when I am handed a relocation file on a potential military buyer



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►► broker spotlight

Written by Angela M. Todd
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

Wes Madden

Scenic Sotheby's International Realty



Just Maddening!

What do you get when you put together a farm boy in Nebraska, an Army medevac pilot in Alaska and a real estate wizard in Florida?

Wes Madden. You get Wes Madden.

This 47-year-old has more than enough drive and passion to go around. He is a father of 3 teenage sons and husband to his wife Laura of 22 years.

It doesn't take long to discover that his personal priorities govern his whole lifestyle with a mantra of "God first. Family second. Business third."

Growing up, Wes and his younger brother, known as "the Madden boys", earned quite a reputation amongst the local farmers in their community for being reliable hard workers. So began the model for his work ethic that has carried him through life, and it's the same message he instills in his sons and anyone who falls under his leadership as Chief Operating Officer and Associate Broker of Scenic Sotheby's International Realty.

Wes learned his "winner's mentality" from his mother, Marcia Madden, who repeatedly told him, "You can do anything and you can

be anything!" Her words took root in his mind and heart and are still part of the driving force behind his can-do approach to everything upon which he sets his intentions.

As a young man, he focused that passion and pursuit on becoming an Army pilot. This brought him from the heartland to Fort Wainwright, Alaska where he served as a Army Blackhawk pilot until his medical release in 2006.

In need of a new career, Wes decided to get his real estate license and soon began flipping houses for profit. With fresh ideas about how to innovate the real estate space in order to give his clients a better experience than the current trend at that time, his friends began seeking his help with their own real estate dreams. And before he knew it, Wes quickly became a highly successful Realtor.

Wes was and is a trendsetter. After gaining his MBA during his time in the military, he combined



his blue-collar work ethic, his acquired education, and his free-thinking natural innovator spirit and did something that had never been done before. His company moved to the top 15 in the nation. If that wasn't a big enough accomplishment for a real estate agent in Fairbanks, Alaska, he went on to lead them to 7 consecutive years as the #1 team in the state, which also earned Madden Real Estate the title of Business





Enjoy the journey;
it goes so fast.

of the Year by the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce-- the first time that award had been given to a real estate company!

One of the attributes that he possesses, along with being unyielding in his pursuits, is the willingness and ability to adapt and adjust in any given situation. So once again, Wes and Laura made a radical decision to pack up and make the giant move from Alaska to Florida.

In only a few short years, Wes has taken all he learned and built in the icy, snowy, dark sub-zero temperatures of Fairbanks, and he has applied those concepts to the sandy, sunny snowbird state of Florida. He is living proof that persistence, resilience, and vision are a duplicatable recipe for success no matter where he goes.

If given the chance, what would Wes say to his younger self? "Enjoy the journey; it goes so fast." And though he is unlikely to slow down anytime soon, as a self-proclaimed "not very good at relaxing" kind of guy, he does have his own style for being present in the moments of this magical life he has created.

You may find him sharply dressed and able to impress in almost any given business setting-- whether on stage inspiring others to live



their best lives, or bringing his fiery magnetic intensity in a one-on-one conversation. Or you may just find him barefooted by the pool grilling steaks for the family dinner! No matter where you find Wes Madden, one thing is sure: He knows that the best sale he ever made was convincing

Laura to marry him. And the best awards he's ever received were given to him by her. And their names are Bo, Sam and Max.

Some people might find it crazy to live a life so focused and intentional, but to him...it's just Maddening!



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