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COVER STORY

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EVENT RECAP

BEYOND THE PAGES

JUNE 2024

GET TO KNOW...

*John Griffin*

**What made you decide to become a loan officer?**

I was in a season of change and had a close friend who was successful in this space. I was traveling internationally in the corporate world and wanted to pursue a career that allowed me to spend more time with my family and still enjoy the same level of reward. Couple that with a natural affinity to take the complex and communicate it in easy-to-digest language, the mortgage business just seemed like the right fit.

**What is your favorite part about being a mortgage loan officer?**

The serving, no question. Being able to serve families with one of the most important transactions they'll make in life is an honor and a responsibility I take very seriously. It goes beyond clients, as well. Knowing the execution of my job also plays a major role in the success level of my business partners drives me just as much as seeing a family achieve their dream of homeownership.

**What is the best advice you would give to an agent when it comes to the lending side of the transaction?**

Always ask. So many agents do a great job of staying abreast of lending programs and products. However, my expertise goes well beyond products. It's about structuring and finance management and that's where having a partner that doesn't cookie-cut, but rather treat every customer as the unique individual they are is rare in today's lending world. Never assume.

**What are your favorite hobbies?**

I love sports and anything outdoors. I'm competitive by nature and have stayed active in multiple leagues up until moving here. Additionally, if it involves hunting or being on the water, you can count me in.

**What is an interesting fact about you that other people may not know?**

I'm a father, first and foremost, of 2 amazing daughters - Mylee & McKenna. As a former soldier in the Army, I try to seek out veterans of all Armed Services to assist with home ownership. And I may have spent a summer as Batman in the Six Flags stunt show, many moons ago!



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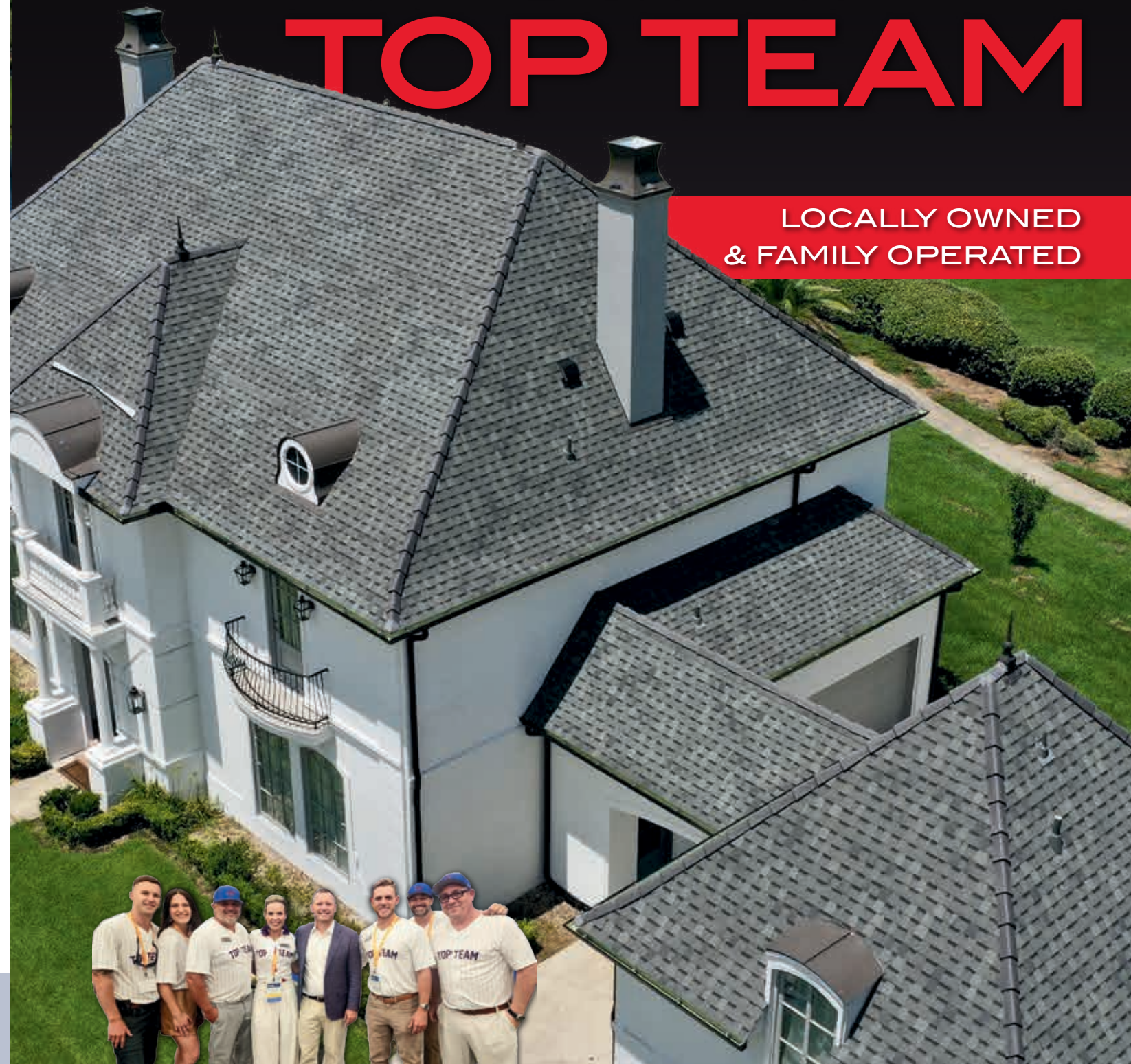
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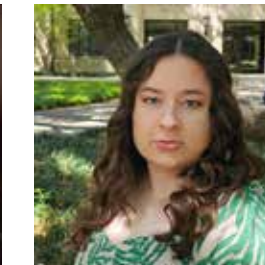
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# Link Up Gleaux Up

Wednesday, June 19th  
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Hey Friends,

The sun is out, the heat is on, and it's a good time for some cool connections.

With this spirit in mind, we're thrilled to invite our BRRP community to the June Link Up to be held at Louisiana Aesthetics and Skincare.

### GLEAUX UP

Join us on Wednesday, June 19th, from 4:00 to 7:00 PM for some live music, food, refreshing drinks,

and the chance to win some incredible door prizes. Specials will be announced and you can call now to pre-book your appointments and take advantage of those discounts! *There's a special gift waiting for the first 20 to RSVP.*

Whether you're a skincare aficionado or simply someone who enjoys a good time, this event is for you. Come and go as you please, but make sure you place it on your calendars so you don't miss out on this one.

### Stick Around and Have Some Fun

We asked some of our past featured agents what they would do with some time to check out sites locally and their answers have us encouraged to plan a Staycation in the near future!

**Tiffany St. Pierre:** "I'd book a condo in Nola and hit up the local shops and restaurants with patios. Then I'd head out to visit the plantations along the river. Lastly, I would book High Tea at The Windsor Court."

**Stacy Belanger:** "I would stay at The Southern in Covington, hit the St Tammany Trace bike trail, stop at local restaurants, shops and cofferies along the way and end the day watching the sun set over the Pontchatrain whilst enjoying a cocktail!!!"

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# ABE SLOCUM

▶ **overcomer**

By Camryn Conner  
Photos by Ace Sylvester

## *True to Myself*

*“True to myself, honest, real, and a go-getter.” These are words Abraham Slocum uses to describe himself. Abraham, or as most people know him, Abe, is a man with a story that deeply resonates with his community. A story that helped him develop these positive traits.*

Abe’s impact extends far beyond his professional endeavors. His involvement in the community stretches back to his early days, where he found himself facing adversity head-on. Overcoming homelessness and addiction, Abe’s journey is a testament to resilience and an unwavering belief in a brighter future.

### **Begin.**

In 2005, after five years in the Navy, Abe came to Louisiana for Mardi Gras. He never left. His journey into the real estate world began in 2020. He was working at a treatment center in the admissions department. Feeling constrained in a field with limited growth opportunities, Abe’s friend and his wife suggested he give real estate a shot. Known for his personable nature and genuine demeanor, Abe decided to enroll in real estate school. Two days after passing his real estate exam, fate intervened as his old job closed its doors. Seeing this as a sign, Abe embraced the opportunity and accepted a marketing role for a different treatment center while pursuing his real estate career. Balancing both roles, Abe became a beacon of hope, blending his passion for real estate with a desire to aid his community.

PRIDE AND EGO CAN GET IN THE WAY OF REACHING OUT FOR HELP AND THEN IT'S TOO LATE.



Abe with his wife Rachel, and son Lincoln and daughter Ruthie.



#### Serve.

Abe's journey is marked by faith. His experiences fuel his commitment to service, as he helps others navigate recovery and find homes of their own. Finding the light at the end of the tunnel has been a huge part of what pushes and motivates him to be better and to serve others. One of Abe's most poignant moments came when he assisted a friend from sober living in purchasing a house, symbolizing a journey from despair to stability. It's moments like these that drive Abe to keep showing up for his community.

"I believe in service, it's a testament old as time, help thy neighbor. Being in recovery and helping other people in recovery is a big part of my life. I believe by being in service, God shows up with blessings." His ethos permeates every aspect of his life, as he continues to uplift those around him with kindness and compassion. In Abe's eyes, service isn't just a duty; it's a calling. He believes that by lending a helping hand and showing kindness to others, blessings will naturally follow. His faith in the power of service fuels his relentless pursuit of making the world a better place, one act of kindness at a time. Abe's journey serves as a beacon of hope for his community, reminding others of the transformative power of compassion and perseverance. In a world often plagued by uncertainty, Abe stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the boundless potential for positive change.

#### Laugh.

Something that makes Abe, or as some would call him, The Meme-Agent, different is just that. He's a meme-agent. His infectious humor and social media presence earned him the title. Through laughter and

relatable jokes, Abe connects with others, offering glimpses of authenticity in a digital world. "It's not done professionally and you can tell, but that's just me." Abe wants to try and bring some comic relief to the seriousness of buying a house. "I do take it very serious, but I want my clients to know I'll be honest and true to myself. I'm going to stay true to myself."

#### Persevere.

Abe is currently training for an Iron Man. This triathlon consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride, and a marathon 26.22-mile run, completed in that order, totaling 140.6 miles. His pursuit of personal challenges, such as training for an Iron Man, reflects his indomitable spirit and commitment to self-improvement. Through every triumph and setback, Abe remains steadfast in his resolve to make a difference in the lives of others. Yet, amidst his busy schedule, Abe remains grounded in his values, prioritizing quality time with his loved ones.



#### Hope.

On May 24th Abe marked his 6 years of sobriety. "It's a day of celebration." He continues, "Every year I reflect back to where I was and there is a lot of gratitude involved. I know a lot of people that are no longer here. I am just grateful that God gave me the opportunity to serve him." As a husband and father, Abe leads with care and compassion and a true desire to help lift people and offer hope for recovery. "At the end of the day, we are all God's children and there could have been many times that I could have been locked away in prison, or even dead." He recognizes that these are two alternatives associated with the lifestyle he chose to leave.

If anyone else in the real estate industry is struggling, Abe wants to be a friend. "Pride and ego can get in the way of reaching out for help and then it's too late." He states that today's world is very different. "It's not just the person on the side of the road, everyone knows someone who is not doing well and I don't want anyone to think that there is not help out there."

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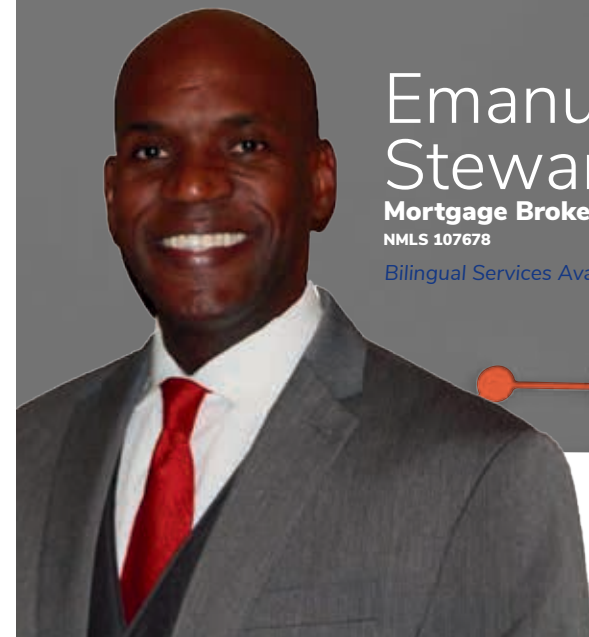
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## My Dad


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▶ cover story

By Bre Pizzolato  
Photos by Ace Sylvester

# RUSS VEGAS

## BACK TO BASICS

Nestled way down the bayou lies a quaint fishing community straddling Bayou Lafourche, roughly 30 miles from the Louisiana beaches of Grand Isle. It's here in Cut Off, surrounded by the waters of Sportsman's Paradise and a large yet close-knit family, where Russ Vegas was born and raised. "It's small town, easy living," he says with a smile.

Despite spending the past 15 years in Baton Rouge, Russ has proudly maintained the distinctive down-the-bayou drawl synonymous with his upbringing. While Baton Rouge has become home for him, his wife, Briana, and their two-year-old Brooks, the foundational lessons he learned as a boy in Cut Off remain the cornerstone of his identity. It's where he learned the power of faith, the importance of treating others with respect and the enduring value of family - principles that continue to guide him today.

#### Family Business

When his older sister enrolled at LSU, Russ looked around and thought, "Well, I guess I'll go to Baton Rouge, too." He packed his bags for the 100-mile road trip to the big city and enrolled in nursing school, excited for a career dedicated to helping others during their most vulnerable times. But the classes were early, and partying was fun, he admits with a smile. "At the time, I didn't think to take afternoon classes," he laughs. "And around that time, a friend told me about a job opening for a Realtor."

As they say, the rest is history. It was time to buckle down, and he quickly began pouring the same passion for helping others that he had planned to put into nursing into assisting people in finding a home. He absorbed business and sales principles, discovering a natural aptitude for relating to others and demonstrating genuine care and concern. Helping others solve problems is second nature. After all, he's honed those skills by watching his parents, who, for four decades, have run a local insurance company in his hometown.

"I run my business with that same small-town, mom-and-pop shop feel," he says. "I want people to feel like they are part of the family." And Russ thrives on taking care of his family. "My goal has always been to retire my parents early," he



says. "I don't think my dad will ever truly retire. That's just the kind of man he is, but I want him to be able to."



I RUN MY BUSINESS WITH THAT SAME SMALL-TOWN, MOM-AND-POP SHOP FEEL. I WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL LIKE THEY ARE PART OF THE FAMILY.



Last year, Russ and Briana started working hard toward that goal by opening a satellite insurance office in Baton Rouge. "We work on it together, but she runs the day-to-day operations and does a great job taking care of our people," he says.

For Russ, life is all about taking care of his people. "Family is the most important thing to me, and the older I get, the more I see that," he says. With a sizable family comprising blood relatives like the 24 cousins and chosen family forged through lifelong friendships, Russ finds fulfillment in fostering connections and supporting those around him.

#### New Perspective

Now, as a husband and father, Russ feels the tug of family on his heart more than ever. "It's

not just pride, but a sense of responsibility," he says. "When I look into my son's eyes, what I want and need to do in life becomes so clear. And I knew that if he were the one asking me what to do, I'd tell him to take a chance on himself. So that's what I'm doing in this new chapter." After ten years with the same brokerage where his real estate career began, Russ has joined Blue Heron Realty. With Briana just a few office doors down, working to grow the family's insurance business in the big city, Russ has never felt more at home.

Now that he's a dad, he has a new perspective on life. "It goes by so fast. When people say don't blink, they mean it," he says. Russ and Briana value time spent with their little one, known affectionately as "The Politician," because he never meets a stranger. When they're not outside playing, they're likely at Rouses, where Brooks is sure to tell everyone he sees, "Hey!"

These days, Russ's principles of life and business are uniquely intertwined. "It always comes back to the basics," he says, referring to sales and everyday life. It's easy to get away from being intentional, but I keep that as my constant goal—to be present and intentional with conversations, relationships, everything."

As he looks to the future, he's fueled by love and determination, standing ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead, always guided by the timeless values of faith, family and genuine care for others that he learned down there in the heart of the bayou. "I want everyone I meet and work with to think, 'Man, I'm thankful for Russ,'" he says. "I strive to make people feel comfortable. I want them to know I'm there and look at their problems like my own."



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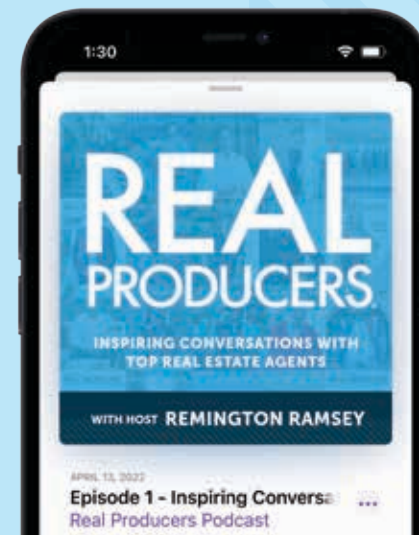
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## *A Legacy of Kindness*

***Many Louisiana natives know that the heart of our state resides in our bayous. Most of us have witnessed the lush banks, winding alongside deep green water, splitting the countryside into a patchwork of lily pads and cyprus trees. Patricia Anderson claims that some of her earliest memories are of these sights, mixed with the scent of her grandfather's crops and the sounds of family.***

Patricia spent her childhood in Assumption Parish, growing up with her brother and sisters next door to her grandparent's farm. "I had a very simple childhood. [My grandparents] had a farm with chickens and cows, growing sugar cane, cotton, and potatoes. I got my hands dirty plenty of times, which was always fun," she recounts. Mixed in with these memories of light-green grass and lazy afternoons were images of her hardworking father. She states that her father was one of the most kind-hearted people she had ever known, and was renowned in her town for these qualities. "I admire my father, because he was so kind and generous with how he lived his life," she muses. "He worked in repairs, so when he would go to work at people's houses, sometimes they didn't have the money. My dad couldn't just not fix their things, so sometimes he would come home with a sack of potatoes, and that's how they paid him."

Patricia states that while being kind, her father also instilled in her the power of a good work ethic. “My mother was a stay at home mom so my dad worked three jobs to support us growing up. He taught us that if I wanted something, outside of the norm, you had to work for it and make the money to buy it. And that’s what I did. I got a babysitting job when I was 12 and worked all through high school and it’s helped me to be the successful person I am today.”

Holding onto these traits, she preserves her father’s memory and tries to incorporate his morals into her daily life. “After he passed, many people would come up and tell me how much I was like my dad. This was such a big compliment to me,” she smiles.

This kindness instilled in her at a young age was ultimately what led her to real estate. Patricia worked in printing and sales for many years, but then, in 2002, her sister, Cheryl,

asked her to join her and her husband on their journey to find their new house. “She wanted me to go along for the ride and I was all in,” she explains, “but then we ran into some issues with the first Realtor they had. She ended up being very rude and I think this was my first taste of how people should not be treated.”

After leaving this Realtor, the search party eventually ran into a broker named Donna Villar, who changed Patricia’s life. “She was one of those go-getter, ‘can’t say no’ type of people, and I really loved that. It resonated with me. After my sister closed on a house, Donna suggested I get licensed so I could work for her. In that instant, I knew I needed a job change,” she says. After 4 months of night school, Anderson was licensed and began working under Villar, learning the trade from example. After that, it wasn’t long before her career took off. “My husband and I owned a RE/MAX franchise for 13

years and sold it in 2020. Knowing I was nowhere near ready to retire, I decided to join Realtors Victoria Haddad and Kelly Mitchell at their brokerage, Magnolia Roots Realty.”

Now, Anderson has a multimillion dollar career, and it all started with that chance meeting. “My sister’s experience is really how I’ve tried to develop my methods. That first realtor was so pushy, showing them things outside of their budget or outside of their school zone. So after

“

I HAVE NO PLANS  
OF QUITTING  
ANYTIME SOON.

”

I passed my test, this experience stuck with me and has remained my motivation to really listen to the people that I get to help,” she emphasizes. Her father’s inspiration as her backbone, Anderson makes it a priority to treat her clients like he treated his, with the utmost kindness and respect. “To me everything is about relationships,” she says, “Most of my clients over the past 20+ years have been repeat and referral. I genuinely have a friendship with my clients, not because I’ve forced it to be that way, but because that’s just the natural evolution of things when you treat people the right way.”

Anderson truly believes that it doesn’t matter if you’re buying a \$20k piece of property or a multimillion dollar home, you deserve to be treated

with the same customer care. With her father’s memory urging her on, Anderson is only looking to launch her career even further. “I just want to do good work for the rest of my career. I’ve been in the business for nearly 22 years now, and I have no

plans of quitting any time soon,” she proclaims. Continuing to help the people of South Louisiana in the best way she knows how, Anderson will continue using her father’s teaching and leaving his legacy behind her, everywhere she goes.



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