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If you are interested in contributing or nominating REALTORS® for certain stories, please email us at **colt.contreras@n2co.com.**

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publisher's note

I'm excited to be addressing you in our very first issue of *Northwest Indiana Real Producers*. I've already met many of you, but it seems only fitting that we begin with introductions in our premier publication.

Real Producers started as an idea in 2015 and is spreading across the nation like wildfire. We are now in over 140 markets and as we launch here in NWI the mission remains the same: to connect, elevate, and inspire the top leaders in Real Estate.

It's my honor to bring Real Producers to Northwest Indiana and to celebrate everything that makes you all an outstanding part of The Region. I hope to interview each of you in the years to come so that we can share your success stories in future issues. I also look forward to connecting with you at our events, providing tools and a network to help you grow your business, and recognizing you for your continued excellence in serving your clients.

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 *Northwest Indiana Real Producers* to life. Also, a huge shout-out to my team that shared their talents to pull this together.

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



COLT CONTRERAS
Owner/Publisher
Northwest Indiana Real Producers
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FAQ

ALL ABOUT *NORTHWEST INDIANA REAL PRODUCERS*



Q: WHO RECEIVES THIS MAGAZINE?
A: The top 300 agents in Northwest Indiana based on volume for the previous year and our Preferred Partners. There are thousands of agents in NWI, and you, in this elite group, are the cream of the crop. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication, and proficiency.

Q: DO REAL ESTATE AGENTS HAVE TO PAY FOR MAGAZINES OR EVENTS?
A: NO! The magazine and events are FREE to agents and funded by the partners who advertise.

Q: WHAT KIND OF CONTENT WILL BE FEATURED?
A: This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing for a REALTOR® to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about Real Producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention-- we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

Q: WHO ARE OUR PARTNERS?
A: Anyone listed as a "Preferred Partner" in the front of the magazine is funding and fueling this community and is an essential part of it. They are the top professionals in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine and attend our events. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area, but the best affiliates as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: DOES Real Producers HAVE EVENTS?
A: Yes! Along with the magazine, we will host quarterly events exclusive to this community, where you —the best of the best— get together at local venues to socialize, mastermind, deepen our connections, and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine, via email, and on social media. Stay tuned for info on our launch party this summer!

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A BUSINESS OR FEATURE STORY?
A: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® to be featured, know of top-notch affiliate partners who you believe should be a part of our community, or would simply like to network; email or call us. I look forward to hearing from you!
Email: colt.contreras@n2co.com







Nominate Your Favorite TOP AGENTS!

Please contact Colt Contreras at (219) 309-7142 or colt.contreras@n2co.com to nominate top agents.

People often ask me, "How do you decide who you feature each month in Real Producers?" My answer: "Through our nomination system." Top real estate agents and the preferred partners who invest in this publication through advertising and sponsoring our events decide who we feature each month through their nominations. Additionally, we have multiple events throughout the year, and top agents with top numbers are present at these events; we receive many nominations here among those who attend. **Please contact Colt Contreras at (219) 309-7142 or colt.contreras@n2co.com to nominate top agents.**

Of those nominated, our team meets with and gets to know each nominee in person or via Zoom. In this meeting, we collect all the cool facts about the agent at a very high level and gather nominations for other top agents and businesses we should consider for our vetted preferred partners' list.

Our selection team decides who gets into each issue. We use the "5 C" criteria below as a guide. An agent must meet the first three — the fourth and fifth items are not required; however, we love celebrating successes of a giving or victorious nature.

COLLABORATION: The number of nominations usually indicates that nominees are respected by their peers and work well with other agents and our preferred partners.

COMPETITION PRODUCTION NUMBERS: Let's face it — the name of the publication is Real Producers, so folks need to be top producers to get into the magazine

CHARACTER: While most in the industry have great character and integrity, we will not feature anyone — agent or business — who has not been recommended or nominated by top agents as a person or business operating with integrity.

CONTRIBUTION: We adore inspiring stories about agents who give back to the real estate and local/global community.

COMPELLING STORY/ CONQUERING A LIFE CHALLENGE: Who doesn't love an against-the-odds success story?

In planning each issue, we try to make sure we don't feature agents from the same brokerage or firm in the same issue. We also try to cover the territory geographically so that agents from each area we cover are featured proportionately. With so many wonderful nominated agents, the decision each month is difficult — so make sure we know who you are!

Remember, real estate agents and brokers do not pay anything for feature stories; everything we do for them is free. While other programs may look similar, we are not a pay-to-play model. We select most articles several months in advance and notify folks one to two months before their feature appears that we have selected them. Please don't be discouraged if you have met with us and have not received the call to be featured. Keep those nominations coming.

We would love your feedback on how we are doing and what, if anything, we can do better to help everyone in the industry **Collaborate, Elevate** and **Inspire** each other. Please email, text, or privately message all suggestions and feedback directly to me.

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partner spotlight

By Giavonni Downing
Photography by Melinda Nicole Photography

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MASTERING THE ART AND SCIENCE OF HOME STAGING: **LARITA THOMAS STAGES SUCCESS IN REAL ESTATE**

Larita Thomas stands out as a Certified Home Stager who seamlessly blends artistry and analytics. With six years of real estate industry experience under her belt, Larita brings a combination of leadership, strategy, and creative flair to every project she undertakes. Larita has a proven track record of making career moves and shattering limitations.

Her journey from moving trains to moving houses reflects her resilience and determination to excel in every endeavor she pursues. Before delving into real estate, Larita honed her skills as a train engineer, where she moved passengers from South Bend to Chicago.



Larita's path is one of uncommon gains. Larita bought her first home when she was eighteen. She even worked at a prison and excelled, becoming the first line officer inducted into a state leadership academy.

As a real estate agent, Larita noticed a shortage of staging partners. She decided to take the lead and solve the problem. She launched



Modishly Designed, a staging company that creates exceptional spaces.

Known for their creativity and innovative solutions, the team at Modishly Designed stays updated with the latest design trends and technologies to ensure your space is timeless and on-trend. When asked about the company's personalized approach to client service, Larita explained, "We tailor our services to meet unique needs, preferences, and budgets."

Larita enjoys solving problems in real estate and finds joy in working with people and investors while embracing changes in the industry. Despite challenges like the pandemic, Larita has moved homes with remarkable speed and success: "We staged a home in Highland and had 38 showings and 13 offers in a matter of hours."

When she is not leading her team of agents or building her staging business, Larita travels and explores the world. She travels with her daughter, shares personal experiences, and explores new places. Maya Angelou's timeless words, "... People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel," have become Larita's motto. For Larita, it's not just about selling houses; it's about creating memorable experiences that resonate with buyers long after they've walked through the door.

> "I WORK WITH ALL PRICE RANGES. I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT SEEING WORKING-CLASS BUYERS FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEIR PURCHASES."

Larita's journey hasn't been without its obstacles, but she thrives, leveraging her diverse skill set to overcome any challenge that comes her way. From navigating the complexities of team leadership to mastering the intricacies of staging, Larita approaches her work with determination and grace.

Larita's motivation lies in building up those around her. She is driven by a desire for freedom and fueled by a passion for helping others. Her advice to aspiring real estate professionals is simple: "Focus on creating a good experience and learning as much as possible." She leaves a lasting impression on her clients and colleagues.

Larita's business partner, Chymiah Robinson, discusses her mentorship and impact on their staging business. "As a former science/biology teacher, I lean into the science behind staging. Larita helped me see that we aren't just decorating a space...we are speaking to potential buyers and saying welcome home."

From staging homes to negotiating deals, Larita's approach to real estate is strategic and empathetic. She leverages data analysis and psychological insights to create compelling experiences for buyers, regardless of their budget or background.

Larita offers staging services in both high-end and affordable price ranges. "I work with all price ranges. I am passionate about seeing working-class buyers feel good about their purchases," said Larita about the joy she gets from staging homes for all working buyers.



Larita's goals extend beyond individual success to building a legacy of empowerment and excellence. With Modishly Designed, she is expanding inventory, leading the industry, and tapping into the psychology of selling homes. She plans to take the next step by building more partnership opportunities as she continues to set the stage for growth and success.







rising star

By Giavonni Downing
Photography by Tyler Schilling

ERIC VAZQUEZ

HIS REAL ESTATE RISE AND THE REAL LIFE BALANCE

In the intricate dance of life, Eric Vazquez is mastering the steps, overcoming hurdles, and embracing his roles as a high-performing real estate professional and a loving father. Eric has gone through the fire and learned to face fears. He now helps clients ease their fears about market trends and interest rates.





As a licensed real estate agent in Indiana and Illinois, Eric serves his clients with a commitment that transcends transactions. Eric sees real estate as more than an opportunity to sell; it's an opportunity to serve. “My client's interests come before my own because if they don't get what they need, then I'm not doing my job, and I'm not going to be successful,” Eric emphasizes, reflecting his belief that true success lies in client satisfaction.

Eric's stellar performance in the real estate market speaks volumes. With transactions totaling 7.4 million in 2023, he has earned accolades for being a top producer and ranked among the top 10% of agents nationally. His recent recognition with the Better Homes and Gardens® Real Estate Gold Award proves his commitment to excellence.

Reflecting on his achievements, Eric humbly acknowledges the journey. “I had my head down so much with life and work that I just didn't realize how much I accomplished,” he admits, highlighting the blend of dedication and humility. While listening to five-star customer reviews read aloud, Eric got a bit choked up, “Hearing the positive reviews from my clients makes me feel good. It's a sign that I'm doing something right.”

Amidst adversity, Eric forged a path into real estate. While working for a major telecommunications corporation, Eric went from hustling out of a kiosk selling phones and tablets to a leadership role in marketing at the corporate office supporting stores across the Chicagoland area. Just two days before Father's Day, he found out that the company, during

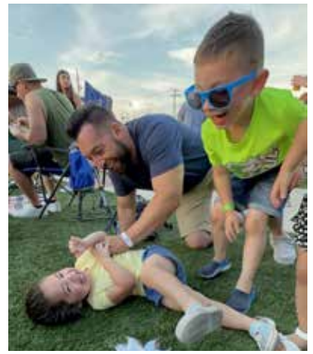


the height of COVID-19, was making job cuts. The proud father of two started studying for the real estate exam before his youngest child was born. His daughter was born in September, and he got licensed in December 2020.

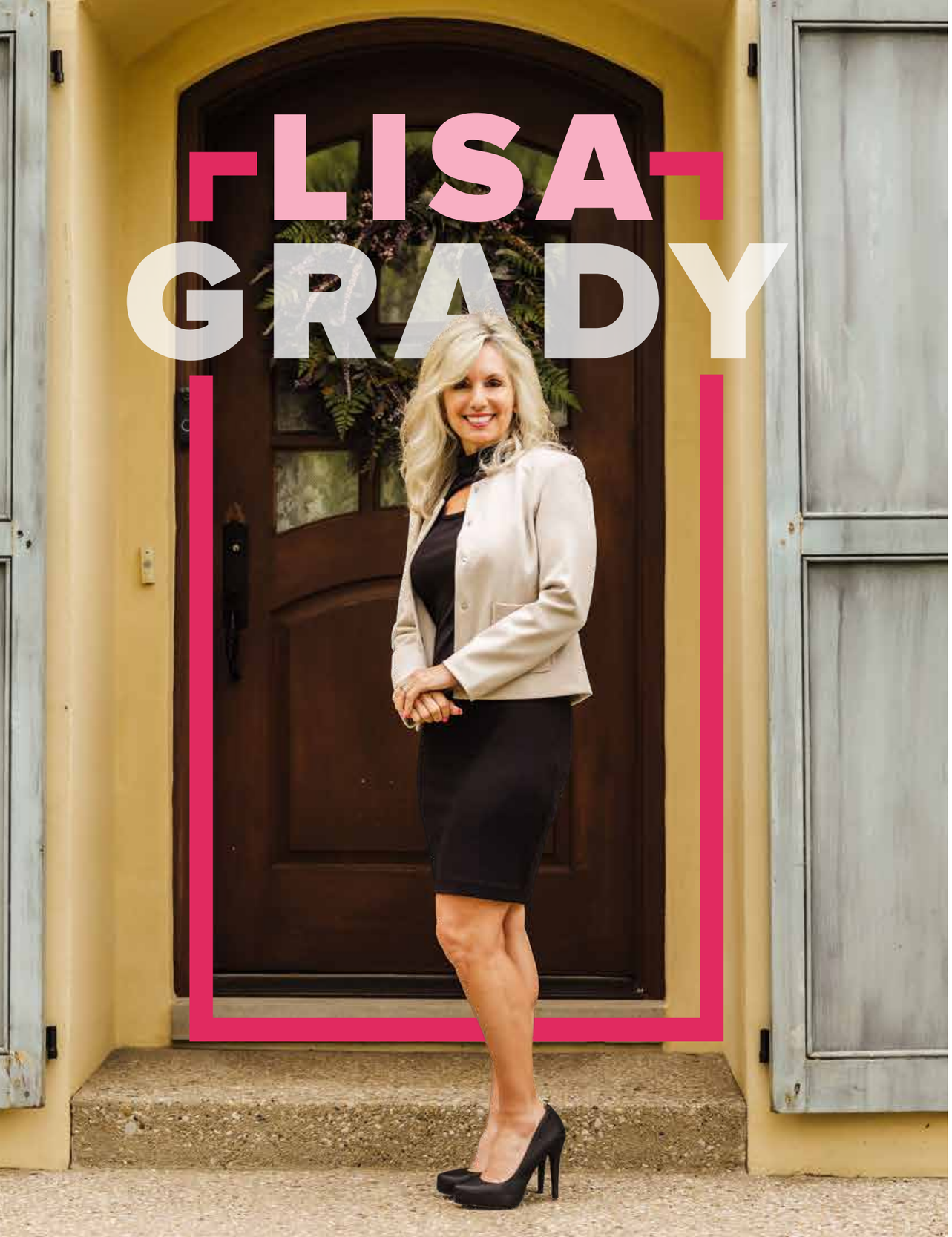
Eric leaped into real estate, pushing past his fears of losing financial security and believing in new opportunities. “I saw the opportunity to make it a full-time career and then, income-wise, be able to support my family,” Eric recalls, illustrating the pivotal moment that led him to real estate. His decision was driven by a desire for personal fulfillment and financial stability, underpinned by a steadfast commitment to family. Eric said, “I put the effort in and started seeing the opportunity while still being there for the big moments with my kids,” about his transition into real estate full time.

The road to success has been fraught with challenges, but Eric's faith and resilience have been unwavering. Balancing the demands of work and fatherhood, he draws strength from his faith community, finding solace and support in times of adversity. “I feel like another big part that's helped is just leaning on that faith,” Eric reflects, the role of faith in navigating life's challenges.

Eric's journey is a testament to the power of self-belief and perseverance. “Never doubt what you're capable of,” Eric emphasizes, imparting wisdom from his journey. “We can be our worst enemy, and if you can find a way to block out that noise... anything is possible.” He believes that success becomes attainable and inevitable by prioritizing personal growth, cultivating relationships, and embracing challenges.



His journey highlights the transformative power of perseverance and the impact of prioritizing what truly matters. Eric plans to continue balancing career goals, like hitting $10 million this year, supporting his son in soccer, and figuring out what new sport or activity to enroll his 3-year-old daughter in since she no longer wants to do gymnastics. Looking ahead, Eric plans to explore real estate investing to build a retirement portfolio that he can pass on to his children.



REAL ESTATE ROOTED IN INTEGRITY & FAMILY VALUES

Written By Giavonni Downing
Photography By Melinda Nicole Photography

From her roots in nurturing her family home instilled by her parents to building her legacy in the real estate industry, Lisa Grady embodies dedication to motherhood and marriage while reigning as a top real estate agent. "My parents taught me the importance of character and reputation," Lisa shared, reflecting on her upbringing. "My father always emphasized the significance of building a good name for oneself because character is one of your most important assets." This principle, instilled in her from a young age, has shaped her values and guided her actions.

For Lisa, legacy extends beyond professional achievements; "For me, legacy is about creating a nurturing environment where the family feels at home," Lisa said, echoing her mother's legacy of providing a safe space at home. This ideology is infused in her real estate philosophy, as she views each transaction as an opportunity to help clients find their sense of safety and peace, whether buying or selling their homes.

With her daughters now on her team, Lisa sees the continuation of her legacy not only in the industry but also within her family. She values honesty, ethics, and genuine care in serving clients, believing that a good name and reputation are foundational to long-term success. "Past clients become future business," she emphasized, recognizing the importance of building lasting relationships.



Over the past 17 years in real estate, Lisa has not only weathered the storms of an unpredictable market but has reigned as a top-performing realtor. Her team has been consistently ranked number one at McColly Real Estate since 2012, producing $40 million in sales last year alone. Her achievements have been recognized by Tom Ferres America's Best, placing her team in the top 1.5%.

In a recent interview, Lisa opened up about her remarkable career trajectory, reflecting on her transition from educator to highly sought-after real estate professional. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education from Indiana University. After four years of teaching, she took a hiatus to focus on raising her three children. Little did she know that this temporary break would extend into 12 years of dedicated motherhood. Lisa shared: "I invested a lot of time and energy into raising a wonderful family."

She cherishes the time she spent raising her daughters Paytn and Alexa and son Troy, who all have an entrepreneurial spirit. Troy started his own landscaping company, Grady's All Season Landscape & Design. He's building a strong name in the community and establishing a foundation for success.

She eventually decided to go into real estate full-time with a spirit of determination and her husband's support; "My husband Troy and I are a true team. He helped me get my career started and I couldn't have done it without him."

She recalls the frustration of facing rejection and fear during the early days of her real estate career. However,

"SUCCESS HAS NEVER BEEN JUST ABOUT NUMBERS OR ACCOLADES FOR ME. IT'S ABOUT FINDING A HARMONIOUS BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY.



Lisa and her daughters Alexa Hosier and Paytn Grady







her determination to succeed propelled her forward. Despite the challenges, she managed to balance them all. “If you keep your priorities in line, you can manage everything. You just have to prioritize what is important to you at that time,” she advised, speaking from her experiences juggling career and family responsibilities.

“Success has never been just about numbers or accolades for me,” she explained. “It’s about finding a harmonious balance between work and family.” Lisa expresses gratitude for her husband’s role in helping her prioritize family events while excelling in her career.

“Troy and I have been married 33 years and I’m proud of that,” Lisa added with a smile reflecting her commitment to cherishing life’s precious moments and nurturing relationships beyond business transactions.

“I DON’T EVER TAKE MY SUCCESS FOR GRANTED.

With every transaction, she built a reputation as a trusted advisor and advocate for her clients. Lisa’s impressive track record and genuine passion for helping others find their perfect home sets her apart from her peers.

The unexpected transition to working with her daughters, spurred by the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought them closer together, personally and professionally. Lisa’s passion fuels their success as a team, enriching their bond and enhancing their effectiveness in serving clients.



Lisa understands the challenges inherent in the real estate industry, particularly in navigating the complexities of buyer-seller dynamics. However, she approaches each challenge with empathy, understanding that individuals are experiencing significant life changes behind every transaction. She gets just as excited working with first-time home buyers seeking a starter home as she does working with buyers looking for their forever home.

She emphasizes the importance of authenticity and genuine care in serving clients, encouraging agents to embrace these values as they navigate their own paths to success.

“I don’t ever take my success for granted,” Lisa reflected humbly. Although she is the face of the brand, she still has a personal touch and commitment to her clients. As a hands-on team leader, she ensures every client receives top-tiered service and is personally involved in every aspect of the business.

Outside of work, Lisa enjoys giving back to her community, sponsoring athletic teams, and spending time with her family, including her grandson and three beloved golden retrievers. Her love for gardening, holiday decorating, and hosting family gatherings reflects her vibrant spirit and zest for life. She truly looks back with no regrets. Lisa Grady’s legacy of integrity and family values has laid the cornerstone for exceptional service, success, and personal fulfillment.

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