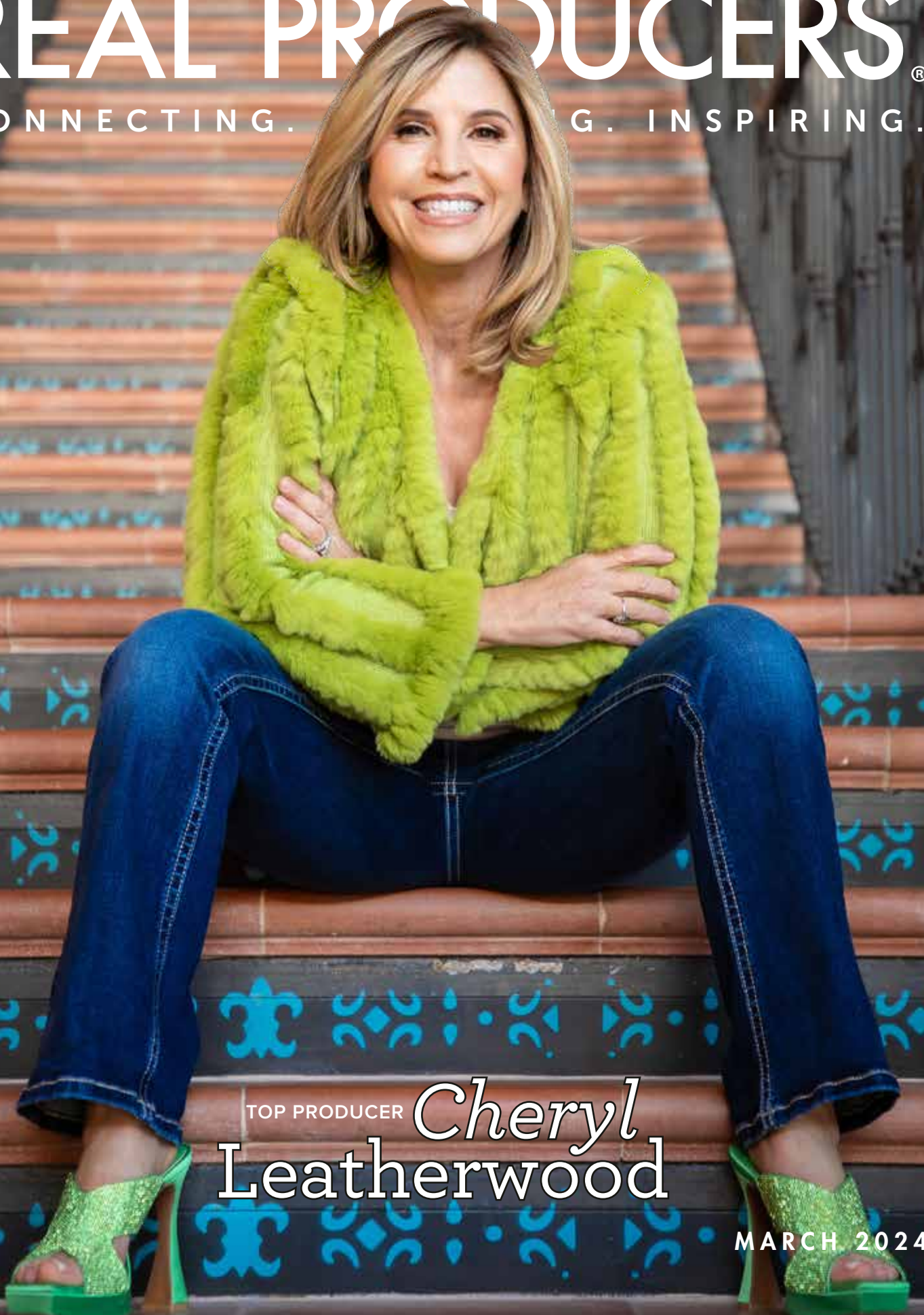


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Susanne Wampold

Favorite part about being a Mortgage Loan Officer?

My favorite part is finding solutions in the difficult situations where my clients don't think they have the necessary means of qualifying for a loan. Witnessing them receiving the keys to a home at the closing table, is the best payback in the process.

What has been your greatest work accomplishment while working at NOLA Lending?

Working in the community on projects such as Habitat for Humanity and the Food Bank of Baton Rouge. Giving back is important to NOLA Lending, to my family and myself.

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

The best advice I would say is to have your clients pre-qualified prior to house searching. It is important to know what they can qualify for ahead of time. It's the best way to achieve the clients goal.

How long have you lived in Baton Rouge?

I have lived in Baton Rouge my whole life! Born and raised here!

Favorite places to go, shop, and eat in the Baton Rouge area?

I love to shop and support our local boutique's. My favorite restaurant for a special night out would be Ruth Chris. The service and food are impeccable.

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

Prior to my career at NOLA Lending, I was a pre school teacher. I taught three year olds for over a decade!



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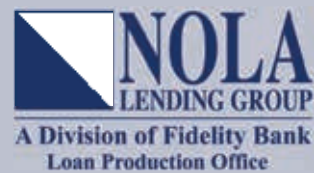


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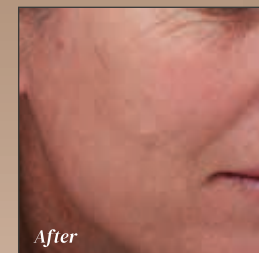
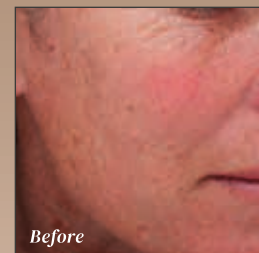
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Hello and Welcome!

If you are receiving this magazine that means that you were in the **Top 300 in the class of 2024** for our area residential REALTORS®. You worked hard and secured yourself a spot in the top 10% of license holders selling residential real estate in the greater Baton Rouge area. No small feat!

If you're new here, welcome to the party. If you're a veteran to the Top 300, I want to commend you for your continued success. We distributed badges during January and February. If you did not receive one, please reach out to me and we can discover why! Our 2024 BRRP campaign is titled, **Show Me Your Badge and I'll Show You Mine**. We are encouraging you to post a photo with your badge and tag another Top 300 and/or Preferred Partner, and tag @batonrougerealproducers so we can share on our stories and in future issues of this magazine. *And save your badge on your phone to use as your entry to our private events! More about this in a minute...*

But I thought print was dead.

Not even. Print is alive and well and not going anywhere. If anyone says that to me I kindly reply with...*"print is only dead to someone without a story to tell."* I think EVERYONE has a story and I believe story is the connector and difference maker.

This magazine is full of stories and was created for you as a way to grow relationships with your peers in the industry. Truly getting to know one another provides perspective, appreciation and understanding. Truly knowing someone strengthens relationships and strengthened relationships can grow your business. I encourage you to find time to sit down and read each copy, cover to cover, every month.

You will receive a copy of *Baton Rouge Real Producers* every month, **for free**, thanks to our advertising partners. I will forever encourage you to send your business to the businesses that advertise within the pages of this publication. I know you have choices and I know you are particular. I have

been particular, too. Each of our Preferred Partners have been interviewed and vetted prior to joining us. Our partners are the picture of collaboration over competition. They have breakfast together every month and look forward to it. They are friends with a common goal of being the best they can be at what **THEY** do, so they can aid you in being the best at what **YOU** do.

Here's the really cool part...you will be invited to networking events exclusively for our BRRP community. We've hosted awards galas, a comedy show, a golf tournament, a mastermind brunch and more. The feedback has been so positive, but one thing I heard from so many was that they wanted **MORE**. Yes. More. More opportunities to gather. If an event was missed they were disappointed to wait another 3 or 4 months for the next one. We listened and currently have 8 events waiting for you in 2024.

Say Hello to Link Up. Where excellence connects.

SAVE THE DATE. Thursday, March 21st.

Our first Link Up will be sponsored by Cypress Roofing, MFB Title, and Redstick Financial. A crawfish boil with drinks, music and the best crowd in town. You will be receiving invites to the contact information we have on file. **Please. If you have not filled out a contact form, or updated your information, please do so.** *You can use the QR code below that will take you direct to that form.*

Again, congratulations on being a top 300 REALTOR® in the class of 2024. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you, *hopefully at our first event*, and I can't wait to celebrate you all year long!

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cover story
By Breanna Smith Pizzolatto
Photos by Ace Sylvester

Cheryl Leatherwood

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A As a self-proclaimed introvert, Cheryl Leatherwood has challenged the assumption that being extroverted and outgoing is a prerequisite for success in real estate for more than two decades.

While she won't be the loudest in the room, you're likely to hear her coming thanks to one of her signature pairs of shoes. She's known for her fun and spunky heels that are often heard clicking through the RE/MAX Professional office or Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors hallways. The brighter the colors and bolder the heel, the better.

"I'm five foot, so I try to get as much as I can from my shoes," Cheryl laughed.

Out of the Box

Don't let her preference for being a wallflower at the party fool you, Cheryl's work ethic is unmatched. She often says she's successful in real estate in spite of herself because, on paper, her introverted nature places her in the lowest percentile of aptitude tests for sales. But to know Cheryl is to know how hard she works and how much she cares. She's never fit in a box.

"I've had people tell me over the years that they don't want to work like I do," she said. "But my goals are not their goals. They don't want the same things I do. I've never thought I needed to be ashamed of working so hard."

She points to her husband, John Leatherwood, as her greatest supporter. "His attitude has always been that if you want something, go for it," she said. "He challenges me, makes me laugh constantly, and life is full of surprises and excitement with him."

When work is done, and it's time to relax at the end of the day, her headphones go on and, with her two Yorkies in tow, she hits the sidewalk. "It's the perfect way for me to relax and clear my thoughts," she said. She also loves to dance, especially to hip-hop, both old and new, though her moves will never make it out of the comfort and privacy of her kitchen,



I'VE HAD PEOPLE TELL ME OVER THE YEARS THAT THEY DON'T WANT TO WORK LIKE I DO. BUT MY GOALS ARE NOT THEIR GOALS.

she laughed. "If there is dance music playing in the background, I can't sit still."

As often as they can, she and John travel, usually choosing a beachy destination to soak up the sunshine. But most days, Cheryl is bouncing between offices, phone calls and client meetings.

"I love to work," she said. "In school, I wanted to make the best grades I could. And I still carry that drive. I want to do the best I can do."

Future Reference

Cheryl stands tall in her role as a Realtor and now in her position as a leader. In recent years she has embraced opportunities to serve in leadership positions in the industry, including as a Director for the Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors and the Louisiana Association of Realtors.

Her journey is marked by her commitment to actively listen, absorb insights and wholeheartedly embrace challenges with the hard work necessary to solve them. "I'm honored and humbled to be a part of the Board of Directors," she said. "Since serving in leadership, I've gained an even greater respect for the leaders who have come before us to develop the education and resources that are creating an impact."

Now, it's her turn.



smiling. Witnessing her unwavering passion for the past two decades, it's easy to see why her children are drawn to the industry that holds a special place in their mother's heart.

Cheryl's eyes are fixed on the future - for her family, her business and the industry. But especially the future generations she calls her own. "My greatest joy is in spending time with the three grands," she said with a smile.

"I love helping people, and that has been the key to my career," she said. "And that extends to other agents. I want them to know they can call and ask me anything."

While some might shy away from the level of commitment Cheryl has to her role as a Realtor and industry leader, many others, especially her own children, are inspired by her example.

Her daughter, Jana Didia, is a mortgage lender, her son-in-law, Obi, has his real estate license, and her son Brett Waguespack is a home inspector. Cheryl and John look forward to welcoming Brett's fiancé, Jordyn, to the family when the two are married this summer.

"I like to think I had something to do with them getting into the real estate industry," she said,



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KYLE EVANS

BOLD ENOUGH

In 2021, after being nominated by his coach, Kyle Evans set out to become one of the 30 individuals selected by Keller Williams as a BOLD Coach. He gave the audition his all. His unwavering dedication, passion for coaching and inherent capacity to relate to others were evident, and he nailed it.

But he didn't make the cut.

"After I didn't get through, I wanted to burn it all down, walk away," he said, pausing to laugh. "Then, I decided to be so good they can't ignore me." He asked for feedback from the judges and called coaches who had been selected to ask for pointers and advice. At his next audition in 2022, that no became a yes. Well, a yes for now.

"My coach told me the eight weeks of training would be the hardest thing I'd ever do professionally," he said with a shrug.

Kyle would coach seven classes across seven different cities in eight weeks. Oh, and a proctor rates each session as a pass or fail. If you fail, you go home. Maybe you audition next year to start the process over again. "No pressure," Kyle laughed.

During one of his final training sessions, a proctor told Kyle that he was getting too

tied up in the outcome. "Uh, yeah. What else is there besides the outcome?" Kyle chuckled as he thought about the time, money and emotions he had invested in the outcome.

Then, he leaned into the lesson.

"I really took that apart, and it clicked. I decided to be myself and take whatever life is - if it's not for me, it's not for me. It was time for me to stop getting so tied up in the expectation of what I was supposed to do or have to do. Now, I'm unapologetically myself."

Doin' This

Young Kyle didn't have many plans for his life, he admitted, but it was undeniable that his hustle and attitude were made for entrepreneurial pursuits. The call to leadership came early and often, too. Helping, guiding and pouring into others has always come naturally to him.

"BOLD taught me just how much I love coaching and teaching," he said. "I've always been drawn to leadership, but I never knew it could be my profession."

It's like Luke Combs sings about in *Doin' This*, Kyle explained. When people ask what Luke Combs would be doing if he weren't a famous country singer, he says he would be singing in a small town bar room with a jar set out for tips.



"That's how I feel," Kyle said. "Whether it's an occupation or not, I would be doing this. I would look for opportunities to pour into people because it's my lane."

The people Kyle pours into most are the people he has at home. He's a family man through and through, always ready for another Sunday spent at the park with his wife Shanna, pushing

their children Knox and Noa on the swings before their usual family lunch at Dearman's Diner to visit with Casey, Kyle's twin brother.

"My hobby is my family and my business," he said. "I'm so into my lane and purpose I don't want to do anything else."

The Right Lane

Whether fulfilling his duties as the CEO of Constellation Home

Sales, tending to his role as a devoted husband and father at home, or coaching leadership courses across the country, Kyle embodies the significance of excelling on your own path.

"When passion meets production, everything else falls in place," he said with a smile.

Kyle has published a self-help workbook, hosts a podcast with his brother, *Children's Tales Helping Adults Prevail*, and embraces every opportunity to become a better husband, father, friend and CEO.



Just as a personal trainer gets stronger while coaching their client, Kyle finds it easier to implement mindset shifts and gratitude after spending a day helping others do the same.

When passion meets production, everything else falls in place.



“A lot of people suffer with anxiety these days, and anxiety doesn’t live in the present moment. It lives in the past or the future of what could happen,” he said. “Coaching and speaking, to me, is the removal of anxiety because I have to be so present in what I’m talking about that everything else fades away. And it has changed my life because I know what I’m supposed to do - it’s helping people, guiding people. And I love it.”

Kyle faces each day reminded of the words of Les Brown, one of the world’s most renowned motivational speakers.

“There will be ghosts surrounding your deathbed, and they will be looking down on you, screaming at the top of their lungs. They will be ghosts of the ideas you had, the book you never wrote, the chance you never took, the person you could have been, and they will be screaming at you, saying you could have brought us to life! And now we must die with you.’ And I think about that every day. I don’t want ghosts there, not a single one. I’m going in peace, knowing I’ve squeezed every morsel out of this life.”

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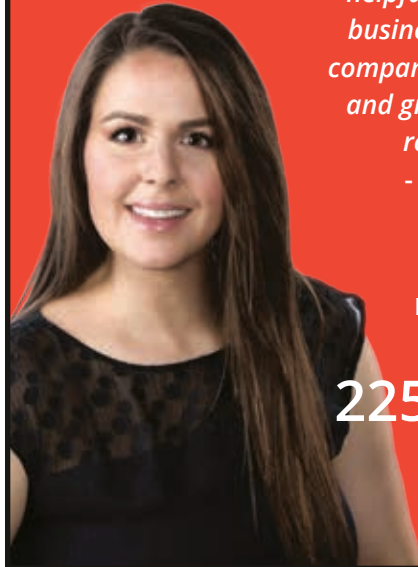
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MICAH FAIRCHILD

» rising star
By Elizabeth McCabe
Photos by Kyle Rome

Exceeding Expectations from Start To Finish

Hard work comes naturally to Micah Fairchild, a life lesson ingrained in him since his childhood days. “I started work at the age of 14,” he comments. Cutting grass and doing odd jobs helped him to make spending money. “I also started working at a fabrication shop. They would let me come in on Fridays and I would get paid cash. It kept me busy, and I continued that for 3 years,” he shares. Recognizing his potential, Micah was promoted to being a full-time employee with the company.

Working in a fabrication shop, Micah had plans of becoming a certified welder. Although he would have made decent money, he realized he didn’t want to put that strain on his body. He explains that welding is a very labor demanding job. It wasn’t worth the risk to his health. Even with the proper equipment it can be detrimental to your eyes and even cause cancer. “I’d rather keep my body in better physical condition,” says Micah. After working, he attended college for a semester. “That didn’t work for me,” he admits. “I was pretty miserable and knew college wasn’t for me.” Fortunately, his girlfriend’s cousin, Jonathan Starns, showed him a better way of life - real estate.

Jonathan, the Broker/Owner of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, was aware of Micah’s situation. “We decided to get lunch together and he talked to me about real estate. He told me, ‘This would be a great fit for you if you are willing to give it a shot.’”

Hesitant to pursue a new career, Micah says, “I had never given real estate much thought, but I knew I could be successful. And I was hooked on the idea and couldn’t shake it. I wasn’t sure how my dad would feel about it. Dropping out

of college wasn’t something my dad was interested in me doing, especially since I had only been in college for a semester.” His father told him, “You have 6 months to have something to show for it or you will have to go back to college.” Realizing that the average real estate agent takes 8 months to close their first deal, Micah was ready for the challenge.

“A couple of months later I was licensed,” says Micah. He will be celebrating 2 years of being a licensed agent this March. He closed his first deal in just 2 months after being licensed and works at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices.

Secrets to Success

What sets Micah apart is his dedication to his career. “We have a lot of agents in the industry who are not full-time agents,” he candidly comments. With around 4,000 agents in Baton Rouge, Micah estimates that the top 20 percent do 80 percent of the business.

“You have to treat real estate like a real job and put in a minimum of 40 hours a week. Consistency is key. With consistency, success will follow. You must do what generates business for you.”

Finding His Niche

“A big part of my business is that I sell homes that other agents can’t sell,” says Micah. Many of his clients have worked with other real estate agents in the past and haven’t had the best experiences. “They hire me to get the job done,” smiles Micah. Many of his clients have had trust issues with real estate agents or are aggravated and upset. “They have already gone through the process before.”



Micah goes above and beyond for his clients, making himself the “obvious choice” for them. A problem solver, Micah discovers why houses didn’t sell and what can be done. “The home needs to be marketed in such a way that our home stands out from the crowd. The other homes for sale in the neighborhood actually help our home sell first,” he says. Fixing problems is what he does best.

Best of all, Micah is happy in his new career with a bright future ahead. He says, “I plan on purchasing investment properties in the future. “My goal is to have two income-producing properties this year.”



CONSISTENCY IS KEY. WITH CONSISTENCY, SUCCESS WILL FOLLOW.



Relaxing and Recharging

When not working, Micah loves to be outdoors. “If I’m not hunting, I will hang out with my friends,” he says. “I also like researching new ways to gain business. I look at different marketing tools and research new websites or platforms.” Micah isn’t one to take it easy. He admits, “I get anxiety when I’m comfortable; relaxing at home isn’t getting me closer to my goals.”

A Solid Support System

Micah thrives on his solid support system. “My family is always cheering me on,” Even when the interest rates skyrocketed, Micah did over three times as much business in that market versus the first year he was licensed.

“Motivation drives success,” he points out. His mother, father, and girlfriend support him in all that he does. “My mother and father have always been my biggest supporters from day one.”

Micah is inspired by his father. “My father’s consistency rubbed off on me,” he reflects. “He never gave up and never backed down from a challenge.” Micah took the challenge of real estate and found a fulfilling career. With his tenacity and concern for his clients, he will continue to rise in real estate, achieving a future beyond his wildest dreams.

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Congratulations to the new Board of Directors & Award Winners at this year's GBRBR Luncheon!

► announcement

Common Questions About **Baton Rouge Real Producers**

Real Producers is a national concept currently open in 125 markets across the country. With almost 4 years in production, I wanted to take the time to answer some pretty common questions we receive about Baton Rouge Real Producers.

What is the purpose of Real Producers magazine?

The mission of *Baton Rouge Real Producers* is simple. We strive to inform and inspire the top-producing real estate agents in the Baton Rouge market and connect them socially. We do this by telling their personal stories. How they have succeeded and failed. What drives them to achieve year in and year out. Where do they spend their time when they are not working and what are they passionate about other than real estate. We give local top-producing REALTORS® a platform to tell their story in a way they have not been able to do so before.

The secondary focus is to provide an avenue for our affiliate partners to create and continue relationships with these top performers on a level that they might not be able to achieve on their own.

Who receives this magazine?

This magazine is mailed to the top 300 producing agents in the greater Baton Rouge area according to volume each year. This is based on the 2023 MLS; the ranking is annual and resets every year. This year, the minimum production level for our community was over \$3.8 million. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication and proficiency.

What is the process for being featured in the magazine?

It's really simple — you can nominate other REALTORS® (or yourselves!). We will consider anyone brought to our attention; we don't know everyone's story, so we need your help to learn about them! A nomination currently looks like this: You email us at gina.miller@realproducersmag.com with the subject "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)." Please explain why you are nominating them to be featured. It could be that they have an amazing story that needs to be told; perhaps they overcame extreme obstacles, they are an

exceptional leader, have the best customer service, or they give back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with us to ensure it's a good fit. If it all works out, then we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and write an article and for our photographers to schedule a photo shoot.

What does it cost to be featured?

Zero, zilch, zip, nada, nil. It costs absolutely nothing! We are not a pay-to-play model whatsoever. We write real stories about Real Producers, so nominate away, friends!

Who are the preferred partners?

Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and a top professional in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our events and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval." 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.

How can I refer a preferred partner?

If you know and want to recommend a local business that works with top REALTORS®, please email us to let us know at gina.miller@realproducersmag.com



Still have questions? Don't hesitate to reach out!

Gina Miller
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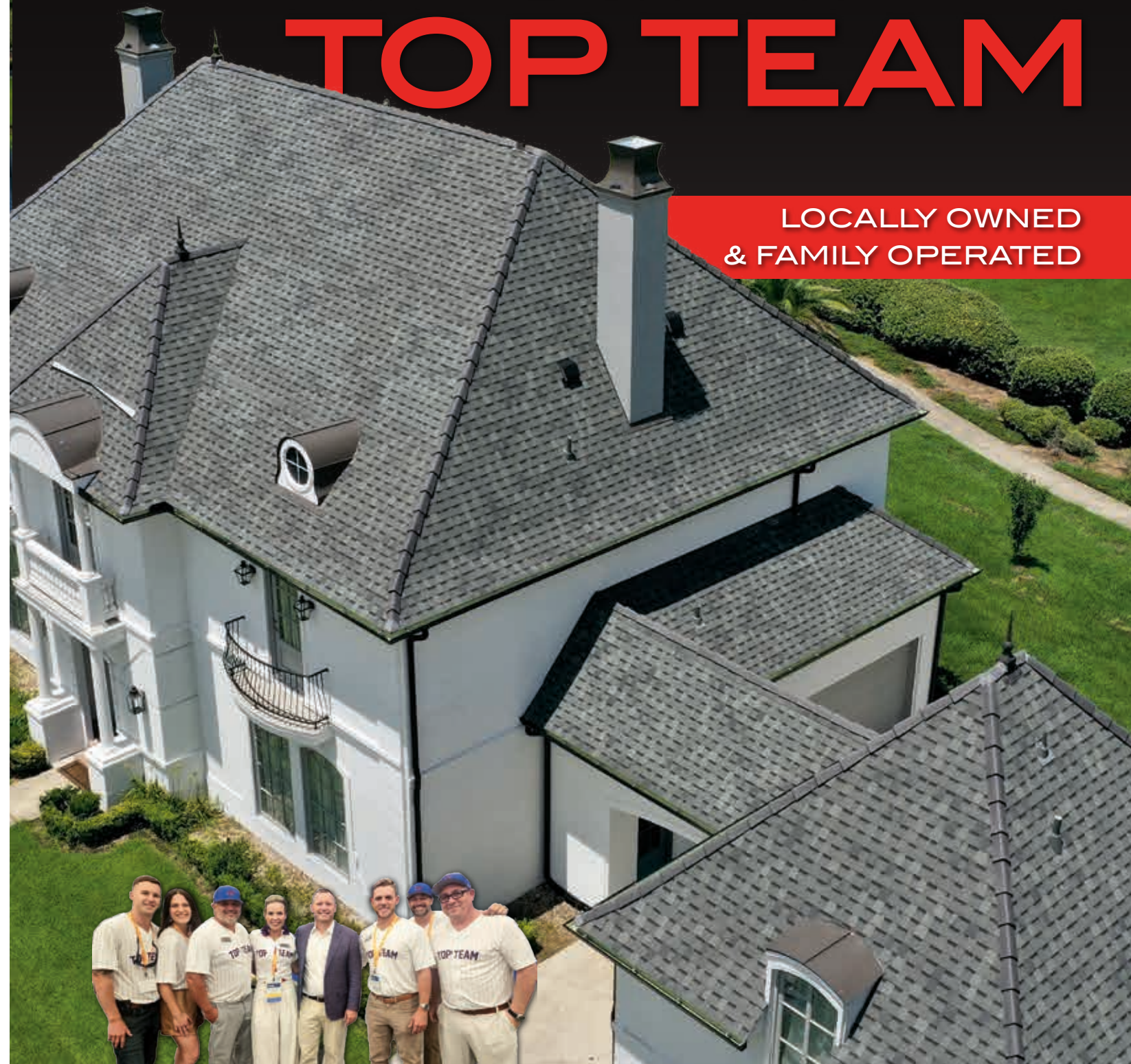
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