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COVER STORY

Christine Baeza

RISING STAR

Laura Burnsed

AGENT SPOTLIGHT

Damien Callais

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

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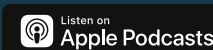
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WHAT IS Real Producers?



Create a life you love to wake up to!

A few years ago, I embarked on a mission to create a life of purpose, meaning, and intentionality. The hustle and grind culture of a busy real estate agent was wearing on me. I was tired. But more than that I felt the call in my soul to pursue other interests. I became a coach, I wrote a book, I started a podcast, and my husband and I relocated from Alaska to Florida. And although I still enjoy helping people buy and sell real estate, it didn't feel like my passion. When you reach a certain age, you tend to prioritize differently. Weary of chasing money and longing for a chance to utilize my creativity, I was suddenly presented with the Real Producers opportunity. And within weeks, the quote "Create a life you love to wake up to!" became my reality. Would someone pinch me please? -- because here I am, living my best life as the owner and publisher of Emerald Coast Real Producers!

Fast forward to now, March 2024, I'm excited to be in print with our third edition, and although publishing a magazine certainly presents its own set of stressors, I'm having an absolute blast! Our first event was held in January (a "soft-launch") and I was overwhelmed by the turn-out and enthusiastic response from agents and partners alike. I'll be candid: The folks here on the Emerald Coast are some of the nicest people I've met! It's been a tremendous honor to bring Real Producers to the Florida panhandle area. I'm looking forward to continuing to highlight our agents' accomplishments and recognize them for their excellence in serving their clients.

And in case you're still wondering who I am, allow me to reintroduce myself. I'm Cindy Bell. I'm a

mom to five almost fully grown amazing kids. I'm a grandma (you can call me "Gigi"!) to four delightful little boys. I'm married to Jeff, a retired law enforcement officer and love of my life. I'm a licensed REALTOR® in both Alaska and Florida, a published author, podcast host, certified master coach, and motivational speaker. I'm a fitness enthusiast, and I love to play golf and poker (not at the same time, and yes, I'm terrible at both!). My latest obsession is baking sourdough bread (it's way harder than it looks), and true confession: I've never met a bowl of ice cream I didn't like. (I'm not sorry.)

But... what IS this Real Producers thing?

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's the "down and dirty":

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 2023. 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 look forward to meeting you at our next event. Stay tuned for those details!

With heartfelt gratitude,



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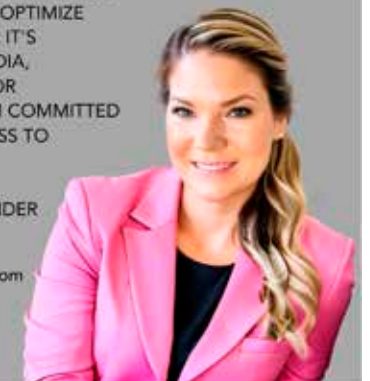


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LAURA

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▶▶ rising star

By Carol Nethen West
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

In the charming village of Gulf Place in Santa Rosa Beach, Realtor Laura Burnsted can be found at Keller Williams Realty Emerald Coast, where she's been an independent agent since 2020. Laura says, "I was doing real estate in Indiana and realized that I can do real estate anywhere. Why not do it at the beach?" She continues, "I started from scratch with my real estate business in Indianapolis; why not move to the beach and do it all again?"

Despite her diligence in strategically moving her real estate business, however, what Laura could not have counted on was the unplanned interruption of an international pandemic. Suddenly, she had to not only reinvent a business in a new area where she'd just moved, but also risk everything during a time when the rules had changed for everyone. Determined and smart, Laura spent the lockdown months contacting everyone she knew, via every online platform she could find, to let them know about the beautiful real estate region she was representing.

She recalls the first few months of building her Florida base saying, "It was hard. I definitely got nervous a couple times. I went back to some of the same tactics that I used before – sending emails, text messages, direct messages on social media and LinkedIn. Eventually, people started reaching out. My first transaction actually came from a lender who I'd worked with in Indiana. He and his family bought a house here as a vacation property. And then he spread the word."

The beautiful, turquoise Gulf and the sugar-white beaches were familiar to Laura even before her permanent move to the area in late 2019. During her childhood, her family regularly vacationed on the Emerald Coast and Laura remembers the area as a special place that few beyond the southeast region of the U.S. knew about. She says, "Everyone in and around Georgia knew this as kind of their special go-to vacation spot."



Several decades later, the secret is out about the Emerald Coast's idyllic beach living. Laura's clients are coming from all around the country. She remarks, "I've got clients from Denver, Washington state and California who tell me, 'I had no idea that Florida had these kinds of beaches! You guys were keeping it a secret for all these years!'"

“

I tell new agents that if they want to succeed in real estate, they've got to work hard for it.

”



“

I just kind of fell out of love with that career path.

”



In appreciation of her association with Keller Williams, Laura says, “Part of the reason I originally chose KW in 2015 was because I knew we were not going to be in Indiana forever. I was looking for a broker that had multiple locations nationwide and worldwide – just in case we ever had to move.”

Growing up in Fayetteville, Georgia, Laura originally planned on a career in medicine. With a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Emory University, she worked in dermatology practices in Georgia, Fort Lauderdale, Washington D.C. and Indiana, all the while keeping open the option of enrolling in a graduate program and becoming a nurse practitioner or a physician assistant. But, while in Indiana, Laura’s plans changed. She says, “I just kind of fell out of love with that career path. I knew I could go back to grad school and get myself in a crazy amount of debt – and for something that I may or may not truly love. Or, I could try real estate.”

When Laura and her husband, Brian, first met they discovered that both sets of parents lived close to one another in Seagrove, FL. Naturally, the coincidence brought the area where she’d vacationed throughout childhood back into focus. Laura says, “We both had a love for this area. It’s a place where we hoped to retire someday. But we figured, maybe just go for it. We don’t necessarily have to wait.”

When asked what advice she’d give to anyone either starting up or restarting a real estate career, Laura says, “I was taught early on: ‘Every no gets you closer to a yes.’ I remember thinking, ‘Okay, if I just blast out a few more emails, send out a few more text messages, and keep putting myself out there, something has to stick.’ And eventually it did.”

While 2020 was complicated by a world made more demanding by the pandemic, Laura is thrilled to report, “To date, 2023 was my best year in real

estate. I actually broke new records for myself and exceeded my goals.” Keller Williams also recognized Laura’s efforts and awarded her The Platinum Circle Award for her achievements.

Giving back is important to Laura to which she comments, “Now my career is at a place where I’m able to donate after each closing. Usually it’s to local organizations like Habitat for Humanity or a local food bank. And we also have our KW Red Day, which is when we donate to a community project.”

Laura and Brian love traveling, especially internationally. Laura comments, “Because I run my own business, there’s not a lot of time off. Even when I was in Spain, I was messaging with clients and getting them set up with showings and taking care of business.”

Finally, Laura attributes her ability to work hard to her parents, saying, “My parents instilled that work ethic in me from a young age. They told me, ‘You’re not just going to have things dropped in your lap.’” She adds, “I tell new agents that if they want to succeed in real estate, they’ve got to work hard for it.”

Andrew CADY

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▶▶ partner spotlight

By Carol Nethen West and Cindy Bell
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

Revolutionizing the Mortgage Industry with Innovation and Authenticity



In the ever-evolving world of business, it is customary to pass on fixed expenses like rent, equipment, and furniture to customers. However, in 2021, Andrew Cady, renowned in Florida as “The Epic Mortgage Guy,” brought a breath of fresh air to the industry. When he relocated his family to the Emerald Coast and launched his fifth Epic Mortgage Team market, he introduced innovative ideas that would reshape the mortgage landscape.

Andrew’s passion for his unique business platform shines through as he eagerly shares it with the top producers on the Emerald Coast. Recognizing that high fixed costs ultimately result in higher interest rates for consumers, he sought to minimize overhead expenses. The solution? A 100% remote team. By embracing remote operations, Andrew could provide the absolute best rates and service to his clients, unburdened by the weight of unnecessary expenses.



The COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses worldwide to adapt to remote work, and Andrew saw this as an opportunity to provide convenience to his customers. With people becoming increasingly comfortable with online interactions, the transition to remote mortgage services became a natural fit. No longer did clients have to endure long commutes to physical offices. Instead, they could conveniently conduct business from the comfort of their own homes.

Despite the remote nature of the Epic Mortgage Team, Andrew understands the importance of maintaining a personal touch. Regular meetings with his team and a commitment to prompt communication ensure that immediacy and connection are never compromised. Andrew firmly believes that timeliness and responsiveness are the key ingredients to success. Answering calls and staying communicative day in and day out is the foundation on which the team operates.



While the Epic Mortgage Team operates remotely for the most part, Andrew recognizes the significance of in-person interaction during the closing process. To ensure a smooth and personalized experience, all loan officers from the team attend every closing they possibly can. This distinction sets the Epic Mortgage Team apart, showcasing their dedication to providing exceptional service from start to finish.

Andrew takes pride in the additional benefits offered by the Epic Mortgage Team. While good rates and responsiveness are expected from loan officers, the team goes above and beyond by focusing on three key pillars: speed, communication, and education. They firmly believe in empowering both consumers and real estate agents with knowledge. To achieve this, they utilize UMortgage, their social media channel, which garners an impressive 300,000 views per month. By sharing valuable insights and educational content, the Epic Mortgage Team aims to foster informed decision-making and build strong relationships.

On a lighter note, Andrew's podcasts often feature a special guest - his beloved seven-year-old Labradoodle named Sadie, affectionately known as "Girlfriend" among his followers. This unexpected addition adds a touch of warmth and personality to the team's online presence, resonating with their audience on a more personal level.

Andrew's journey with Epic Mortgage has been one of triumph and growth. As an entrepreneur who dropped out of high school, he paved his own path and built a successful family business. In 2015, he made the bold move into the mortgage industry, setting an ambitious goal to close \$100 million in business each year. His unwavering determination and tireless efforts paid off, with a record-breaking \$101 million in deals closed in 2020.

During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Andrew observed a trend among mortgage lenders. Many focused solely on refinancing and neglected their relationships with real estate agents. Recognizing the importance of maintaining these connections, Andrew made a conscious decision to prioritize purchase business. This strategic move resulted in over four hundred closings in 2020 and 2021, solidifying the Epic Mortgage Team's reputation as a reliable partner in the industry.

As the Epic Mortgage Team expanded, Andrew realized that the brand needed to reflect the collective effort behind its success. No longer could he be the sole face of the company. Thus, the Epic Mortgage Team was born, symbolizing a united front dedicated to excellence and delivering the best possible outcomes for their clients.

In summary, Andrew proudly shares the achievements of the Epic Mortgage Team. In 2022, they completed nearly six hundred transactions, totaling an impressive \$165 million. The team's unwavering commitment to innovation and authenticity has driven their growth, and they are excited to continue serving their clients with passion and dedication.

Andrew's passion for his unique business platform shines through as he eagerly shares it with the top producers on the Emerald Coast.



Christine BAEZA

DOCKSIDE REALTY, INC.

A Passion for Living, A Profession of Sharing

Christine Baeza's passion for living is the essence of everything she does. From martial arts to life as an artist, a mom, a wife, a REALTOR®, and an integral part of a close family business, she finds purpose in helping others create the life they dream of. Christine calls Santa Rosa Beach home, where Dockside Realty Inc.--a long-established brokerage founded by her parents Roy and Patty Barker -- flourishes. Five years ago, when she, her husband Albert and their three boys relocated from Southwest Florida to the Emerald Coast, Christine felt personally transformed and renewed. She says, "To the heart, eyes, and mind. This is a place that gives you a sense of awe in nature."

At Dockside Realty, collaboration is a way of life where the ability to count on each other is a given. Christine believes, "It's not about the number of agents that we have, it's about keeping that family atmosphere. When our clients work with us, they will know our whole family." Patty, Christine's

mom, answers calls and details such as inspections, and Roy, Christine's dad, watches over the legalities and paperwork of the transactions. "It's really a beautiful organization where each one of us uses our best strengths."

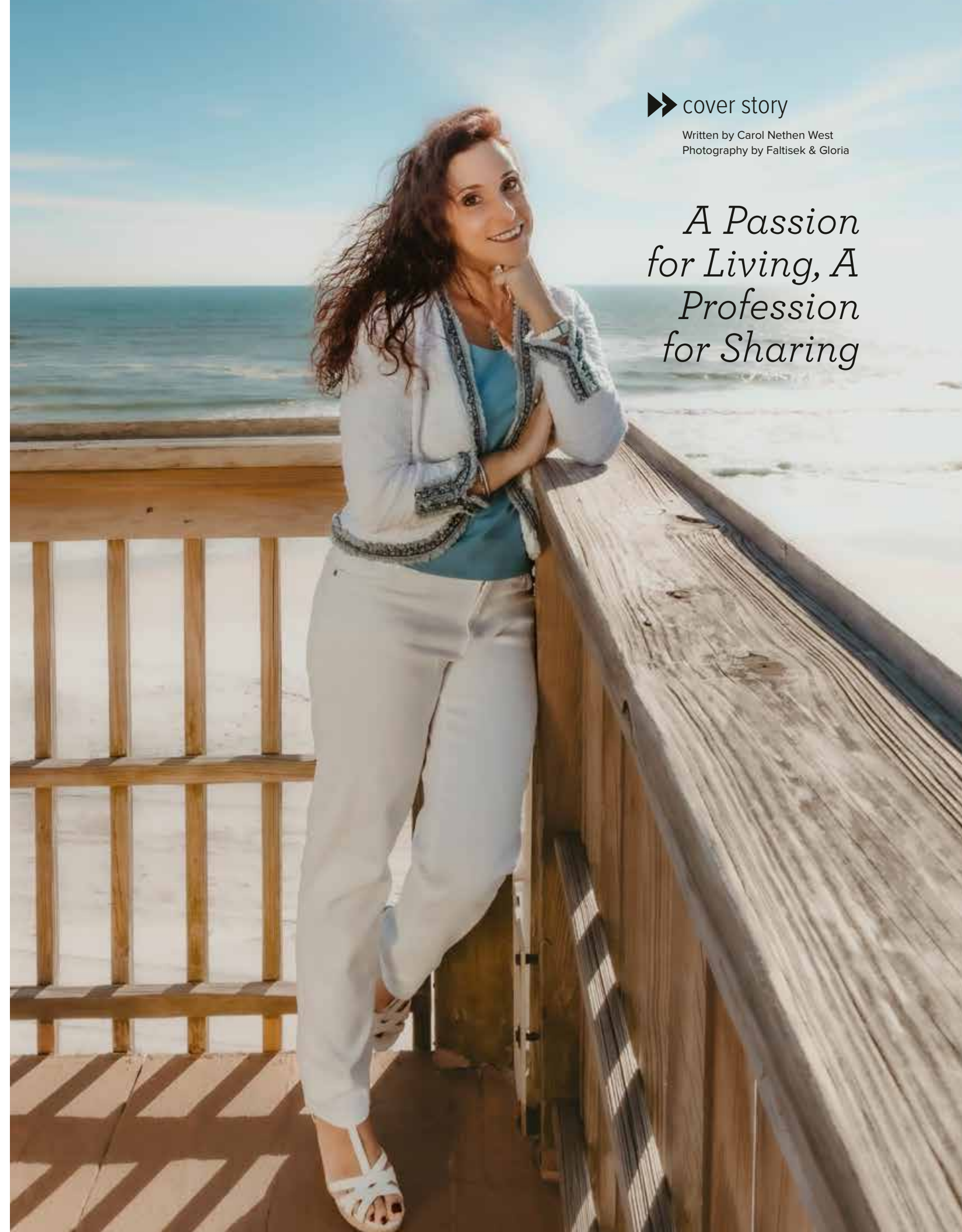
While Christine is well versed in all aspects of the business, she particularly enjoys being the first person her clients meet, and strategizing ways by which she can exceed their expectations. She says, "I find myself personally very attached to my clients and I want what's best for them. So, quite often, it takes a long time to find the right property for the right person." She adds, "I work with a lot of investors. Many of them are real estate agents in other states, and they send their clients to me as well, because they know I'll take care of them."

Originally from California, Christine grew up near San Francisco in the Santa Clara/Sunnyvale area where her life-long appreciation for living near an ocean began. When her first child was born, she began martial arts training and since has risen to

► cover story

Written by Carol Nethen West
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria

*A Passion
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a master level. Christine takes pride in the discipline saying, "I am a third-degree black belt in mixed martial arts. I've also taught martial arts in many areas of the United States for twenty years. I especially appreciate teaching women that they can be strong and powerful, but still beautiful and feminine. Martial arts has taught me the value of respect and patience. You're constantly walking into situations where you're working with different personalities. I've learned to take the time to listen to people's needs in order to accomplish their goals."

As a hobby, Christine works with multimedia materials and loves creating nature and ocean-themed works. She has become known for her unique offerings to clients at closing – their choice of a piece from her reproduced collection. For Christine, the thanks couldn't be more personal.

Christine and husband, Albert Baeza, are loving parents to three sons – Auston, who works with his dad in commercial real estate, Matthew who is currently

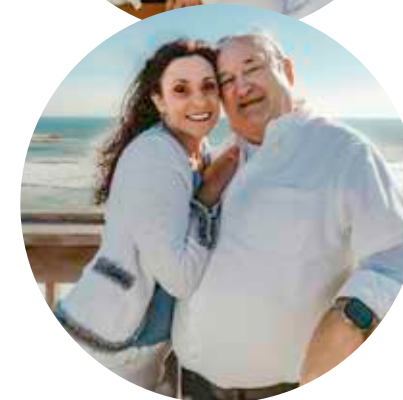
working towards his real estate license and Carter, the youngest who is an agent at Dockside Realty Inc. and who also contributes technical skills like drone photography and social media.

With heartfelt commitment to her family, Christine has enduring esteem for her husband. She says, "My husband and I are going on 29 years of marriage. He is also a well-seasoned real estate agent with RE/MAX. He specializes in land development, investing, and commercial real estate. His extensive clientele keeps him traveling as he sells from the Panhandle to South Florida. Albert is one of the only commercial real estate agents in the area who speaks fluent Spanish." With admiration, she quips, "He has an amazing following!"

Although never far from their computers and an internet connection, Christine and Albert travel whenever they can. They particularly love cruising, where they meet investors with whom they share their talents, as well as sharing all the reasons



“ It’s not about the number of agents that we have, it’s about keeping that family atmosphere. ”



they love the Emerald Coast. Christine says, "Anywhere we go, we are networking. We love meeting new people so whether out to dinner or on a vacation, building our network is part of our goal."

Christine eagerly shares her advice for new real estate agents, saying, "Recognize that this is more than just a job - it's a profession. To be successful, you must have a true dedication to your buyers and sellers. This means prioritizing honesty and integrity above making a quick sale. Sometimes not getting a deal is the right decision. Additionally, it's important to be kind and respectful to other agents in the industry. We all work hard, and by working together with kindness and compassion, we can create a more positive and

collaborative environment that benefits everyone."

Finally, Christine describes what is most fulfilling about her work. She says, "For me, building lasting relationships with clients that go beyond sales is what truly matters. I hold family, friendship, and the natural beauty of the area in which I operate in high regard. Church is our cornerstone and as we live, we try to stay grounded in that first. I believe in the values of honesty and integrity, and I always strive to conduct myself and my business in a manner that reflects

these values. I am committed to assisting fellow agents in honing their skills and mentoring those who are new to the industry. My expertise, coupled with my passion, inspires me to continue to grow and succeed in this field."

▶ our first event!

SOFT LAUNCH

RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY

Photos by Faltisek/Gloria

Thanks to everyone who came out and celebrated with us at our Soft Launch event, and to the fantastic folks at Emerald Coast Title Services for hosting! Stay tuned for information on upcoming events. We can't wait to celebrate with you!



20 YEARS

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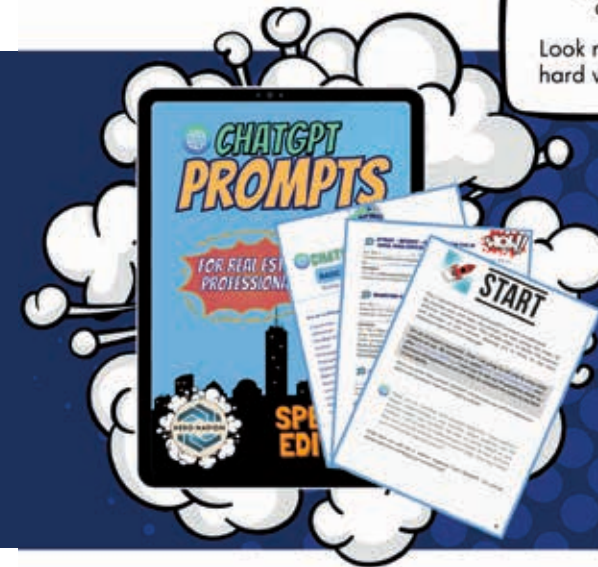


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DAMIEN CALLAIS

LEADING WITH VISION

Damien Callais is not just a visionary, entrepreneur, and real estate team leader; his true passion lies in connecting with people. Despite experiencing significant business success, Damien's professional journey was often marred by a rebellious spirit and the challenges brought about by the 2008 market crash. However, with the guidance of mentors, Damien discovered the strength to transform his life. Reflecting on this, he states, "They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. I believe my superpower is loving people and seeing potential in them that they can't see for themselves. In short, I love people."

A dedicated advocate for the recovery community, Damien is equally committed to addressing urgent calls from those in need as he is to engaging with business partners.

Damien's resilience and character find their roots in his hometown of New Orleans. Raised by his single-handedly supportive mother, Damien faced his first personal challenge as a bullied overweight schoolboy. His response was to become a wrestler and fighter, offering protection to others experiencing bullying. In 2016, during the Baton Rouge Flood, Damien's natural leadership emerged as he took action, leading to the formation of The Cajun Navy Relief.

While real estate had always been Damien's initial career path, starting in mortgage banking in 2003, it wasn't until he discovered LPT Realty that he found a philosophy and structure that truly inspired him. The platform provided the freedom and support he needed to excel in real estate, leading him to a fulfilling career of helping agents cultivate self-empowerment.

▶▶ agent spotlight

Written by Carol Nethen West and Cindy Bell
Photography by Faltisek & Gloria



“**REAL LEADERS MAKE MORE LEADERS.**”



With a straightforward personality, a genuine smile, and a sharp wit, Damien thrives on working with open-minded real estate agents seeking to fully develop their potential. He offers next-level, personal coaching to those wanting to be “all in” and activate total belief in themselves, focusing on leadership development, mindset, and building a positive culture.

When Damien mentions “putting the ‘real’ back into real estate,” he challenges the typical business structure that requires agents to work solely for a brand.

Leading his real estate team, The Carpe Diem Group, Damien focuses on finding development deals and inventory. In his sixteen months at LPT Realty, Damien has not only excelled but also attracted over 1600 new agents in twenty states to the firm.

Despite the blurred lines between work and play, Damien basks in his Florida lifestyle—a huge part of which is hanging out with his mom, Melinda almost daily! He loves boating, taking wanderlust car trips, and humorously admits, “I’m single – and looking for my ‘Juliet.’ But she needs to be able to put up with me!” In five years, Damien envisions having a family or, if not, dedicating himself to helping troubled kids who need someone to believe in them.

Taking the lead in his life has given Damien unwavering faith in God and himself, fueling his crusade-like attitude to help agents discover their full potential and take the lead in their own lives. Damien emphasizes, “Real leaders make more leaders,” encouraging people to step into their power and leverage his coaching and mentorship for a developer mindset. In a thoughtful pause, Damien adds, “I’m not afraid of my story. I used to tell myself disempowering things, but I’ve since changed that. In every situation, there’s empowerment or disempowerment, and you get to choose. I’ve learned that nothing in life happens to you; it only happens for you.”

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