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TABLE OF CONTENTS



12

Cover
Agent:
Laura
Harbison



20

Leader-
ship:
Maria Rita
Velez



26

Event

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LAURA HARBISON



► cover agent

Written by Kendra Woodward
Photography by Spaces and Portraits Photography



balance in all things

With a deep-rooted passion for real estate that was developed and molded over her collegiate career, Laura Harbison stands proud as a pinnacle example and testament to the power of compassion, dedication, and community engagement within the real estate industry.

From a young age, Laura's life was marked by constant movement courtesy of her father's career as a fighter pilot in the Air Force. Three high schools in four years, across three different states, shaped Laura's outlook on life, instilling in her a sense of adaptability and an appreciation for different cultures. From England to Las Vegas, Texas to Tennessee, Idaho and the numerous places in between, it was in Las Vegas that Laura found her true calling amidst a part time position she held at a brokerage while balancing academics and a slew of part-time jobs.

Thanks to the suggestion of her sorority sisters (some of whom worked at the brokerage they recommended to her), Laura's path intersected with the world of real estate when she picked up a job as an agent's assistant. Straight away she immersed

herself in the intricacies of the industry, soaking it up like a sponge. And despite juggling the various roles and responsibilities, Laura's dedication to her craft never wavered.

Throughout numerous other part time jobs, including a brief stint working at an escrow office, Laura always maintained her position at the brokerage and by the time she graduated from UNLV with a degree in Quantitative Management Systems she had already spent years honing her skills, listening carefully to client interactions and conversations, and preparing for her next chapter as a full time Office Coordinator and Buyer's Agent in a high-volume office. She spent the next four years working with the company's top producing agent, working 80 hours a week or more, which provided her with invaluable experience and prepared her to launch her own team.



Over the next decade, Laura's career was marked by perseverance and determination as she navigated the male-dominated landscape. However, it was when she formed her own team, complete with both licensed and administrative assistants, that she set her plan in motion to become a top agent. "I am a numbers person and am very detailed. I enjoy a fast pace, and that every transaction is different and interesting," Laura explains.

Undeterred by her obstacles, Laura made it her mission to uplift others, embodying the mantra of her father, "You don't have to hurt others to be successful." With an understanding that success doesn't have to be at the detriment of others, she continues to help those around her to be successful as well.

In 1997, Laura left the company that she had been with for 11 years and moved her team to Realty Executives. Within a couple of years, she was not only the top producing agent for the franchise in Nevada, but also achieved the status of Realty Executives Top Team Worldwide! She had grown her team into a well-oiled machine, with positions that included a listing coordinator, an escrow coordinator, a marketing coordinator, three buyer's agents, and two administrative assistants - with Laura's parents filling two of the positions, so it is truly a family affair.

In 2005 they added one more when she convinced her husband, John, to join the team. Together, they forged a path marked by integrity, professionalism, and a commitment to

client satisfaction. Admittedly she says they tag team everything, whereas she is more client and office focused, John attends inspections, walk throughs, checks vacant properties, supervises vendors, and a myriad of other tasks. He will also check in on their elderly clientele, stopping in to say hello, or to help them with whatever they need.

When the previous owners of the Realty Executives franchise in Nevada decided to leave the brand, Laura agreed to be a new Realty Executives franchise owner. That was when Realty Executives Southern Nevada Properties was formed, with Laura at the helm as its Broker/Owner.

With over three decades in the industry, it's no surprise that Laura is now helping her clients kids and grandkids! She enjoys working in the luxury market, but also has a special niche in the 55+ age restricted communities. Her team is uniquely structured to cater to the needs of her retired clientele, being able to offer a wide range of additional services that they need. Laura's tagline, "Sold is my favorite word, let me make it yours!" Encapsulates her unwavering dedication to achieving results and exceeding client expectations.

Beyond her professional achievements, Laura's philanthropic endeavors serve as a testament to her compassionate spirit and unwavering commitment to community welfare. A Touch of Home, the charity she founded in 1994 benefiting Title One Hope - CCSD, has provided essential resources and holiday cheer to countless underprivileged children, a testament to Laura's belief in the transformative power of giving back.



“ I am a numbers person and am very detailed. I enjoy a fast pace, and that every transaction is different and interesting. ”



Despite her busy schedule, Laura remains deeply rooted in her family values and personal connections. With seven children and a myriad of commitments, Laura and John prioritize quality time together, whether it's hosting large Sunday family dinners with upwards of 30 people or embarking on outdoor adventures like spending time at the ocean or in the mountains. With two of the kids still in high school, extracurriculars continue to fill a lot of their time, and the family always makes time to be involved in their church as well.



Laura's ability to balance her professional success with her personal life, underscores her holistic approach to living and working. She is a compassionate leader dedicated to making a difference in the lives of others and serves as an inspiration to all who aspire to blend professional success with social responsibility. "I approach every transaction from the perspective of the client's goals, and love helping them win - which doesn't mean someone else lost, it means we met or exceeded their goals and hopefully their lives are better for it."

“ I approach every transaction from the perspective of the client's goals, and love helping them win - which doesn't mean someone else lost, it means we met or exceeded their goals and hopefully their lives are better for it. ”



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RITA VELEZ



Maria Rita Velez is unlike any other agent you've met. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Maria's journey is akin to a modern-day Saturday Night Fever - full of cultural integration, community, and a relentless pursuit of the American dream.

Growing up in a tight-knit Italian neighborhood, Maria imbibed the values of inclusivity and community engagement from an early age. Her parents, deeply rooted in the fabric of their neighborhood, instilled in her the importance of culture, integration, and equality - principles that would shape the foundation of Maria's future endeavors.

With an upbringing colored by her father's ownership of the quaint Italian eatery in Manhattan called VERDI, Maria spent her formative years working coat check and absorbing the nuances of hospitality while attending Hunter College. Meanwhile, her mother, a skilled seamstress, added her own flair to the family's narrative and

had Maria's summers filled with adventures in etiquette classes, a testament to her family's commitment to refinement and tradition. Maria jokes that they shipped her out every summer to either the Hamptons or Italy, to stay with extended family while her parents worked, but it ultimately offered her the ability to read and write Italian.

A Relentless Pursuit of Positivity

► leadership

Written by Kendra Woodward
Photography by Spaces and Portraits
Photography
Photographed partially at The Smith Center For Performing Arts



Despite her bustling upbringing, Maria excelled academically, graduating with honors from Staten Island College with a degree in History and minors in Education and Political Science. Throughout her academic journey, she remained actively involved in various equality organizations and community outreach programs, laying the groundwork for her future advocacy work.

After tying the knot young, embracing motherhood in Staten Island, and having three children (Monika, Keith, and Erika), Maria embarked on a multifaceted career path in banking. As life transitioned, Maria entered her next phase single and in a new position as a Personal licensed Banker at HSBC Bank educating people on IRAs, investments, and how to avoid penalties when buying their first home.

However, Maria's foray into real estate investing started well before she obtained her first Las Vegas investment property in 2009. As a daughter of immigrants, she often managed her parents real estate investments from a young age, helping translate legal documents and managing her parents finances. After her then-boyfriend/now-husband, Paul, retired from the City of New York Police Department and relocated to Las Vegas, it truly ignited her passion to invest outside of her comfort zone of New York. When they were married three years later, Maria and the kids joined him and moved to Vegas as well.

Initially, Maria would travel back to NY regularly to manage her properties, but after years of traveling back and forth she decided to sell her New York properties, and go all in on Vegas in 2018 by obtaining her real estate license. "I enjoy the art of the deal," she beams. "And getting people a piece of the American dream - aka equity and wealth."

With a busy work schedule and properties to juggle, Maria had no time to build her sphere of influence when she initially moved to Vegas. As she put it "I had no friends, no history, I felt lost in Las Vegas." She was looking for something more, and found herself traveling more and more between New York, Vegas, and her second home in Italy. A

chance encounter meeting Bobbie Starr Dust would change that trajectory forever when Bobbie introduced Maria to the Women's Council of REALTORS® where she currently serves as President.

Through various extracurricular endeavors, Maria connected and broadened her knowledge of the industry, found her tribe, and slowly expanded into other groups (like the HOAs that surround her investment properties and chairing the Lifestyle Committee at Mountains Edge). A complete 180 from when she first moved to Vegas - Maria's life is now filled with friends, a business built on repeat clients and referrals, and community.

As her life's mission has always been focused on personal connections and relationships, and developing strong community ties, it's obvious that Maria's sole purpose is to make her existence meaningful, while bringing her New York cosmopolitan flair. It's the juxtaposition of who she is, and you can hear it when you speak with her.

Now, Maria gets to continue her life's mission through The Velez Fiandra Group, with her son, Keith Fiandra, and her husband, Paul Velez, by her side. "It's definitely a lot of work, but it takes a tribe to run a community like ours," she praises. She also took a step into web domains recently and jokes that since her clients are always asking her for recommendations for local contractors, photographers, lawn care specialists, seamstresses, etc, she went ahead and bought GotAGuy.com. After all, she is a community connector.

Away from the hustle and bustle of real estate, Maria finds solace in her family and furry rescue companions, Nymeria and Dolce. She begins every day as a Miracle Morning practitioner and is even quoted amongst the first few pages of the revised book written by Hal Elrod. In her free time, she enjoys working out, cooking, making jewelry, photography, and is a self-proclaimed fashion diva and shoe-holic with over 300 pairs of shoes. She also continues a long standing Italian tradition of cooking tomato sauce every Sunday for their family dinners, where they hang out for hours and play games.



“

I enjoy the art of the deal. And getting people a piece of the American dream - aka equity and wealth.

When time permits during one of her three yearly vacation stints, you'll find Maria working from her home in Italy which she recently finished a major renovation on after buying out her siblings shares of the ancestral home

in 2020. The home has been in their family for several generations as her father initially bought the house for his parents before moving stateside, and it means a great deal to Maria to be able to surround herself with the culture of her family even if it means staying up late to work on Vegas

time. She notes that the nine hour time difference has its challenges, but she wouldn't have it any other way - getting to spend time with her Italian family and still work real estate, is her version of living her best life.



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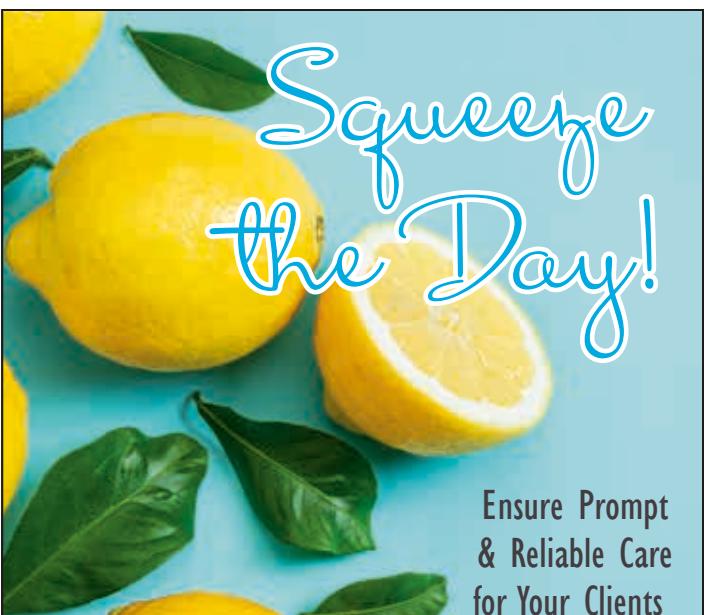
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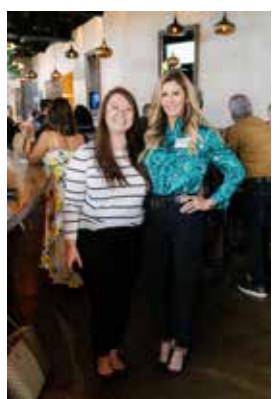






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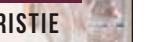
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