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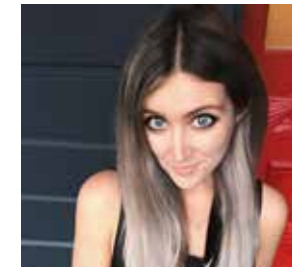
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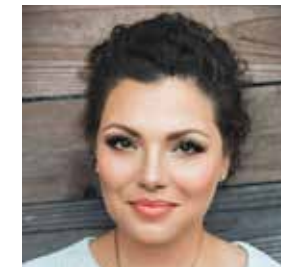
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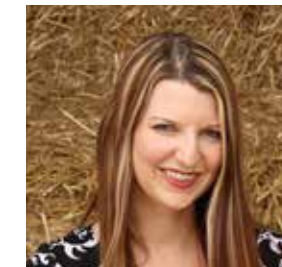
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# Harvesting Success

# Fall Brunch

▶ event recap

Photos by David Graves Photography



Reli Title & Closings Homewood



On September 26th, we had an incredible time celebrating the latest magazine features at our Harvesting Success Fall Brunch hosted at Reli Title and Closings' beautiful Homewood office. The atmosphere was energetic and inviting as Birmingham's top REALTORS® along with our preferred vendor partners gathered to network and celebrate together.

We enjoyed an amazing waffle and breakfast spread from Rolls Bakery, and Lambert Agency Insurance treated us to delicious apple cider mimosas, which were a huge hit with everyone! We were excited to draw one lucky REALTOR® as the winner of a fantastic door prize: a two-hour cleaning from the wonderful team at Southern Charm Cleaning.

With the perfect combination of music, mimosas, and great company, the event was both fun and memorable. Special thank you to all of our sponsors and to Reli Title for hosting such a delightful and successful event!



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# LINCOLN SMITH AND HIS TEAM AT

# MORTGAGE RIGHT

## ▶ partner spotlight

Written by Elizabeth McCabe  
Photos by Brendon Pinola Photography



### FOR ALL YOUR MORTGAGE NEEDS

Having the right mortgage lender can make or break a transaction. When it comes to securing the best mortgage solutions, Lincoln Smith and his team at MortgageRight stand ready to keep deals moving smoothly to the closing table. As producing branch manager, Lincoln brings 24 years of experience, offering a customer-focused approach that's as seamless as it is personal.

### A Veteran-Owned Company You Can Trust

MortgageRight, a locally-based and veteran-owned company in Birmingham, Alabama, is proud to serve its community with over 50 locations across 48 states. With a deep commitment to clients, especially veterans, MortgageRight offers something unique—its values of service and integrity. “We are one of the largest privately-owned mortgage companies in the Southeast,” says Lincoln. “We have a large, great team, and we pride ourselves on serving our veterans and our community.”

This veteran focus sets MortgageRight apart. The team knows the challenges veterans face and specializes in offering tailored mortgage solutions that meet their specific needs. Lincoln and his team are passionate about helping veterans achieve homeownership and making their transition into a new home as smooth as possible.

### A Thriving Team Culture

Behind every successful mortgage transaction is a dedicated team, and at MortgageRight, Lincoln leads a growing group of over 10 loan officers, loan partners, and processors. “We have a fantastic culture,” Lincoln shares. “Everyone is like family. We have fun, but we also take our work seriously. We're building strong relationships with our REALTOR® partners by providing weekly insights into market trends and mortgage updates.”

The team prides itself on delivering a smooth, personalized experience for every client. Whether it's a first-time homebuyer, a veteran, or a self-employed individual needing specialized attention, MortgageRight treats every client with the care and dedication they would want for themselves. “Our process is tailored to each client,” Lincoln explains. “It's about creating a seamless experience for both the client and the REALTOR®.”

### The MortgageRight Difference

So why should clients choose MortgageRight? For Lincoln and his team, it's simple—clients are treated like family. “We hold your hand through the entire process,” says team member Camie Funk. “Buying a home is one of the largest investments you'll ever make, and we're here to make that transition as smooth as possible.”

What makes MortgageRight even more reliable is its in-house approach. All underwriting, processing, and funding are done locally in Birmingham. This not only ensures efficiency but also gives the team full control over every aspect of the mortgage process.

MortgageRight places a high value on its REALTOR® partnerships, constantly seeking co-branding and marketing opportunities that benefit both sides. “We love to collaborate with local agents to enhance their production and provide value to their clients,” Lincoln notes. “Our goal is to make the entire process—from application to closing—effortless for both clients and agents.”



Lincoln Smith



**Leadership and Vision**

Lincoln's passion for the mortgage industry extends beyond just closing deals. His purpose is to mold future leaders. "Throughout my career, I've held various roles in the mortgage industry, but I decided to become a producing branch manager to leave a lasting thumbprint on the next generation of mortgage leaders," Lincoln shares. His branch is thriving, and his goal is to become one of the top-producing branches in Alabama while maintaining a fun, motivating, and client-centered culture. As the producing branch manager, he is also growing his client list, which is a top priority on his list of goals.

**Meet the MortgageRight Team**

Lincoln has a highly qualified team that excels in catering to clients and is dedicated to serving them. "A trusted team makes all the difference," he adds. Lincoln can't say enough about his team: Loan Officer Dave Molde, Loan Officer

Kevin Jemison, Loan Officer Camie Funk, Loan Officer Tom Sparks, Loan Officer Ashley Hatcher, Loan Officer/Processor Addison Hoffman, Loan Officer Diana Will, Loan Officer Estuardo Urizar, and Loan Officer Scott Alsabrook.

"We are hoping for one more addition to our team and then our team will be complete," says Lincoln.

**Advice for REALTORS® from the MortgageRight Team**  
The MortgageRight team doesn't

just excel at lending—they're also a source of advice for their REALTOR® partners. "Continue to strive for leadership and perfection," Lincoln encourages. Loan Processor Addie Hoffman adds, "Stay humble and kind in all your interactions." Diana Will states, "Thank you for investing in an industry that creates generational wealth and changes lives." Kevin Jemison comments, "I would love to partner with you, be an asset, and help you grow your business through open houses, co-marketing, and more!"

**Ready to Work with MortgageRight?**

For those seeking a mortgage partner they can trust, Lincoln Smith and his team at MortgageRight offer a winning combination of experience, local expertise, and a client-focused approach. Whether you're a REALTOR® looking for a reliable partner or a client ready to secure a mortgage, MortgageRight is ready to serve.

**For More Information:**

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**2023**

**BY THE NUMBERS**

HERE'S WHAT THE TOP AGENTS IN BIRMINGHAM SOLD IN 2023...

 **\$3,569,021,132**  
SALE VOLUME

 **8,469**  
TOTAL TRANSACTIONS

 **\$11.8 M**  
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 **28**  
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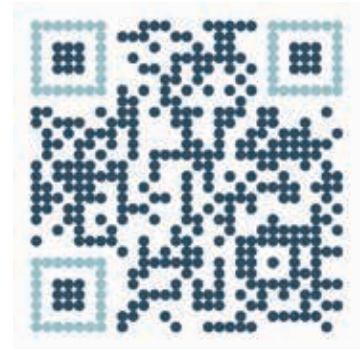

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feature agent  
Written by Zachary Cohen · Photos by David Graves Photography

# Lauren Murphree

finding home

“When I first graduated, I got my dream job back in Memphis as a district manager for Aldi, but my husband and I were engaged, and he got his dream job in Birmingham,” Lauren recalls. “After six months, I realized my job wasn’t a good fit, and he loved his work, so I moved to Birmingham.”

Upon returning to Alabama, Lauren set out to build a career and a social network. She spent several years as an account representative and freight logistics broker before moving into real estate in 2012.

“Gusty Gulas and my husband were fraternity brothers. He hit it big in Zillow and needed someone to work the leads he was bringing in, so he talked to us, and I joined him to sell houses instead of freight,” Lauren explains.

Lauren got her real estate license while on maternity leave with her first child, assuming she would dabble in the business. Yet, once she got licensed, her competitive spirit took over. She was named “Rookie of the Year” for her brokerage and soon settled into real estate as a full-time profession.

Real estate has proven to be the perfect fit for Lauren and her family.

Lauren Murphree may not have been born in Alabama, but she’s found a home in the Heart of Dixie. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, and raised in Hagerstown, Maryland, and Memphis, Tennessee, Lauren first came to Alabama to attend college at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. She graduated with a dual degree in German and marketing in 2006 and has called Birmingham home since 2007.

She’s found a great balance in raising a family and helping her clients with their real estate needs, often taking her kids to showings and events. She’s blessed to have a supportive husband who helps her to prioritize both family and career.

#### Flying High

Today, Lauren is a top agent at RealtySouth. After six years on Gusty’s team, she’s been a solo agent since 2018. In 2024, she closed an impressive 23 homes for \$8.7 million.

So, what have been the keys to Lauren’s success?

“I’m always available. I have strong communication,” she says. “And I’m a type A personality. I like lists, and I’m very thorough. I’m also a bulldog. I have a good personality for negotiating. I’ll tell you what the facts are, whether you want to hear them or not. People know I will give them the truth.”

Alongside her work selling real estate, Lauren has developed a love for staging, design, and real estate investing. In 2023, she purchased her first short-term rental property, which she manages via Airbnb. She has also maintained a long-term rental property for ten years and regularly helps her clients find profitable investment opportunities.

Lauren gains the most joy from mentoring agents and volunteering her time. She stays involved at the Birmingham Association of REALTORS®, where she sits on several committees and is a Leadership Academy graduate. She is also a recipient of the Ada Mae Garner Award, a Homes for Heroes endorsed REALTOR®, and sits on the Birmingham Regional Advisory Council for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.



**It's All for Family**

Lauren's real estate journey began with her family at the center, and they continue to be her inspiration for success. Today, she lives in Ross Bridge with her husband, Wes, and their three children, Kaitlyn (12), Emmett (8), and Elizabeth Grace (5). All three kids play sports; if they aren't at a gymnastics event or soccer game, you'll find Lauren and her family watching movies, playing tennis, camping, watching Alabama football, or playing with their dog, Ritter.

**“**I'll tell you what the facts are, whether you want to hear them or not. *People know I will give them the truth.***”**

“My parents raised me to work hard and love the Lord. I hope my children say the same about me one day. I pray my legacy is hard work and that my children are good members of society. And I want to leave behind some good REALTORS® that know how to take care of people and give our industry a good name,” Lauren closes.



Photo by Rachel Coffey Photography



**FUN FACT**

Lauren speaks German fluently. She studied abroad at a college in Mannheim, Germany, for a semester and leveraged her skills to land a job with Aldi, a German company. Lauren and her family still travel to Germany regularly, and her oldest child is learning to speak German.

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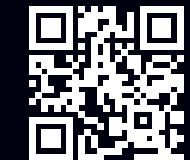
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▶▶ making a difference

Written by Nick Ingrisani  
Photos by Brendon Pinola Photography

# MATTHEW

A JOURNEY  
OF RESILIENCE  
AND SERVICE

# LEPORE



**I feel like it's God who got me into the world of real estate.**

Matthew was born in Detroit, Michigan, and spent the early years of his life there before his family relocated to Birmingham, Alabama, when he was seven years old. Growing up in the vibrant southern city, Matthew built strong roots, staying in Birmingham through his first year of college. Then, he decided to shift gears and join the Army, ultimately serving for 10 years.

After being stationed around the U.S. and Germany and deployments to Bosnia and Iraq, Matthew returned to Alabama, hoping to settle into civilian life. He tried a few different jobs before accepting a position in car sales, which he did for seven years. During that time, he met his future wife, Stephanie. They got engaged in 2014 and began to look for a house to move into together after their wedding.



**THERE'S ALWAYS A CONNECTION THAT SOMEBODY WHO'S SERVED HAS WITH OTHER MILITARY MEMBERS.**





While writing a contract for the purchase of their new construction home, Matthew's knack for negotiation flustered the on-site salesperson. At the closing table, impressed by his skills, the builder asked Matthew if he had ever considered becoming a REALTOR®, going so far as to offer him a job if he pursued his real estate license. Inspired by this conversation, Matthew decided to make the jump into real estate.

After obtaining his real estate license in 2015, Matthew transitioned into full-time real estate work in January 2016. The early days were shaped by mentorship from the same builder who had encouraged him to make the career switch. He trained Matthew for three months and then placed him in his own neighborhood. This foundation of selling new construction homes allowed him to draw on the skills he'd honed in car sales—primarily the ability to sell what you see, provide excellent customer service, and negotiate on behalf of your clients.

However, it was Matthew's connection to his military roots that truly set his real estate career in motion. In 2016, he began working with Veterans United Realty, a referral partner that connects military personnel and veterans with homes and agents. As an Army veteran, Matthew found he had a natural rapport with these clients.

*"Being a military vet myself, it doesn't matter what branch of the service somebody serves in. There's always a connection that somebody who's served has with other military members. We know how to speak the lingo; we know what each other goes through. Also, when people are deployed and experience those hardships, I can relate. So, if somebody ever deployed, there's a connectivity between them and me, and I can build a camaraderie so they trust me and want to work with me."*

The trust he's able to build with fellow veterans paid off. In his first year, Matthew worked with 10 veteran clients. His business has grown steadily; today, 98 percent of his clients are military members or veterans. His hard work and dedication to serving this community have earned him the title of the number one referring agent for Veterans United Realty in the Birmingham market.

Since 2020, Matthew has been with Keller Williams Realty "BESTavia" (Vestavia), primarily



selling residential homes. Matthew has been a solo agent throughout his career, having built a solid business focused on veterans and handling every aspect of business on his own. He enjoys having full autonomy over his business but is considering getting an assistant to take some work off his plate, allowing him to focus more on building and growing relationships with past and future clients.

Reflecting on the traits that have helped him succeed, Matthew emphasizes the importance of resilience and adaptability.

*"Being resilient in and adaptable to this industry builds your confidence. And then, when you're interacting with clients, they feel confident in what you're doing and your ability to help them."*

Outside of work, Matthew is dedicated to his faith and family. An active member and usher at Church of the Highlands, Matthew's Christian faith is a central pillar in his life. When not serving his community or clients, he enjoys traveling with his wife and their 7-year-old daughter, Harper.

Whether he's negotiating a home deal or creating lasting memories with his family, one thing remains constant: Matthew is committed to integrity, strong relationships, and a life of serving those who served.

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## HARBUCK

### » cover story

Written by Elizabeth McCabe  
Photos by Brendon Pinola Photography

### Finding Her True Purpose

“I look up to my mom, Bonnie Johnson, so much that it’s evident in all aspects of my life,” says Leighton Harbuck with ARC Realty. “My mom has been a REALTOR® for many years.” Prior to being a REALTOR®, her mother was a teacher. “I just followed in her footsteps and am so much like her now in so many ways,” smiles Leighton.

Before arriving on the real estate scene, Leighton enjoyed being an elementary school teacher and then a stay-at-home mom. Although she initially was resistant to getting her license, she had a change of heart.

“When I saw my mom start real estate, I wasn’t sure if I wanted to do it,” she admits. “I always said I would never

be a REALTOR® because I saw how hard my mom worked,” she laughs. Leighton’s husband, Ryan, encouraged her to get her license in 2018 and she took his advice to heart.

“When I sold my first house, I realized how much I loved helping others and how it was my true passion,” she says. Ironically, the first house was sold to

one of her former students. “It was a full circle moment,” smiles Leighton. “I educated them as a child and then educated them again, in a huge life decision, later in life.”

Interestingly, Leighton never thought she would be in the sales world. However, never say never. “After I had kids and wanted to stay at home with

our girls, my dream job, I felt like I was meant for more,” she says. “God then gave me this purpose in life to serve other families. He has shown me that this is my purpose. I can serve other families, and in return, it serves my family. I can still be a mom at my daughter’s school functions, go on field trips, and greet them when they get home from school, all while helping people buy and sell real estate. So, I am able to put my family first but still serve my clients well at the same time.”

### A Heart to Serve Others

“I love to serve other families in the biggest transactions of their life,” explains Leighton. People are this Top Producer’s passion.

Leighton’s heart for others was developed when she moved to Birmingham from Florida while she was in middle school. “It was very hard to move at that time,” she says. “We sold our house and moved here at an impactful time in my life. It shaped me to be

confident in who I am and be ready for change.” The move helped her to be more adaptable and wholeheartedly embrace change.

Now, she sees children moving from other towns and has a heart of compassion for them. As a former elementary school teacher, she even wrote a children’s book about moving, which can be a challenging event for a child.

“It’s called *From A House to a Home*,” says Leighton proudly. She’s hoping that her book will help children transition to their new homes successfully with anticipation and excitement. “I grew a lot through writing the book,” she points out. “My hope is that the story in it resonates with many little ones.”

### A Wonderful Life

When Leighton isn’t meeting with clients and showing homes, you can find her with her family. Leighton is married to her husband, Ryan, the president of a local construction company. They love to travel and lead their busy lives together.





“We’ve been married for 15 years now, and we have two beautiful girls, Mae (11) and Maggie (9),” she shares. In Leighton’s spare time, she helps to coach the cheer squad. Ryan also stays active in the girls’ lives.

“He coaches our youngest daughter’s softball team,” explains Leighton. “Softball and cheer are our world right now.” Leighton takes every moment – whether in the cheer squad or in sports – to connect with others.

“When I’m at cheer practice, a game, or other kids’ activities, people often ask me about the local real estate market,” she says. She likes being of service to others, and their local market expert and is always eager to help them with their real estate concerns.

**Passionate About Life and Real Estate**  
Outside of work and family, Leighton

enjoys playing tennis and is part of several local leagues. Tennis has also provided opportunities to blend her social life with her business. “I’ve helped several people on my tennis teams buy and sell homes,” she says. “It’s been a great way to connect with people both on and off the court.”

Leighton’s attention to detail extends beyond the real estate transaction. She also loves organizing, a skill she often brings into her work. “It brings me joy to help my clients organize their homes and ensure everything is market-ready,” she says. “It’s fun to pull those two passions together.”

**Mentoring and Faith**

Despite her successes, Leighton remains humble and grounded in her faith. Her favorite Bible verse, Psalm 143:8, serves as her daily inspiration: “Let the morning bring me word of



your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.”

“This verse reminds me that each day is a new day to serve others—whether in real estate, on the tennis court, or with my family,” she reflects.

Leighton also enjoys mentoring new agents and believes that being a good REALTOR® starts with being a good person. “If you care about people and serve them well, it will show in your work,” she advises. “I always try to make my clients feel like they are my top priority.”

**A Lasting Legacy**

Leighton credits much of her success to her mother’s influence. “As a REALTOR®, my mom has been a great example to me in many aspects of my life,” she says. “She’s shown me that I can enjoy life, be a good mom, and still have a rewarding career that serves others.”

From a dedicated teacher to a stay-at-home Mom, and now a thriving REALTOR®, Leighton Harbuck has found her purpose in serving others. Whether through real estate, coaching cheerleaders, spending time

Whether with her family or playing tennis, she gives her full effort to everything she does, leaving a lasting impact on the people she encounters.



“If you care about people and serve them well, it will show in your work. I always try to make my clients feel like they are my top priority.”

# The faces behind the business!



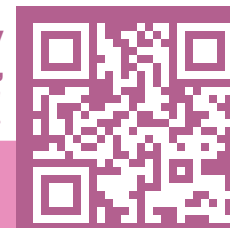
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