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OVERCOMER:
Sandie Courtney

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:
Kent DeReus with A. Perry Homes

CELEBRATING VETERANS:
Sabrina Hagood

NOVEMBER 2024



Stephanie Smith

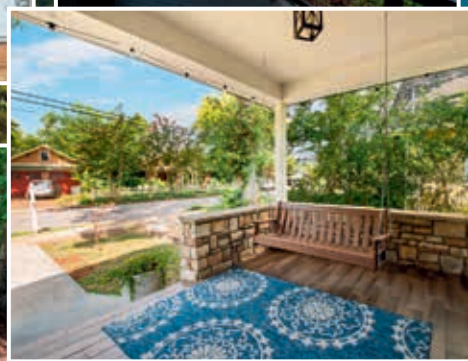
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Let's Talk!




▶ publisher's note

GRATEFUL


Through it All

As I look around at everything happening in real estate right now, I can't help but feel a sense of gratitude—even in the face of all the change and challenges. It's no secret that our industry is going through some major shifts, from navigating market changes to dealing with the ripple effects of the recent NAR settlement and facing the aftermath of devastating hurricanes. Yet, despite it all, there's so much to be thankful for.

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Jeff White,
Owner/Publisher

Through it all, I believe we'll come out stronger, more connected, and better equipped to handle whatever comes next. Change is inevitable, but gratitude gives us the perspective we need to navigate it with grace.

Real estate has always been unpredictable. One minute the market's booming, and the next, things slow down. Trends come and go, and there are always new hurdles to clear. But what stands out, especially in times like these, is our ability to stay flexible and roll with the punches. That adaptability is something I'm really grateful for. It's what keeps us moving forward, no matter what comes our way.

The NAR settlement has stirred up a lot of conversations, and I know it's got many of us rethinking how we approach our business. While there's uncertainty ahead, this moment is also giving us the chance to make our practices stronger, fairer, and more transparent. It's not just about meeting legal standards—it's about reinforcing the trust that makes our industry thrive. And for that, I'm grateful. We've been given the opportunity to grow and improve, and that's something we can all embrace.

On top of these industry shifts, we've also seen the devastating effects of recent hurricanes. It's heartbreaking to witness the destruction, but what really stands out is how communities pull together during times of crisis. Whether it's neighbors lending a hand or businesses stepping in to help rebuild, there's a real sense of unity that's truly inspiring. While the damage to homes and properties is immense, what matters most is the resilience of the people affected. And I'm thankful for the way our industry has stepped up to support those in need.

These moments are a reminder that homes are so much more than buildings—they're places where memories are made, families are nurtured, and lives unfold. When natural disasters strike, we're reminded of just how precious that sense of home really is. As real estate professionals, we have the privilege of helping people not only find their homes but rebuild their lives when things go wrong. That's a responsibility we shouldn't take lightly, and it's one we can be deeply thankful for.

So, as we face these changes—whether it's adjusting to new industry norms or coming together to support communities after a disaster—let's take a moment to appreciate the good that can come from challenging times. We have the chance to learn, grow, and make a real difference. And for that, I'm incredibly grateful.

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By Anders Clarke
Photos by William Griggs

meet
Kent DeReus

with A. Perry Homes

HELPING OTHERS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

Fifteen years ago in Chicago, two Architects found frustration in their work as custom home designers and builders. So they did something about it. Under the guidance of Anthony “Tony” Perry, they founded A. Perry Homes with the mission to provide a truly exceptional, architect-led, client-centered experience in custom home design & construction. Kent DeReus, an accomplished architect and current CEO of A. Perry Homes says, “We saw a better way to help clients achieve their home building dreams.”

They made their entrance into Chattanooga in November of 2020 to work with the Black Creek Development, finding partners that valued the expertise and architect-led approach that was their standard. “We were really excited to diversify and get involved in a completely new market,” Kent shares enthusiastically. Now several years in, they have multiple projects in the works and dozens of raving fan clients to speak to the quality of their craft and the delight of their experience.

When it comes to home building, custom builds are the most challenging. For a full custom approach, A. Perry Homes wanted to take the challenge of providing a unique experience head on. This means that each client gets to fully realize their vision from the ground up. “Every single project we do starts with a blank piece of paper,” Kent states. As an architect, Kent gets the privilege of sitting down with clients and working with them through their design process. From the very first meeting, they start sketching out designs, working with clients to bring their ideas to life. A combination of expertise and experience is applied to each client’s individual needs, ensuring their client’s experience comes first.

Each and every client gets a tailored experience with their design and build. No two clients are the same, and for the custom approach A. Perry Homes strives to provide, their experience must be unique by necessity. Everything from their personalities, their knowledge and preparation level, and their specific desires for their ideal home are taken into account. “It’s about the client’s experience and what they want for their house,” Kent shares. There is no ego involved with the design process; only curiosity and consultation. Designing something unique that has never been done before is a hefty responsibility. But the team at A. Perry Homes is adamant about making sure clients are taken care of from start to finish.



EVERY SINGLE PROJECT WE DO STARTS WITH A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER.

Along with their Black Creek projects, they have some big plans in development. “Once we started designing and building in Black Creek, we saw an opportunity to create an enclave of custom homes. So we reserved 36 lots and have begun work on Sunset Ridge at Black Creek,” says Kent. Two model home projects are underway, as are six lots already purchased with plans in motion as well. The chance to craft a custom community from the ground up is a responsibility they feel blessed to bring to fruition. Beyond Black Creek, A. Perry Homes is developing Riverside Canyon Estates on the Tennessee River. With 60 acres of waterfront property and lots ready for private docks, this will be an opportunity to enjoy luxury river life within Hamilton County.

Only four short years into their time in Chattanooga, A. Perry Homes has set a high standard for home design and building. Their detailed and custom approach to the process as well as their clients has earned the respect of dozens of clients and the REALTORS® they have personally worked with. Crafting an unforgettable experience and creating remarkable homes is their passion. Their mission is to go above and beyond, and it’s safe to say they have proven their ability to do so many times over.

For anyone looking for an incredible experience and a team with the expertise to realize your vision, look no further than A. Perry Homes and their outstanding team.



Working with REALTORS®, their team strives to involve them in the process as much as they need. Their client may be actively looking to build a custom home, or they may just be curious about exploring options. Their needs are always put first, providing whatever education, guidance, or information they need to feel like they made the right decision. Explaining the process of designing a custom home, how they overcome challenges and the reasoning behind design choices helps paint a vivid and informed picture of what a client can expect working with them. A deep understanding of the real estate industry and the agent side of the transaction fosters comfortability and confidence. They build great rapport and are focused on helping agents close deals. They have a local REALTOR® on staff as well to help consult and guide any clients who don’t have a prior agent to guide them.

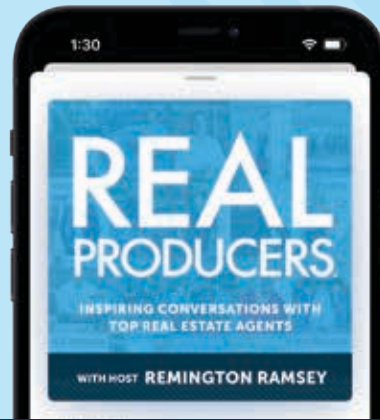
A big part of providing a high quality product is how the process coalesces with each individual client’s needs. Every project has unique topography, views, budget, and challenges that come with it. In combination with the personality of each client and what they need to help realize their design goals, the approach is just as important as the product. “Without an experience a new home very quickly becomes a commodity,” Kent emphasizes. Their individual lifestyle needs and goals for their home are factored into the design process. A. Perry Homes is determined to make the process easy and fun. “We’re focused on creating magical experiences for our clients while crafting the spaces for life’s remarkable moments,” Kent says passionately.

For Kent, his experience as CEO and architect allows him a unique opportunity to serve both clients and his colleagues

within the company. He gets to sit down with clients on day one and start sketches or give tours of the model home he resides in. By working intimately with each client and discovering their unique vision, he is constantly pushing his own skills and expertise to new heights. Seeking to make each project a true collaboration between builders and clients is an honor for him and his team. “We professionally fall in love with other people’s dreams,” he says with a smile. Kent relishes the opportunity to build a trusted partnership with each client.

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MEET Sandie Courtney

THE POWER OF SECOND CHANCES

Life rarely offers second chances, but when it does, the power to change everything lies in how we embrace them. Chattanooga real estate agent Sandie Courtney knows this well. Her remarkable journey from addiction and homelessness to a successful career is a testament to the power of faith, the grace of second chances, and the belief that nothing is impossible when you trust in God's plan.



Today, Sandie is more than just a successful real estate agent—she's a living example of the transformative power of God's intervention, proof that no matter where you've been or how far you've fallen, redemption and renewal are always within reach.

A Life in Pieces

Born in Chattanooga and raised in North Georgia, Sandie's early years were a tumultuous struggle. By the age of 14, she had started using drugs, a decision that led her down a destructive path of addiction that defined her teenage and young adult years. At 19, Sandie had her first child, and by 21, she found herself homeless, now with two children and separated from their father.

"I was lost," Sandie recalls. "Completely lost. I didn't know how to fix my life or even where to start."

Rock bottom came when Sandie attempted suicide, overwhelmed by the weight of her circumstances. But in what Sandie believes was nothing short of divine intervention, her life was spared by a simple answered prayer. That day marked the beginning of her transformation.

"I shouldn't be here," Sandie says. "But God had other plans for me. He stepped in and gave me a second chance at life, and I knew I had to do something with it."

A New Beginning

After her miraculous experience, Sandie went through six months of

recovery, a time of deep spiritual awakening. She felt God guiding her back to the light, showing her that her life still had purpose. It was during this time that she reconnected with her faith, a faith that would sustain her as she began to rebuild her life.

"I gave it all to God," Sandie says. "I had nothing left but Him, and that's when everything started to change."

Sandie's recovery wasn't just physical; it was spiritual and emotional. She knew she had been given a second chance, and she was determined to make the most of it. One of her first steps was to give back by volunteering at J103, a local Christian radio station. For four months, Sandie found solace in serving others, rediscovering her sense of humanity and accountability.

"That experience changed me," she says. "It wasn't just about the work; it was about reconnecting with people, with kindness, and most importantly, with God."

A New Path: From Radio to Real Estate

Sandie's journey continued to unfold in ways she hadn't imagined. During her time at J103, the chaplain, John Gann, suggested she try her hand at sales. Although she had no formal experience in the field, Sandie was intrigued by the idea. Her love for houses and neighborhoods had always been a quiet passion, and she soon realized that real estate might be her calling.

After managing a chain of Verizon stores for nine years, Sandie took a leap of faith and decided to get her real estate license during the COVID-19 pandemic—a bold move during such uncertain times. But once again, God's grace was at



work. Just seven weeks after being licensed, she closed her first deal.

“I had no idea if I would make it,” Sandie says, “but I trusted that God had opened this door for a reason.”

Building on Integrity and Faith

It’s been said, “Changed people change people.” For Sandie, real estate isn’t just a business—it’s a way to help others. She approaches every transaction with integrity, honesty, and a deep sense of responsibility. Her belief in second chances isn’t limited to her own life; she sees her role as a REALTOR® as an opportunity to help others start fresh.

“Buying a home is a new beginning for so many people,” Sandie says. “It’s not just about finding a place to live; it’s about creating a new chapter, and I want to be there to help make that happen.”

Sandie’s success in real estate, much like her recovery, is grounded in her faith. She believes that God’s hand is in every aspect of her life, from the clients she meets to the deals she closes. She often shares her story with clients, especially those who are going through their own challenges, offering a message of hope and encouragement.

I gave it all to God. I had nothing left but Him, and that’s when everything started to change.

“God changed my life,” she says. “And I want people to know that He can change theirs too.”

Family: Her “Why”

While Sandie’s faith is the foundation of her life, her family is her “why.” Her children, Logan (18) and Chloe

(16), are her greatest motivation and joy. Their love and support have been crucial in her journey, and they’ve walked alongside her as she built a new life.

Chloe is in Colorguard at LFO, works at Taco Bell, and is a member of Burning Bush Baptist Student Ministry. Logan graduated in May 2024 and is now the manager at Xtreme Air jump park on the weekends as well as working full time starting his trade career in commercial plumbing installations. He loves basketball and plays weekly at a local church. “They are wonderful young people and I’m so proud of their accomplishments.”

A Future Filled with Faith and Opportunity

Looking ahead, Sandie’s vision for the future is to continue growing her real estate business while building a team of agents who share her commitment to faith, integrity, and second chances. But her goals extend beyond business. She wants to use her platform to inspire others, especially those who are struggling, to believe that with God’s help, they too can turn their lives around.

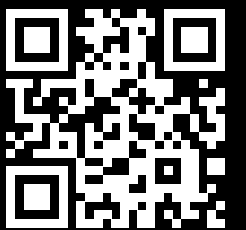
“I’ve been given so much grace,” Sandie says. “Now it’s my turn to give back, to help others see that no matter how bad things seem, there’s always hope.”

As Sandie continues to build her real estate career, she remains grounded in her faith, knowing that every step forward is a gift from God. With each new day, she strives to use her second chance to bring hope and kindness to those around her, just as God did for her.



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CONTENT: This is all about you, the Chattanooga real estate community. We do personal and unique stories on members of this community, giving you a platform to inspire others. Our goal is to go beyond the numbers and take a deep dive into the personal side of the industry, to inspire us to know one another better. It costs absolutely nothing for a real estate agent to be featured in the publication.

But to be featured, an agent must be nominated by a peer or leader in the Chattanooga real estate community. We are always taking nominations and encourage you to nominate individuals who are making a huge impact on our local real estate market.

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NETWORKING EVENTS: Along with the monthly publication, we host various social networking events where top agents, along with our top preferred partners, get together at reputable local venues to rub elbows, mastermind, have a good time and strengthen our greater Chattanooga community. We communicate information about the events through the publication, texts, emails and social media.

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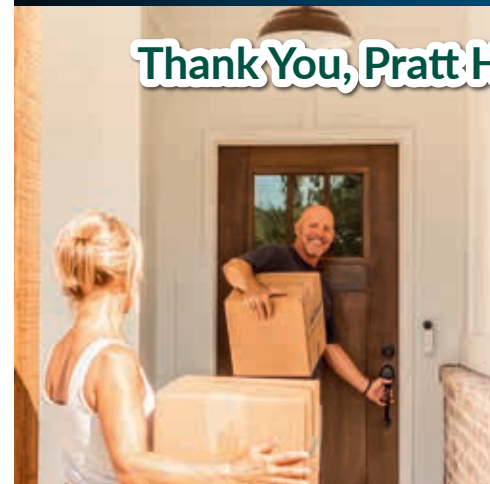
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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
& BREAKING BARRIERS

Some people are pushed into situations they don't expect, and often aren't looking for. For Sabrina, she was content to do real estate at Keller Williams. However, when her colleague, Jai Williams, wanted to start a brokerage, she asked for Sabrina to join her. After she initially declined, she recalls praying about the decision. One night, she sat up in the middle of the night with the decision at the forefront of her mind. She took the brokers exam the next month and told Jai about it. She decided to go into business with Jai shortly after, helping found Nouveau Realty Group on November 10th of 2022.

Growing up in Augusta, Georgia, Sabrina was on track in school to pursue a career in criminal justice. Upon graduation, she spent some time as a case worker for the Department of Family & Children's Services. She then moved into a job as a special agent in the criminal justice field. She decided criminal justice wasn't for her, focusing solely on investing. She has been investing since 2004, but officially got licensed as a REALTOR® in 2017. She loves the opportunity to serve others and help their goals of home ownership become a reality.

Above all else, like many top REALTORS®, Sabrina is driven by the desire to help others. "To really get 100% fulfillment, you have to have a heart for people," she explains. Her love for helping families get into their first home is her favorite experience. She has even helped several people in their 60s and 70s buy their first home after a lifetime of renting. Those instances have been

a memorable and cherished experience for her just as much as her clients. "Homeownership is bigger than just homeownership. It affects the whole community," she says. Her heart for helping extends into her involvement in several nonprofits she supports and volunteers with when she has time. She loves to change lives and has seen the impact real estate has had on her own life.

Sabrina has always liked things to go just how she wanted. Starting a brokerage and being in charge of marketing, coaching, and mentoring agents has been a challenge. It helped push her out of her comfort zone and has helped her grow and improve herself. Her role requires her to really engage with the needs of others, putting her own preferences aside. She has noticed she has become much more patient and understanding as a result. Much like her love for helping clients, she loves to help teach new agents to succeed and grow. She has also become more organized and learned to communicate more effectively to others, a necessary part of any organization. Especially as the current board leader of NAREB, improving and utilizing her organizational skills has paid dividends.

A unique aspect of Sabrina's business is her success on social media. She has amassed a loyal and fruitful following on Facebook through her time, energy, and personality. She says 95% of her business has come from Facebook. She focuses on three things with her platform that have led to great success: educate, entertain,





“
I DON'T SELL
ANYTHING THAT
I DON'T KNOW
ANYTHING ABOUT.
”

and encourage others. Because she shares her success with others, they have been drawn to use her as their agent for many transactions over the years. She admits that it doesn't work for all agents. Her methods and character have combined to create a unique impression, leading people to contact her as a result.

Sabrina has achieved many landmarks in her career, and its thanks in part to the people she has surrounded herself with. With her partners, Jai and Tamekia, at Nouveau, they were the first trio of African American women to lead a brokerage in Chattanooga. She has had numerous instances of people reaching out, thanking them for inspiring others with their landmark business. "I did not realize how much it impressed upon people," Sabrina admits, "We didn't know how big that was." It has had a definitive impact on their community, and they have had plenty of feedback to support it. They also helped start the first local chapter of NAREB in Chattanooga, where Sabrina currently serves.

Her next steps are expanding her business into new horizons. Sabrina is already involved internationally in real estate around the world, including Mexico, the Bahamas, and Egypt to name a few. She has plans to move into more development projects, applying her expertise to a new set of challenges. She has personally visited some recent investments, stating, "I don't sell anything that I don't know anything about." Her current projects in Mexico involve both residential and commercial property, and she is excited about what the next couple of years have in store. In addition, Sabrina says Nouveau is still expanding and nurturing the agents they have as they pass their two-year anniversary. They have been very intentional about empowering each other to step in and cover during time off or vacation, ensuring they are prepared for whatever life throws at them.

Thankful for the opportunity to be a part of Nouveau, Sabrina is committed to doing what she does and doing it well. It's been a whirlwind the last two years, and they are at 14 agents already and growing. Her partnership with Tamekia and Jai has made the experience a pleasure, and they are fully committed to supporting each other and making it work. She is also supported by her amazing husband, Keith, who she married in 2000. She has two sons, a 26-year-old in Nebraska, just out of the Air Force, and a 21-year-old in school at UTC and doing real estate at Nouveau. Blessed with wonderful opportunities and surrounded by amazing people, Sabrina is not where she thought she would be, but loving where she is.



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Helping Families Find Home

Meet
**JORDAN
COOK**

Jordan Cook, lead sales agent for The Torgerson Team of Keller Williams Realty Great Downtown, can't imagine a career other than real estate. Jordan grew up in Memphis in a close-knit family. After graduating from the University of Tennessee Knoxville, Jordan thought he'd pursue a law degree. "I was sure I'd go to law school, but my heart just wasn't in it," shares Jordan. His brother was in commercial real estate and convinced Jordan to give real estate a shot.

Jordan was already living in Chattanooga when he began his real estate pursuit in 2014. As he began his career, Jordan was mentored by Joe Pleva, a very successful commercial broker. "I learned so much from Joe," reflects Jordan. "I can't thank him enough for his friendship and mentorship. I still find commercial real estate to be fascinating, but it was difficult as a 26-year-old with no real roots in Chattanooga to get established in that part of the real estate industry." When Jordan was ready to turn his attention to the residential side of the business, Joe introduced Jordan to Nathan Torgerson. And they've been partnered ever since. "Nathan and I work so well together," offers Jordan. "We each bring different skills to the business and excel in different areas."

As a residential agent, Jordan has thrived. He's consistently a top producing agent, but the accolades and success don't mean as much to Jordan as the satisfaction he gets from helping a family find the perfect place to call home. "I think of my job, not as a salesperson, but as an advisor," shares Jordan. "I ask myself how I'd want to be represented and that's how I show up for my clients." One piece of advice Jordan gives to his clients



Photo by OKCrowe Photography

when they are looking for a home is to trust their instincts. "During my consultation with buyers, I tell them to trust their instincts and focus on what feels right in the home," says Jordan. "I try to help them see beyond paint color and cosmetic issues and to instead focus on if the bigger parts – location, layout, and size of the home – work for them."

Jordan is the type of agent who rolls up his sleeves and gets to work alongside his clients when necessary. "I love problem solving and being able to provide and find solutions to problems that routinely arise during transactions," says Jordan. As an example, in 2018 he'd been working with a family for quite a while to find just the right home. "Finally, we

found a great home that had the space they needed, room to grow, and the best location for their family," recalls Jordan. "After getting the house under contract and working through a laundry list of inspection items, we received several appraisal conditions that needed to be met in order to move forward with the THDA loan." His clients had no additional cash to meet the necessary requirements, but Jordan wasn't going to let them lose this home. He met them there over a weekend and got to work on the list of needed repairs. "It was very special to work alongside the whole family and overcome those unexpected hurdles."

Growing up, Jordan lived near a lot of his extended family. His family was always close. Sunday lunch at his

grandmother's house was one of his favorite weekly activities. "Looking back, I have so many incredible memories at my childhood home, my grandparents' house and the family's lake house," shares Jordan. "I think those memories fuel my desire to help my clients find the perfect place to call home." Being raised in a close family also gave him the foundation and blueprint for his own family.

Keller Williams is more than just Jordan's office. It's also where he met his wife, Amanda. They both joined the office around the same time. They were working on different teams, did a few transactions together and slowly became friends before falling in love. The couple got married in 2021 and their son, Bowie, was born in early 2023. "Amanda is the best partner in life

that I could ask for," Jordan shares warmly. "She's adventurous, loves the outdoors, is family centered, and selfless. She retired her real estate license in 2024 to focus on our family, but she is an amazing agent who understands my business, the ups and downs, and hours it demands. She is such an amazing mom to Bowie and my biggest supporter; I thank God for her every day."

Jordan prioritizes his family and the outdoors when he isn't working. Bowie is a great source of joy and entertainment for Jordan, Amanda and their entire extended families. "He brings so much laughter and happiness to everyone," Jordan shares. Chattanooga's outdoor recreation options was one of the top reasons Jordan chose to move to the area. "I love the fact that we have

great access to amazing fly-fishing, world-class mountain biking, hiking, and rock climbing," offers Jordan. "When I have time, I love to drive out to the Hiwassee, where my cell phone doesn't work, and fly fish for trout early in the morning."

Jordan's passion for helping people, his patience and his genuine connection to his clients have allowed him to build a career he loves. "I get emotionally invested with all of my clients," Jordan admits with a chuckle. "It certainly adds to the stress level but, it makes me a better, more compassionate agent." Jordan never loses perspective about the impact he makes on people. He's not helping them buy and sell property. He's helping families buy a home or a second home where they will create lasting memories.

“During my consultation with buyers, I tell them to trust their instincts and focus on what feels right in the home.”



I was sure I'd go to law school, but my heart just wasn't in it.



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