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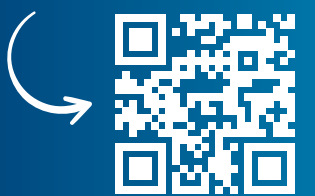
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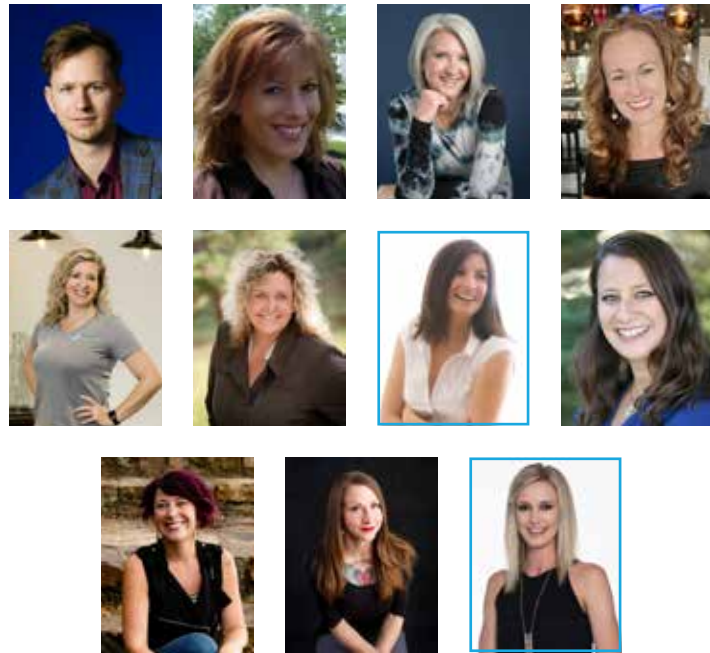
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THE POWER OF *Mutuality*

publisher's note

This month, I'm sharing a post written by a friend and colleague, Jeff White, who publishes Memphis Real Producers and Chattanooga Real Producers. Jeff and I have similar visions with our platforms and I cannot have written this better than Jeff. With that said, here are Jeff's words copy and pasted (with his permission) below:

There is a term I have come to really love recently... MUTUALITY.

Mutuality is a principle of interdependence and shared benefit, and it is essential for building strong, trusting relationships. This concept is crucial not only between top agents but also with our trusted affiliate partners. Mutuality fosters a collaborative environment where everyone can thrive.

For top agents, mutuality means viewing colleagues as collaborators rather than competitors. Sharing insights and strategies can elevate the entire team, creating a culture of learning and growth. Seasoned agents can mentor



Brian Gowdy and Colleen Rippey (publisher of Baltimore Real Producers and Coastal Real Producers) randomly encountering each other on the 7-mile hike around Jenny Lake in Grand Teton National Park! (photo taken July 2024)

newcomers, who, in turn, bring fresh perspectives and energy. This exchange enhances individual performance and strengthens the team's overall capability.

Mutuality extends to our relationships with affiliate partners, such as mortgage brokers, home inspectors, and marketing professionals. Building strong, mutual relationships with these partners involves recognizing their value, respecting their expertise, and working together towards common goals. This synergy leads to superior service and greater client satisfaction. A mortgage broker who understands your clients' needs can offer tailored solutions, while a marketing professional aligned with your goals can create more effective campaigns.

Embracing mutuality encourages transparency, trust, and open communication—all vital for lasting relationships. When clients see their agent's network of trusted partners working seamlessly together, it instills confidence and peace of mind. They know they

are surrounded by professionals who have their best interests at heart.

Finally, mutuality is a way of doing business that elevates everyone involved. By fostering mutual support and shared success, we create a collaborative, innovative, and ultimately, more successful real estate community.

*Here's to mutual success,
--Jeff White*

Thank you,
Brian Gowdy
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719-313-3028 | brian.gowdy@n2co.com

reflections FROM THE EDITOR

This month I noticed a theme emerging among our featured agents: the importance of giving back. I have been reflecting on how we all do this in different ways. Some may donate financially while others volunteer or give their time in various ways. But some of us may "give back" in more subtle ways. Maybe it's in the way we show up for others in our daily interactions, the attention we give or the energy we bring to various situations, or in how we are there to offer support just when someone needs it. I have learned from my own life experiences that

there isn't just one "right" way to make a difference in the lives of others. Sometimes the smallest moments make a big impact. I enjoyed seeing so many different examples of giving back this month. These agents are true inspirations!



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SAM

» rising star
Written by Tabby Halsrud
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SPARKS

After a 22-year military career followed by an 8-year long retirement, Sam Sparks shifted into real estate at the invitation of a friend. Sam joined his friend at Keller Williams and worked there a few years before ultimately joining Kerri Kilgore at Realty One Group. While he was retired, Sam supported his military wife, took an active role in raising their boys, and coached his son's soccer and baseball teams.



Sam and his wife are well-connected in the military community and while he has served a lot of military personnel and vets, he tries not to focus on any one niche. Sam prefers to help anyone who wants to buy or sell a home. He recalls what it was like to be a young military member purchasing his own first home, feeling overwhelmed by the VA process. He enjoys helping others navigate the process so they don't have to continue renting for longer than necessary.

Sam is used to putting his head down and working hard to find solutions - skills he learned in the military that have served him well. One of the challenges with his transition into real estate was learning how to put himself out there and be more open about himself, his successes, and his struggles. This felt difficult in the beginning after a long career of holding information close and being protective of personal information. Now, he has changed the way he talks to new agents and encourages them to be honest if they are struggling. He wants them to know that real estate isn't always as easy as it looks, but they are not alone.

Sam is grateful for those who helped him early in his real estate career - the friend who helped him get started in real estate and more recently, Kerri Kilgore. He knows their support and guidance has been instrumental to his path and to his successes.



Sam appreciates that both his long-time military career and his family have been paramount in shaping him into the person he is today. He and his wife have been married 24 years and have three boys, ages ranging from 16 to 27. The family still enjoys regular dinners together. When not working, Sam enjoys anything outdoors - especially kayaking, hiking, and camping. This family also loves to travel and most recently visited Costa Rica and Ireland. Sam loves taking road trips into the mountains with his family and hopes to be able to make time for golfing again someday soon.



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KIESHIA MACE- PEARSON



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Written by Tabby Halsrud
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MACE-
PEARSON

At the age of 3, Kieshia Mace-Pearson was placed into foster care. Her parents were addicts and her mom ended up in prison. While living with her foster family, Kieshia took an interest in the homes they would pass as they took walks through the neighborhood. She remembers seeing families sitting down to dinner through windows, all the while missing her own family. Kieshia was longing for what had been stripped away from her: a sense of safety and security and a home. These early experiences planted a desire to help bring these things to others. Kieshia, who had seven siblings, was later reunited with her mom and her dad, who recently passed away from cancer.

Kieshia never had a desire to go to college. She felt she wasn't the academic type and knew she couldn't sit still and focus in a classroom (she has since learned that she has ADHD). Instead, Kieshia joined the military in 2010 at the age of 17. A fun fact she shared: when the recruiter presented the job choices, Kieshia asked which one would let her shower the most. Her recruiter burst out laughing, saying it was the funniest question he'd heard in 20 years of recruiting—and he'd never been asked that before. Kieshia laughed as she recalled the moment. She ended up choosing to be a cook in the Army, a role that felt perfectly aligned with her heart for serving others.

While in the Army, Kieshia noticed that a lot of her brothers and sisters in arms weren't familiar with their benefits. She watched many military personnel struggle with homelessness and wanted to help them understand they could buy a house. Kieshia left the military in 2017 and got into real estate, serving many military personnel. The biggest obstacle in her new career was that she had moved to Colorado Springs from South Dakota, not knowing anyone. As soon as she got her license, she started getting involved so she could meet people. She joined the Junior League of Colorado Springs and attended HOA meetings.

Kieshia knew she wanted to be a listing agent from the start, but the traditional path—starting as a showing agent, moving to a buyer's agent, and eventually transitioning to listings—just didn't feel right for her.





Instead, she sought a quicker route. Recognizing the constant buying and selling among military families in her subdivision, she focused on getting to know her neighbors and felt a strong pull to build a tighter-knit community. Understanding firsthand the challenge of moving frequently and not knowing anyone, she began hosting free monthly activities and events in her neighborhood. She also launched two book clubs: one for the larger community, now boasting 1,600 members, and one specifically for her neighborhood.

Kieshia's passion for community involvement extends far beyond her neighborhood. She and her husband, Killan, volunteer monthly for Care and Share Food Bank and regularly contribute to Habitat for Humanity, Partners in Housing, and even volunteer in the housing department at Fort Carson. Kieshia encourages others to make a difference: "Volunteer hours make a huge impact, and I urge everyone to get involved with our local nonprofits to directly support local families."

In her spare time, Kieshia enjoys relaxing at home, hiking with Killan, and sipping coffee at locally-owned spots like Old Towne Coffee in Fountain. She loves attending small-town events like farmers markets and Saturday in the Square. At home, Kieshia and Killan have a "mini petting zoo" with four dogs and two cats. They also have 24 nieces and nephews and love hosting monthly sleepovers for those who live nearby.

In 2021, Kieshia helped a multitude of clients who were going through a divorce. In serving these clients, she came to understand how unique each experience was - ranging from amiability and easy transactions, to restraining orders and difficult transactions.

She had been in business for about three years at the time, and couldn't imagine having to navigate the more difficult transactions as a new agent. Kieshia began researching how to better serve this niche and ultimately got her designation as a Certified Divorce Real Estate expert through Ilumni, the leading divorce education institute for real estate agents. With only a 10% acceptance rate, the application process was rigorous and required reference letters from peers and from professionals in the legal community, as well as interviews with judges and attorneys. Getting the designation required her to attend specialized legal classes and divorce hearings.

A 2024 Best of the Springs recipient, Kieshia still serves anyone looking to sell or buy real estate, but her primary focus is on divorcing homeowners. She makes it a goal when possible to help one spouse stay in the home to continue building its value; when that's not possible, she works to sell. She is now the Real Estate Chair of the El Paso County Bar Association and facilitates the education of attorneys on different real estate matters. She also testifies in court as an expert witness. Kieshia's divorce expertise extends beyond real estate transactions, too. Kieshia provides a free monthly workshop for people going through or contemplating divorce. Called Second Saturday, this workshop hosts different expert speakers every month, and attendees come to learn and ask questions. Experts include attorneys, judges, mediators, and financial representatives.

As a CDRE, Kieshia understands the challenges of navigating high-stress transactions with many moving pieces. She's happy to be a resource for any attorneys and agents who need extra support in managing the selling process during a divorce.



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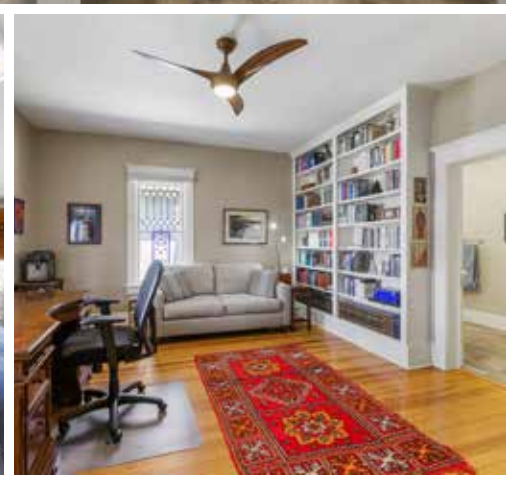
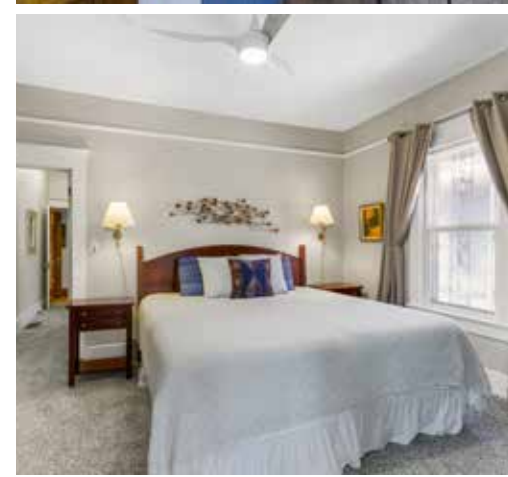



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MATTHEW KLINKER

Born and raised in Colorado Springs, Matthew Klinker graduated from Doherty High School in 2013. An avid soccer player through high school, he also loved cars and off-roading with his dad. While he didn't pursue soccer as a career, he did believe the adage, "if you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life." Matthew attended Lincoln College

of Technology in Aurora, where he studied Automotive. He found a job working on cars but soon realized he didn't want to make a living at it and really only enjoyed working on his own cars. He transitioned to working as a service advisor and writer for Subaru.

In the meantime, Matthew and his wife purchased their first home and



▶ rising star

Written by Tabby Halsrud
Casa Bay Photography



made a lot of updates to it before they sold it. They then purchased and later sold a new build. Through the process of buying and selling their own homes, Matthew became interested in real estate as a potential career. He had been working in the automotive industry for seven years, which was physically demanding and tiring. After his daughter was born, the long hours began taking a toll on him and affected the time he was able to spend with his family. After a home sale created extra cash for him and his wife, Matthew decided it was the perfect time to change careers.

In 2022, he jumped into real estate and now works with Ryan Van Ornum at the Wolfpack Property Group. He loves the freedom and the opportunities his new career provides. The biggest adjustment for Matthew...? "I had to learn discipline to do the work every day. Real estate is whatever you make of it. It's up to me to decide if I want to do good." Matthew's business comes from his vast social circle, the people he meets when out networking, open houses, and some online leads. While he doesn't focus on a specific niche, he





has helped a lot of first time home buyers see that it's not as hard to buy a house as they thought it would be.

Matthew and his wife met in high school and have been married for seven years. Their daughter is now 3 years old and has recently started preschool. Both his marriage and becoming a father have shaped him into the man he is today. For fun, Matthew enjoys riding dirt bikes. He and his wife are big sports fans and hold season tickets to both the Avalanche and Broncos. Matthew has a TikTok page, BBQ Realtor, where he shares the process and the finished product from barbecuing and smoking meats like brisket and ribs.

When asked what it means to be featured, Matthew said, "It's cool to be recognized for the hard work, especially being so new in the business. I've done really well in my first two years and I appreciate being recognized for that."

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Watering is another important factor in houseplant selection. Do you have time to water weekly or do you need plants that will thrive with less frequent watering? All houseplants need to be watered but different plants will require different levels of watering care - not all plants need or want to be watered weekly. Humidity affects watering schedules and the ability of our houseplants to thrive. Our dry Colorado climate makes it difficult for some varieties of houseplants to do well.

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I often hear people say that they love houseplants but haven't been successful in keeping them alive; some think they have a black thumb. I believe that these individuals just haven't found their right plant match yet - so I am here to help! I help people choose the right houseplants and offer care tips to create a lush green space inside their home or business. I provide a variety of consultative and hands-on support services for those who want to green up their environments. For realtors, stagers, and short-term rental owners who want to integrate indoor houseplants into their listings and rentals, I provide plant rentals and care plans and handle the regular care to keep the plants thriving.

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▶▶ special feature Written by Tabby Halsrud

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Carrie LUKINS & Preston SMITH

▶▶ real producers

Written by Tabby Halsrud and Carrie Lukins
Casa Bay Photography



Carrie Lukins and Preston Smith didn't just stumble into real estate—they crafted their paths with intention and purpose. For Carrie, it all began in 2007 when her military husband was transferred to Colorado Springs. With a background steeped in architecture, thanks to her custom builder father and her global travels, Carrie found her niche in real estate. But she didn't just want any job—she wanted the right one. “When I first started out, I did a lot of interviews and asked a lot of questions. Rather than focusing on who wanted me on their team, I decided who I wanted to align with,” she recalls. That decision led her to Sellstate Alliance Realty, a company she eventually purchased in 2018. It was there that she partnered with Preston Smith, and together, they built a business rooted in shared values and a vision for excellence.



Preston Smith, a Colorado resident since 1978, has been a relentless worker from a young age. His career, marked by impressive sales achievements at companies like Sunshine Audio, Car Toys, and AT&T, eventually led him to real estate. It was Tom, the owner of Sellstate Alliance Realty at the time, who encouraged Preston to consider a career in real estate. Preston took the leap, balancing dual jobs for 11 months before fully

committing to real estate. His dedication paid off when he won the Rookie of the Year Award in 2016. It was at a National Sellstate Summit in Florida that Preston and Carrie first discussed the idea of partnering—a conversation that would lead to a powerhouse collaboration.

Today, Carrie and Preston helm a multi-faceted, family-owned brokerage with offices in Colorado Springs and Pueblo, as well as a

third franchise agreement. Their venture includes The Real Estate Academy of Colorado, an affordable pre-licensing school that empowers aspiring agents to pursue real estate while maintaining their current jobs. Graduates can then choose to join Sellstate Alliance or any other brokerage.

New agents at Sellstate Alliance are welcomed with an 8-week mentorship program designed to equip them with the tools for success. The program covers everything from contract writing to understanding the intricacies of the real estate industry. Preston emphasizes, “Our goal is to give the best service that a brokerage is supposed to give and to help the agents be the best they can be.” The mentorship integrates Brian Icenhower’s training system with top-tier technology, providing agents with a solid foundation.

Carrie and Preston’s complementary skills are the backbone of their partnership. Preston handles the business and compliance aspects, while Carrie focuses on relationship-building and strategic planning. Their unique strengths create a balanced leadership that benefits both new and seasoned agents. “We are completely different!” Preston admits. “I’m a black-and-white numbers and contracts guy, while Carrie is the heart—she’s the one who remembers the name of the puppy when I don’t even remember they have a dog.” This dynamic duo offers a holistic approach to mentoring, teaching agents everything from LLC setup to effective time management.

Beyond real estate, Carrie and Preston are deeply committed to giving back to their community. Shortly after becoming



partners, they founded The COS Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting local initiatives. Their efforts extend to programs like the K9 challenge coins, where proceeds benefit local police departments. Additionally, they are passionate supporters of the national program Homes for Heroes, which they've expanded into 719 Heroes. This initiative rewards military personnel, law enforcement officers, firefighters,

healthcare professionals, and educators by giving them a percentage of the commission after closing.

As of early August, Carrie and Preston have assisted 238 heroes, giving back almost \$700,000 in 2024 alone, with over \$4.1 million returned to the community over six years. Preston's personal experiences fuel his dedication to helping those in need, particularly the

unhoused population. "We were from very humble beginnings, and that is why I work so hard helping the unhoused population," Preston shares.

Carrie and Preston seek agents who are not only skilled but also have a passion for making a difference. Their agents are actively involved in community events, such as the Badges and Bogeys Tournament for the Police Foundation of Colorado Springs, where agents and police officers team up for a day of golf and camaraderie.

In their personal lives, both Carrie and Preston are proud grandparents and enjoy spending time with their families. Preston, an avid golfer, makes time to hit the greens most days and is also passionate about understanding medicine and health. Carrie, who has traveled extensively and has a large, close-knit family, enjoys raising her grandson and staying connected with her many nieces and nephews.

Although they have been featured in *Colorado Springs Real Producers* before, Carrie and Preston are honored to grace the cover. "To be recognized among the great agents in our community—it's an honor and is very humbling," Preston reflects. Carrie adds, "We were born for real estate—it is the vehicle that allows us to follow our passion and give back."

Together, Carrie Lukins and Preston Smith exemplify what it means to lead with purpose, passion, and a commitment to excellence in real estate and beyond.



We were born for real estate—it is the vehicle that allows us to follow our passion and give back.





I'm a black-and-white numbers and contracts guy, while Carrie is the heart—she's the one who remembers the name of the puppy when I don't even remember they have a dog.



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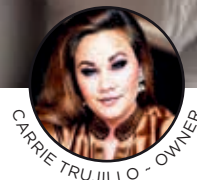
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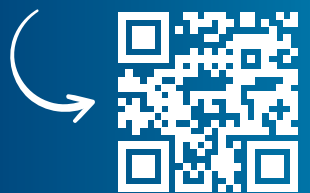


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MERCIE CURBOW

A vacation to Colorado changed the trajectory of Mercie's adult life, after a visit she shifted her plans from settling in Lubbock Texas and decided to make Colorado Springs home. Mercie initially joined BiggsKofford, a CPA firm, which ultimately led to her real estate career. Jerry Biggs and Kurt Kofford were instrumental mentors for Mercie and she modeled her real estate business using lessons learned from them.

Mercie loves connecting with her clients and bringing people together through their homes. She has also developed a niche testifying for divorce cases regarding valuations. Outside of work, Mercie loves taking photos of people and landscapes and scrapbooking photos of her niece and nephew. She also enjoys hiking, golfing, live music and reading.

FUN FACT: Mercie was raised on a farm/ranch and grew up riding horses, working cattle & driving a tractor!



AARON SALLADAY

Former dirt bike racer and VW Enthusiast, Aaron Salladay became a lender before earning his real estate license about a year ago. Passionate about education, he is also a licensed substitute teacher. Aaron took the initiative to start an accountability group in his office, and enjoys connecting with his sphere of influence, which is how he finds most of his real estate business.

Outside of work, Aaron enjoys rebuilding cars and admits he likes going fast. He is a runner, mountain biker, and has a cabin in Westcliffe that offers the occasional escape.

FUN FACT: Aaron is an introvert.

Bonus fun fact, General Palmer brought Aaron's mom's side of the family here from England in the 1800s and they can be spotted in a photo that hangs at the Garden of the Gods.



ALZIRA ESCOBAR-PRUITT

Did you know? Alzira Escobar-Pruitt owned a restaurant for three years in Georgia; she sold Z's Cafe during the 2008 recession. Originally from Spain, Alzira attended college in Georgia and has also lived in Texas; it was in Texas when she had her first introduction to real estate. She has a master's degree in criminology and has worked as a paralegal. After the passing of her parents, Alzira realized that law school wasn't her own dream and she began exploring what *she* really wanted for herself, discovering a latent passion for real estate.

Alzira got her license in 2020 and being impressed by the level of education Scott Sufak provided, she joined his team. She is proud of the fact that she completed the Pikes Peak Association of REALTORS® Leadership Academy.

Outside of work, Alzira enjoys hiking and road bikes. She is one skydive away from being able to jump solo and has her pilot's license, too.

FUN FACT: English is Alzira's third language after Spanish and Portuguese.

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JOE CUCHIARA

Joe Cuchiara's family moved frequently, from Washington state to the Midwest, but their journey finally led them to Colorado Springs right after he graduated from high school. Joe was a dishwasher and then a cook at Conway's Red Top, but his path took a turn when the owner of the company his father worked for decided to open a Schwinn bicycle shop. At just 19, Joe was tasked with researching how to operate and manage the business, which he did, and soon after found himself running the store. As fate would have it, a few years later, Joe became the owner.

In 1992, Schwinn Bicycle Company filed for bankruptcy, and at age 35, Joe faced the challenge of beginning a new career and enrolled in real estate school. He earned his license in 1993 and transitioned from counseling those seeking health, fun, and fitness to counseling those considering buying or selling a slightly more significant asset! Known for his consultative approach to selling, he believes that information and education are paramount to empowering clients in their decision-making process.

He cherishes the freedom and flexibility his career offers. Outside of work, Joe and his wife, Devon, run an Airbnb, using it as a platform to showcase and represent the vibrant community he loves with warm hospitality to those traveling from outside Colorado Springs.

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What do you love about your work?

My favorite part of being a home inspector is when homebuyers feel empowered by the information I've given them.

Fun facts:

You can find me climbing in the flatirons, trail running and hanging out with my Heeler, River. When I'm not outside I love to cook and bake. I love campfire cooking!



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