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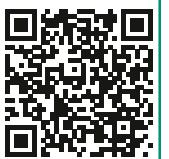
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Contents

IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 Meet the *Salt Lake City Real Producers Team*
- 10 Preferred Partners
- 14 Cover Agent: Marsha Merrill
- 22 Meet Our Partner: Title Guarantee
- 28 Agent Life: Alexandria Pedroni
- 34 Agent Life: Laurie Read

14

COVER STORY

Marsha
Merrill

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Marsha Merrill

ENJOYING THE JOURNEY

WRITTEN BY KENDRA WOODWARD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIFFANY BURKE PHOTOGRAPHY
PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE MONARCH IN OGDEN

When you think of an agent who exudes positivity, warmth, and a strong commitment to others, Marsha Merrill of KW Success – Top Notch Realty is one of the first people who comes to mind for many in the area. With her ever-present smile and contagious energy, Marsha's dedication to her clients, family, and her craft exemplifies her boundless passion for life. Her tagline, "Top Notch Service & Results Every Time!" is more than just a slogan—it's a promise she lives by every day. As is one of her favorite quotes; "Life is not the amount of breaths you take — it is the moments that take your breath away."

Born in the small, flat town of Hugoton, Kansas, where, as she humorously puts it, "You can watch your dog run away for days," Marsha grew up surrounded by unlimited examples of what a hard work ethic looked like. Growing up surrounded by a family that ran a custom harvesting business, Marsha was driving a combine at the age of 14, working for her family's business. Her early exposure to long hours, teamwork, and perseverance instilled her pursuit of top-notch customer service and determination to make every day count.

Watching her father prospect for work regularly via door-to-door visits and cold calling taught Marsha the importance of connecting with people on a personal level, a skill she's honed and carried into her real estate career. After high school, Marsha moved to Phoenix, Arizona, to pursue a degree in computer-aided drafting where the rural Kansas girl thrived in the hustle and bustle of Metro Phoenix. There she climbed the corporate ladder in marketing and advertising, allowing her passion for creativity and strategy to flourish.

But even amidst her corporate success, Marsha's love for real estate was always bubbling just beneath the surface, and by 1997, the young, single

woman purchased her first home and sparked a passion that would later become her career. Life took an unexpected turn in 2006 when Marsha and her then-husband made the decision to move to Utah. As a new mom and stay-at-home parent, she threw herself into motherhood with the same determination she brought to every other aspect of her life. She recalls how she hopped on a plane with her new 14-day-old baby and flew to the new town to house hunt with their real estate agent, and after looking at 21 homes in less than 48 hours (joking that she was probably an agent's worst nightmare), she ended up making an offer on a new construction home before heading back to Phoenix to sell their current home.

When her circumstances shifted and she needed to re-enter the workforce, Marsha was elated at the opportunity to jump into real estate, finally—a field where her natural skills and love for helping others could shine. "I always had a passion for real estate," she beams. "It seemed that I could earn what I wanted in real estate if I poured my heart into it, and I still had a somewhat flexible schedule to be the mom that I wanted to be." After passing her real estate test with flying colors, Marsha

sold 13 homes within her first year and continues to surpass her goals with each new year.

"I love that every day is different. I always strive to take the very best care of my clients no matter what their situation is, and I pride myself on adaptability and having the skills necessary to meet diverse client needs. It's very important to understand that every real estate transaction is unique and clients have different needs." From staging homes for free to thinking outside the box to achieve her clients' goals, Marsha approaches every situation with creativity and compassion. One glowing review from Christopher D. sums it up perfectly: "Beyond her knack for presenting a home and exceptional negotiation skills, Marsha is a delightful and caring human who really listens and cares deeply."

Marsha's dedication to her clients and her craft has been a cornerstone of her success, but she also credits her journey to her family and personal resilience. As a single mom early in her real estate career, she worked tirelessly to build a stable and fulfilling life for herself and her daughter. Her efforts paid off and evidently also rubbed off on her daughter, who adds, "My



mother is probably one of the greatest influences in my life. She has raised me to become a courageous and kind leader and woman. She taught me how to nurture and comfort, but also to plan and act. As a real estate agent, she plays the role of entrepreneur, diplomat, therapist, strategizer, and consultant for her clients, and I have watched her carry out all of these responsibilities with grace."

Even with her many accomplishments in real estate, Marsha remains passionate about growth and learning in all aspects of life. She stays up-to-date with industry trends, constantly seeking ways to better serve her clientele, while also exploring

new hobbies now that she and her husband, Todd, have become empty nesters. Todd has been her rock and biggest fan, understanding the demands of her career and cheering her on every step of the way. Together, they've built a life filled with love, adventure, and mutual support.

Whether she's helping a family find their dream home or embarking on her next great adventure, Marsha does it all with kindness, grace, and an unwavering belief in the power of connection. Her story reminds us all to chase our dreams, embrace challenges, strive to treat others the way we would want to be treated, and to enjoy the journey every step along the way.

“

IT SEEMED THAT I COULD EARN WHAT I WANTED IN
REAL ESTATE IF I POURED MY HEART INTO IT, AND
I STILL HAD A SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

TO BE THE MOM THAT I WANTED TO BE.”





Marsha and Todd with their daughter, Madilyne, who attends the University of Utah. "That has made us instant Utes fans!" says Marsha. "She graduated as valedictorian from St. Joseph Catholic High School in Ogden in 2024."

“

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From l to r: Emilee Snow, Cassie Jackson, Rick Smith, Debbie Hemingway, Laurie Lund, Amber Hughes and Mitch Montgomery



“

We understand the Utah market inside and out, which means we can provide tailored solutions to meet unique needs.”

Title Guarantee's story is built upon a shared vision dedicated to a steadfast commitment and focus on relationships. Founded in 2011 by Rick Smith and Andy Keys, the company emerged from the duo's desire to break away from the rigidity of "Corporate America" and create something different for its clients. After years of working within large corporate systems, Rick and Andy recognized the need for a title company that combined the financial security of a big business with the personalized service of a smaller, family-run operation. Their solution was Title Guarantee, a company that occupies what Rick likes to call "The Sweet Spot" between those two ideals.

“Picture a Venn diagram where one bubble is a huge corporation and another bubble is a local mom-and-pop shop...we exist in the overlap,” Rick explains. He continues, adding how Title Guarantee is big enough to offer the financial stability and resources of a large organization while also operating with the heart and values of a small business. “We are not a big corporation where employees are tracked by their employee numbers and layoffs happen when orders dip, or where title work is done overseas,” Rick prides. “We consider our coworkers and clients to be great friends, kind of like the family we get to choose. We cherish and value loyalty and believe there is strength in that.”

This philosophy (which is so wholeheartedly supported by every employee and staff member) is what has allowed Title Guarantee to flourish within the title industry and grow to include four offices across the Wasatch Front while assembling some of the best escrow teams in the business. The dedication of its founders and the team they've assembled is reflected in every interaction, making clients and employees alike feel like family.

One of the key members on this team is Sales Manager Cassie Jackson, who has been with the company for over a decade. Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Cassie's career within the mortgage and real estate industry

is all she's ever dreamed of—with 29 years of experience, her journey through various roles has given her an unparalleled understanding of the title process. When her previous employer sold out to a larger corporate firm, Cassie and her entire team began searching for a title company that valued personal relationships and local expertise. Enter Title Guarantee, where she and her team have remained steadfast over the last 12 years.

Cassie's approach to her work, clientele, and staff is rooted in life experiences that taught her the value of working as a unit to accomplish a shared goal. Losing her father as a young teen, it was her mother who served as a shining example of this characteristic, having raised her and her siblings with both care and compassion. “You never know if tomorrow is promised, so live every day with no regrets,” she notes. “It's about the small acts—listening with intention, offering a kind word, or simply being there when someone feels alone. Compassion isn't about solving every problem; it's about showing our clients that we are here to help and support them.”

Another integral part of the team is Emilee Snow, an escrow officer who began her title career in 2005 as an assistant. Driven by her love of meeting new people and building relationships, Emilee worked her way up to become a licensed escrow officer after joining Title Guarantee in 2013. Citing the move as

a pivotal moment in her career, Emilee explains, “For me, nothing compares to the team here at TG. Because of our family here and the relationships and trust we have with one another, we are able to provide a level of service to our clients that we are all proud of.”

“We understand the Utah market inside and out, which means we can provide tailored solutions to meet unique needs,” Cassie adds. Owners Rick and Andy continue to cultivate a culture that prioritizes trust, resilience, and adaptability, where communication, transparency, and attention to detail remain at the heart of their process. As Emilee puts it, “Treating people with respect, following through on commitments, and staying true to your word go a long way in building trust and meaningful connections in our industry.”

Whether navigating challenges in the market or celebrating milestones with clients, Title Guarantee remains steadfast in its mission to provide exceptional service while fostering genuine relationships. From its founders to its team members and clients, the company thrives on connection, loyalty, and a shared vision for success. Whether helping clients close a deal or simply lending a listening ear, the team at Title Guarantee continues to prove that it's a place where every detail matters, every client is valued, and every team member is part of something bigger.

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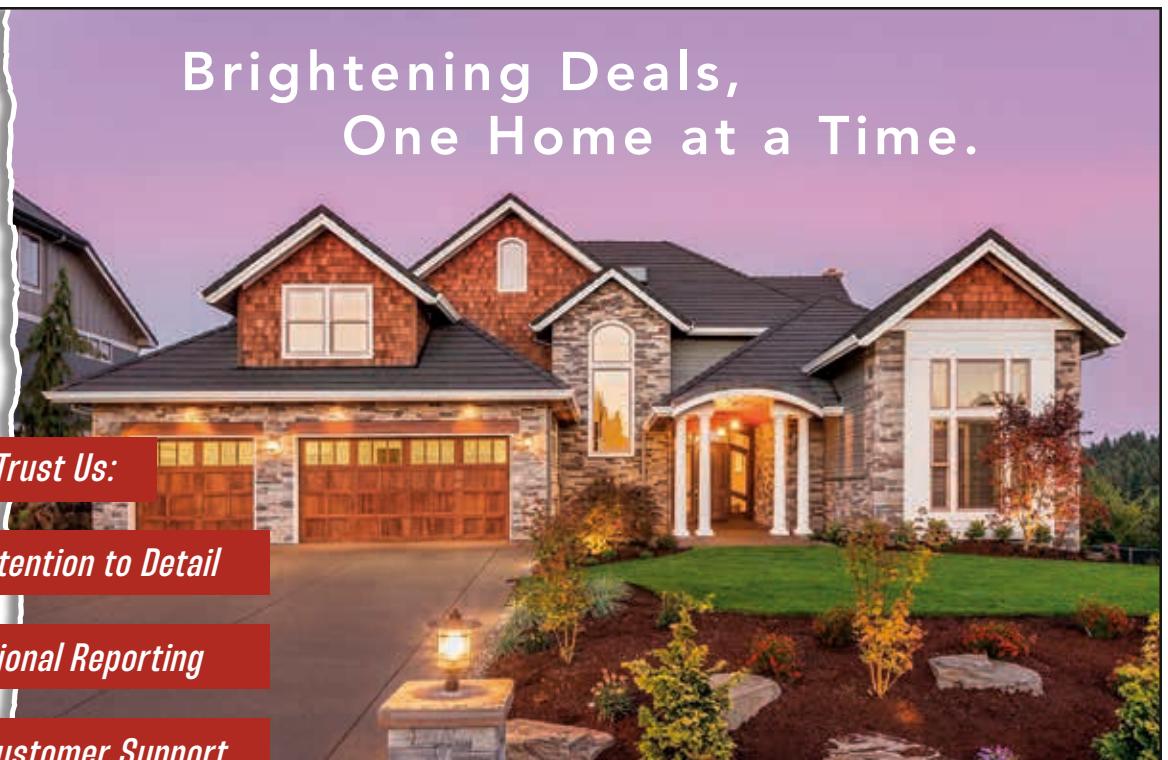


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Alexandria Pedroni

ALWAYS REACHING FOR SOMETHING MORE

WRITTEN BY KENDRA WOODWARD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEXI RAE PHOTOGRAPHY

Alexandria Pedroni is a true force of nature, blending fiery determination with a kind and relatable demeanor that has propelled her to remarkable success in the real estate world. As a stay-at-home mom to three young children, Alexandria faced unimaginable challenges when her life was turned upside down by divorce. Suddenly, she found herself unable to afford even basic necessities, like a gallon of milk for her kids, and moved into her grandmother's basement with virtually nothing. Driven by her deep love for her children and an unshakable belief that she was meant for something greater, Alexandria set out to write herself a new story.

Born in Orange County, California, and raised in West Jordan, Utah, Alexandria embraced Utah as her true home from an early age. Spending summers in Lake Havasu, Arizona, with her grandparents gave her cherished childhood memories, but it was Utah's majestic mountains and outdoor beauty that captured her heart. To this day, she still marvels at the state's stunning landscapes and treasures the quality of life it offers her family. Utah is not just where she built her career; it's where she has built her life. "I love Utah and have been here so long, I consider myself a native," she says passionately, adding that she might retire to Hawaii, but until then, the Utah way of life has her heart.

Before real estate, Alexandria explored numerous career paths, from working as a pediatric dental

assistant to becoming a buyer for the Utah clothing brand Bohme, where she began dreaming of owning her own successful business. Yet, even back then, Alexandria always had this inkling that there was something bigger waiting for her...and she was right.

Real estate had always been a passion simmering beneath the surface, and with her children as her motivation, Alexandria took a leap of faith in 2019 to become a licensed real estate agent, diving into the industry with everything she had. Not even a year into production, she realized what was so special about the industry. It was early in the pandemic, and Alexandria's persistence and negotiation skills helped her clients beat out seven offers to secure their new home. When the husband cried tears of joy as she handed over the keys, Alexandria knew she had found her calling. "In that moment, I realized this isn't just a transaction, this is LIFE changing - this is me helping people achieve a little bit of the American Dream - it's meaningful, and this is what I love to do."

Alexandria's success didn't come without sacrifices; however, it explains how successful real estate agents are busy at all hours of the day. With five kids ranging in age from 5 to 13, she has had to juggle a demanding career and family life. "Sometimes I miss out on games, school things, dinner with the family, and lazy Sunday mornings," she admits, but her passion for her work keeps her going. "I love what I get to do

each day, and I get excited to wake up and start my work each day."

To reach this level of success in real estate, any agent will tell you that it requires passion and care for your clientele—one that reaches far beyond the transaction and well into becoming a family. This mentality has become the cornerstone of Alexandria's business and is why so many clients and agents see her as a trusted friend and advocate. With her warm personality and innate ability to connect with people, she makes the buying and selling process both manageable and enjoyable.

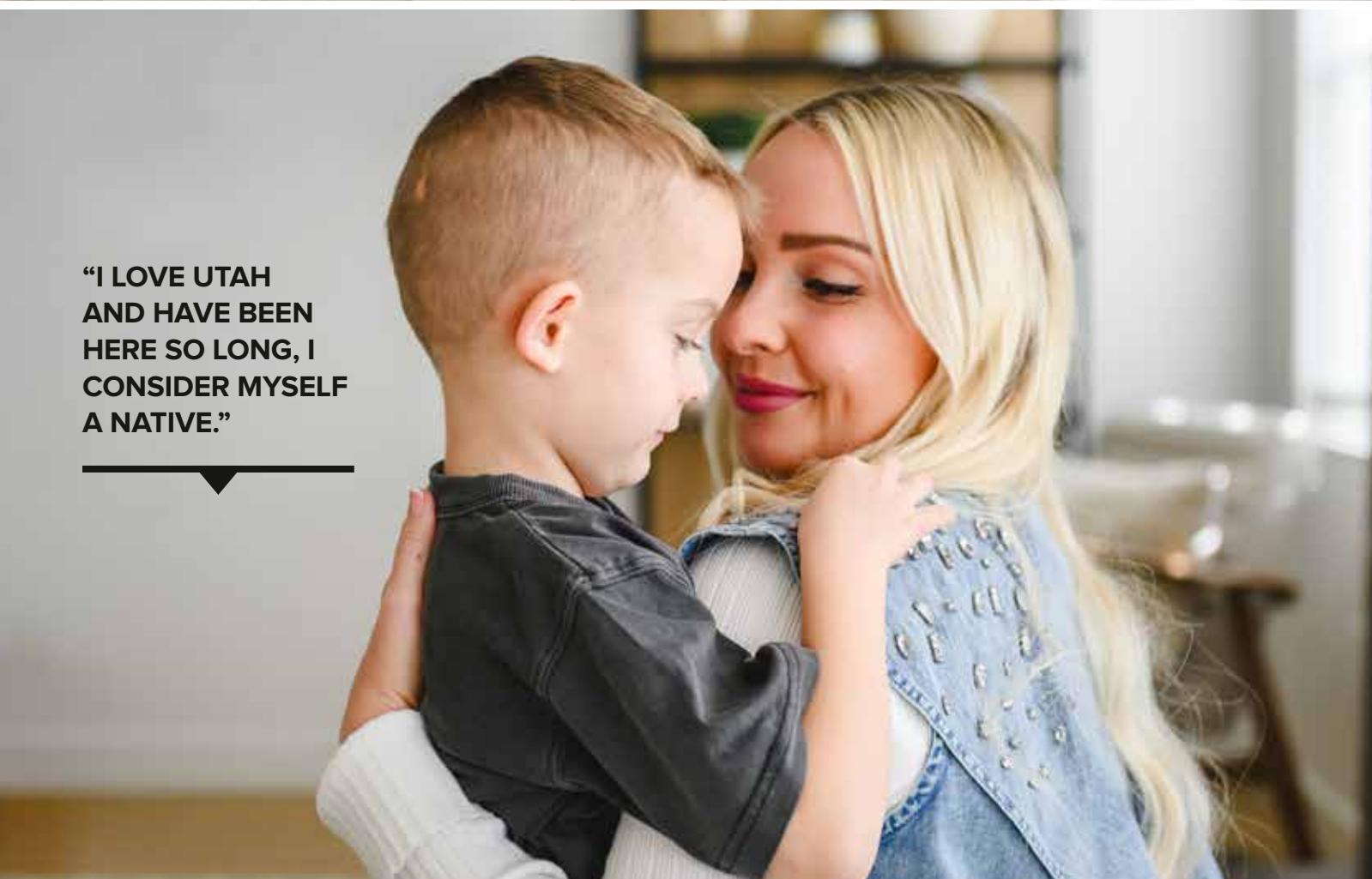
Her social media presence has also become a powerful tool for showcasing her personality and expertise. She has been rated a top real estate agent in Salt Lake City and Utah multiple times over, thanks to her ability to leverage the various platforms. "I could go on and on about the powerful impact social media has had for my business—the connections I have made through social media is something I pride myself on, but being able to showcase someone's home for sale to thousands of people with one post is amazing!"

With such a unique zest and outlook on the world, Alexandria credits much of her drive and resilience to her upbringing. Growing up with a single mom and her brother, she learned the value of hard work and the importance of making people feel loved. Those lessons continue to influence her today as she raises her own family



alongside her husband, Garrett. The two met in high school and Alexandria describes their story as “love at first sight.” Together, they’re raising five kids in their home in Eagle Mountain while dreaming of future travels and adventures. When they’re not working, Alexandria and Garrett love to spend time at the beach, traveling to new destinations, and soaking in life’s simple pleasures.

As she looks ahead, Alexandria remains grounded in the values that have guided her journey and success thus far. From humble beginnings to future successes, her story is one of grit, determination, and a deep love for her family and clients. As she prepares to open her dream brokerage, Astra Real Estate, there’s no doubt that she’ll continue to make waves in the industry and inspire others to chase their dreams...no matter how impossible they may seem. Alexandria’s journey proves that with passion, perseverance, and a little bit of fire, anything is possible.



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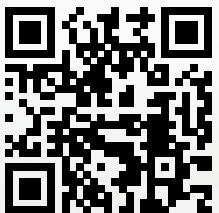


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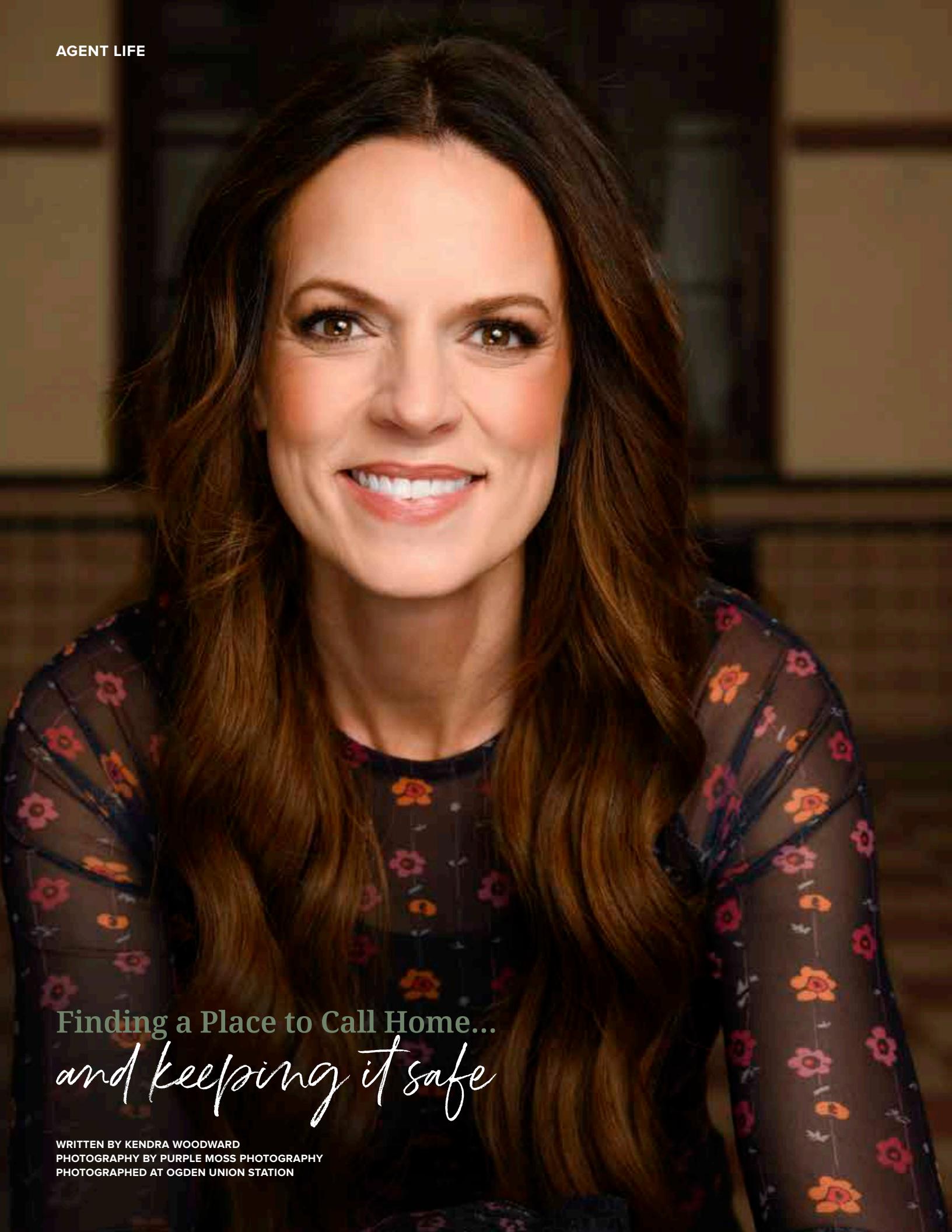
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**Finding a Place to Call Home...
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WRITTEN BY KENDRA WOODWARD
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Laurie Read

Laurie Read is a rare gem in the real estate market—a professional whose kindness and compassion radiate in every aspect of her work. With a deep commitment to her clients and community, Laurie stands out not just as an agent but as an example of genuine care in an industry often perceived as cutthroat. The heart of her success, however, lies in her ability to connect with people on a deeply personal level, making every transaction more than just a business deal—it's a relationship built on trust, empathy, and shared dreams.

Laurie has always carried within her an innate desire to help others and took that with her as she dove into a career in criminal justice and forensic accounting. While this initial journey was far removed from the realm of real estate, her next venture was real estate adjacent as she started working for an accounting firm. Despite offering to pay for her degree in forensic accounting, Laurie was miserable and felt like she never saw her family come tax season.

But as fate would have it, her husband, Chris, an IT professional working with title companies, encouraged her to take real estate into consideration. Initially resisting the idea, Chris suggested she at least take the classes and go from there. Within two days, Laurie was hooked but realized that if it was something she was going to pursue...it had to be all or nothing. Discussing the topic with her husband, she explained, "If I'm really going to invest in this and ferry one of the biggest financial purchases that people ever make, I have to go into this all in." So, she quit her job and dove in headfirst with a determination that soon became the cornerstone of her success. "I had a sink or swim mentality," she admits.

Closing 19 deals in her inaugural year, Laurie silenced skeptics and set a precedent for her burgeoning career. But her motivation wasn't driven by competition; it was fueled by her passion for helping others achieve their dreams. Her tagline, "Don't Just Dream It, Own It," perfectly encapsulates that ethos as Laurie's clients know they're not just buying a house when they work with her; they're fulfilling lifelong aspirations with a guide who genuinely cares about every step of their journey.

Nearly a decade after such an amazing start to her career, Laurie still gets excited witnessing the emotional transformation her clients go through, particularly with first-time homebuyers. She treasures the moment a client walks into a house that feels like home and the excitement that lights up their faces. "It's my most favorite thing," she shares, her joy palpable. These are the moments of connection that continue to drive Laurie's passion, which also allow her to stay present for her family and friends.

Throughout Laurie's life, her resilience and determination have been the foundation of her success, traits that are rooted in personal experiences. As the youngest of four siblings and surrounded by a sea of boys, she watched her mother navigate the challenges of raising a family post-divorce while working minimum-wage jobs to make ends meet. That experience instilled in Laurie a profound sense of independence and a drive to succeed, but also showed her the power of handling others with grace—characteristics she still carries today.

And despite stereotypical brother-sister relationships, Laurie's brothers were always her biggest cheerleaders and

played an influential role in shaping her mindset. The unfortunate loss of one of her brothers became yet another pivotal moment for Laurie, prompting her to reevaluate her path while reaffirming her passion for real estate. "You will have people in your life that lift you up, but at the end of the day, it comes down to you and your mindset," she reflects—a lesson she now passes on to her children and mentees. "You shouldn't have to depend on somebody else for your happiness, YOU get to decide it. Because at the end of the day, you're the one living inside your mind."

Laurie's team, Dream Utah Homes, has become an extension of her values and hard work, cultivating a supportive environment where collaboration trumps competition. She is passionate about mentoring new agents and guiding them through the challenges of the industry with the same grace and understanding that define her approach to life. In fact, she co-founded "Leaders Wanted Mastermind," an initiative focusing on mindset training for new agents. "In an industry that can be too brutal, we constantly have to be paying attention to our mindset," adds Laurie.

Outside of work, Laurie embraces her role as a wife and mother to her three children. Laurie and her family enjoy camping, fishing, and riding four-wheelers on their mountain property... and she jokes that she is still surrounded by a sea of boys. Her adult stepchildren, Kade and Avery, are in their 20s and live outside the home. After undergoing five years of IVF treatments and having success when they welcomed baby boy Nash, 7, Laurie began stretching her philanthropic reach through anonymous donations to fertility clinics. As insurance doesn't cover any costs



related with testing and IVF therapy, Laurie understands the financial struggle a family can endure when choosing to walk this path.

As a result of the loss of her brother, Laurie also co-founded the Jason W. Read Protect and Serve Foundation in his memory and honor as a Centerville City police officer. The foundation was created to provide essential safety equipment and training for local law enforcement, ensuring officers return

home safely to their families. Since its inception, they have raised over \$150,000 to address critical needs, such as providing and replacing expired bulletproof vests. "There are tons of foundations to support officers' families who are killed in the line of duty, but not as many that help provide officers with the tools they need to stay safe where their city and government are lacking."

Laurie's story is one of resilience, compassion, and a deep commitment

to others. In a field where success is often measured numerically, Laurie measures hers in relationships, lives changed, and dreams realized. She jokes that she's "the agent that doesn't go away," but it's a dedication to her genuine care for the people she serves. Whether planning playdates, catching up over dinner, or simply checking in, Laurie ensures her clients know they are valued far beyond the sale.



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NAR 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

A New Era Begins

SUBMITTED BY REALTOR® MAGAZINE • BY ELIANA BLOCK



The Sitzer-Burnett settlement was a focal point as national, state and local associations worked together to keep members and consumers informed—and association leaders laid the groundwork for the path ahead.

The National Association of REALTORS® released its 2024 Year in Review on Tuesday. The 33-page report is an assessment of the organization's past year, highlighting member benefits across eight areas—and promising a new mission-driven era.

Last year brought significant milestones for the association, including settlement of the Sitzer-Burnett lawsuit, implementation of residential practice changes for members, and approval of Culture Transformation Commission recommendations to bring greater accountability and transparency. All this came as members worked to navigate a challenging market, with limited inventory, higher interest rates and shifting living and work patterns.

"The past year tested our resilience as an industry, as an association and as individuals," NAR President Kevin Sears said in a letter that opened the report. "As we embark on 2025, I want to express my gratitude to you—our members, the broker community, the local and state associations, and our MLS and industry partners—for the incredible work you've done to push through these challenges and help set the stage for our industry's future."

Building Trust, Collaboration

NAR CEO Nykia Wright said the association must evolve to meet the needs of members "today and tomorrow" while building on the momentum generated last year. "In 2024, we cut costs and passed our first balanced budget in at least 10 years," Wright said. "We also conducted in-depth research to begin laying the groundwork for a new member experience."

She added: "The work to redefine our broker relationships; better leverage our relationships with state and local associations to optimize member value; build on our strategic partnerships with aligned Institutes, Societies and Councils; demonstrate our appreciation for the many volunteer leaders who are instrumental to driving our mission forward; and reposition our staff to meet the ever-growing needs of these stakeholder populations will shape our 2025 activities."

Wright has engaged two new partners in the effort: In early January, NAR announced that Sherry Chris, former CEO of Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate and ERA Real Estate, would join the association as a special advisor to help strengthen relationships, build trust and enhance collaboration with brokerage leaders. On Jan. 15, Jarrod Grasso was named senior vice president of industry relations for NAR, a role dedicated to enhancing the association's relationship with state and local association leaders. Grasso joins NAR after serving the New Jersey REALTORS® for more than two decades, most recently as their CEO.

Supporting Member Success

In 2024, to assist members in preparing for practice changes outlined in the settlement, NAR launched facts.realtor

to provide updates and guidance. The resource includes more than 120 FAQs, a legal video series that garnered more than 800,000 views, and more than a dozen consumer guides, in English and Spanish, for members to use while working with clients. The association also provided its Accredited Buyer's Representation (ABR®) designation course at no cost to members; nearly 162,000 REALTORS® took advantage of that benefit.

More than 1,000 NAR members joined a grassroots effort—as surrogates—in 2024 to help educate consumers about the practice changes. Those interested in joining the program can email surrogates@nar.realtor.

In the advocacy arena, NAR scored significant wins: defending private property rights, securing the OK for VA buyers to compensate their brokers directly as the Department of Veterans Affairs studies the issue further, and supporting industry-friendly policies and candidates at all levels of government. The REALTORS® Political Action Committee—which backed 50% Democratic and 50% Republican federal candidates—achieved a 97% success rate in the 2024 election cycle.

Underpinning NAR's advocacy success is a highly regarded research team that provides thought leadership and produces key housing market data and research reports. In 2024, NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun, Deputy Chief Economist Jessica Lautz and their team spoke at more than 400 in-person and virtual visits across our 1,100-plus local and state associations, brokerages and third-party organizations. NAR's research content generated 1.9 million website visits, 240,000 report downloads and 100,000 social shares in 2024, signifying the appetite members and consumers have for reliable housing data and research reports.

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