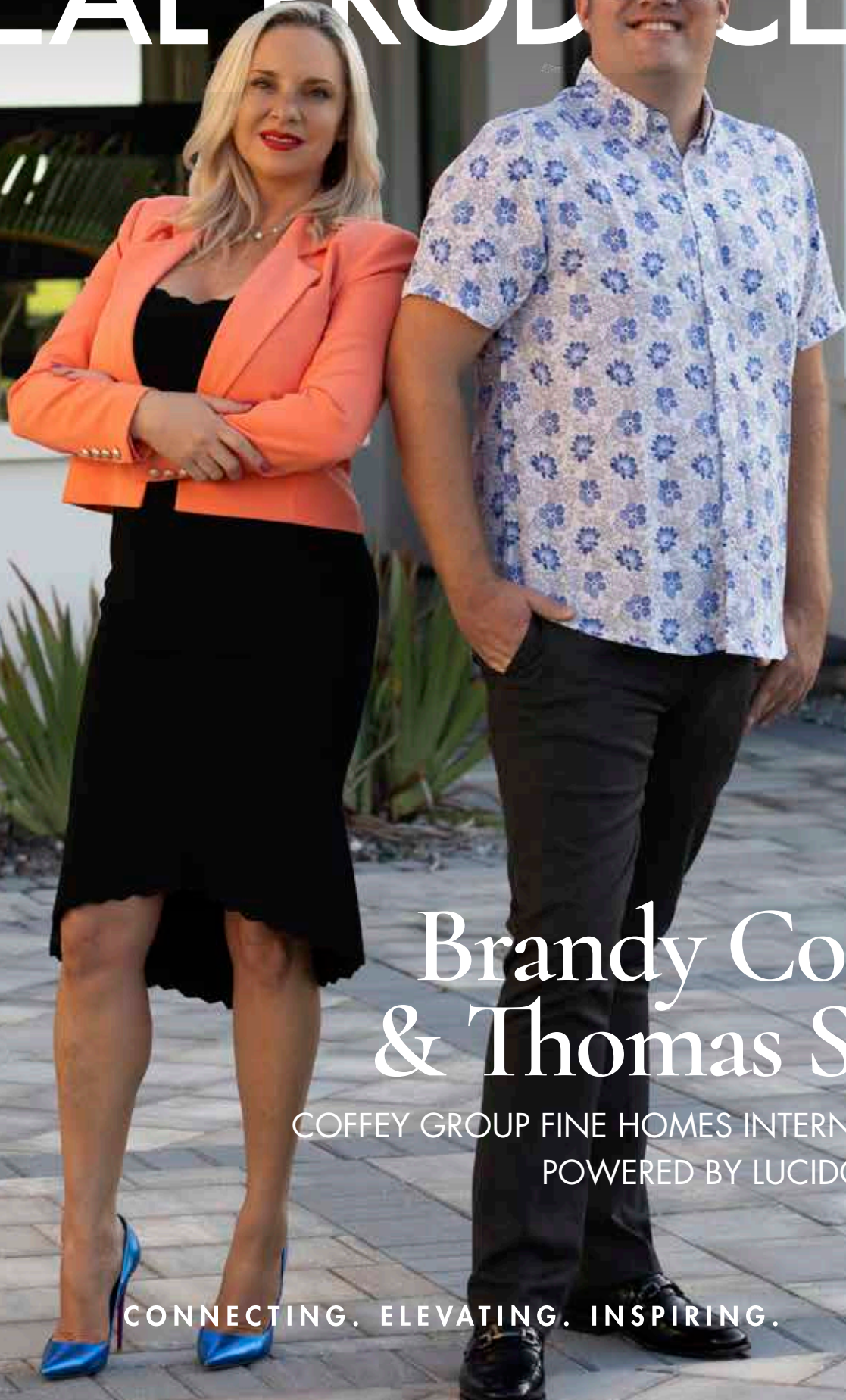


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Jason Schneider joined The Federal Savings Bank in 2024 as a market leader and seasoned professional with over 5 years of experience in the mortgage industry. He actively finds the best lending solutions for all his clients.

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Over the years, Jason has spent most of his time in NY and now splits his time in Florida as well. With his wife of over 25 years and children from teenagers to adults, he remains very active in his community. Staying in shape mentally and physically is one of his favorite ways to spend his free time.

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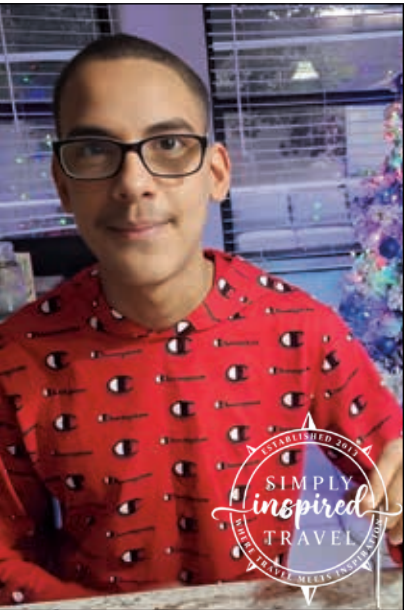
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Meet The Team

Cover photo by
Mindy & Cory Poff,
Poff Media Group



Joni Giordano-Bowling
Owner/Publisher
757-348-7809
joni@n2co.com



Dave Bowling
Owner/Publisher
757-450-2899
dave.bowling@n2co.com



Jacki Donaldson
Managing Editor
352-332-5171
jacki.donaldson@n2co.com



Misty Bailey
Connections Coordinator
757-897-1283
misty@imperialetiquette.com



Maddie Podish
Social Media Coordinator
757-634-8998
mspark7382@gmail.com



Dan Clark
Writer
757-206-4144
dan@danclark.realtor



Allie Serrano
Photographer
813-501-7250
allie@allieserranoportraits.com



Mindy & Cory Poff
Photographers
779-861-3739
mindy@poffmedia.com



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Celia Merritt, Loan Officer
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SCAN ME

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Hello, Real Producers!

April rolls in with a different kind of energy. The days stretch longer, and the opportunities multiply as the market heats up—an exciting time for those who lead the way in real estate. As top producers, you set the pace by embracing change and seizing every opportunity that comes your way.

At the core of our success lies a simple yet powerful belief: *The heartbeat of Real Producers is to elevate the culture of our real estate community by inspiring us to know one another better. When we know one another better, we treat each other better, When we treat each other better, we create a culture of trust, and when we trust one another, doing business together becomes an honor and a privilege.*

In this issue, we bring you compelling stories of top producers and a featured business partner who embody this spirit of connection and excellence. Their journeys remind us that our industry isn't just about transactions—it's about building lasting relationships that foster trust and mutual respect.

As always, please support our preferred partners, the folks who make this publication possible. Each partner has an ad in each issue and appears on our Preferred Partners listing at the front of the magazine.

Sincerely,
Joni Giordano-Bowling & Dave Bowling
Owners & Publishers, Sarasota & Manatee Real Producers
757-348-7809
joni@realproducersmag.com | dave.bowling@n2co.com

Brandy Coffey & THOMAS SONS

Coffey Group Fine Homes International,

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Success in real estate often hinges on more than individual effort—it requires collaboration, trust, and a shared vision. For Brandy Coffey, a seasoned broker with 20 years of experience, and Thomas Sons, her right-hand man with a decade of industry expertise, the driving force behind their growing business is their professional relationship. Together, they've forged a partnership that blends their unique strengths, pushing each other to new heights while ensuring their clients' success.

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH
PHOTOS BY MINDY & CORY POFF,
POFF MEDIA GROUP

Four years ago, Thomas found himself at a career crossroads. After working with an expansion team that eventually disbanded, he was searching for his next move when he met Brandy Coffey, a well-established broker with a thriving real estate business in Sarasota, where she had grown up. For Thomas, who had relocated from Indiana 10 years

earlier, joining Brandy's team felt like a natural fit. "After I interviewed with Brandy, I just knew this was my next 'home,'" Thomas recalls. "What she had to offer aligned perfectly with my needs, and her values mirrored mine. I was confident that working under her would help me grow and take my business to the next level."

Brandy immediately recognized Thomas's potential. "He was a machine and connected so easily with anyone," she says with a smile. "But we needed to work on his paperwork." With Brandy's guidance and resources, Thomas could focus on his strengths—building relationships and helping clients achieve their real estate goals.





Together, they became an unstoppable team.

Their professional collaboration has flourished thanks to their complementary personalities. Brandy, known for her outgoing and direct approach, balances Thomas's quieter, more reserved demeanor. "We're opposites, but opposites attract in all types of relationships," Thomas reflects. "Brandy's much more outgoing, while I'm the quieter one, but we blend everything well."

Brandy likens their dynamic to a sibling relationship. "He's our culture keeper," she explains. "He wants everyone to be happy, and he's not afraid to come to me if something is affecting the positive culture we've worked hard to create." Even when Brandy and Thomas don't always agree, they resolve their differences quickly and respectfully, always keeping the team's best interests in mind.

What truly sets Brandy and Thomas apart is their unwavering commitment to each other's success. Their bond is built on honesty, transparency, and a shared goal of growth. "We adore and respect each other too much not to be honest," Brandy emphasizes. Thomas, ever the grinder, adds, "You have to hustle to be successful in this business. Every mistake is a learning opportunity that prepares you for the next transaction." He takes pride in mentoring new agents, while Brandy fiercely protects her team, always looking out for everyone's best interests.

**“
You have to
hustle to be
successful in
this business.**

EVERY MISTAKE IS A
LEARNING OPPORTUNITY
THAT PREPARES YOU FOR
THE NEXT TRANSACTION.”

Outside of work, Brandy and Thomas enjoy different pastimes. Brandy and her husband stay active with pickleball, golfing, and fishing. Meanwhile, Thomas is a huge fan of cruises, exploring Disney's Epcot, trying different foods, and frequenting Dave & Buster's on Wednesdays. Brandy jokes, "If Thomas isn't working, he's probably at Disney." She sometimes has to remind him to relax during his time off. "She's taught me that when I'm off, I should actually be off and enjoy that time," he admits.

At the heart of Brandy and Thomas's success is a genuine synergy rooted in trust, respect, and shared values. Together, they've cultivated a culture of collaboration, honesty, and growth within their team. Reflecting on their journey, Thomas asserts, "We may be opposites, but we balance each other out perfectly. I couldn't ask for a better mentor and partner in this business."





BY TIM WEISHEYER,
2025 PRESIDENT OF
FLORIDA REALTORS®

2025 is in full swing, and the real estate market is holding strong. In January, we saw a 3.5% increase in home sales, and we anticipate a slight dip in interest rates to add to the market strength. As the economy and market continue to realign, Florida REALTORS® ensures our state economy remains strong as we work to help incentivize businesses to thrive and relocate to the Sunshine State.

One of the best ways to encourage businesses to relocate to Florida is to create a healthy economic environment. Due to the advocacy of Florida REALTORS®, the business environment has improved substantially in the last decade. One of the many examples is our work on reducing and eliminating the business rent tax (sales tax on commercial leases).

In Florida, the “business rent tax” refers to the state sales tax on the rental, lease, or license to use commercial real property. Florida REALTORS® has successfully advocated

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Advancing the Florida Economy: REALTOR® ADVOCACY AT ITS BEST

for incremental reductions since 2017, and Florida businesses have realized significant savings as we have worked with the legislature and Governor’s office on this important initiative. Here’s a brief breakdown:

Tax Rate Reduction:
Originally a 6% sales tax on commercial leases and now down to 2.0%, with more reductions on the horizon.

Estimated Savings:
More than \$2 billion in tax relief for businesses.

- Impact:**
- This reduction stimulates economic growth by lowering the financial burden on businesses.
 - It’s making Florida more competitive in attracting new businesses and keeping existing businesses.
 - Businesses can reinvest the money saved into their companies, employees, new products, services, and innovations.

The business rent tax reduction has provided substantial financial relief to Florida businesses, fostering a more favorable business environment, bolstering economic expansion, and freeing up significant operating revenue to invest in Florida’s workforce. Beyond the aforementioned benefits, we know many of our members and brokerages also lease commercial space for their real estate offices. Florida REALTORS® and the Florida REALTORS® PAC have been championing this and many other legislative initiatives to protect our members and their businesses. Our work isn’t done, and we are working to further reduce the business rent tax and provide more savings for you and your businesses.

We all know real estate is vital to the state’s economy, and we are proud to champion it. Florida REALTORS® are zealous advocates for your profession because we know you depend on us, and the Florida real estate industry represents 21% of the Florida Gross Product, totaling more than \$300 billion.

The 2025 legislative session is ongoing, and we are proud to be in the halls of the state Capitol every day working on your behalf. You can view Florida REALTORS®’ full advocacy agenda at www.floridarealtors.org, and we invite you to attend a recap session at our annual convention in Orlando on Monday, August 25-Friday, August 29. For more information, visit www.floridarealtors.org.



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Shari Norwick

STORY BY JACKI DONALDSON
PHOTOS BY ALLIE SERRANO, ALLIE SERRANO PHOTOGRAPHY

Shari Norwick never intended to be a real estate agent. But as she reflects on her journey—from advertising executive to top-producing agent—she sees that every step along the way led her here.

Born in New York City and raised on Long Island, Shari went to college in New York. She spent a semester in Denmark and traveled throughout Europe before earning her degree in sociology from SUNY Stony Brook. Her love for real estate took root after college. “I bought my first house at 23,” she shares. “Over the years, I have purchased about a dozen homes, but that first one started my foray into real estate.”

Before officially entering the real estate industry, Shari enjoyed a successful career in advertising. She spent 10 years as an account executive for Newsday, one of the largest newspapers in the country. In 1990, she and her husband relocated to Florida. “We were ready for a life change and to leave the cold winters in New York,” she states. “My husband’s family had a condo on Longboat Key, and the first time he introduced me to the area, I fell in love. We bought our house on Lido Beach in three days.” Shari first worked in the Sunshine State as a behavioral counselor at a weight



loss center before transitioning back into advertising with the Herald-Tribune.

Shari and her family moved back to New York for a time, but in 2003, they returned, settling in Lakewood Ranch before the community was fully established. At this point, Shari decided to change her career trajectory. “I took the real estate course at night and got my license in 2004,” explains Shari, who sold \$11 million in her first year and earned the coveted Rookie of the Year honor. “Every day, I got up, worked hard, went to every training I could, applied everything I had done in advertising, and it worked.”

During the next 20 years, she built a thriving business that is now 100% repeat clients and referrals. She has never advertised herself and credits much of her success to how she treats her clients. “I treat everyone the same way—whether they’re buying a \$300,000 home or a \$3 million home,” she asserts. She is also adept at connecting with other agents. “I value the relationships I’ve built with both clients and my colleagues throughout the years,” she notes. “Long-term relationships are the core of my business.”

Shari’s reach extends to mentoring new agents and helping investors—one of whom has purchased nine homes

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Pictured left to right: Shari's son-in-law, daughter, and their baby; Shari's son, Shari, and her husband

with her—and takes pride in her reputation for cultivating smooth transactions. She comments, “I want all parties at the end of closing to define the process as a “win-win.”

Beyond real estate, Shari loves spending time with her husband, two children, and her first grandbaby. She treasures quality moments with family and enjoys dining out with friends, boating, and traveling. With her son, daughter, son-in-law, and grandchild all living in Lakewood Ranch, she can't imagine living anywhere else.

As Shari looks to the future, she sees herself continuing to work alongside her daughter, a licensed agent and assistant



at Fine Properties. “I'd love to guide her as she grows into the lead agent while I take on more of a mentorship role, which would give me more time to enjoy with friends and family—my family is my world,” Shari relates. Her son is also in the real estate arena as a master home inspector with Pillar to Post.

Even as she plans to slow down eventually, Shari remains deeply committed to her clients and community. “I care about everyone involved and value relationships well past the closing,” she says. “At the end of the day, I want people to say they appreciate doing business with me. That's the best compliment I could receive.”

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TOAST TO THE TOP

A Night to Remember With Sarasota & Manatee Real Producers Celebrating Our Top REALTORS®

PHOTOS BY POFF MEDIA GROUP

What an incredible evening celebrating the top REALTORS® in Sarasota & Manatee County! From inspiring conversations to well-deserved recognition, the energy in the room was truly electric. A huge thank you to everyone who joined us—your passion, dedication, and commitment to excellence make this community so special. If we didn’t get a chance to connect, let’s change that. We’d love to feature you in an upcoming issue.

A huge thank you to Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar—the perfect host!

The team at Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar & Store in Lakewood Ranch went above and beyond to create the perfect setting for this event. From the outstanding service to the delicious food that many called the best they’ve ever had at a REALTOR® event, every detail was flawless. Thank you, Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar, for helping us bring this vision to life. We’ll be back!

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Relive the night: Swipe through the highlights and relive the magic! Huge thanks to @poffmediagroup for capturing every unforgettable moment. Check out the full event gallery and video recap at www.sarasotarealproducers.com.

If you are a top real estate agent in the Sarasota & Manatee County area, being featured in Real Producers does not cost you anything; we are NOT a pay-to-play model—instead, you get to earn it and be recommended by your peers and our preferred business partners. Hope to see you at the next event, which is also free for you, by the way.





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Celia Merritt

EDGE HOME FINANCE

STORY BY ELIZABETH MCCABE

For Celia Merritt, the path to becoming a successful loan officer was anything but typical. After a 28-year career in emergency medicine, including 17 years with the Hillsborough

County Fire Department, Celia transitioned into a new chapter that merged her passion for helping people with her knack for solving complex problems.

Today, as a loan officer with Edge Home Finance, she’s blazing new trails in the lending world while maintaining the core values that have guided her throughout her life.



Her calmness, courage, and confidence have earned the trust of many real estate agents and their clients. Celia knows how to move deals to the closing table. Her problem-solving ability helps many people arrive at the dream of homeownership.

Celia’s love for puzzles and mental challenges keeps her engaged in her work, but she values the human aspect of her work the most. “I couldn’t sit in a cubicle and crunch numbers all day,” she laughs. “I have to interact with people, solve problems, and put things together. This is a platform for me to continue helping people, just in a different way.”

Following Her Heart

Celia followed her heart’s dream of becoming a firefighter/paramedic, which was ignited at the age of 14—a goal that was far from easy. As a child, she faced significant health challenges, including multiple knee surgeries that required her to wear leg braces. Despite these obstacles, her determination never wavered. She joined the Boy Scouts, where her passion for firefighting

“I COULDN’T SIT IN A CUBICLE AND CRUNCH NUMBERS ALL DAY. I HAVE TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE, SOLVE PROBLEMS, AND PUT THINGS TOGETHER. THIS IS A PLATFORM FOR ME TO CONTINUE HELPING PEOPLE, JUST IN A DIFFERENT WAY.”



took root. Even after college, she wanted to become a firefighter.

Her dedication led her to pursue a degree in emergency medicine while simultaneously going through the fire academy. During this time, she worked in an emergency room and juggled her rigorous schedule with school during the day. But a chance encounter at a local dance hall, where she was swing dancing with friends, introduced her to lending. A fellow dancer who worked for a lending company offered her a secretary position—a job that would eventually change the course of her career. “I started in lending in 2003,” says Celia. “I quickly moved up from secretary to wholesale processor, learning the back end of lending.”

Balancing her new role in lending with her commitment to the fire department, Celia worked part-time in the lending industry while advancing through the ranks of the fire department, ultimately becoming a lieutenant. However, after a major shoulder surgery and the realization that her body could no longer withstand the physical demands of firefighting, Celia made the difficult decision to retire in 2022.

The timing couldn’t have been better. Celia’s lending business had taken off, and she had built a strong team around her. Yet, the defining moment came when her daughter, Rylee, was diagnosed with diabetes. “Rylee was the last person I transported in a rescue unit,” Celia shares. “She was in the ICU, and after three days, when she finally woke up, I knew it was time for a shift. Everything was in place, and God worked it all out.”

Full Speed Ahead

Celia has fully dedicated herself to her lending career at Edge Home Finance. Her extensive background in medicine, particularly in oncology and emergency medicine, gives her a unique perspective in her work. “Knowing medicine helps significantly,” she says. “I make sure to take care of my clients and set them up for success.”

Her commitment to her clients goes beyond just closing loans. Celia handles everything from insurance quotes to inspections with the utmost care. Her clients, many of whom are older or have specific needs, appreciate her personal touch. Whether picking up paperwork in person or offering a prayer before discussing numbers, Celia’s faith plays a significant role in her business. “I love everyone where they are,” she shares. Celia strives to build genuine friendships with her clients, thanks to her warm personality and kind heart. Her transparency and authenticity resonate with others, allowing people to feel like they can be more vulnerable and open with her.

At Edge Home Finance, Celia’s team reflects her values and work ethic. Jill, her dedicated processor; Katie, who excels in social media and ads; and Krista, who handles documents, all contribute to the seamless operation

of her business. Celia is known for her calm demeanor under pressure—a skill she honed during her years as a firefighter. “There’s no problem we can’t solve as long as everyone is on board,” she says confidently.

Celia handles everything from residential to commercial loans. “We have access to over 100 lenders, so we can always find a solution for borrowers,” she points out. “We offer a wide range of programs—from conventional loans to down-payment assistance and PNL loans. The options are endless, and we have so many ways to make things work.”

“I LOVE EVERYONE
WHERE THEY ARE.”

Faith + Family
Celia’s deep faith intertwines with every aspect of her life and work. She’s actively involved in her church, participating in workdays and events, and she supports several charitable organizations, including the American Lung Association, where she serves on the Southeast Board, and the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. Her mother’s battle with lung cancer and her subsequent involvement with Moffitt Cancer Center have also inspired her advocacy. As a single mother to 12-year-old Rylee, Celia appreciates her career’s flexibility. Rylee, a bright and active young girl, shares her mother’s passion for fitness. She has even participated in the same stair climb events as Celia, including the Tunnel to Towers stair



climb, where she became the youngest participant at just 5 years old.

To Celia, life is all about helping others. Whether firefighting or helping people find a mortgage for their unique situation, she is committed to her clients and the community. This trailblazer is making a name for herself in the mortgage industry at Edge Home Finance, standing out from the competition with her kindness, hard work, drive, and determination. She would be delighted to help your clients with all their mortgage needs.



**CONTACT
ME!**

Celia Merritt
Edge Home Finance
813-957-2080
Celia@CeliaMortgageTeam.com
www.CeliaMortgageTeam.com



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Real Producers FAQs

Real Producers magazine, started in Indianapolis in 2015, is now in more than 130 markets nationwide and continues to expand rapidly.

Q: WHO RECEIVES REAL PRODUCERS MAGAZINES?

A: The Top 500 real estate agents in Sarasota and Manatee Counties.

Q: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS MAGAZINE?

A: We believe in the power of collaboration and growth through a strong professional network. We bring together the Top 500 real estate agents and preferred partners in each market to form an exclusive, high-achieving community. We share their stories, successes, market trends, and upcoming events—anything that will connect, inform, and inspire.

Q: DOES REAL PRODUCERS HAVE EVENTS?

A: Yes! We host exclusive networking events throughout the year.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BEING FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: Anyone on the Top 500 list can nominate other real estate agents, businesses, brokers, owners, or themselves. Office leaders can also submit nominations. We review all agents who come to our attention. Since we don't know everyone's story,

we rely on your nominations to highlight deserving candidates. While we cannot guarantee a feature, we encourage you to meet with one of our team members, support Real Producers, and attend our private events to increase your chances.

Q: WHAT DOES A FEATURE STORY COST?

A: Feature stories are entirely free, so we encourage nominations.

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS?

A: They are the best businesses in Sarasota and Manatee Counties in their category, and you can find them in our index at the front of the magazine. We do not select businesses at random or accept all who approach us. Every business featured has been recommended, ensuring credibility and quality. Our team conducts additional vetting to ensure businesses align with our standards and add value to our network. We aim to create a powerhouse network of top real estate agents and trusted companies to strengthen our community.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A BUSINESS?

A: To recommend a business that collaborates with top real estate agents, email joni@realproducersmag.com.



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