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How
Makayla
McCowen
Turned Realtor

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDGAR VILLEDA, STRONGSHOT STUDIO

**A Teacher's Heart
in Real Estate**

Bringing Clarity and Care to Every Move

For some people, real estate is about houses. For others, it's about people — their stories, their transitions, their new beginnings. For **Makayla McCowen**, Team Lead and REALTOR® in Augusta, GA, it's both.

"I started in this business with a teacher's heart," Makayla says. "I focus on helping others learn, grow, and feel confident through every step of the buying or selling process." Whether it's a first-time homebuyer, a relocating military family, or a seller starting over, her mission is to bring clarity, calm, and strategy to what can often feel like a stressful season.

From Classroom to Closing Table

Originally from Texas, she attended the University of Texas at Austin and began her career working with students facing emotional and behavioral challenges. Her job was to help them regulate, communicate, and find success in traditional school settings — a role that required patience, empathy, and structure.

Life took an unexpected turn when her then-husband received military orders to relocate to the Augusta area. Like many military spouses, she packed up her life and started over — a new city, new community, and no clear plan for what came next. During that transition, she decided to earn her real estate license, planning to try it out during her first summer break from teaching.

What began as an experiment quickly grew into a calling. "Real estate changed my life in ways I never expected," she reflects. "It gave me the freedom to build a business rooted in education, relationships, and community." And her calling is obvious—having sold over 100 homes during her first three years in real estate.

Today, she combines her teaching background with her passion for helping families, guiding clients through one of life's biggest transitions with confidence and care. "Looking back, I can see that teaching and real estate were never that different," she says. "In both, my goal has always been to guide, support, and make people feel seen and confident through change."

Home, Sweet (and Lively) Home

Her home life is just as full of energy as her professional one. She shares her home with four dogs — Zola, the dignified Greyhound; Pepper, her spoiled Poodle; and

Ginger and Rose, two playful Jack Russell Terrier mixes.

Alongside them are two mischievous cats who proudly deliver "gifts" through the dog door, and even a king snake named Dakota who rounds out her unique household.

When she's not working, she enjoys quiet time on her back porch surrounded by her pets. "I love to read, crochet, or just nap out there," she laughs. She also tends to a small garden and makes it a point to spend time outdoors, whether camping or enjoying a weekend at the beach.

Rooted in Community

Her love for education continues through her involvement with the Manhood/Womanhood Tour in Augusta, where she teaches first-time homebuyer classes — a perfect blend of her two passions. "Many of my former students



“
Real estate
changed
my life in
ways I never
expected.”



lived in shelters or hotels,” she explains. “Seeing how much a stable home could change their lives is what drives me.”

That experience inspired one of her biggest dreams: to launch a foundation supporting children and families facing housing insecurity. “My hope is to create something that doesn’t just help people find homes,” she says, “but helps them build brighter futures.”

A Bright Future

As she looks to the future, she envisions continued growth — personally and professionally. “I want to expand into new markets while building a team known for genuine care, education, and results,” she says. At her core, her purpose remains the same: to guide people through change with empathy, understanding, and confidence. From the classroom to the closing table, her teacher’s heart continues to lead the way.


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Rooted in Science and Service



A Conversation with Bartlett Tree Expert Miller Rambo

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDGAR VILLEDA, STRONGSHOT STUDIO

When it comes to caring for the living landscapes that define our homes and communities, few understand the balance between science and service quite like **Bartlett Tree Experts**. At the helm of the local division is Miller Rambo, a professional whose passion for trees runs deep — from his early studies in forestry to his present-day leadership in urban tree care.

A Journey from Forestry to Urban Arboriculture

“I studied wildlife and forestry at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College,” Miller recalls, “but I didn’t know much about urban forestry as a career path.” That changed when he began working with a friend who owned a tree service company in Iowa. “That experience opened my eyes to a whole new side



scientific foundation. “We’re the only tree company with our own private laboratory,” Miller explains. “Our team uses it to diagnose, research, and continually improve our knowledge. That helps us train our arborists to provide the best possible care for our clients’ trees and shrubs.”

A Commitment to Safety, Science, and Service

Customer satisfaction at Bartlett is rooted in honesty, integrity, and clear communication. “Every job begins with a scientific evaluation,” says Miller. “We diagnose problems precisely and create comprehensive treatment plans. Our clients can trust that we’ll deliver care that’s not just effective, but safe — for their property, their family, and their trees.”

Word-of-Mouth Growth

In an increasingly digital world, Bartlett still values the power of personal connection. “Word of mouth is our favorite form of marketing,” Miller admits. “We also use targeted mailers to reach neighborhoods with older, established treescapes. But nothing beats a happy client who tells their neighbor.”

Weathering the Storm — Literally

Running a tree service comes with daily challenges — from unpredictable weather to equipment breakdowns. But 2024 brought an especially tough test: *Hurricane Helene*. “It devastated so many trees and properties,” Miller recalls. “But what made the difference was our team. The other Bartlett divisions jumped in to help, sending crews, managing calls, and even getting us a Starlink within three days so we



of tree care — one focused on people’s homes and communities.”

When he and his family moved back to Georgia, he brought that newfound enthusiasm with him, eventually joining **Bartlett Tree Experts**, a company known for blending groundbreaking science with hands-on service.

More Than Tree Work — It’s Tree Care

Bartlett Tree Experts offers a full spectrum of services, including **pruning, tree removal, fertilization, pest and disease management, root care, lightning protection, cabling, consulting services, tree risk assessments and inventories**. But what truly sets the company apart is its



could stay connected. Having that kind of support reminds me that I'm never doing this alone."

Life Beyond the Trees

Outside of work, Miller is happiest outdoors. "I love hunting, golfing, going out on the boat, and family vacations," he says. "You'll usually find us with friends and family, grilling and watching football."

He and his wife, Cassandra, recently celebrated their seventh anniversary. "We met in Colorado, while working at a horse ranch," he smiles. "She's now a veterinarian in Washington, Georgia. We have a 3½-year-old son, Carter — he's full of energy and the light of our lives."

Looking Ahead

As for the future, Miller isn't planning any major changes — just continued growth and connection. "In five to ten years, I hope to be doing what I'm doing now," he says. "I love working with my clients and building those relationships."

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Still, he's got a few goals on his bucket list. Professionally, he's aiming for Board Certified Master Arborist status. Personally, he dreams of traveling to Europe and Alaska, and one day, a successful elk hunt out west.

"Trees are living systems — and so are communities. I'm lucky to work in a profession that connects the two every day." — Miller Rambo, Bartlett Tree Experts



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THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF SAM DATTA

BUILDING TRUST, ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDGAR VILLEDA, STRONGSHOT STUDIO

When it comes to real estate, success is often measured by numbers. But for **Sam Datta**, REALTOR® with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Beazley Realtors, success is defined by something deeper—*relationships built on trust, integrity, and a personal touch.*

From his office in Evans, Sam has quickly risen through the ranks since beginning his real estate career in

2019. His impressive 2024 sales—\$13.7 million across 33 transactions—and a growing list of accolades reflect his hard work and commitment. Among his many honors, Sam earned the #1 Top Resale Agent, #1 Top Listing Agent, and Chairman's Circle Gold Award, placing him among the top 2% of Berkshire Hathaway agents nationwide. As of the second quarter of 2025, he proudly holds the #1 statewide and #12 nationwide

“**I STAYED CONSISTENT, LEARNED CONTINUOUSLY, AND FOCUSED ON KEEPING EVERY PROMISE. THAT’S HOW I BUILT MY REPUTATION.**”



positions in the network—a remarkable achievement for someone who once started from scratch.

From Business Owner to Trusted REALTOR®

Before entering real estate, Sam was a successful businessman who owned and operated convenience stores. But the demands of managing staff and the limits of that industry led him to seek a more fulfilling path—one where his success depended solely on his own drive.

“With my MBA in Marketing, I wanted a career where I could use my skills fully,” Sam shares. “Real estate gave me that—an opportunity where hard work and integrity directly shape your results, and where you can make a real difference in people’s lives.”

That mindset has defined Sam’s approach ever since. Whether he’s guiding a first-time homebuyer or advising a seasoned investor, he treats every client’s transaction as if it were his own. “I put myself in my clients’ shoes,” he says. “I consider every precaution, every outcome, and every benefit as if I were buying or selling the home myself. That personal care builds confidence—and trust.”

More Than a Realtor—A Relationship Builder

Sam’s philosophy is simple yet powerful: “*Don’t just buy or sell houses—build relationships.*” His business thrives on referrals from happy clients, a reflection of his sincere commitment to service and connection. “While anyone can chase transactions,” he says, “it takes commitment and sincerity to build lasting trust.” That authenticity has also helped him overcome his biggest professional challenge—starting over in a competitive industry after years in business ownership. “In real estate, you have to prove yourself from the ground up,” he says. “I stayed consistent, learned continuously, and focused on keeping every promise. That’s how I built my reputation.”

A Rich Personal Journey

Originally from Punjab, India, Sam—whose full name is *Bharat Datta*—came to the United States



in 2003 as an IT professional. Over the years, he transitioned from technology to entrepreneurship and eventually to real estate. His strong educational foundation from Delhi University and an MBA in Marketing equipped him with the business acumen and strategic mindset that now fuel his success in real estate.

At home, Sam is a proud husband and father. He and his wife, Seema, have been married for 28 years and share two accomplished children. Their daughter, Soumya, a Johns Hopkins University graduate, is building her career in the corporate world, while their son, Shaurya, is excelling as a second-year student at Augusta University, earning a place on the Dean's List. The family also enjoys the company of their two playful cats, Rosie and Leo.

Life Beyond Real Estate

When he's not closing deals, Sam finds peace and inspiration in the mountains. He enjoys hiking, singing, dancing, and spending time with friends. "Adventure keeps me grounded," he says with a smile. "The fresh air and scenic beauty of the mountains recharge me for everything life brings."

Deeply committed to his community, Sam also serves as Vice President of the Indo-American Cultural Association (IACA). Through this role, he helps foster cultural connections and support within the local community.

Looking Ahead

For the future, Sam envisions continued growth—both personally and professionally. "I want to help more families achieve their homeownership dreams and continue building a business grounded in trust, excellence, and genuine relationships," he says. "At the end of the day, I want people to remember me not just as a successful REALTOR®, but as someone who cared deeply and stayed true to his values."

In an industry where competition is fierce, Sam stands out not just for his results—but for his heart. His story is a testament to perseverance, passion, and the power of doing business the right way: with honesty, empathy, and authenticity.





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