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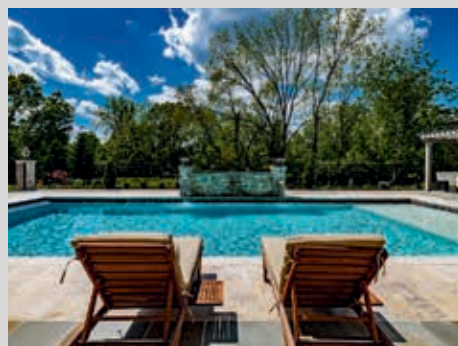
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2025 FEBRUARY

Leadership, Growth, and Rising Talent

As we step into 2025, it's an exciting time to reflect on the powerhouse professionals who shape the Brandywine Valley real estate market. This month, we are thrilled to spotlight **Stephen Mottola and The Mottola Group**, the **top team in Delaware by volume** and **fourth in the entire Brandywine Valley**, which spans New Castle County, Delaware, Chester County, Pennsylvania, and Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

The Mottola Group's remarkable success story is a true testament to the power of collaboration, strategic vision, and relentless commitment to client satisfaction. From their dynamic leadership to their ability to adapt to ever-changing market conditions, they continue to set the bar for excellence in real estate.

In this issue, we also shine a spotlight on **"The" Amanda Bradford**, our **Rising Star** this month. Amanda's hard work, passion, and impressive trajectory in real estate make her a name to watch in the years ahead. We are excited to share her story and the unique qualities that make her a standout in our community.

Additionally, we are pleased to feature **Aaron Leonard**, a talented financial advisor who helps many of our top agents manage their wealth. Aaron's expertise in wealth management is a vital resource for real estate professionals looking to safeguard their financial future, and we are proud to highlight his contributions to the success of our community.

This issue is a celebration of excellence, from the top-performing teams like the Mottola Group to the rising stars who are shaping the future of real estate. It's also a reminder of the strong network of professionals—from financial advisors to agents—that help support and elevate the industry as a whole.

Here's to celebrating the achievements of today and looking forward to even greater successes in 2025!



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Stephen Mottola

and The Mottola Group

BY RYAN ZINN
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A Legacy Built on Relationships and Integrity

Stephen Mottola's journey in real estate began in 1986 when he obtained his license, but his passion for homes and neighborhoods can be traced back to his childhood. "When I was 9 years old, I had a family in my neighborhood whose father worked for a really small real estate firm in Wilmington, and I'd spend time with his two sons. They always had the multi-list books at their house. I used to ride my bicycle around the neighborhoods, looking at the houses that were listed for sale in the multi-list books," he recalled.

Building The Mottola Group: A Team Effort

Even while working part-time as an agent from 1986 until 2012, Stephen consistently ranked in the top 5% in the state of Delaware. In 2012, he officially launched The Mottola Group, along with trusted partners like John Sloniewski, Carole Shepherd Long, and Kristy Mottola to help facilitate sales and day-to-day operations. "Kristy actually keeps my business going... my set of skills is really well suited for working with people from within the community, and Kristy and John and my team are keeping the train on the track so that each detail is met and our customers feel that we have a seamless process for them," he shared.

Under Stephen's leadership, The Mottola Group has expanded into five states, serving clients in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Florida. In 2024, the team was ranked #1 Large Group in the United States by transaction sides in *Realtrends: The Thousand* and #4 in total sales volume, making them the top group in Delaware by both metrics.

Relationships: The Cornerstone of Success

Reflecting on his career, Stephen credits his success to a relationship-driven approach.

"You have to remember that for each person, this is probably one of their biggest life decisions. This is where they share time with a partner. This is where they raise a child if they are going to have children or where they and their closest friends and family gather. So what I've learned is that I have to remember that this decision, even when life gets really stressful, cannot just be looked at as a transaction because it is a life-changing decision for the person that you're working with," he explained.

Stephen's dedication to clients has shaped his philosophy. "When someone has sat and literally cried at the settlement table because they have so many memories of raising their family in a house, downsizing or moving on, knowing that I have been able to help them transition their home to the next person that will hopefully be a steward for it—that is incredibly rewarding," he said.



“

When I got into real estate, I was actually able to become who I always wanted to be.



Kristy Mottola,
Partner, The
Mottola Group

Navigating Challenges in Real Estate

Stephen acknowledges that real estate comes with challenges. “The largest ones are dealing with colleagues that don’t have the same views on how to get a deal across the finish line. Also, I think the changing of what inspections were and what inspections have become, the volatility of the market over the long term of my career, the interest rates, and the fluctuation of pricing and appraisals as the market fluctuates. And keeping it as stress-free as possible when this is already a major decision for somebody,” he said.

Lessons From Life and Mentors

Reflecting on his career, Stephen shared how life experiences shaped his work. “I read the book *The Millionaire Next Door*, and it really influenced me to realize that you never know what anybody has. That book showed that you could be dealing with a plumber that has more money than a bank executive. It made me realize that is a great way to be in life: under the radar,” he said.



The Mottola
Group, Photo:
Becca Mathias

He also drew inspiration from his longtime colleague, Steve Crifasi of Patterson Schwartz Greenville, saying, "I've always really respected and admired Steve and his philosophy, the way that he's built his business and the way he works with his clients. I've implemented a lot of that in my own career. We've both built our businesses from relationships."

Advice for Aspiring Agents

For those considering a career in real estate, Stephen offered candid advice. "You have to be extremely flexible and know that there is no time-clock in real estate. Real estate is the same sort of dedication that you need to be a surgeon; you need to have the dedication and be on-call as a surgeon is. If somebody needs open-heart surgery, the surgeon needs to be there. If somebody needs their hand held or they feel their world is crashing down because an inspection hasn't gone right, you need to handle it now because it is going to spiral and become 10 times worse if you don't pick up the phone," he said.

A Look Back and a Legacy Forward

Looking back, Stephen reflected on what he would change if he could. "If I could go back and redo anything, I'd go back to high school and allow myself to be more of who I am. High school is an informative time when you're trying to discover yourself, and I felt that I was trying to keep up. When I got into real estate, I was actually able to become who I always wanted to be," he shared.

For Stephen, success is measured by integrity and relationships. "Success is when you can look at yourself and feel good about each day that is past and each day that is in front of you. You are doing what you would want somebody else to do to you or treat others how you would want somebody else to treat you," he said.

A Lasting Impact

With nearly 39 years in real estate, Stephen's passion for the industry and dedication to his clients remain unwavering. His story is a testament to the power of relationships, community, and commitment to excellence.



Left: John Sloniewski, Partner, The Mottola Group

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All About Brandywine Valley Real Producers

The first Real Producers magazine started in Indianapolis in 2015. Real Producers is now in over 140 markets across the nation and is continuing to grow nationwide. *Brandywine Valley Real Producers* launched in March 2024!

Q: WHO RECEIVES REAL PRODUCERS MAGAZINES?

A: The top 500 real estate agents across the Brandywine Valley along with our preferred partners.

Q: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS MAGAZINE?

A: We believe that we are better together. When we surround ourselves with other successful, like-minded people, we grow to new heights. Real Producers is a platform that brings together the most accomplished individuals in the Brandywine Valley real estate sector.

By curating an exclusive community comprised of the top 500 real estate agents and RP-vetted businesses in each market, we foster a shared space for sharing stories, celebrating successes, discussing market trends, and highlighting upcoming events. Our monthly publication is dedicated to connecting, informing, and inspiring, encompassing anything that contributes to the enrichment of our community.

Q: DOES REAL PRODUCERS HAVE EVENTS?

A: Yes! We have specific networking events throughout the year.

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

A: The process for being featured in our magazine is straightforward. To be eligible, you need to be on the top 500 list, and we value nominations highly. Whether you're a real estate agent, business, broker, owner, or someone who admires the work of others, you can nominate individuals, including yourself. Even office leaders have the opportunity to nominate outstanding real estate agents. We take every nomination

seriously and consider anyone from the top 500 list who is brought to our attention. While we cannot guarantee a feature, we strongly encourage you to connect with one of our team members, show support for Real Producers, and participate in our private events. These steps can enhance your chances of being featured in our publication.

To submit a nomination, please visit: <https://www.brandywinevalleyrealproducers.com/nominate>

Q: WHAT DOES IT COST A REAL ESTATE AGENT/TEAM TO BE FEATURED?

A: It costs absolutely nothing to agents to be featured! We are not a pay-to-play model. We share **REAL** stories of **Real Producers**.

Q: WHO ARE THE RP-VETTED BUSINESSES?

A: The RP-vetted businesses featured in our publication represent the some of best in the business in their respective categories within the Brandywine Valley. You can easily locate them in our index. We do not randomly select businesses, nor do we collaborate with every business that approaches us. We prioritize businesses that have received your stamp of approval through recommendations and each business showcased has been personally recommended by many of the top agents featured in our publication. Before featuring any business, our team conducts additional vetting to ensure they align with our community's values and bring substantial value. Our aim is to build a robust network that not only includes the best real estate agents but also features top-tier businesses, fostering collective growth and strength within our community.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A BUSINESS?

A: If you want to recommend a business that works with top real estate agents, please email us or visit our web site - **Email: ryan.zinn@realproducersmag.com**
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Spotlight on
Aaron Leonard:

Financial Advisor, Wealth Manager, and Community Advocate

BY RYAN ZINN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACOB SNAVELY

Aaron Leonard, a financial advisor and wealth management professional with Edward Jones Investments, is a familiar and respected face in Greenville, Delaware. With a career spanning over two decades at Edward Jones, Aaron's story is one of dedication—not only to his clients but to the community he calls home.

Aaron's journey began with a childhood marked by adventure. His father's corporate career in the hotel and hospitality industry took the Leonard family up and down the East Coast,

with stops in Florida, North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and beyond. Though moving so frequently might have been unsettling for some, Aaron embraced each relocation as an exciting new chapter. "Every move was a big adventure for my younger brother and me," Aaron recalls.

Eventually, Wilmington, Delaware, became the place Aaron decided to settle. A proud alumnus of the University of Delaware and former Blue Hen football player, Aaron has deep ties to the area. His connection to the university runs in



the family—both his mother and uncle are graduates as well. Today, his parents live in nearby Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and his brother’s family is just a short drive away in Chestnut Hill. For Aaron, it’s a welcome change from his transient upbringing to have so many loved ones nearby.

Aaron’s professional career took off after five years with MBNA, a path that eventually led him to Edward Jones in 1999. “I always had an entrepreneurial spirit and wanted to remain in the financial services business,” Aaron explains. Edward Jones,

with its unique model of empowering advisors to run their own branches while benefiting from the resources of a Fortune 500 firm, proved to be the perfect fit. Nearly 25 years later, Aaron continues to build meaningful relationships with his clients, alongside his trusted Branch Administrator, Rebecca Bradbury.

“Our branch in Greenville Center focuses on serving individual investors and small- to medium-sized businesses,” Aaron shares. “We work with people who show mutual respect and value our advice, and we truly enjoy these relationships.”



For top real estate professionals in the Brandywine Valley, Aaron and his team provide an additional layer of support that can be a game-changer for their businesses and clients. With a focus on financial planning, estate considerations, and wealth management, Aaron’s services often complement the needs of REALTORS working with clients navigating complex financial decisions during a home sale or purchase. Whether helping clients create investment strategies after a property sale or advising on long-term financial goals, Aaron’s expertise adds value to any transaction.

Beyond his professional life, Aaron is an active member of the community. He and his wife, Renae, share a passion for animal welfare. Renae, a former client service professional who recently launched her real estate career, has coordinated fundraisers and events for local organizations, including hosting the Delaware Humane Society Gala. The couple also volunteers regularly with Forgotten Cats, a nonprofit dedicated to feline rescue and adoption.

When Aaron isn’t working or volunteering, you’re likely to find him at Brandywine Creek State Park. An avid trail runner, he spends several days a week exploring the scenic

trails, sometimes accompanied by Renae, their two dogs, or his brother. Weekends are often spent at home, where Aaron indulges his culinary creativity and love for classic horror movies. “If it’s an old black-and-white monster movie, I’ve probably seen it several times,” Aaron says with a smile.

Aaron Leonard’s story is one of balance: a successful career, deep community connections, and meaningful personal passions. His ability to combine professional excellence with a commitment to giving back makes him a true asset to the Brandywine Valley.

The *Brandywine Valley Real Producers* community is proud to highlight Aaron Leonard as not just a preferred partner but as someone whose expertise can serve as a valuable resource for the region’s top REALTORS and their clients. With a shared commitment to excellence, Aaron and his team are here to help agents elevate their businesses and enhance their clients’ financial futures.

Contact Aaron for investment and financial planning questions -
Phone: 302-654-1548 Email: aaron.leonard@edwardjones.com

The Amanda BRADFORD

BY RYAN ZINN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACOB SNAVELY

Amanda Bradford's journey into real estate began during the COVID-19 pandemic, when she was furloughed from her liquor sales job. Encouraged by her father, a contractor, she pursued her long-standing interest in real estate.

"I had always wanted to get into real estate but never really had the right push to do it," Amanda recalls. "My dad convinced me it was the right time to make the career switch and give it a try! Like most people, I loved houses. With my dad being a contractor, I grew up with a unique love for homes and design."

Building a Career from the Ground Up

Before embarking on her real estate career, Amanda held various roles, including six years at Two Stones Pub in Hockessin and as a liquor sales representative. These experiences in customer service and sales laid the foundation for her success as a REALTOR®.

In just over four years, Amanda has helped over 125 clients, with sales exceeding \$42 million. Primarily serving New Castle and Kent counties in Delaware, she recently expanded her reach by earning her Pennsylvania real estate license. "I am excited to begin helping even more clients in the surrounding areas," she shares.

Amanda's achievements include being named annually as one of the Top 10 Social Media Agents by Property Spark and

ranking in the Top 5% of Delaware agents by *Brandywine Valley Real Producers* for the past two years.

Leveraging Social Media for Success

Social media has been instrumental in Amanda's growth. "When I was first getting started in real estate, I was trying to determine how I could stand out from my colleagues," Amanda explains. She began posting educational videos and home walkthroughs on Facebook and Instagram, despite initial nerves.

"I was afraid to say the wrong thing or just embarrass myself completely. But I soon found that so many people loved to watch my videos! That's what helped to give me the confidence to continue posting."

Amanda has since grown her following to nearly 6,000 people, with some videos reaching almost 400,000 views. Social media has connected her with clients and agents nationwide. "The power of social media can be scary at times but has allowed me to use my creativity in a way I didn't think I would be able to in this industry."

Supporting Fellow Agents at Crown Homes

Beyond her impressive sales achievements, Amanda serves as a Training and Onboarding Specialist for Crown Homes. In this role, she ensures a smooth transition for new agents joining the brokerage, helping them feel confident and ready to succeed.





"I've had the opportunity to assist brand-new agents in creating their systems and veteran agents in enhancing their current ones," Amanda explains. "It's incredibly rewarding to help every agent achieve their goals, whether they're just starting out or taking their business to the next level."

Educating and Empowering Clients

Amanda's passion extends beyond transactions—she is dedicated to empowering clients with knowledge. Her goal is to ensure clients feel confident and informed every step of the way.

"I am really passionate about educating people on the process of selling and buying a home," she says. "There are so many people out there who feel lost during the process or feel they may have been taken advantage of because they didn't fully understand everything."

Overcoming Challenges and Embracing Growth

As a young entrepreneur, Amanda initially faced skepticism due to her age. "It can be scary and intimidating to walk into a room where everyone else has so much more experience than you and are basically expecting you to fail," she shares.

Her dedication and expertise have proved that age is just a number. "Age doesn't necessarily mean someone knows more than me or does better in this industry."

A Balanced Definition of Success

Amanda's view of success has evolved. "I used to think success was selling over 50 houses a year and I truly strived for that goal. But now I realize I want my success to look like a full, well-lived life," she reflects.

A Passion for Performance

Outside of real estate, Amanda is a seasoned performer with a background

in vocal, dance, and musical theater. This April, she will return to the stage as the lead in *Anastasia: The Musical* at the Millburn Stone Theater.

"I am so excited to share this part of myself with people again, including my clients!"

Advice for Aspiring Agents

Amanda emphasizes the importance of support. "Make sure that the brokerage you are with is really guiding and helping you," she advises. As a solo agent at Crown Homes, Amanda values the backing of her brokerage. "It's really important to make sure that you have a strong tribe around you."

Amanda also has plans to start her own team. "Teaching and supporting others is one of my favorite aspects of this job, and it would be incredible to help other agents get to the place I am at now."

Amanda's journey reflects resilience, passion, and a commitment to her clients, community and her business, making her a standout in the real estate industry.

Follow Amanda on Instagram @theamandabradford for a glimpse into her life and her creative and inspiring content!



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