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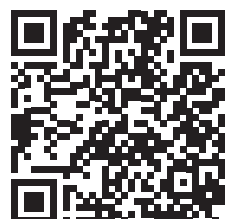
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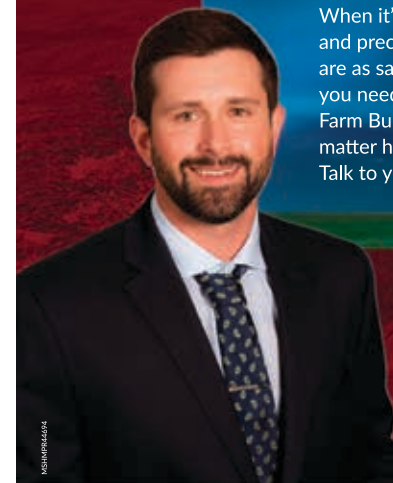
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EVENTS

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- Read every issue of Real Producers you receive – it's like having a cheat sheet when you meet agents and other vendors face-to-face.
- Look through magazines for recently featured agents to identify who you want to meet.
- Coordinate with the Real Producers' staff to make an introduction at the event.
- Sponsor events for maximum exposure and to make a big splash.
- Bring a door prize to guarantee your name is heard by all attendees.
- Have a follow-up plan in place when you meet contacts (coffee, lunch, meeting, etc.)

SOCIAL MEDIA

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- Comment on our posts spotlighting agents and partners so they see your name every month.
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- Let us know if you would like to be featured on a CMRP Podcast in 2025.

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Dees

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TOP PRODUCER

Selena Lovejoy



WRITTEN BY SUSAN MARQUEZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABE DRAPER PHOTOGRAPHY

A native of Richland, Mississippi, Selena Lovejoy married her high school sweetheart, Brad Lovejoy when she was just 20 years old. “We started dating when I was 15 and he was 17,” she says. The couple both went to Richland High School. Brad went to Mississippi State, and when Selena graduated high school, she went to Hinds for a year before the couple got married and she headed to Starkville. She went to school and worked at a make-up counter at McRae’s in Columbus.

When Brad graduated, the couple moved home to Richland. Selena went to work for an internet company, and Brad, an electrical engineer, took a position at SkyTel. “Both companies were located in downtown Jackson and we rode to work together every day.” Eventually, Brad went to work in Clinton and Selena went to work for a closing attorney in Brandon.

“The attorney was Buddy Youngblood at Title and Escrow Services,” says Selena, “and I worked on the closing side for two years before having our first child.” She stayed home with the baby and during that time Brad and her dad worked together to build the couple’s first home in Florence. “We signed the construction loan the day before I gave birth.” Selena’s job was to pick up materials her husband and dad needed and deliver them to the site in her Ford Explorer with a 16’ trailer.

When their son Matthew was a year old, Selena went back to work for Buddy. “I took him to work with me when sick.” She continued working there while she was pregnant with her daughter and then went home. When Anna Grace was six months old, Selena realized





“

I got my real estate license in 2006, and that gave me the freedom to be there for my kids.”

she needed a job that would allow her to be more flexible. Between working for a closing attorney, building a home, Selena had a good grasp on the real estate industry and decided she would get her license.

“I got my real estate license in 2006, and that gave me the freedom to be there for my kids.” She started with Lee Garland with The Garland Group. “I did all of Lee’s closings (while at Buddy’s office). He took me under his wing and pointed me in the right direction. He also introduced me to volunteering on the association level which has become my passion.” Selena joined the Jackson Association of Realtors® (now Central Mississippi Realtors).

After almost nine years, Selena made the move to Front Gate Realty. “Shelley and Stephanie Cummins are fantastic. Both are very involved in state and local associations.” While there, Selena realized she loved the administration side of the business. “Unlike a lot of people, I love doing the paperwork.” She moved to REMAX Connection with Julie Davis and her team, where she did the back side of deals. “I started doing that full time and still sold houses. I did that for a year and a half and last year I decided I needed to pivot.”





“

I wanted to keep it simple for now.”

With her daughter going into her junior year, Selena went back to Front Gate Realty and did all of Jeffrey Dillon’s paperwork before opening her own brokerage. Now she operates The Lovejoy Group from a 400-square-foot addition above her garage. “I wanted to keep it simple for now,” she says. “It’s just me, but when the time is right, I will most likely add agents. My mom may be licensed soon, and my husband has actually had his license twice. I joke and say he needs to get it renewed and come to work for me. My nephews are also interested in the business.”

While she sells primarily in Rankin County, Selena says she will go anywhere. “Last year I sold a property in Magee.” Organizing systems is Selena’s sweet spot – I don’t like to do the same thing twice. If I can make a template for it, I will.” Watching families grow is what keeps her going. “I love telling clients they are under contract. Helping people is something I enjoy.”

Selena serves on the Board for CMR and is in line to be president next year. “Being on my own is a bit of a challenge because I don’t have others in my office that I can help. However, I still help agents through my role as a board member of CMR. I like that people call me for advice.”

Outside of real estate, Selena is a fitness enthusiast who teaches fitness classes at a local gym. “I was certified to teach in 2017, and I do Body Pump classes as well as Body Combat, RPM, and spin. I also teach a balance and mobility class for senior adults.” She is a member of this year’s Leadership Rankin class. Selena and Brad have three children: Matthew (23) lives in Nashville, Anna Grace (20) is a hospital technician at Blair Batson Children’s Hospital in Jackson, and Kaleb (15) is a freshman at Brandon High School. The family attends Crossgates Baptist Church.



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DEOLA SMITH

DEOLA SMITH CALLS ON

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FOR CAREER IN REAL ESTATE

WRITTEN BY SUSAN MARQUEZ • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABE DRAPER PHOTOGRAPHY

When Deola Smith went to college at Southern Miss in Hattiesburg, it felt like she was moving to a big city. She grew up in Stringer, Mississippi, a town with just over 1500 people. “I went to school at Stringer Attendance Center from first through twelfth grade and graduated MISS SHS for the class of 2009. We all knew everyone – I only had 28 students in my graduating class. I grew up in a very family-oriented small town that felt very safe and secure. It was a great childhood.”

She chose to attend Southern Miss because she had family who graduated from there. “My grandmother was one of the first Black nurses to graduate from the registered nurses program at USM and my uncle was in the The Pride of Mississippi (band).” Another reason she chose to attend Southern Miss is because it was close to her parents. “Hattiesburg was only 45 minutes away, and my mom owned JJ’s Design’s in Laurel where she was a florist, a dress designer, and she designed custom gift baskets. She set up weddings every weekend, often two or three a day, and I was always the unhired help.”

With intentions of following in her grandmother’s footsteps, Deola majored in nursing. “That lasted one semester. I hated to disappoint my grandmother, but I learned quickly that nursing was not for me.” Because she had done dual enrollment in high school and attended Jones Community College in the summers, she had enough hours to major in business management with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and graduate in three years.

While in college, Deola applied for an internship at Sherwin-Williams. “I went for the interview, wearing



a three-piece suit – dressed for the part! The interviewer asked me if I had any experience and I told him no. Then I told him all about my work experiences with my mom and her business and I was offered the job on the spot. That interview was more like a coaching session and the man who interviewed me was a great mentor throughout my career. I had a job waiting for me in the management training program after I graduated.”

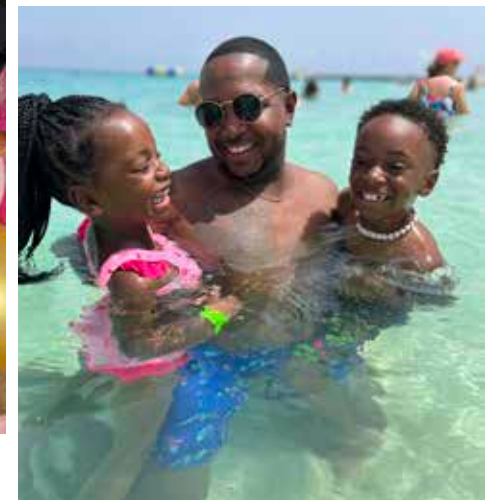
That took her to Jackson, where she trained at the store on Northside Drive and I-55. “I started in 2012, the Monday after graduating college and had a series of four promotions, going from assistant store manager to training store manager position by 2018.” During that time, she moved from Richland to Laurel to Brookhaven and back to Jackson. “Each time I had to relocate my family. My husband worked at the Madison Post Office and no matter where we moved, he commuted to Madison.”

When it became apparent there was no more room for promotions without moving again, Deola had a decision to make. “We bought our first house in Brandon and we had two children. I had to do what was best for my kids, and being available for them and my husband was important to me.” She used her entrepreneurial skills to start a t-shirt business, Designs by Dee. “I worked that business from the ground up,” she says. With hard work and determination, “I used my knowledge to create a brand for myself in Brandon. I joined the Chamber, I did volunteer work, and I networked in the community.”

Covid slowed business down a bit and Deola decided to take the real estate course. “I started getting interested in real estate when I was working at Sherwin-Williams. I worked with a lot of builders on colors and gained a passion for new construction. Something clicked and I decided that I was in a good place to give real estate a go.” “I took the course at the Mississippi Realtors® Institute and passed the test.”



After interviewing top agents to learn what to look for in a brokerage, she chose to sign with Havard Real Estate Group. “Derrick Havard was so nice. We have an amazing relationship to this day. He told me they don’t do a lot of training, but since I had been in sales so long I thought I would be OK.” After a while, Deola says she needed to make a change and God showed her where to go. “I was invited to an open house at The Agency! HAUS. I almost didn’t go because it was a rainy night. They talked about training and I said, ‘I hear you, God.’ I scheduled a one-on-one meeting with Dwanna Stanley and she gave me a blueprint that day on how to run my business.”



“My mom always told me to sow into something as much as I wanted to reap. **God took my vision and made it ten times bigger.**”



Deola attended the Tom Ferry Real Estate Success Summit where she heard other stories and realized the opportunities are limitless. “It lit a fire under me.” She was named Rookie of the Year in the first year at Agency! HAUS and closed on \$1 million in sales in the first six months. Now in her third year in real estate, Deola closed on her first multi-million-dollar commercial deal. “It’s the largest deal in the company’s history.” In March, she received her company’s Rising Star award. In August, she received NAREB’s Top 50 Top Producer Award.

Realizing now that all she has done in her life, from working with her mom to her career with Sherwin-Williams to running a business of her own and networking in her community, Deola set herself up for success in real estate. “I’ve done all I have with no paid ads and no referral sites. I’ve relied solely on my sphere of influence and it has grown from there. My mom always told me to sow into something as much as I wanted to reap. God took my vision and made it ten times bigger.”

Deola and her husband, Jimmie Lee Smith, Jr., have two children, Jimmie (Jay Lee, age 11) and Kaitlyn (age 9). A very active mom, Deola says she doesn’t like to miss anything. Kaitlyn is a cheerleader, and both kids play basketball. Jay Lee also plays football and my husband has coached for four years. I am the assistant coach for my daughter’s basketball team.” Both kids help with Deola’s open houses. “Both of them also help me record my content – they are training to be my media team!” She also gets help from her husband, parents and in-laws. “I’m so blessed to do what I do and to have my family involved.”

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WRITTEN BY SUSAN MARQUEZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABE DRAPER PHOTOGRAPHY

Van Parham grew up in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and after graduating from Clarksdale High, he enrolled at Delta State University. “I wasn’t sure what I wanted to major in when I started college,” he says. “I thought I might like nursing school, but realized early on that it wasn’t for me.” Van went on to earn a degree in criminal justice with a minor in biology, but he ended up farming in Coahoma County, growing cotton, corn, and soybeans.

Van’s mother owned a flower shop in Clarksdale where Van worked while growing up. “I worked with and for mostly women, so I learned early on how to do anything they needed when they needed it.” When he moved to the Metro area, he remodeled houses, eventually building and developing projects while also repairing homes for Realtors®, who are mostly women. “I understood what they needed, and they knew they could trust me to get the job done.”

By 2015 Van had 32 rental houses and concentrated on roofing, building/remodeling, and Realtors’® punch lists for closings. “They really are my favorite customers,” he says. Today, twenty years after he started his own business here, he says most of his work comes from Realtors®. “I don’t do any outside marketing. I have regular high-volume clients who call me whenever they need something and I also get new clients via word-of-mouth. Realtors® also send me problem houses or problem situations

for me to buy, remodel, and give back to them to list. I’m here for the Realtors®, helping to get the house closed.”

One thing Van does that is of real value to Realtors® is that he works directly with buyers and sellers when there is a problem. “I explain to them why we need to do what we need to do. From repairs to flaws or even perceived flaws from home inspections, I can empathize with both buyers and sellers, because I’ve been on both sides.”

Van can handle any size construction project, from repairs to new build. That includes roofing, which is a large part of his business. Parham Construction offers free roof inspection and remodeling quotes. “We will look at your roof before you make an unnecessary insurance claim,” Van says. “Relationships with insurance companies are important and we are here to help you.”

“We also added Parham Plumbing three years ago which is run by my son, Master Plumber Max Parham. We do drain line repairs, under slab work, water heater replacement, and general plumbing. We are able to inspect for broken sewer lines under houses with our advanced detection equipment including cameras and leak finders, then we can make the necessary repairs.” Van says buyers’ agents would do well to request a camera inspection if a house has been lifted or seems to need foundation work. “There is a good chance a broken sewer line is under the house causing the damage. It is not standard operating procedure for foundation companies to repair these after lifting, so it is something to be cautious of.” In addition to plumbing, Max has been a pilot for seven years. Van and Max enjoy taking their plane for long weekend trips as time allows.





Van says he is not one to sit still. “If I’m not working, I’m not sure what to do. I don’t really care to watch TV, but I do enjoy cooking, especially grilling and smoking. I cook gumbo, chicken and dumplings, and soups. I make a good brisket and whole tenderloins.” When he cooks, Van cooks a lot – “I think it was Ben Franklin who said to ‘cook once, eat twice.’ I like to cook a lot and share it with others. The Realtors® I work with are like family; I sometimes give them chicken and dumplings. They love it because when they are busy, they don’t have to cook.”

More than anything, Realtors® like knowing they can count on Van to get the job done. “I have been using Van Parham for many years and I value his work highly,” says Harriet Brewer with Nix-Tann and Associates in Jackson. “He does quality work and is very dependable. He helps me with many difficult issues. I could not work without him!”

“The Realtors® I work with are like family; I sometimes give them chicken and dumplings. They love it because when they are busy, they don’t have to cook.”

A Madison County resident, Van, and his wife, Rebecca, live with their dogs near Lake Cavalier. They have four grown children and one grandchild. “I love what I do,” he says. “I like helping people and this is something I can do to make things run smoothly for others.”



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