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Meet April Taylor Stroud

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EVENT RECAP:
Ugly Sweater

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FEBRUARY 2025

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Happy Valentine's Day!

As February unfolds, we are reminded of the power of love, connection, and collaboration—the very values that make our real estate community thrive. Whether it's the love for helping clients find their dream homes, the dedication to professional growth, or the partnerships that strengthen our success, this month is a celebration of what truly matters.

This issue highlights extraordinary individuals and teams who exemplify these values:

- **Our Cover Feature Realtor**, whose passion and perseverance inspire us all.
- **Our Celebrating Leaders Agent**, someone making a remarkable impact with leadership that uplifts the industry.
- **Our Realtor on the Rise**, whose energy and innovation represent the bright future of real estate.
- And, of course, **our Amazing Preferred Partner**, who continues to set the gold standard for service and collaboration.

As we celebrate the season of love, let's also take a moment to appreciate the bonds we've built within this incredible network. Thank you for being part of our *Columbia Real Producers* family.

Here's to love, success, and thriving partnerships!



Warmest wishes,
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Festive Fun & Fashion

at the *Columbia Real Producers* HOLIDAY PARTY

WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER · PHOTOS BY: PP'S PHOTOGRAPHY (AMY PORTER)

Columbia Real Producers Holiday Party: A Festive Night to Remember

On the evening of December 9th, 2024, Columbia's top REALTORS® and preferred partners gathered at the stylish M Space on Lady Street for the highly anticipated *Columbia Real Producers* Holiday Party: Ugly Sweater Showdown. Hosted by Robert and Sierra, publishers of *Columbia Real Producers*, this annual event blended laughter, celebration, and networking into a truly memorable holiday gathering.

The evening kicked off with cheerful holiday drinks and mouthwatering bites, setting the stage for REALTORS® to connect and reflect on a successful year. The true highlight of the night was the spirited Ugly Sweater Competition, where attendees donned their most outrageous and creative holiday attire. From jingle bell embellishments to glowing LED lights, the sweaters were nothing short of spectacular! The coveted prizes for the most hilariously hideous outfits added a playful edge to the friendly competition.

While the sweaters stole the spotlight, the event was also a chance for REALTORS® to celebrate their achievements, forge new connections, and strengthen relationships within the Columbia real estate community. The atmosphere was alive with festive tunes, hearty laughter, and a shared sense of holiday joy.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to **Atlantic Bay Mortgage and Premiere Roofing**, the event's generous host sponsor, whose support helps elevate Columbia's real estate industry. Their dedication to the community underscores the spirit of collaboration that events like these aim to foster.

As the party wound down, it was clear that the *Columbia Real Producers* Holiday Party wasn't just about ugly sweaters or festive cheer—it was about celebrating the people and partnerships that make Columbia's real estate market thrive. Cheers to another amazing year, and here's to many more!

Mark your calendars now for next year's festivities—this is one event you won't want to miss!





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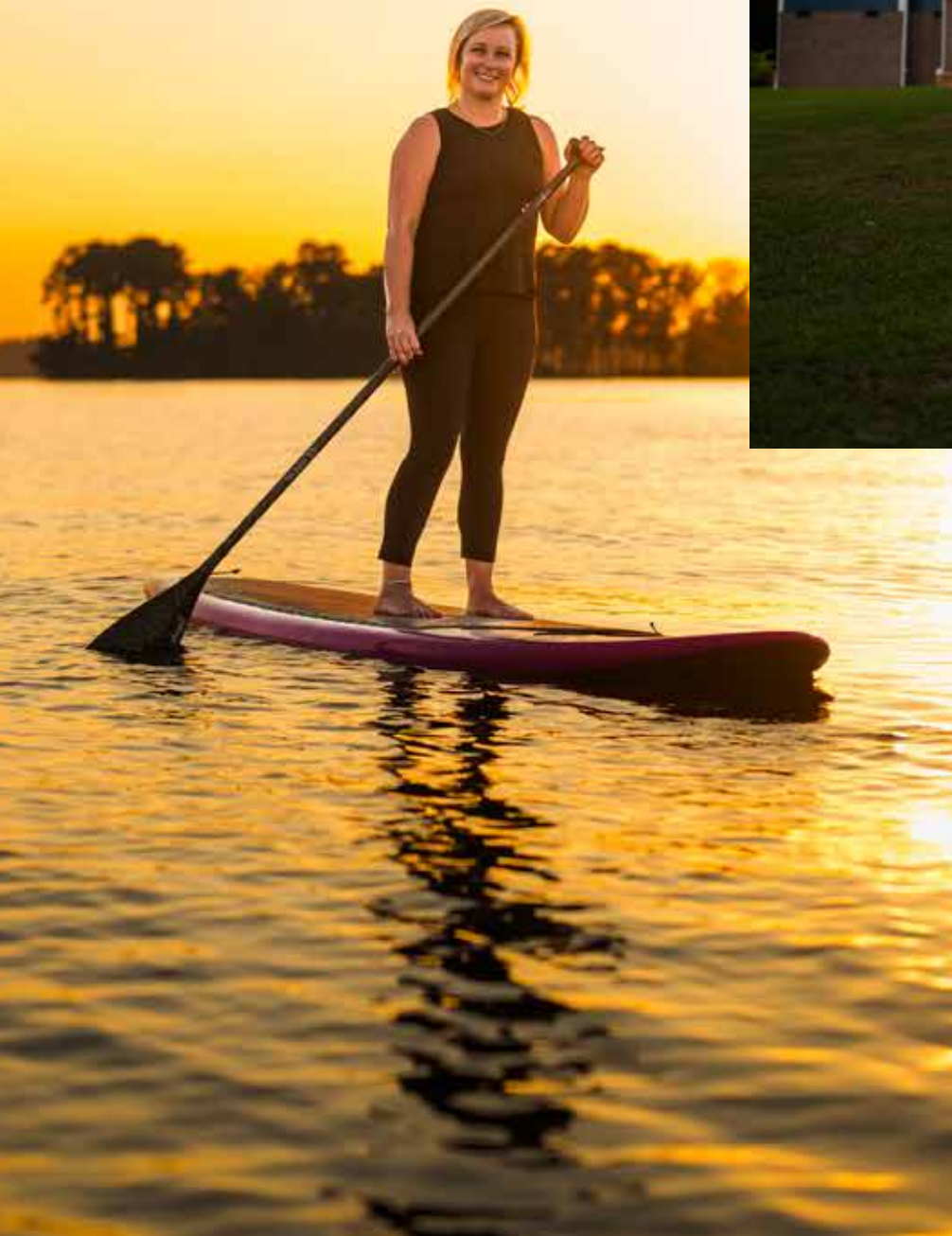
April Taylor Stroud, an accomplished Real Estate Professional with The Real Estate Brokerage, has built a reputation in South Carolina's Midlands area for her commitment to her clients and her authentic, approachable style. Born and raised in South Carolina, April brings a deep love for her community and a strong sense of Southern hospitality to her role as a Real Estate Professional. With a career that began in 2016, she has been recognized for her client-focused approach and for fostering trust, whether in good times or challenging ones.

April's journey toward real estate began as a high school student at Lexington Technology Center, where she took marketing classes and had the opportunity to shadow a real estate agent—a close friend of her grandfather's. Captivated by the world of real estate, April felt an immediate connection to the industry, and while she initially pursued a different career path, the pull of real estate never left her. After earning a degree in Marketing and Business Management, she worked in medical offices across South Carolina, North Carolina, and Colorado. When her twin boys, Ryan and Ethan, were born in 2010, she made the choice to stay home and later transitioned to direct sales with Thirty-One Gifts. As her sons grew, she considered her next career step, ultimately deciding to pursue real estate when the family moved back to South Carolina.

In 2016, April achieved her real estate license and has since devoted herself to helping clients find their perfect homes while balancing the demands of family life. With her husband working in North Carolina during the week, April often juggled her new business with parenting her young sons, who became her "biggest supporters." Over the years, Ryan and Ethan have accompanied her to listings, showings, and inspections, learning firsthand about the industry she loves. Now, eight years later, April continues to thrive in her career and is a respected agent in her field, specializing in residential home sales as both a listing and buyer's agent.

April's real estate practice stands out not only for her industry knowledge but also for her ability to connect with her clients. She tailors her approach to each client's unique needs, whether they are first-time buyers, growing families, or individuals relocating to South Carolina. April's local expertise spans numerous cities throughout the Midlands, including Lexington, Columbia, and Gilbert, where she provides comprehensive support throughout the buying or selling process. Her dedication extends to ensuring clients have the information

“
JUST BE
YOURSELF.”



and resources they need, liaising closely with lenders, attorneys, and other agents to facilitate smooth transactions.

One of her most memorable success stories highlights the lengths to which she goes for her clients. When a family purchasing their first home faced the loss of a job, putting their dream in jeopardy, April tapped into her network and helped the wife secure new employment, allowing the family to move forward with their purchase. This commitment to her clients' well-being and dreams is a hallmark of her approach, and it has contributed to her impressive career volume of over \$100 million, with \$17 million in sales last year alone.

April attributes much of her success to mentors like Dustin and Tara Johns, whose hard work has inspired her

to pursue her goals with resilience and drive. Despite the challenges of building a business while raising a family, she remains deeply passionate about her work, aiming to bring joy and satisfaction to each client's real estate experience. To April, success is defined by achieving her goals independently and celebrating both big and small milestones along the way.

April's passion for helping others extends beyond real estate into her personal life, where she is actively involved in numerous charitable organizations. Inspired by her husband's military service and her own family's experiences, she supports causes close to her heart, including the Wounded Warrior Project, Camp Cole-Ambassador, the March of Dimes, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, ChildFund International, and the Alzheimer's Association.

At home, April finds joy with her husband, Joey, their 14-year-old twin sons, and their pets, including her loyal Morkie, Cash, who now accompanies her on work outings. They enjoy life on Lake Murray, where family time often includes baseball, fishing, and trips on the lake. April's love for travel, concerts, and her collection of crystals reflects her vibrant personality and her belief in balancing hard work with enjoyment.

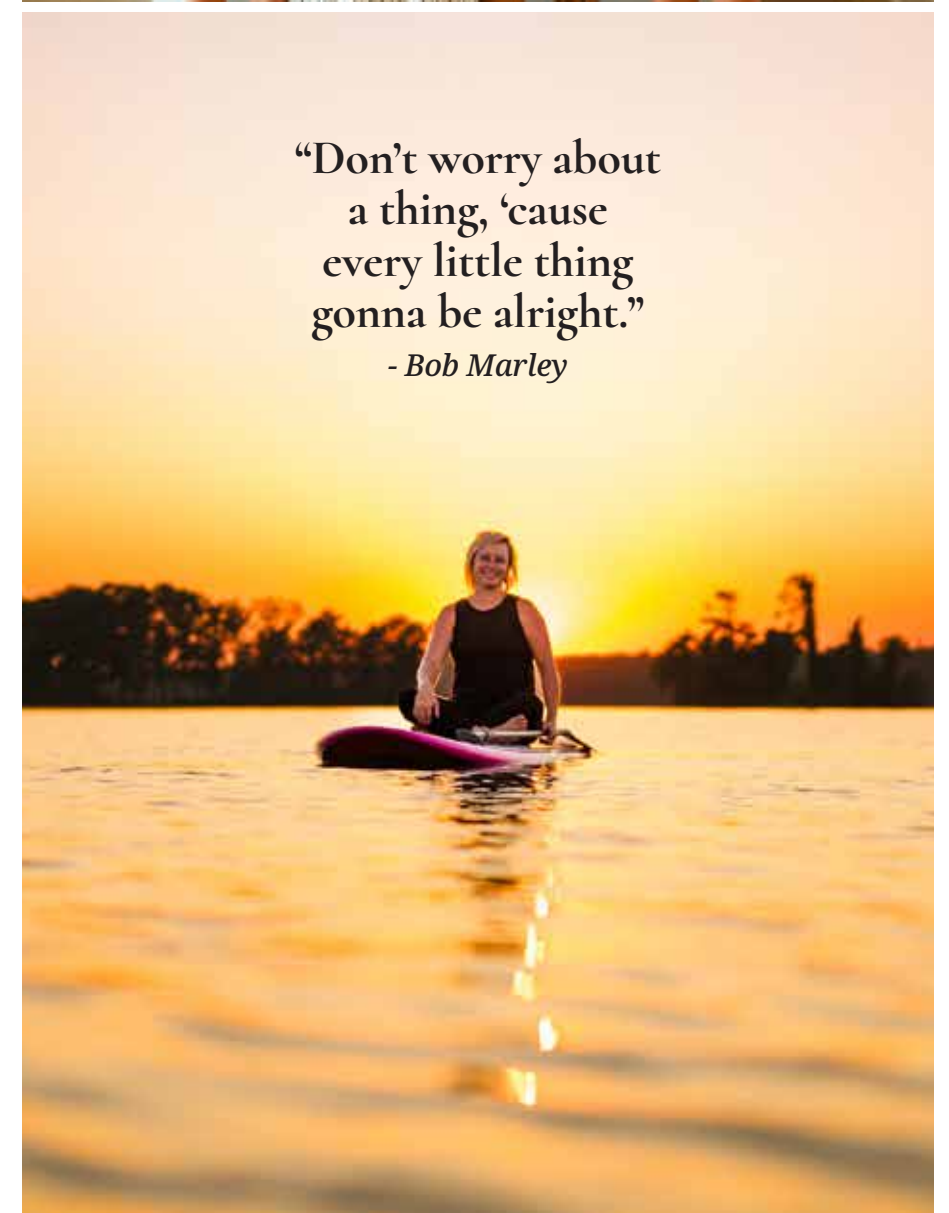
April's advice to fellow Real Estate Professionals is to "just be yourself," and she models this by treating clients with respect, showing vulnerability, and cultivating a strong referral network. Known for her ability to bring positivity and fun into her work, April believes in giving her all to each client while balancing the joys and responsibilities of family life. With her Hero Rebate Program, she further supports clients who serve the community, from military members to first responders and healthcare workers.

With her personal motto inspired by Bob Marley's words, "Don't worry about a thing, 'cause every little thing gonna be alright," April's outlook combines optimism and determination. She looks forward to a future in real estate, where she plans to keep helping others achieve their homeownership dreams for years to come.



“Don't worry about
a thing, 'cause
every little thing
gonna be alright.”

- Bob Marley



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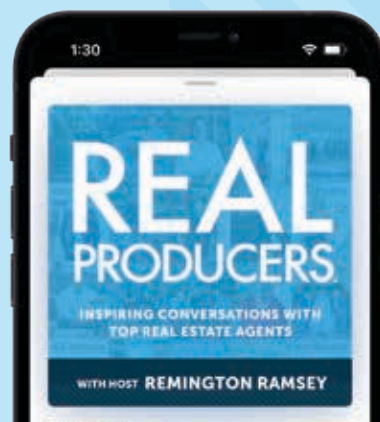


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WITH MARY GERVAIS BRANTLEY

WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

Met Mary Gervais Brantley, a dedicated mortgage advisor with CMG Home Loans in Columbia, South Carolina, and the 2024 Free Times Best Mortgage Loan Officer. Born and raised in the heart of Columbia, Mary has proudly served the community for over seven years, guiding clients through seamless and stress-free journeys to homeownership. Engaged to her fiancé Edwin after a romantic Parisian proposal, Mary embraces her hobbies of baking bread, gardening, and hand embroidery, alongside caring for their three beloved dogs—Hari, Marcel, and Bird.

Mary Gervais's passion for helping families and individuals achieve their dream of owning a home shines through her work. Supported by her talented all-female team—Jaimie, Cat, and Sarah—Mary Gervais offers a personalized experience from pre-approval to closing. With access to over 900 loan programs, including conventional, VA, FHA, USDA, non-QM, and HELOCs, Mary Gervais ensures that every client finds the solution tailored to their unique needs.

Her journey into the mortgage industry began during a summer job assisting loan processors, where she witnessed the joy of families achieving



“

With the right plan, realtor, and mortgage advisor, homeownership is always possible.”



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homeownership. This sparked a lifelong commitment to making that dream a reality for others. Mary Gervais’s empathetic nature and ability to craft game plans that align with her clients’ budgets and timelines have been key to her success.

Mary Gervais is also deeply involved in her community, supporting initiatives like the annual Cola Rose Shower, which addresses period poverty and promotes women’s healthcare awareness. Her dedication extends beyond transactions—she builds lasting relationships with clients, celebrating milestones and making their dreams of homeownership a reality.

One story that holds a special place in Mary Gervais’s heart involves a couple who believed homeownership was unattainable due to perceived income challenges. Through her expertise and personalized approach, she helped them

craft a plan, connected them with the perfect realtor, and saw them close on their dream home in less than 30 days. Stories like these fuel Mary Gervais’s passion for her work.

For Mary Gervais, success is about creating a business that instills confidence and comfort in homebuyers while making them proud to recommend her services. Her ideal client? A strong, independent woman ready to invest in her future through homeownership. “With the right plan, realtor, and mortgage advisor, homeownership is always possible,” Mary Gervais says.

Contact Mary Gervais Brantley at CMG Home Loans today to embark on your journey to owning your dream home.

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MEET TRISHA BROWN

PHOTOS BY: THE ROAMING LENS (LEAH WATT) - WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

Trisha Brown, Broker and Owner of Exclusive Realty, is a name synonymous with dedication, expertise, and a customer-first approach in the world of real estate. Beginning her journey in 2009, Trisha's transition into real estate was fueled by her extensive sales background and her husband's interest in home-flipping. With a desire to provide excellent customer service and a keen sense of responsibility, she saw real estate as a path to not only supplement her income but also build a career based on integrity and professional growth. Trisha became a Realtor to ensure her clients would benefit from her up-to-date knowledge and unwavering commitment to ethical practices.

Over her 15-year career, Trisha has worked with top companies, including Keller Williams and Century 21, where she quickly rose to become a top agent. Encouraged by her success and her husband's support, she took the bold step to establish Exclusive Realty, fulfilling her vision of a client-centered brokerage. "Starting my own firm wasn't an easy decision, but I wanted

to provide a high level of service that came from my own values and without restrictions," she reflects. This decision enabled her to realize her potential fully and prioritize the values that matter most to her.

Specializing across South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia, Trisha serves a broad client base and is proud of her ability to provide full-service support without referral constraints. She is a relentless advocate for her clients, always staying one step ahead by exploring off-market opportunities, networking with other agents, and even calling on properties pending sale to find the perfect fit for her clients. A memorable experience came during the competitive market of COVID-19 when her persistence and proactive approach helped a client secure a home that would otherwise have slipped through the cracks. Stories like these underscore Trisha's commitment to her clients' goals, proving time and again that her success is built on passion, dedication, and a willingness to think outside the box.

Throughout her career, Trisha has achieved significant milestones, including reaching a career volume of over \$86 million, with a total of \$9.4 million in sales last year alone. Her success has not been without challenges, however. Competing against large brokerages in a crowded market as an independent broker has tested her resolve, yet she has persevered by implementing effective systems and processes to level the playing field. Her achievements were recognized by her five consecutive CCR Circle of Excellence Awards, a testament to her resilience and hard work. For Trisha, success is defined by the ability to stay true to her goals and to ensure she has done right by her family and her clients. "Success can take on many definitions, but for me, it's knowing I've achieved my personal goals and served my clients well."

At the heart of her business today is a commitment to educating buyers on the benefits of homeownership and guiding them on the path to making informed decisions. Her passion for the industry is evident not just in her work





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ethic but in her personal values. Trisha is deeply family-oriented, cherishing time with her husband Stephon, daughter Daisha, and son Jaylin. Together, they share a love of travel and music, often celebrating holidays with family vacations. These trips are part of Trisha’s belief in building lasting memories and balancing professional success with family connections.

Looking ahead, Trisha dreams of expanding her business and hopes to open a shelter for abused women, offering them a fresh start and teaching them about homeownership. Her desire to give back and her vision for her business reflect her belief that real estate is about more than transactions—it’s about empowering lives. She urges aspiring realtors to stay consistent,

find their niche, and prioritize relationship-building. “Consistency is key. It’s not just about the money; it’s about building relationships.”

In Trisha’s words, “As Realtors, we are our brand.” Her dedication to integrity, respect, and service is the foundation of Exclusive Realty and the reason she has become the trusted professional clients turn to, time and again. Her favorite quote by George Washington Carver—“Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have a habit of making excuses”—echoes her drive and is a reminder to all aspiring realtors of the importance of accountability. With her dedication, resilience, and compassion, Trisha Brown leaves an indelible mark on the real estate industry, always remembered as the person clients can count on.

“CONSISTENCY IS KEY. IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT THE MONEY; IT’S ABOUT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.”



**Meet
Debbie
Sayce
Elliott**



A REALTOR WITH HEART, HUMOR, & HARD WORK



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A Background Rich in Real Estate and Resilience

Debbie Sayce Elliott, a 61-year-old realtor with Campbell and Company, powered by Keller Williams Preferred, brings decades of experience, a love for her work, and a genuine enthusiasm for people to her role. Having earned her real estate license in July 2020, Debbie's transition into real estate was a natural one. With a 35-year background in marketing and PR, where real estate was often her niche, she had already worked extensively with builders, developers, and brokerage firms. Her unique expertise in communications, combined with the work ethic of a former business owner, made her exceptionally well-prepared for her real estate career.



A Natural Fit with Campbell and Company

Debbie began her real estate career as an independent agent with Nest Realty in Wilmington, NC, a boutique brokerage known for its creative marketing and community-centered culture. In 2022, she and her husband, John, moved full-time to John's Hometown of Camden, SC, where she joined the local real estate market. "I hung my license with Nest Realty out of Greenville SC but I wanted to be more engaged with the Camden community," Debbie explains. Drawn to Campbell and Company's expertise in historic, luxury, and equestrian properties, she reached out to Jeanene Campbell, team lead for



Campbell and Company and joined the team in April 2023. “Jeanene has been an inspiration and mentor,” she shares. “Her market knowledge, reputation, and work ethic set, a high bar for the team.” As a member of this dynamic four-person team, Debbie enjoys bringing the same passion and professionalism she valued in her previous career.

Building Client Relationships through Listening and Creativity

Debbie’s approach to real estate is built on a foundation of listening and understanding her clients’ evolving needs. “I ask lots of questions to determine buyers’ must-haves, which often change as we tour homes,” she says. A relentless networker, she actively participates in the Camden community through local clubs and activities, often hearing about properties before they hit

the market. Her marketing background also plays a major role in her success. “Creativity has always been at the heart of my work,” she explains. “It’s about finding solutions where others don’t think to look.”

One memorable success story highlights Debbie’s skills as both a negotiator and problem solver. As the former owner of her own PR agency, Talk, Inc., where she specialized in crisis management, Debbie is adept at handling unexpected issues that may arise in real estate. “Emotions can run high,” she notes, “and my job is to find solutions that instill confidence and protect my clients’ best interests.”

Community Engagement and Giving Back

A Camden resident, Debbie is committed to supporting her community. She

“Dogs are my passion and being able to support their work is one of the most fulfilling aspects of my job.”



donates 5% of each commission to PAALS (Palmetto Animal Assisted Life Services), a nonprofit that provides assistance dogs to individuals with disabilities. In 2023, she proudly donated over \$10,000 to PAALS. “Dogs are my passion,” Debbie shares, “and being able to support their work is one of the most fulfilling aspects of my job.”

Hobbies, Family, and a Legacy of Joy

Outside of work, Debbie and her husband, John, enjoy exploring South Carolina, boating on Lake Wateree, and spending time with their two dogs, Keeper and River. Originally from

“Little” Washington, North Carolina, Debbie has always loved the small-town charm of Camden. “We’ve owned a home on Lake Wateree since 2001 but when we decided to move here full-time, we built downtown in the Historic District. Now we enjoy everything downtown Camden has to offer and our lake house is just 20 minutes away. Debbie’s love for life shines through her hobbies: she’s an avid reader, tennis player, gardener, and baker who also delights in puns and dad jokes.

Looking to the future, Debbie hopes to continue building her real estate business before eventually

transitioning into a referral-based role. She encourages aspiring agents to embrace the journey with patience, resilience, and an openness to hard work. Her advice to others? “There are no traffic jams along the extra mile,” a favorite quote by Roger Staubach, which captures her approach to life and work perfectly.

In the end, Debbie hopes to be remembered as a successful realtor who brought people joy through her work and friendships. “Success,” she reflects, “is about working hard, giving back, and finding happiness every day in what you do.”

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