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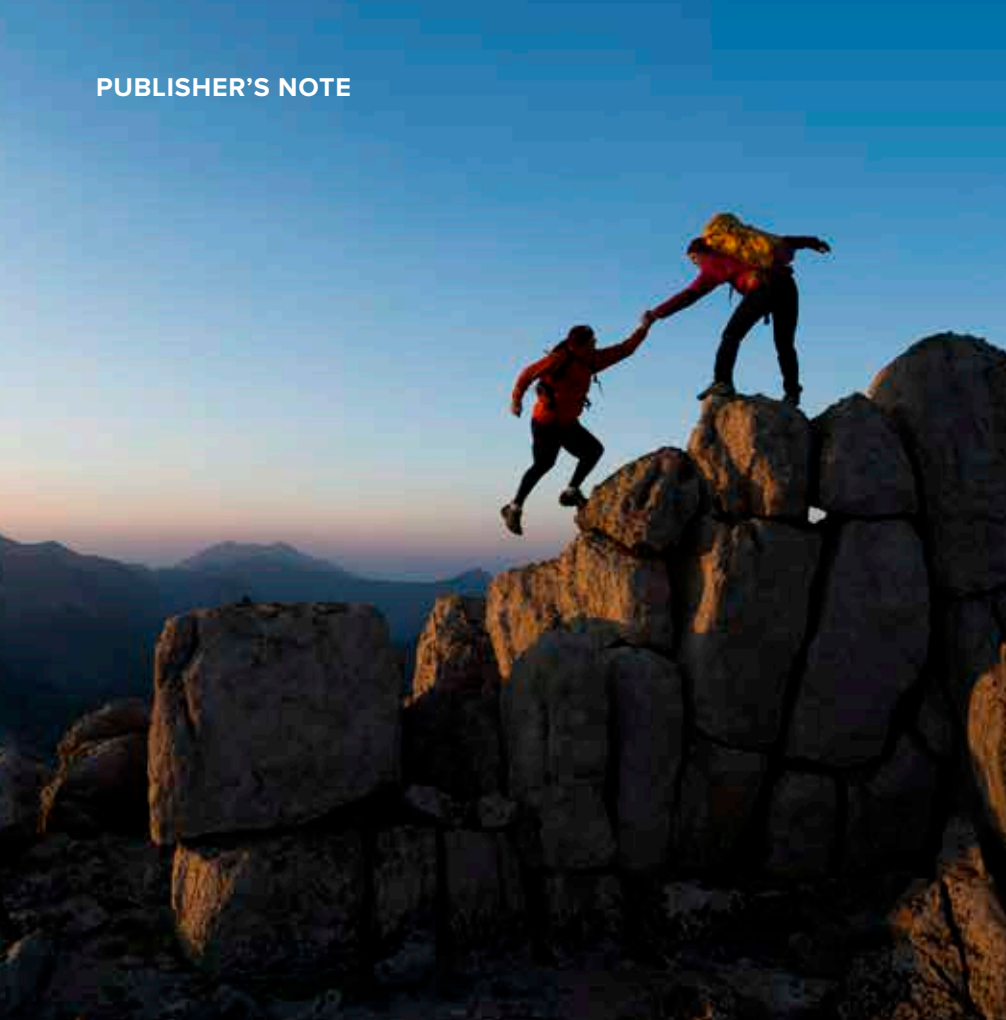
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The Master Key to Thrive in 2025

Here we are, at the start of another exciting year—and let me tell you, I can't wait to see what's ahead! There's something about the energy of a fresh year that gets me fired up. It's a time to dream big, set goals, and chase after those "wow" moments that remind us why we love what we do.

Lately, I've been thinking about the imagery of keys and how they symbolize opportunity and potential. Every door we face—whether it's a challenge, a goal, or a new venture—requires the right key to open it. So, the big question is: **What are the keys to thriving in 2025?**

One key stands out to me: **belief.**

Belief is like a master key. It's not just one key among many—it's the key that helps open every door. Whether you're unlocking creativity, perseverance, collaboration, or growth, belief is the starting point. When you truly believe in yourself, your vision, and your ability to succeed, you find ways to turn every lock, no matter how daunting it may seem.

Think about it: Belief fuels confidence, and confidence drives action. It's what allows you to walk into opportunities with boldness, tackle obstacles with grit, and build connections that matter. It's not about blind optimism; it's about the kind of belief that pushes you to prepare, innovate, and stay focused on what's possible—even when the path isn't clear.

As we dive into 2025, let's focus on carrying this master key with us everywhere we go. Let's lean into belief and use it to unlock new doors, face fresh challenges, and make this a year of incredible breakthroughs.

We're here to celebrate your wins, share ideas, and keep inspiring one another to reach new heights. Here's to a year of thriving, growing, and unlocking your full potential.



Cheers to belief, breakthroughs, and a fantastic 2025!

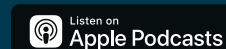
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Meet Sally Isom

Finding Home(s)

WRITTEN BY JEFF WHITE
PHOTOS BY CALEB NELSON

It's been said, home is where the heart is. Sally Isom embodies the truth of this sentiment, dedicating her life to helping others find the perfect place to call home. Her journey to becoming one of Memphis' top real estate professionals is as unique and heartfelt as the city she loves. With over 28 years at Coldwell Banker Collins-Maury, Sally has built a career centered on resilience, relationships, and a deep love for her adopted city.

From Texas to Tennessee

Sally grew up in Garland, Texas, just outside of Dallas, where she got an early introduction to the world of real estate. Her dad owned a real estate company and worked as a homebuilder, so you could say it's in her DNA. After earning a degree in Sociology and Education from the University of Texas, she started her career as a manager trainee at Safeway Grocery Stores. But real estate was always on her mind.

In January of 1995, while she was working at Neiman Marcus, she crossed paths with Clay, who would later become her husband. The tale goes that she had the opportunity to open a charge account for him. "I was just doing my job when I noticed he was pretty cute. I asked if he wanted to put Mrs. Isom on the account," she recalled. He replied, "There is no Mrs. Isom." They hit it off, and she invited him to a party that evening at Broadway Grill in Addison. He showed up, and they had a great time. Their relationship blossomed into long-distance dating, and by 1996, they were married. She moved to Memphis just a week after the wedding!

It was a big change, but Sally saw an opportunity to finally dive into her dream career. "I got my real estate license while working at Oak Hall and started interviewing with different

companies," she remembers. "When I walked into Coldwell Banker Collins-Maury and met Bill Maury, I knew I'd found my place. We clicked immediately."

Fast forward nearly three decades, and Sally is still thriving at the company, grateful for the friendships and support she's found there.

Falling in Love with Memphis

Sally's move to Memphis wasn't all smooth sailing. At first, she wasn't sure how she felt about the city. But everything changed when she and Clay joined Lindenwood Christian Church in 1997. "That church brought me back to my faith and helped me form deep relationships," she shares. "Once I connected with the people, I fell in love with Memphis. The history, the culture, the food, the music—and most of all, the people. Memphis is so real."

Her faith continues to be a guiding force in her life. "I believe God brought me to Memphis for a reason, and I try to share my story with others who might be struggling," Sally says.

A Career Built on Relationships

Over the years, Sally's business has grown steadily, thanks to referrals from past clients



and their friends and families. "I'm so lucky to work with amazing people who trust me to guide them through such an important process," she says.

Her success is also a testament to the supportive environment at Coldwell Banker Collins-Maury. Sally credits Doug Collins, the company's founder, for being a mentor who prioritized training, ethics, and involvement in the real estate community. "Doug encouraged us to get involved with MAAR (Memphis Area Association of Realtors) and TAR (Tennessee Association of Realtors)," she says. "That's where I built lasting friendships and found my footing in the industry." Angie Ware and Sean Blankenship purchased Coldwell Banker Collins-Maury 5 years ago from Doug Collins and have continued with the same core values the company was founded on.

Keeping Up with Market Trends

The real estate market is always changing, and Sally stays on top of it all. "Since COVID, people are spending more time at home, so they want spaces that fit their lifestyles," she explains. "First-time buyers are eager to stop renting, and outdoor spaces and functional kitchens are more important than ever."

Right now, Sally is especially passionate about helping clients downsize to a simpler lifestyle. "Luxury condos, secure zero-lot-line homes, and newer properties on smaller lots are in high demand," she says. She also loves helping clients explore real estate as a wealth-building tool, whether through rental properties, multi-family units, or flips.

Life Outside of Real Estate

When Sally isn't busy with clients, you can find her traveling, working out, hiking,

“

Everything is going to be okay. We all have so many chances to help others and make connections.”



and make connections,” she says. “I’m focusing on being more present and taking those opportunities when they come.”

Fun Fact

One fun detail many may not know about Sally is her love for the pilot’s seat. From the skies to the seas, Sally’s adventurous spirit has always propelled her forward—she holds a pilot’s license and a captain’s license for driving boats up to ninety feet long. One might say she has an uncanny ability to navigate uncharted territory, including a steadfast commitment to guiding her clients through their own journeys.

Looking Ahead

As she moves forward, Sally remains deeply grateful for Memphis and the life she’s built here. “This city has given me so much,” she says. “I’m excited to keep giving back and helping others find their perfect place in this amazing community.”

For Sally, real estate is more than just a job—it’s a way to serve, connect, and celebrate the city she loves. And with her heart for people and passion for Memphis, she’s not slowing down anytime soon.

the city where they’re based,” she says. “The Salvation Army’s programs, especially for women in addiction recovery, are also so inspiring. I love that they help women live with their children while they rebuild their lives.”

Advice for Fellow Agents

Sally’s advice to new Realtors is simple: “Be kind and helpful to others in the industry. I’ll never forget the agents who were patient with me when I was starting out. It makes all the difference.”

Her motto, “Everything is going to be okay,” reflects her optimistic approach to life and work. “We all have so many chances to help others

or learning to play bridge. But her biggest hobby? Following the Memphis Grizzlies. “I’ve become a huge NBA fan over the past few years,” she laughs. “I go to as many games as I can.”

Sally’s husband, Clay, has been her rock since the beginning. Together, they share their life with Missy, their spoiled Yorkshire Terrier, and stay close to their nieces and their families in Texas.

Giving Back

Sally’s heart for giving back is evident in her support for organizations like St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and the Salvation Army. “St. Jude does incredible work for kids with cancer, and I’m proud to live in



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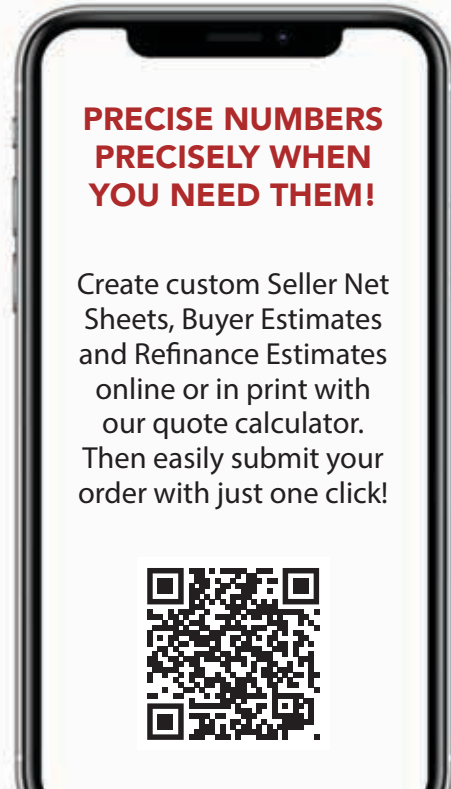
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MICHAEL & APRIL Bryan

TRUST, FAMILY & REAL ESTATE

WRITTEN BY JEFF WHITE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIANNA KINSEY LINN

“Real estate is about more than just selling homes—it’s about building trust and helping people make life-changing decisions with confidence.” – Michael Bryan

For Michael and April Bryan, co-owners of Bryan Realty Group (BRG), this belief has been at the heart of everything they’ve built. They didn’t just want to build a successful business; they wanted to create a place where people feel like family, where honesty and integrity always come first, and where trust isn’t just a word, but a guiding principle.

A Connection Rooted in Trust

Michael and April’s journey together began when they were re-acquainted at his sister’s wedding in 2000. “It was instant,” Michael says with a smile, remembering their first date. “We both knew we wanted to be together.” Within months, they were engaged, and less than a year later, they were married. Their connection wasn’t just about love—it was about building a foundation of trust that would carry them through both their personal lives and eventually their shared professional journey.

That trust was key to shaping their careers. Michael’s family had a long history in real estate, with both his grandfather and great-grandfather being

well-respected figures in commercial real estate. Even though Michael initially hesitated to follow in their footsteps, a little over 20 years ago it eventually felt like the right path. “It was something I fought for a long time,” Michael admits. “But becoming an investor in residential real estate drew me in and I quickly fell in love with the industry.”

“I always knew I wanted to help people and run my own business. Real estate gave me that chance—whether it’s helping people buy their first home or guiding them through a challenging sale.”

April’s background, on the other hand, came from the world of corporate customer service, marketing, and product development, where she learned the value of truly understanding people’s needs. After 22+ years at International Paper and FedEx, she was ready to join Michael, and real estate

felt like the perfect way to use her skills to help others. “I always knew I wanted to help people and run my own business,” April says. “Real estate gave me that chance—whether it’s helping people buy their first home or guiding them through a challenging sale.”

From Rentals to Real Estate: Building Wealth and Relationships

Their first steps into real estate over 20 years ago weren’t about chasing immediate profits; it was about securing their own future. They started by flipping houses and buying rentals, looking to build long-term wealth. “It was about making sure we had something secure for our future,” Michael says. “But it didn’t take long before I realized the bigger picture. I could help others do the same, and that’s what excited me about the real estate industry, spurring me on to become an agent for others.”

As their experience in real estate grew, Michael and April knew they wanted to create something bigger—a place where agents could thrive while focusing on what truly mattered: people. Michael took the leap to start his own brokerage in 2016, April joined him in 2018, and what began as a small team has now grown to over 20 agents. But the one thing that

has stayed constant is their belief in creating a supportive, team oriented, “healthy competition” environment.

They combined their diverse experiences—Michael’s knowledge of construction and home systems, and April’s deep understanding of customer service—to offer something unique: a personalized, honest approach to real estate that focuses on education. “We always want our clients to feel empowered,” April explains. “Whether you’re buying or selling, it’s important to know exactly what’s happening, what your options are, and what to expect. Knowledge is power, and we make sure our clients have it.”

Their honest approach helped them earn trust quickly, but it also set the tone for how they would build their future. “If you’re upfront with people, if you’re honest, they’ll come back to you,” Michael says. “That’s been our experience, and it’s what keeps us going.”

Growing Bryan Realty Group: Building a Team Like Family

“We’ve never wanted our agents to feel like they’re competing against each other in a negative way,” April says. “Instead, we’ve built a culture where everyone works together. When one person succeeds, we all succeed. It’s a team effort. And we celebrate all of our wins!” One recent win was being voted “Memphis Most” Best Real Estate Company for the second year in a row. This is one of the accolades we are most proud of because it is an award nominated and voted on by the public.

A strong collaborative spirit is at the core of their business. From day one, Michael and April were committed to recruiting agents who shared their values—not just those who were looking for a paycheck, but those who were genuinely invested in helping clients.

“We envisioned a different kind of business model, one that goes beyond the traditional brokerage approach,” Michael explains. “Instead of focusing on commission splits and monthly desk fees, we prioritize coaching and training to empower our agents and brokerage to succeed. Our belief is simple: when our agents are professional and knowledgeable, their success naturally translates into success for BRG.” He continues, “At BRG, we’re committed to being client-focused professionals who prioritize our clients’ best interests. When clients win, our agents win, and ultimately, our entire team and industry benefit. It’s a true win-win for everyone.”

“If you’re upfront with people, if you’re honest, they’ll come back to you. That’s been our experience, and it’s what keeps us going.”



Unlike many traditional brokerages, BRG doesn’t charge desk fees. “We believe in investing in our agents because their success is our success. It’s a mutual relationship built on trust and shared goals,” April says.

When asked about future growth, Michael and April emphasize that there’s always room at Bryan Realty Group for talented agents and staff who align with BRG’s core values. “If you’re not willing to grow, learn, and embrace coaching, no split or structure will make you successful. It all starts with the right mindset and a commitment to excellence, advocates April.”

This philosophy extends beyond the business itself—into the way they treat their clients. “We’ve always believed that real estate isn’t just about selling houses. It’s about creating trust and relationships that last,” April says. “Our goal isn’t just to close a deal—it’s to make sure our clients are completely comfortable with their decisions. We want them to know we’ve got their backs every step of the way.”

Family: The Heartbeat of Everything They Do

Family has always been at the heart of what Michael and April do. And now they’re passing that sentiment down to their son, Seth, that works with them too. The family-first approach applies to the family they’ve built together, and the extended family they’ve cultivated within their brokerage. They’ve always strived to create an environment where relationships come before competition, and where support, not rivalry, is the key to success.

“We believe in family values—not just in our personal lives, but in our business too,” Michael says. “Creating a space where people feel supported, fully trained, where they feel like they belong—that’s what’s important to us. It’s about nurturing growth, both professionally and personally.”

It’s no surprise, then, that they treat their clients like family, too. “Buying or selling a home is a big deal,” April says. “We don’t take that lightly. We want our clients to feel heard, supported, and cared for throughout the entire process. They’re not just transactions to us—they’re people.”

Balancing Work, Family, and Fun

Michael and April firmly believe that balance is key to long-term success, not just in business but in life. Outside of work, they enjoy spending time on

their boat at Greers Ferry lake and on a family farm, where they indulge in their love for outdoor activities. “We spend a lot of time horseback riding and cutting trails on the farm,” Michael says. “It’s our way of getting out into nature, staying active, and unwinding.” Their love for the outdoors also extends to their travel habits, with trips both domestically and internationally. “I’m more of a beach and warm weather person, while Michael prefers mountains and wineries,” April says, laughing. “We make it work!” When they’re not on the farm or traveling,

Michael and April enjoy spending time with their families, especially their son, nieces, and nephew. “We’re the silly, supportive aunt and uncle,” April says. “Family is everything to us, and we appreciate every moment spent together.” These activities not only bring them joy, but also help them recharge so they can bring their best selves to both their business and personal lives. We definitely believe in “work hard, play hard”, April and Michael agree.

Looking to the Future: A Legacy Built on Trust

As Michael and April continue to grow Bryan Realty Group, they’re focused on creating something that will last—not just for themselves, but for their team and future generations. “We’re not just here for the next deal,” Michael says. “We’re building something long-term, something based on trust and integrity.”

Michael and April Bryan aren’t just selling houses—they’re building relationships, fostering growth, and leaving behind a legacy that will stand the test of time.



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Meet **Melody Bourell**

Working Her Way
to **Top Realtor®**

WRITTEN BY JEFF WHITE
PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH
LOONEY PHOTOGRAPHY

MMelody Bourell's roots in Memphis run deep.

Her family moved frequently, upgrading their living situation as her parents' financial situation improved.

"When I was a kid, we moved a lot to better houses and neighborhoods,"

Melody Bourell recalls with a smile. Her first home was a trailer on Lamar Avenue—"I always say, beat that! Ha!" she laughs. From there, they moved to Oakhaven, then Parkway Village, and finally Fox Meadows. That early experience of climbing the housing ladder instilled in her a deep understanding of what a home represents—

not just a place to live, but a symbol of progress, stability, and dreams fulfilled.

Those formative years shaped her tenacity and adaptability, qualities that now define her as a top-tier real estate agent and partner at Marx-Bensdorf Realtors, where she helps families achieve their own milestones.

Early Years

Changing schools frequently due to housing moves meant Melody had to adapt quickly. "It was sink or swim," she says. "Thank goodness I can swim." This resilience laid the foundation for her tenacity in life and business.

Skipping College, Diving Into Work

While many pursue higher education, Melody took a different path. "I went to work," she explains. Her first job at 16 was scooping ice cream at Baskin Robbins, but that lasted only a day or two because she was "too small to reach and scoop." She quickly found her stride as a waitress at Shoney's. "It's still one of the hardest jobs I've ever had," she admits. "Breaking down a salad bar at 10 PM and going to school the next day ... Not easy, people!"

Over the years, she worked her way through various roles, including as a sales rep at Sysco. "I used to get pages that said '911 -I

need Ranch' on Saturday mornings," she jokes. Despite the stress, her time at Sysco taught her a valuable lesson: "Just ask for the business." It's a mantra she carries with her to this day.

Finding Her Calling in Real Estate

Melody's leap into real estate began with a nudge from a friend, Susan Overton. "I was working six to seven days a week and thought, 'If I'm going to work this hard, I need to make more money,'" she says. Starting as Susan's assistant, Melody quickly learned the ropes and took on a role as a

buyer's agent. Her knack for turning leads into clients and closing deals set her apart.

After a brief stint with another brokerage, Melody found her way back to Marx-Bensdorf Realtors, where she's been ever since. "The stars aligned," she says of the move. Today, she's not just an agent but a partner, bringing her creativity and experience to the leadership table.

More Than a Realtor: Melody's Many Hats

What truly sets Melody apart is what she does beyond real estate. She's a woman of many talents



“IT'S SO
REWARDING TO
SEE **MEMPHIS**
IMPROVING.”



“

ALWAYS PUT THE CLIENT'S NEEDS FIRST, AND **LOYALTY** IN BUSINESS IS EVERYTHING. IT'S HOW YOU HANDLE THE MISTAKE THAT PEOPLE CARE ABOUT.”

as simple as a uniform could change a child's experience at school. “I saw firsthand how a clean uniform boosted a child's confidence,” she explains. Under her guidance, the initiative has evolved from a small-scale effort into a cornerstone of support for the school. Melody takes a hands-on approach, rallying support through social media. She tells funny stories about the people who donate and what they do in the world to encourage others to participate. “These kids are our future leaders of Memphis,” she says passionately. “Helping them feel prepared to succeed is very important.” The success of the program is a testament to her dedication and her deep compassion for others.

The Creative Soul
When she's not working, Melody dives into her hobbies: cooking, traveling, collecting art and entertaining. Her love for vintage jewelry and reclaimed treasures

reflects her appreciation for beauty and history. She's also a passionate supporter of public radio, often tuning into shows like *The Splendid Table* and *Checking on the Arts*.

Family First
Melody's family is the cornerstone of her life. Her parents' story is one of grit and love—they've known each other since childhood and built a life together from humble beginnings. “I get my work ethic from them,” she says. Her father, kind and brilliant, and her mother, one of 12 siblings who taught her the value of perseverance and connection. Melody also cherishes her sister Julie and her niece Zaynah, who bring joy to her busy life.

Advice for Realtors—and Life
Melody's wisdom extends far beyond real estate. “Always put the client's needs first, and loyalty in business is everything” she advises. She also emphasizes the

importance of handling mistakes with grace: “It's how you handle the mistake that people care about.”

She credits her restaurant background for many of her skills. “Restaurants teach you so much! Everyone should have to work in restaurant at least once. You have your “front of the house” and “back of the house” people. They are your family & lifeline. It's the same in real estate! Front of the house are your lenders, closing attorneys, insurance people, other realtors. Back of the house are your inspectors, electricians, plumbers, and construction people! I jokingly call it waiting tables from your car. “Listen to clients, solve problems, and run things.”

A Visionary Partner
As a partner at Marx-Bensdorf Realtors, Melody's excited to shape the future of the firm. Her blend of creativity, dedication, and experience makes her a natural leader. “I'm very lucky and grateful,” she says. “This is a labor of love.”

The Heart of Memphis
Melody Bourell is more than a real estate icon. She's a force of nature, a champion for her community, and a testament to what hard work and passion can achieve. Whether she's helping a first-time buyer, staging a home, or providing uniforms for kids in need, Melody's impact is felt far and wide. In her words, “What you see is what you get. I'm honest, transparent, and always go the extra mile.”

Memphis is lucky to have her.



and passions, all of which enrich her professional life and her community.

The Advocate for First-Time Buyers

Melody loves helping first-time homebuyers. “It's so rewarding to see Memphis improving,” she says, referring to revitalized neighborhoods that were once overlooked. From downtown condos to suburban homes, she thrives on showcasing the diversity of Memphis real estate. “You never know what the day will bring,” she adds, excitedly recounting her journeys across the city.

The Staging Expert

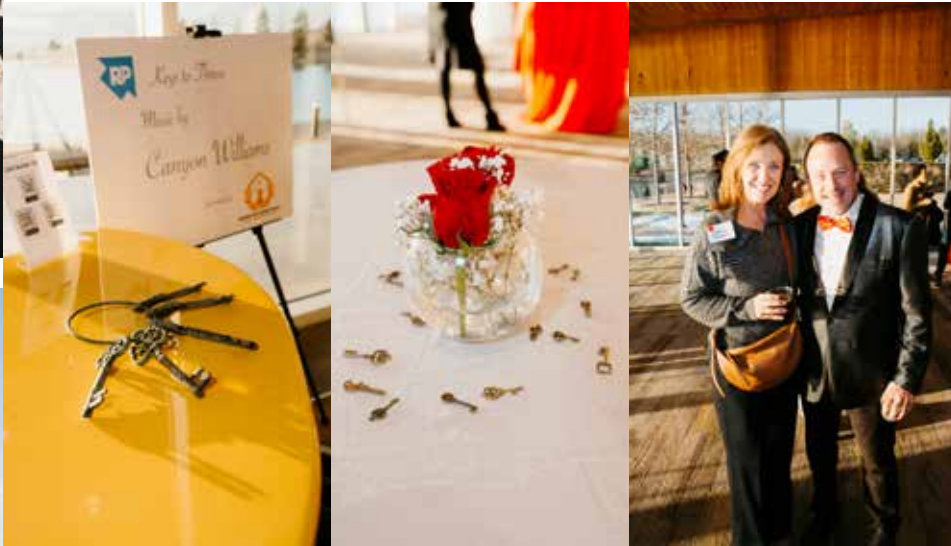
With a flair for entertainment and design, Melody stages many of her own listings, often incorporating reclaimed

and vintage items. “I'm an avid curbside shopper,” she laughs. Her favorite find? A vintage sectional she restored. “I call it my \$2,200 free couch!” She takes this same vision to houses. If you've ever attended one of Melody's broker open houses, you know they aren't just showings; they're experiences, complete with delicious food and thoughtful details to make every guest feel special.

The Philanthropist

Melody's heart is as big as her ambition. Fourteen years ago, she co-founded the Brewster Elementary Uniform Drive, which provides school uniforms to over 800 students annually. The program was inspired by her desire to give back to the community and the realization that something

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FROM A HOME INSPECTOR

Derek Groves with National Property Inspections

A home inspection is an opportunity to uncover the hidden secrets of a prospective property, and for Derek Groves of National Property Inspections (NPI) Northwest Mississippi, it's a chance to educate and empower clients. Alongside his trusted partner, Scooter Holliday, Derek has been helping homebuyers in Memphis, Collierville, Olive Branch, and beyond since 2014, ensuring they understand the true condition of their future homes. With cutting-edge tools like infrared scans, air quality testing, and radon detection, Derek and his team go beyond surface-level evaluations to provide comprehensive insights, making the inspection process an educational journey rather than a checklist.

Derek's unconventional path to home inspection began in the mortgage field service industry, inspired by a conversation with a realtor friend. His career shift proved transformative, blending his curiosity with a passion for empowering homebuyers. "We strive to be genuine and non-alarmist in our

communication," Derek shares. By delivering clear, actionable information, NPI helps clients make confident decisions, whether they're first-time buyers or seasoned investors.

Beyond inspections, Derek enjoys time with his family, cheering on the Dallas Cowboys, and pursuing hobbies like disc golf and fantasy football. Through honesty, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence, NPI Northwest Mississippi has built a legacy of trust, providing not just home inspections but peace of mind for clients embarking on one of life's most significant journeys.



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