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The Premier Team **26** COVER STORY

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CJ Phipps, Next Door Photos



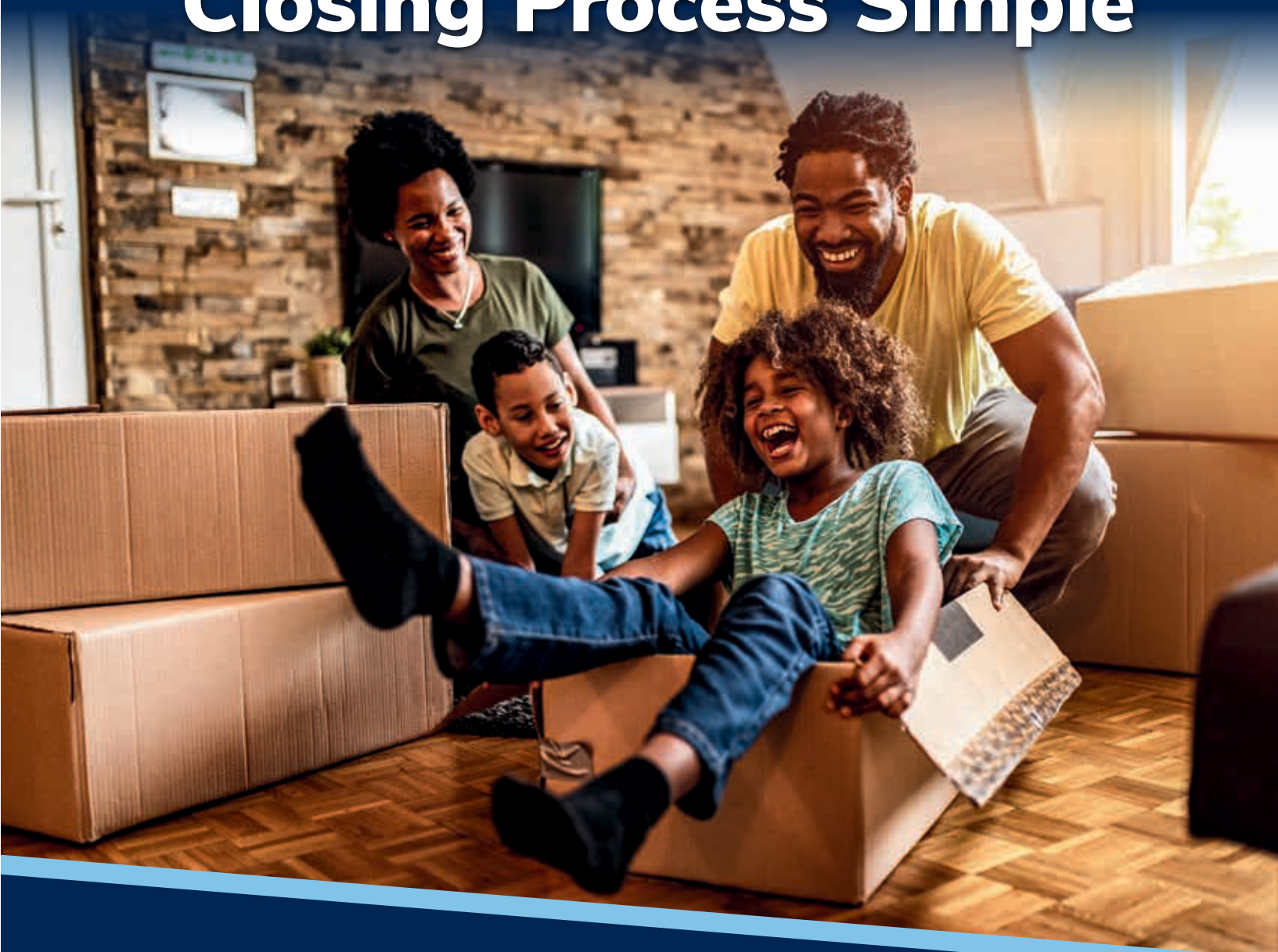
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## Publisher's Note

Hello January, the Season of New Beginnings!

As we welcome 2025, there's a sense of excitement and endless possibilities in the air. January is a month of fresh starts—a chance to set new intentions, embrace challenges, and dream big for the year ahead.

It's also a time to reflect on the successes and lessons of the past year. As we turn the page, let's remember the power of community, connection, and collaboration that brought us here. Together, we can achieve even greater heights.



We're excited to kick off 2025 with an inspiring Mastermind event on February 13th! Join us for a morning filled with impactful ideas, meaningful connections, and




industry insights. Stay tuned for more details—you won't want to miss this dynamic start to the year!

As we step into January, let's hold onto this thought: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Wishing you a January filled with purpose, energy, and new beginnings!




Your publisher,  
**Kristin Brindley**  
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**4**

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# CJ PHIPPS

## NEXT DOOR PHOTOS

### Building Connections Through The Lens

BY AMELIA ROSEWOOD · PHOTOS BY DON ELROD

CJ Phipps has been the proud owner of Next Door Photos Charlotte for seven years, serving the community with a steady hand and a welcoming approach. Known for his calm and laid-back personality, CJ is a natural peacemaker who excels at building connections with everyone he meets. In an industry driven by visuals, CJ brings more than technical skills; he fosters a spirit of unity and understanding among clients and colleagues alike. With a talent for bridging divides and bringing people together, CJ has turned Next Door Photos into more than a photography business—he’s created a trusted community presence.

#### Mission-Driven Path

CJ Phipps has deep roots in Charlotte, where he grew up and discovered his passion for making a difference. Originally, CJ’s path appeared set toward ministry, with a degree tailored for the field and an early career spent working in churches. However, he was no stranger to variety in his work, gaining experience in everything from restaurant service to manufacturing. “I jump around a lot,” CJ notes, reflecting on his broad work history. While ministry was his ultimate goal, his journey has been anything but linear.

During college, CJ realized his interest in the business world and began to see it as a platform for creating meaningful change. “I always thought there were three main paths in life: working directly to help people, supporting that work financially, or finding a way to combine the two,” he explains. This exploration led him to an emerging concept known as business as a mission—the idea that a business could be profitable and purpose-driven. He



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**"IT'S LESS ABOUT THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE AND MORE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE SOMETHING FROM NOTHING."**

was captivated by how a business could integrate impact into its core, creating benefits for clients and communities.

In 2018, CJ launched Next Door Photos in Charlotte, fusing his vision of a business with a mission. His company provides real estate photography services to agents while supporting an international editing team, many of whom have overcome serious life challenges. "The key realization for me was understanding the potential of business to make a difference simply

through its model," CJ says. Since then, the Next Door Photos network has continued to grow, with CJ managing ownership and operations in Charlotte.

#### **Efficient Service and Social Impact**

With the tagline, "We help Realtors publish listings faster with great media," Next Door Photos has grown since CJ launched operations in Charlotte. The company has expanded to over 50 territories nationwide, thanks to its dedicated expansion team based in

Michigan. Serving real estate agents across the Carolinas, Next Door Photos provides comprehensive media solutions through a skilled team of local photographers, account executives, and remote operations staff. Charlotte-based owner CJ leads a talented group, including photographers, an operations team in the Dominican Republic, and an editing team in Kenya, ensuring fast, high-quality, next-day photo delivery.

"We deliver high-quality photos and certified, precise measurements in a single appointment," says CJ, highlighting the company's high standards.

Blending local service with national resources, Next Door Photos combines advanced technology with personalized support to streamline services for high-volume clients. "Our clients always feel like we're right in their backyard," CJ says. Technological advances have further improved efficiency, with tools like 3D cameras and real estate apps allowing for quicker, high-quality work, which is especially beneficial for top-producing agents.

As a certified B Corporation, Next Door Photos also prioritizes social impact, partnering with a Kenyan editing team to provide fair-wage jobs to people in vulnerable situations. "Our business is about more than just media," says CJ. "We're here to create jobs that offer stability and dignity." This commitment to sustainable employment and social responsibility makes Next Door Photos a trusted and impactful partner for real estate professionals.

#### **Balancing Family and Entrepreneurship**

CJ is deeply committed to both his family and his entrepreneurial pursuits. He and his wife, Amelia, have three young children: Gibson (5), Sage (2), and Amos, their newborn son. "With an infant, we spend much time at home," CJ shares. The family enjoys a rural lifestyle on a few acres in Midland, where they spend time outside, work in the yard, and visit local farms and markets.

Although family life is his priority, travel is a passion CJ shares with Amelia. "Before having kids, my wife and I traveled together, which we enjoy." Though their travel plans have slowed due to the demands of raising young

children, the couple looks forward to exposing their kids to diverse cultures.

Most of CJ's free time is spent with his kids. "Most of my time outside work is spent with my family—playing outside or doing anything related to that," he says.

However, his entrepreneurial spirit is never far behind. He enjoys brainstorming new business ideas, from apps to podcasts. "I enjoy coming up with different business ideas."

CJ also helps Amelia with homemaking, and while his work takes most of his time, he still manages to unwind with an occasional TV binge. CJ believes he would still pursue entrepreneurship if he weren't in his current career. "It's less about the product or service and more about the opportunity to create something from nothing," he explains. For CJ, building a brand, a team, or a product will always be at the heart of his work.

#### **Vision for Growth**

CJ envisions expanding his business while staying true to his mission of creating opportunities for the vulnerable. "The goal is to partner with the vulnerable to cultivate freedom, fulfillment, and purpose," he says, reflecting his belief that business can positively impact beyond profit.

Professionally, CJ plans to scale his Next Door Photos organization to 20,000 shoots a year across multiple cities in the next 5 to 7 years. He also hopes to travel more internationally with his family, offering his children the language immersion experiences he had in high school. "I want my kids to be bilingual," he shares. CJ also has personal goals tied to faith, and he is planning to start a local church with his wife in the next decade.

When it comes to real estate, CJ understands the challenges agents face in a competitive market. His advice? Build strong relationships. "I want

to relieve Realtors of the media and measurement portion of their operation so they can focus on the rest," he says, emphasizing his commitment to being an extension of their teams.

CJ focuses on providing consistent, reliable service while scaling his business to meet the needs of high-producing agents. "We're always improving our services to best serve Realtors," he explains.

**CONTACT US!**

For more information, visit [nextdoorphotos.com](https://nextdoorphotos.com). You can also reach us in Charlotte at 704-727-8180 or email CJ at [cj.phipps@nextdoorphotos.com](mailto:cj.phipps@nextdoorphotos.com).



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# KATIE CARTER ELLER

The Power Of Faith And Hard Work

BY AMELIA ROSEWOOD  
PHOTOS BY DON ELROD

Katie Carter Eller, a REALTOR® with Keller Williams Unified in Mooresville, embodies the qualities her clients and colleagues admire most: empowering, reliable, prompt, and compassionate. Known for her friendly demeanor and bubbly personality, Katie approaches life and work with a positive spirit. Her journey to becoming a real estate professional is filled with lessons in perseverance, hard work, and a genuine desire to help others.

Katie's personality shines in her ability to connect with others. "Growing up, my teammates called me 'Smiley' and 'Colgate' because I was always smiling," she shares. Even when her adventurous spirit led her to participate in a half marathon in New York City, Katie's optimism carried her through—though she jokingly adds, "Never again!"

## A Leap of Faith

Born and raised in Huntersville, Katie is a true native of the area she now serves. She attended North Mecklenburg High School before taking classes at CPCC to earn her X-ray certification for a career in orthodontics. For 20 years, Katie worked as an orthodontic assistant at Hill Orthodontics in Cornelius.

"My entire family, from my parents, step-parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles, have been incredible role models," Katie explains. "They showed me the value of hard work and loyalty, staying with their jobs for 30+ years. They all had a big impact on me, and I'm forever grateful." Katie adopted her work ethic early on and landed her first job at age

15, juggling school and sports. Her 20 years in orthodontics further reinforced her dedication to showing up every day with purpose. "My boss at Hill Orthodontics never missed a day of work unless it was jury duty. He even worked with broken ribs," Katie recalls. "That level of commitment left a lasting impression on me."

After leaving orthodontics, Katie had the opportunity to nanny her three little cousins for about four months, then spent a year at Farm Bureau Insurance in Huntersville. Though the insurance experience sharpened her customer service skills, she realized it wasn't her long-term calling.

Katie earned her real estate license in May 2021. A year before that, a friend encouraged her to consider the field. "She told me, 'You would be really good at this,' and that planted the seed," Katie shares. After six months of working full-time, Katie remembered what her friend had said, and at that point, she was determined to pursue this new path. She balanced her full-time job with pre-licensing courses. Studying every day before work, during lunch breaks, and on weekends, she faced moments of doubt and exhaustion. One particularly tough day, she received encouragement from an unexpected source: an older couple who stopped to ask what she was reading in the park. "The man said, 'Real estate is a wonderful profession. You'll do well,'" Katie recalls. "That encounter kept me going when I wanted to give up. I know God placed them in my path."



Now thriving in real estate, Katie says the profession aligns perfectly with her goals. “Real estate allows me to create a life by design, provide for my family, and give back to my community,” she says. The most fulfilling aspect of her work? “Helping others. Whether it’s watching clients achieve their dream of buying or selling a home or encouraging newer agents to keep going, it brings me so much joy.”

Katie’s success in real estate is backed by her strong work ethic and proactive communication style. “Being a native of the area gives me a unique understanding of the local market,” she says. “I tailor my strategies to meet each client’s specific needs and communicate at the highest level with clients and agents alike.”

Katie’s hard work has led to remarkable success. In 2023, she achieved \$3.9 million in sales volume; by the end of 2024, that figure had risen to between \$4.3 million and \$4.6 million. A solo agent, Katie has also received accolades highlighting her dedication to her firm’s values. Nominated by her peers, she was named Cultural Ambassador in 2023 for her firm, an honor reserved for individuals who embody Keller Williams’ values and culture of care. Katie also earned the KW Culture Award and the Productivity Coaching Culture Award in 2022. Additionally, she serves on the Associate Leadership Council (ALC), which comprises the top 20% of her office and plays a key role in shaping the firm’s growth and culture.

#### Life Beyond Real Estate

Katie’s life is deeply rooted in her faith, family, and the local community. Married with three stepdaughters and the oldest of four siblings (three brothers and one sister), she enjoys the close proximity of her family, who all live locally in the Lake Norman area. Every fall, Katie and her family and close friends look forward to a trip to the Outer Banks, where they create lasting memories together.

Outside of work, Katie’s love for sports connects her to her family legacy. “My granddaddy played professional baseball, and I think that’s where my passion comes from,” she says. Whether watching football or baseball, Katie is always ready to cheer for her favorite teams. She also enjoys reading and jokes that if she weren’t in real estate, she’d pursue a career as a sports announcer. “I’m always talking to the TV during games,” she laughs. “I tell my husband, ‘See, I should be a TV announcer!’”

Katie is also active in giving back to her community. She volunteers for Keller Williams’ annual Red Day, organizes Christmas Child shoeboxes, and donates to local nonprofits. “Being part of a community means supporting it in every way you can,” she says.

#### Looking Ahead

Katie’s favorite book, *The Traveler’s Gift* by Andy Andrews, serves as a guiding light in her journey. “It’s about the seven decisions that determine personal success. I highly recommend it,” she says. Over the next 5–10 years, Katie hopes to build a sustainable and reputable real estate business, prioritizing client relationships and exceptional service. Her guiding principle comes from Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the

world.” Katie strives to embody that message every day. “One smile or encouraging word can change someone’s entire life trajectory,” she says, referencing the man in the park who encouraged her during her pre-licensing journey. “Be the light to others.”

Katie’s advice for aspiring top producers is rooted in patience and perseverance. “Believe in yourself and never give up,” she says. “Get involved in training, build relationships, and study your local market. The day you plant the seed is not the day you see the fruit. That analogy is so powerful. I always remind new agents to focus on the seeds they’re planting today because they’ll see the rewards later.”



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# THE PREMIER TEAM



Success doesn't happen overnight, and for Jeff Lynch, Patrick Nooney, and Steven Onisick of The Premier Team at RE/MAX Executive, success is not only a result of hard work but also of genuine care, vision, and a commitment to helping others. With over 650 homes sold annually, this dynamic trio has proven they're not just a team—they're a powerhouse of innovation, dedication, and impact.

But who are the faces behind this incredible success story? Let's take a closer look at the personalities, journeys, and values that make The Premier Team the gold standard in real estate.

## The Foundation

The Premier Team's story began in 2006, but the seeds of this venture were sown long before that. For Patrick Nooney, the CEO and Managing Partner, it all started with a dream to grow a business that empowers others. After running a food brokerage company, Patrick saw real estate as a field where he could thrive without the overhead of equipment but with the endless potential to make a difference in people's lives.

"From day one, I knew I wanted to create a team that would empower others," Patrick shares. "It's not about me wearing 20 hats; it's about creating a system where each person excels in their role so that our clients receive white-glove service every time."

Patrick's leadership style is grounded in vision and faith. His daily mantra? "People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing—that's why we recommend it daily!"

## Three Unique Journeys, One Shared Vision

Each member of The Premier Team brings a unique background and skill set to the table.

Jeff Lynch, originally from Latham, NY, transitioned into real estate after a successful career in hospitality. As a former professional in country clubs and hotels, Jeff developed an innate understanding of customer service—an invaluable asset in real estate. "Real estate is a natural extension of what I've always loved: connecting with people and helping them achieve their goals," Jeff explains. Today, as a team leader and CFO, he applies those same principles to every transaction, ensuring clients experience exceptional care and responsiveness.

Steven Onisick, a Morrisville, PA native, has resided in the Charlotte area since 1980 and transitioned to real estate following his time in the IT sector. Spending long hours behind a

computer left him craving a career that was more dynamic and people-oriented. His passion for real estate took root in 2004, and he's never looked back. "Helping people achieve the dream of homeownership is incredibly fulfilling," Steve says. His dedication to service and his knack for organization have been instrumental in his role as COO.

For Patrick, who moved to Charlotte from Jesup, GA, in 1986, real estate was a way to merge his entrepreneurial drive with his desire to serve others. "What sets us apart," Patrick emphasizes, "is that we don't just sell homes—we build relationships. Our business is about people, not properties."

## The Secret to Their Success

When asked what sets The Premier Team apart, the answer is unanimous: their commitment to their clients and their team culture.

Jeff believes success stems from being responsive and delivering on promises. "Communication and providing value are non-negotiable for us," he explains.

For Patrick, it's the team's structure that gives them the edge. "We have an incredible full-time staff, each doing their job so that our clients are supported by many. It's not a one-man show—it's a well-oiled machine."

Steve adds, "Our core values always put the client first. It's service before opportunity every single time."

Their results speak for themselves. The Premier Team is ranked #4 out of 5,800 RE/MAX teams nationally and #10 globally in sales and volume. They also receive RE/MAX Lifetime Achievement and Hall of Fame awards, and their consistency as a Pinnacle-level team has cemented their place among the industry's elite.

## A Glimpse into Their Personal Lives

Beyond the numbers and accolades, The Premier Team is made up of real people with rich personal lives and diverse interests.

Jeff, who has been married to Ann for 24 years, is a proud father to two daughters, Peyton (24) and Paris (20). He enjoys golf, exercise, and traveling with his family, often blending his love of sports into his downtime.





Patrick has been married to his supportive wife, Ronda, for 23 years and has a son, Dylan, who works in the cancer technical field. When he's not running The Premier Team,

Patrick enjoys traveling, Bible study, and working in his yard. "There's something about seeing a completed project at the end of the day," he says with a smile.



Steve and his wife, Vicki, recently celebrated 25 years of marriage. In his free time, Steve is an avid golfer, pickleball enthusiast, and guitar player.

**Giving Back to the Community**

The Premier Team's impact extends beyond real estate. They're heavily involved in philanthropy, supporting causes like The Children's Miracle Network and local animal shelters. Patrick also participates in monthly homeless feeding through the Community Shelter of Union County and contributes to restoration projects in the NC mountains.

For Jeff, community involvement is a reflection of his gratitude. "Every day is a gift, so why not use it to give back and lift others up?" he says.

**Looking Ahead**

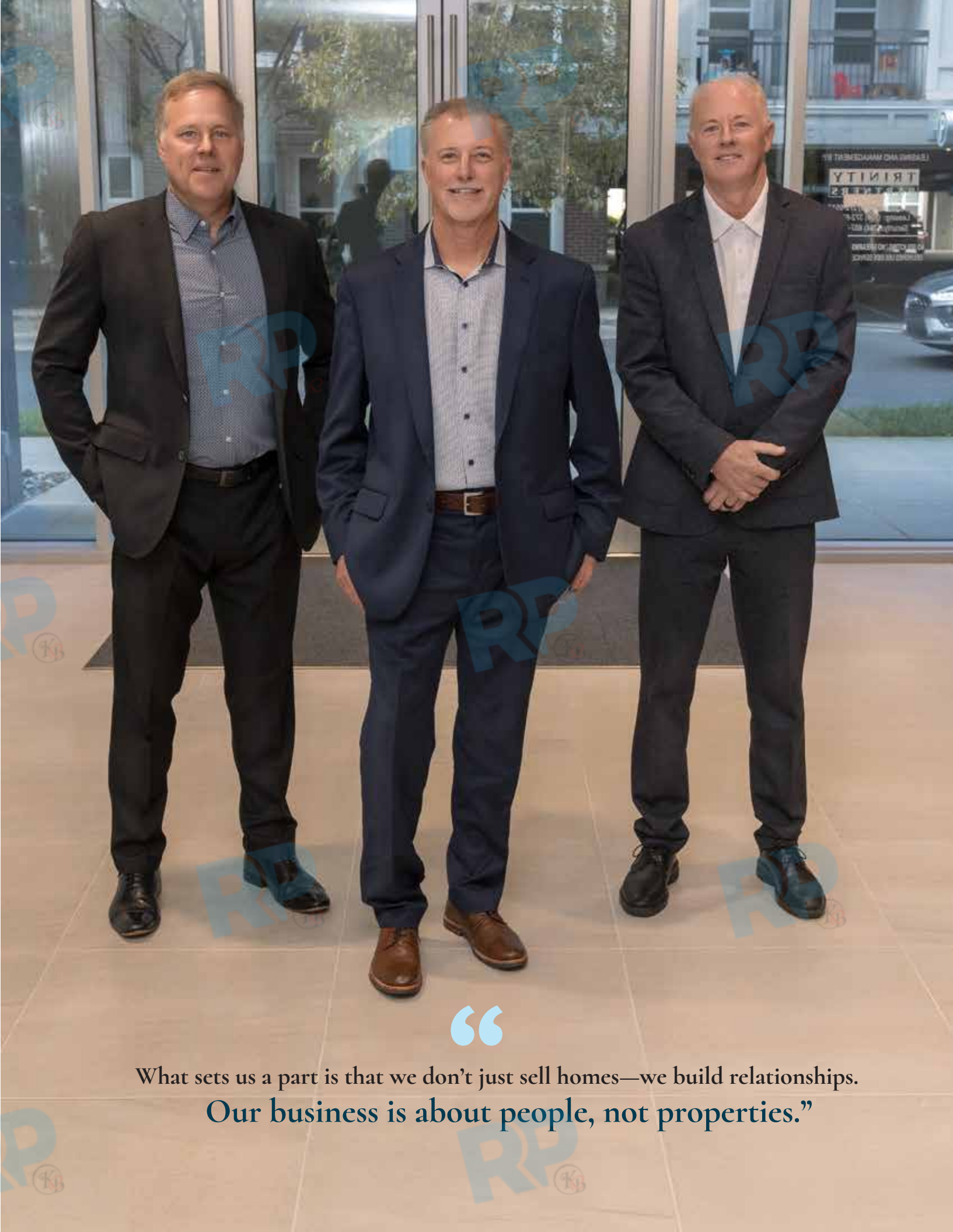
As The Premier Team continues to grow, their vision remains clear. They aim to expand their team while maintaining their core values of service and excellence. Patrick is determined to balance growth with premier service, ensuring that every client receives the care they deserve.

For aspiring top producers, Jeff offers this advice: "Join a team with excellent core values, strong culture, and strong support systems. It takes time to build a business, but the right environment makes all the difference."

Patrick adds, "Remember, a stable business rests on four pillars—don't try to balance your career on less than that."

The Premier Team is more than a group of successful REALTORS®—they are community builders, dream makers, and relentless advocates for their clients. At their core is a belief that success comes from serving others and building a culture where everyone thrives.

Their motto says it all: Success through Reputation. With Jeff, Patrick, and Steve at the helm, The Premier Team is setting the standard for excellence in real estate—and they're just getting started.



“

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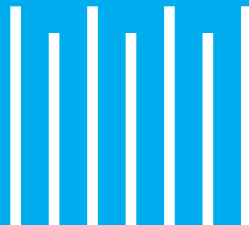
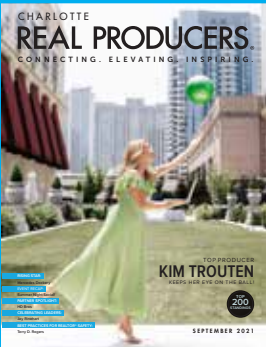
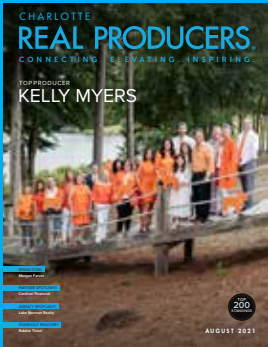
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Rank	Name	Office	List Units	List Volume (Selling \$)	Sold Units	Sell Volume (Buying \$)	Total Units	Total \$
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