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Meet  
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Team



**Joni Giordano-Bowling**  
Co-Publisher  
Publisher  
joni@realproducersmag.com  
757-348-7809



**Dave Bowling**  
Co-Publisher  
dave.bowling@n2co.com  
757-450-2899



**Jacki Donaldson**  
Managing Editor  
jacki.donaldson@n2co.com  
352-332-5171



**Misty Bailey**  
Connections Coordinator  
misty@imperialetiquette.com  
757-897-1283



**Mary Kromer**  
Social Media Manager  
mary@adigital  
marketingconsultant.com  
732-606-5236



**Iran Parker**  
Event Coordinator  
iran@asharpevents.com  
757-450-1936



**Maddie Podish**  
Writer  
msparks7382@gmail.com  
757-634-8998



**Dan Steele**  
Writer  
dan.steele28@gmail.com  
757-667-1556



**Dan Clark**  
Writer  
dan@dandclark.realtor  
757-206-4144



**LEAH WALLACE**  
Photographer  
info@leahariel  
photography.com  
757-202-7666



**Mason Murawski**  
Photographer  
murawski.photography@gmail.com  
757-504-6461



**Charles Townsend**  
Photographer  
charlestownsendvideo@gmail.com  
757-559-4745



**Rachel Saddlemire**  
Photographer  
rachelthephoto42@gmail.com  
336-970-1386



**Dave Schwartz**  
Photographer  
davejschwartz13@outlook.com  
757-639-5124



**Misty Prewitt**  
Photographer  
misty@mistysavestheday.com  
757-620-0082

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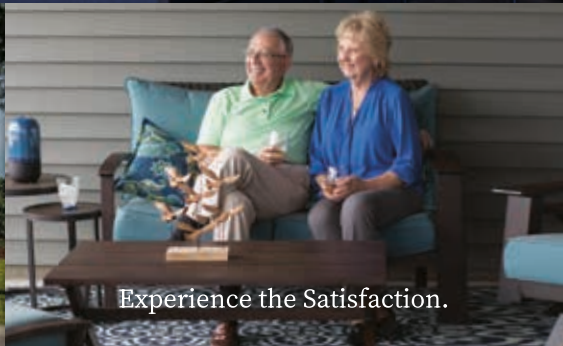
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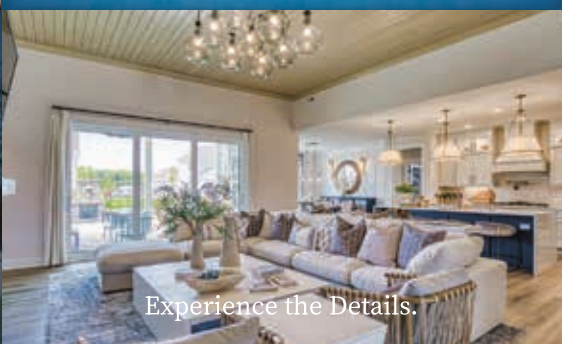
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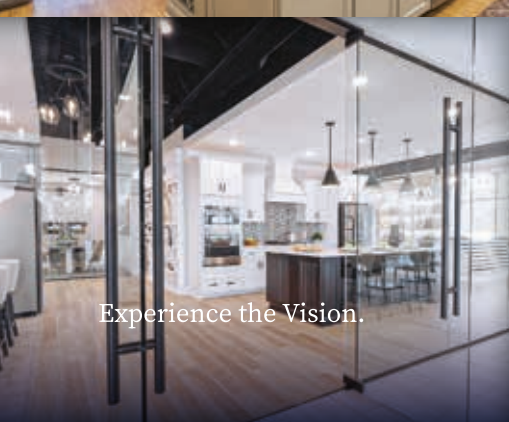
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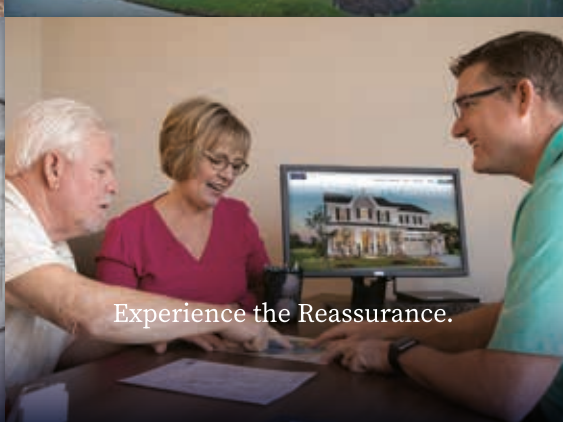
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# GREG GARRETT

Garrett Realty Partners

STORY BY JACKI DONALDSON  
PHOTOS BY RACHEL SADDLEMIRE,  
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Twenty years ago, Greg Garrett received the prestigious Good Neighbor Award from the National Association of REALTORS®. He was one of only five nationwide recipients that year, and the honor earned him a place on the cover of REALTOR® Magazine. The recognition wasn't for sales volume or industry accolades—it was for the extraordinary impact he made through sustained volunteer service. Greg's award didn't represent a side project or detour

from his real estate work—it embodied how he built his business in the first place: through a deep commitment to his community, exemplified by his founding of Orphan Helpers (now Counteract International), which now reaches into three countries.

Rather than climbing the traditional leadership ladders in local, state, or national REALTOR®

associations, Greg has invested his time and energy in community efforts that align with his values and vision for lasting change. His path has led him to serve, for example, on the Hampton Roads Workforce Council, Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance, Coastal Virginia Building Industry Association, and Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. He was also the founding president of the Young Entrepreneurs' Organization of Southeastern Virginia and the Young Presidents' Organization







Photo by Michael Taylor of Sigmon Taylor Photography

of Virginia. Greg currently serves as Chair for Future of Hampton Roads, an organization promoting regionalism. This role reflects a lifetime of civic engagement rooted in the belief that strong communities are the foundation of a thriving real estate industry—and not the other way around.

Greg obtained his real estate license in 1977. At just 19 years old, he began positioning himself for success. Cutting his hair into a conservative style and wearing three-piece suits seven days a week, he drove old four-door Cadillacs and Buicks to fit in with an older crowd. He knocked on doors and studied under renowned trainers like Tom Hopkins, Floyd Wickman, and Mike Ferry. He pursued additional education and certifications and formed mutually beneficial relationships with community members and leaders.

“I built relationships with much older builders, mortgage bankers, appraisers, lawyers, and clothiers by getting involved in social groups,” Greg describes. Joining the James River Country Club as a 20-something and spending time in regional, charitable, church, and other spheres outside real estate helped catapult Greg’s career.

Greg’s community-minded efforts have yielded impressive results. He became the top agent on the Virginia Peninsula at age 25, opened what is now Garrett Realty Partners at 26, and went on to become the top individual producer in all of Hampton Roads. In addition to the residential brokerage, Greg has founded and leads several different multifaceted companies in real estate, mortgage, yachting, and wellness.





In the face of decades of obstacles, including the 1987-1990 recession, the 2007-2012 housing market crash, two 14-year flat markets with no appreciation, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Greg has leveraged grit, perseverance, and his knack for thinking outside the box to repeatedly reinvent and expand his business for monumental outcomes.

Twenty years ago, Greg began increasing his reach geographically, and for the past 10 years, Garrett Realty Partners has had a strong presence in the Southside Hampton Roads market. “For decades we have been the go-to company for rising superstars in the industry on the Peninsula,” Greg states. “Now we are providing that same level of training, tangible support, culture, and leads on the Southside. We have 100s of Zillow leads coming in every month to help Southside rising superstars get there

even faster.” Greg’s commitment to the Southside expansion is so important that he and his wife have moved to Norfolk. “I can live anywhere, but I’ve chosen to live on the Southside to be fully planted here,” he asserts.

Although the “Garrett” name is front and center in the 25 cities and counties his brokerage serves, Greg does not take full credit for his sprawling growth. “All of the innovative action we’ve taken is

“  
**We are not a bunch of individual silos trying to be heroes. We work to be mutually beneficial to ourselves and our clients.”**

because it was good for the careers of our people,” he explains. “Deep down at our core, we are not in the real estate business—we are in the career-building business, and we choose to work in real estate. Our mission statement is ‘Building Futures Together.’ Three simple words. We’re helping our clients build a future, we’re helping our employees and agents build a future, and we’re doing it together. We are not a bunch of individual silos trying to be heroes. We work to be mutually beneficial to ourselves and our clients. My expansion mindset is not about me. It’s about whatever I’m involved in and whomever we can help and touch.”

As he continues to innovate and expand, Greg embraces a core philosophy: “For everything you’re doing competently, replace yourself and get somebody else to do it,” he advises. “Then, go conquer something else. This approach has developed us into a cutting-edge company that takes things to the next level and then seeks the next project.”

Greg does not claim that everything he has done for the past 47 years will suit everyone, but he is grateful for how his community involvement has grown and is still elevating his reach. “We’ve been a dominant force on the Virginia Peninsula for many years,” he emphasizes, adding, “Now, Southside is our fertile ground. As we take our unique strategies, techniques, culture and expand them into this market, we believe we will become a dominant player here, too.”

Outside of his professional endeavors, Greg cherishes spending time with his large, close-knit family. He enjoys sailing, jet skiing, and especially jumping through the white water of the ocean. Greg stays active with CrossFit and running, and he frequently travels for work, family adventures, and getaways with his wife, Michelle. He also remains active with his organization, Counteract International, which supports orphaned and incarcerated children in Central America.



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# Zach Cheatham

SEARCH7CITIES REAL ESTATE

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH • PHOTOS BY DAVE SCHWARTZ, COASTAL EXPOSURES

**From the flight deck of a Navy aircraft carrier, where split-second decisions mean the difference between life and death, to the world of real estate, where life-changing decisions occur across kitchen tables, Zach Cheatham's journey is anything but typical. Now a thriving agent with Search7Cities Real Estate | REAL, Zach brings 21 years of Navy grit, resilience, and service-driven leadership—qualities that fuel his passion for helping military families navigate their next real estate journey.**

Zach's military career reads like a high-stakes action movie. Serving primarily on the flight deck of Navy aircraft carriers, he specialized in crash and salvage—a high-risk role involving airplane crash response and fire rescue. He stood ready to respond every day for more than two decades because everything was on the line. "It's common for me—I did it every day for 21 years—but it's not very common out here," Zach says, reflecting on the challenge of translating his highly specialized skills into a civilian career. "Jobs for people who know how to lift airplanes with cranes are not abundant."

Initially, Zach pursued a career in firefighting, earning a fire science degree with plans to become an inspector or investigator. But after spending 14 of his 21 years on deployments and living aboard ships, the idea of another job that would take him away from home wasn't appealing. Then, the Department of Defense's SkillBridge program opened a door he hadn't considered: real estate.

The SkillBridge program, designed to help service members bridge the gap between military and civilian life through internships, gave Zach a unique opportunity. "I was ready to hit the ground running, and real estate checked every box I didn't even know I had," he says with a laugh.

What started as a temporary training opportunity quickly turned into something more. After only three years in real estate, Zach had helped nearly 100 families. He credits much of that success to mentorship. "I tripped and fell into Rich Zapata and Megan Messer," he says humbly. Through a mutual connection, Zach met Rich, and everything changed. Today, Zach serves as the sales manager on Rich's team, proving how quickly he earns trust and respect.

Zach is no stranger to relocating. He's lived in places like Great Lakes, IL; Bahrain; Jacksonville, FL; Norfolk, VA; Pearl Harbor, HI; and Sasebo, Japan—giving him a unique





perspective on what moving truly means. “I can relate to just about anyone going through a relocation,” he says. “Chances are, I’ve moved more times than most. Moving is about more than packing up a truck and heading a few blocks over—it’s about uprooting your entire life and, sometimes, moving across the world.”

His experience gives him a significant advantage when working with military clients, who comprise more than 90% of his business. His status as a retired Navy Chief earns immediate trust, and he leverages modern tech like FaceTime, Zoom, and Marco Polo to serve clients relocating from across the globe. But he goes beyond the house hunt.

For Zach, real estate is a commitment. “Whatever I tell a client I’m going to do, I do it,” he asserts. “I never want to overpromise and underdeliver. I am truthful, honest, upfront, and transparent.” That mindset pays off. One client recently told him, “That was the easiest, fastest, most efficient thing I may have ever been a part of.” For Zach, words like these are the real reward.

On the home front, Zach and his wife, Kelly, have four sons, ages 7, 9, 13, and 15. Their family has navigated the ups and downs of Navy life together, from deployments to living in Hawaii and back again. Their youngest sons were born in Pearl Harbor, and by the time they were 5, they had already traveled more than most adults.

Now settled in Suffolk, the Cheatham family has found something they never had before—stability. “We’ve never felt settled anywhere before,” Zach shares. “Real estate finally gave us that.” Kelly homeschools their boys and is passionate about homesteading. Together, they enjoy football, baseball, shooting, and fishing—surrounded by their two dogs, chickens, and a goat.

Zach isn’t overthinking his future. “I don’t see myself doing anything else unless the day comes that I stop enjoying real estate, and if that happens, I’ll just move on,” he says with a grin. “But for now, I love the pace. It’s fast, it’s challenging, and it keeps me sharp—exactly how I like it.”



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**MARATHON  
MOVING SERVICES**

STORY BY DAN STEELE  
PHOTOS BY LEAH WALLACE,  
LEAH ARIEL PHOTOGRAPHY

# Milton Whitaker

Many folks agree that you never know how much stuff you accumulate until you move. Milton Whitaker knows that moving can be one of the most stressful parts of buying a new home, so he has made efficiency and top-notch customer service the cornerstones of Marathon Moving.

“It’s in the name *Marathon*; it’s our work ethic,” Milton declares. “We’re just super-efficient. We get in, and we get the job done. From the time they arrive to the time they leave, our guys are in top-performance mode, and they complete each job in the most efficient, professional way possible.”

Locally owned and operated, Marathon offers customers a wide scope of moving services. “We can do everything for you—pack your boxes, load you up, deliver, unpack; we cover all the bases,” Milton says, noting that Marathon can take care of residential and commercial customers for local, long-distance, and out-of-state moves. “We can get you anywhere,” Milton shares, adding that his team serves many military families. “Being central on the East Coast is a pretty good spot,” he remarks. “People are going north and south, so we’re in a great area to help our customers.”

Growing up in a military family and with years of personal experience in the moving industry, Milton is intimately familiar with how critical smooth moves are for customers. “I got started in the business helping my sisters move all around Richmond,” he recalls. “They went to VCU, so we used to get a U-Haul to move them. My father and I helped them move at least 10 times, allowing me to get



my feet wet before I even knew I was going to be in the business.”

About a year after graduating from First Colonial High School, Milton took a job with a local mover before working with nationally known companies. “I worked for all the local major van lines in the area, like Allied and United, so the guys who’d been doing it for a long time trained me.”

Bringing that knowledge to his business, Milton knows keeping crew members in top physical



Marathon is offering a 10% discount on all moves for seniors and military personnel. “We’re also providing free moving boxes with any local move,” Milton notes.





**“We take care of the job, do it to the highest standard, and make sure they want to refer us again.”**

When he isn’t helping others relocate to new chapters of their lives, Milton loves to go to the gym, indulge in video games, and spend time with his family. “I’m a homebody,” he reveals. “I like relaxing and hanging out with the kids. I just had a son in 2023—my youngest—and I have an 11-year-old, a 5-year-old, and an 18-month-old.” He says the family is big on sports, and he’s always



condition, given how exhausting moving can be, is extremely important. “We try to keep our guys in tip-top shape, and we incentivize going to the gym,” Milton explains. “We provide gym memberships for all of our guys at no extra cost if they want to go. We try to bundle fitness with the job itself; they go hand in hand.”

Perhaps most importantly, no matter what the job entails, the movers at Marathon never lose sight of the main goal: total customer satisfaction. “We know moving is stressful, so we always put the customer first,” Milton asserts. “Putting the customer first is something I laid down when building this company. I know the job is hard, with long days, but we always make sure the customer is satisfied.”

Customers know that when they hire Marathon for their moving needs, they can depend on the team to take care of them, and real estate agents who refer their clients to Marathon know they are recommending a mover with the customer’s happiness in mind. “We take care of the job, do it to the highest standard, and make sure they want

to refer us again,” Milton emphasizes. “We want to keep that business going and keep their clients happy.”

Although moving is a tough job, Milton has found that delivering peace of mind and seeing customers transition into a new phase of life is the most fulfilling part of his work, especially when they are repeat customers. “Seeing people joyfully get from one place to another is incredibly rewarding for us,” he comments. “We often serve repeat customers, so seeing people upgrade from home to home and feel secure with where they’re going is wonderful.”

at games to support and cheer them on. “We’re a very active family—my son wrestles, my daughter plays soccer, and my little one has expertise in tearing stuff up, so he definitely gives me a run for my money!” Milton laughs.



#### Contact Milton Whitaker

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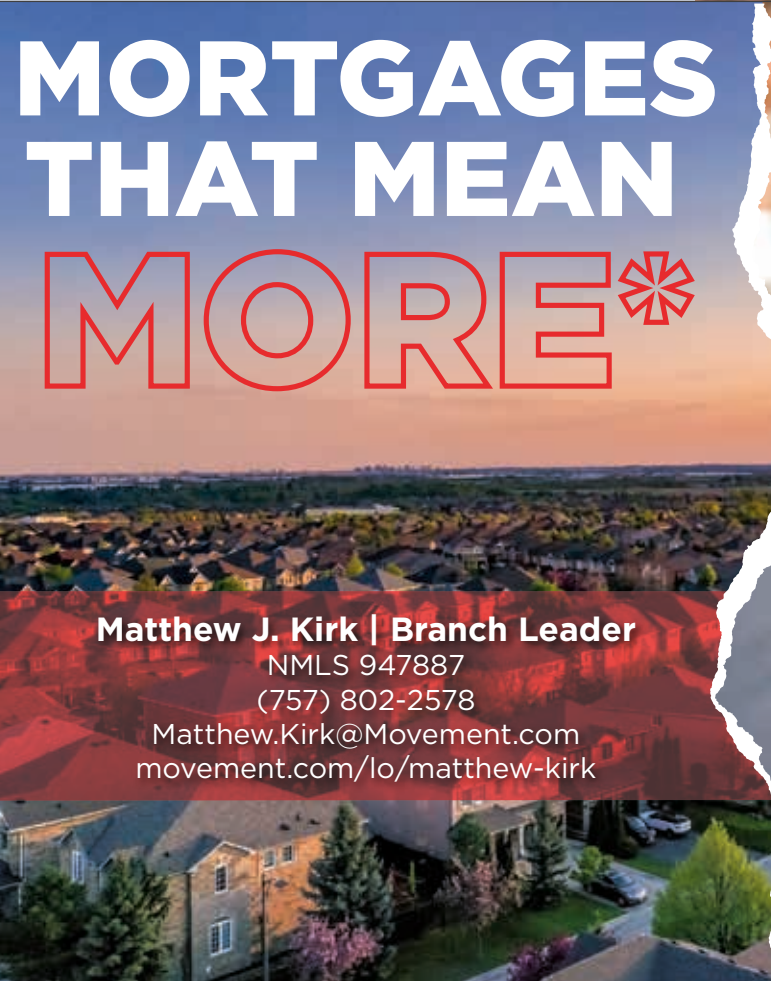
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Hampton Roads Real Producers • 33



# Terry Smith

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY  
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STORY BY DAN STEELE  
PHOTOS BY LEAH WALLACE,  
LEAH ARIEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Many people measure success by the numbers in their bank account; the wiser among us know that being successful is not just about the amount of money you make but about making a difference—a lesson Terry Smith lives by while he works to bring his clients' real estate dreams to life.

“Success is how you feel about yourself and how you make others feel,” he reflects. “If you feel good about yourself and what you’re doing, you don’t have to make a million dollars. You can make \$50,000 or \$20,000; being happy with where you are and the people around you is what truly matters.”

This lesson resonates with Terry because of personal experience and is integral to what led him into real estate in 2009. “I was the



regional vice president for a large repair facility with stores all up and down the East Coast,” he recalls. “The only days we were closed were Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter Sunday, and my phone would ring all the time, and I never had a break. If my family wanted to go somewhere, I couldn’t go because I was always working.”

Eventually, Terry’s wife helped him realize his situation was unsustainable and encouraged him to explore new career options. “My wife has her own title company, and in 2002-2003, I had bought some investment property in North Carolina, so I was already investing in land,” Terry explains. “With real estate, you pretty much set your own schedule, and since I was already comfortable with it, I decided to make it my career.”

Although he may have a more flexible schedule now, Terry brings the same dedication and enthusiasm to real estate as he did in his previous career. “I’m passionate about everything I do,” he says. “When I’m finished with the sale, I’m not done. I always follow up with clients and ask if they need anything.” And if they do, Terry does his best to get his clients the help they need. “I’m most passionate about making sure I take care of my clients, whether they’re buying or selling,” he explains. “If they need a repair done, I’ll do it myself if they can’t afford it.”

Terry gives all clients the same service, whether their price range is \$150,000 or \$10 million. “Just getting to the goal that my clients need, whether they’re selling or





buying, is the most fulfilling thing about my work," he says. "Whether they're selling a rental property to make money or looking for a home that suits them with the right schools, as long as my clients are satisfied, that's my biggest reward."

Helping others comes naturally to Terry, and when he isn't helping his clients achieve their real estate goals, he is often helping save lives. "I've been volunteering for 11 years now," he says. "I ride on the ambulance, responding to emergencies and saving lives, and I love it." Terry also enjoys cars and motorcycles, but most of all, he cherishes spending time with his wife and two children. "My wife and I just celebrated our 27th wedding anniversary," he enthusiastically shares. "We met through the Jaycees when I directed a play and she served as chairman. When I was younger and in my 20s, I said, 'I'm not going to have any kids and get married,' but then I met the right lady, and the rest is history."



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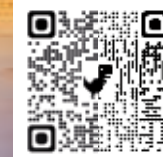


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# Celebrating excellence

## under the disco ball

BY CRYSTAL CRONIN, HAMPTON ROADS REALTORS® ASSOCIATION, SENIOR VP MEMBER EXPERIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

The 2024 Circle of Excellence<sup>SM</sup> Awards Gala was a groovy celebration, welcoming winners and their guests to a disco-inspired evening. Attendees arrived in their best velvet and retro jumpsuits and dresses, fully embracing the theme with flair and enthusiasm. The night featured vintage cocktails, live music, and groovy photobooths.

A shimmering disco ball lit the room as top producers proudly crossed the stage to be recognized for their achievements. Congratulations to the 1,902 members recognized and 764 awards earned!

### 2024 Circle of Excellence<sup>SM</sup> Award Winners:

#### Outstanding Rookies

Matthew Knox, Seaside Realty  
Taina Chanel Rodriguez, Iron Valley  
Real Estate Hampton Roads  
Clarice Savereux, DRAGAS Companies Realty, Inc.  
Meghan Hanley, RE/MAX Alliance  
Allen Harris, OWN Real Estate

#### Rookie of the Year:

Melissa Humpert, RE/MAX Alliance

#### #1 Small Team:

The Dunbar Team, RE/MAX Alliance

#### #1 Large Team

The Doll Team, RE/MAX Alliance

#### #1 Mega Team:

Team Bryant Homes, The Bryant  
Group Real Estate Professionals

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Morgan Xenos, DRAGAS Companies Realty, Inc.

#### #1 Commercial Salesperson:

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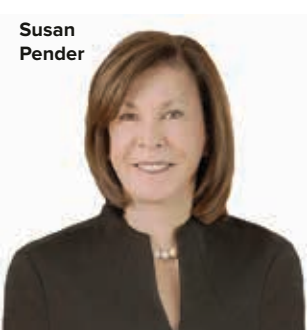
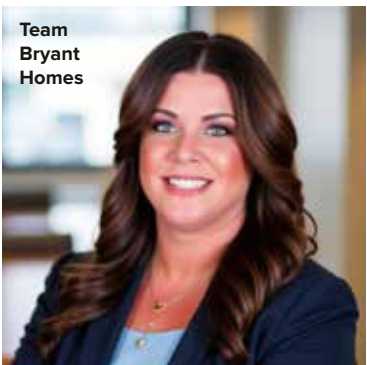
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# BUILDING THE FUTURE:

## COASTAL VIRGINIA STUDENTS GAIN REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

BY COLBY RAYMOND, 2025 CVBIA PRESIDENT



The Coastal Virginia Building Industry Association (CVBIA) is dedicated to fostering the next generation of skilled professionals who

will shape the future of new home construction in our region. A cornerstone of this commitment is our strong support for the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Student Chapter program, a vital initiative that effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and the dynamic realities of the residential construction industry. This month, we're excited to highlight the tangible impact of this program through the success of the NAHB Student Chapter at Norfolk State University and the proactive engagement of our CVBIA members.

The NAHB Student Chapter program serves as a crucial link, connecting students with the vast opportunities within the home building sector. Through hands-on projects, networking events, and exposure to industry experts, these chapters provide invaluable experience and insights that complement classroom learning. For students, it's a chance to apply their knowledge, build connections, and gain a competitive edge as they embark on their careers.

Here in Coastal Virginia, the Norfolk State University NAHB Student Chapter has quickly become a vibrant hub of aspiring building professionals. Driven by enthusiastic students and dedicated faculty, the chapter actively engages in construction-related activities, fostering a passion for the craft and a deep understanding of the industry. Their dedication was recently recognized on a national stage when they were awarded the "Rookie of the Year" title in the Four-Year College Programs (Custom/Small Build) category at the prestigious International Builders' Show (IBS) in Las Vegas. This impressive achievement highlights the talent and commitment present within the Norfolk State chapter.

More significantly for our local industry, the value of the Norfolk State University students is already being recognized right here at home. We are thrilled to report that several CVBIA member companies have already stepped up to hire students from the Norfolk State University NAHB Student Chapter for internships this summer! This direct engagement underscores the practical skills and enthusiasm these students bring to the table and demonstrates our members' commitment to investing in local talent. These internships will provide invaluable real-world experience, allowing students to apply their classroom knowledge on actual job sites and within established building companies.

By offering internships and other forms of support, CVBIA members are directly contributing to the development of these future leaders. We encourage real estate professionals to explore opportunities to connect with and support the Norfolk State University NAHB Student Chapter. Offering internships, serving as mentors or guest speakers, providing resources, or offering site visits are all valuable ways to contribute to the growth and development of these promising young professionals.

Let us all recognize the exciting progress of the Norfolk State University NAHB Student Chapter and the proactive engagement of our members in providing them with real-world opportunities. By working together, we are not only building homes, but also building the future of the new home construction industry in Coastal Virginia.



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Diamond Elite Producer  
C: 757-291-4398



Maddie Podish  
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