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JUNE 2025

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FATHER'S DAY ISSUE

Rising Star:

Derek Durish
of The Durish
Group at
Haven Realty
Homes

Partner Spotlight:

Phoenix Home
Renovation
NWI



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COVER STORY

If you are interested in contributing or nominating REALTORS® for certain stories, please email us at colt.contreras@n2co.com.

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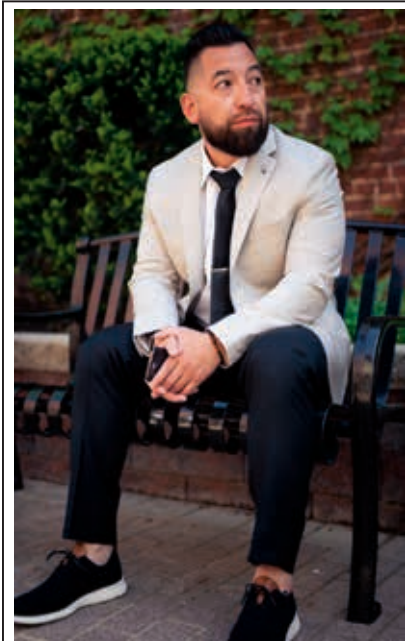
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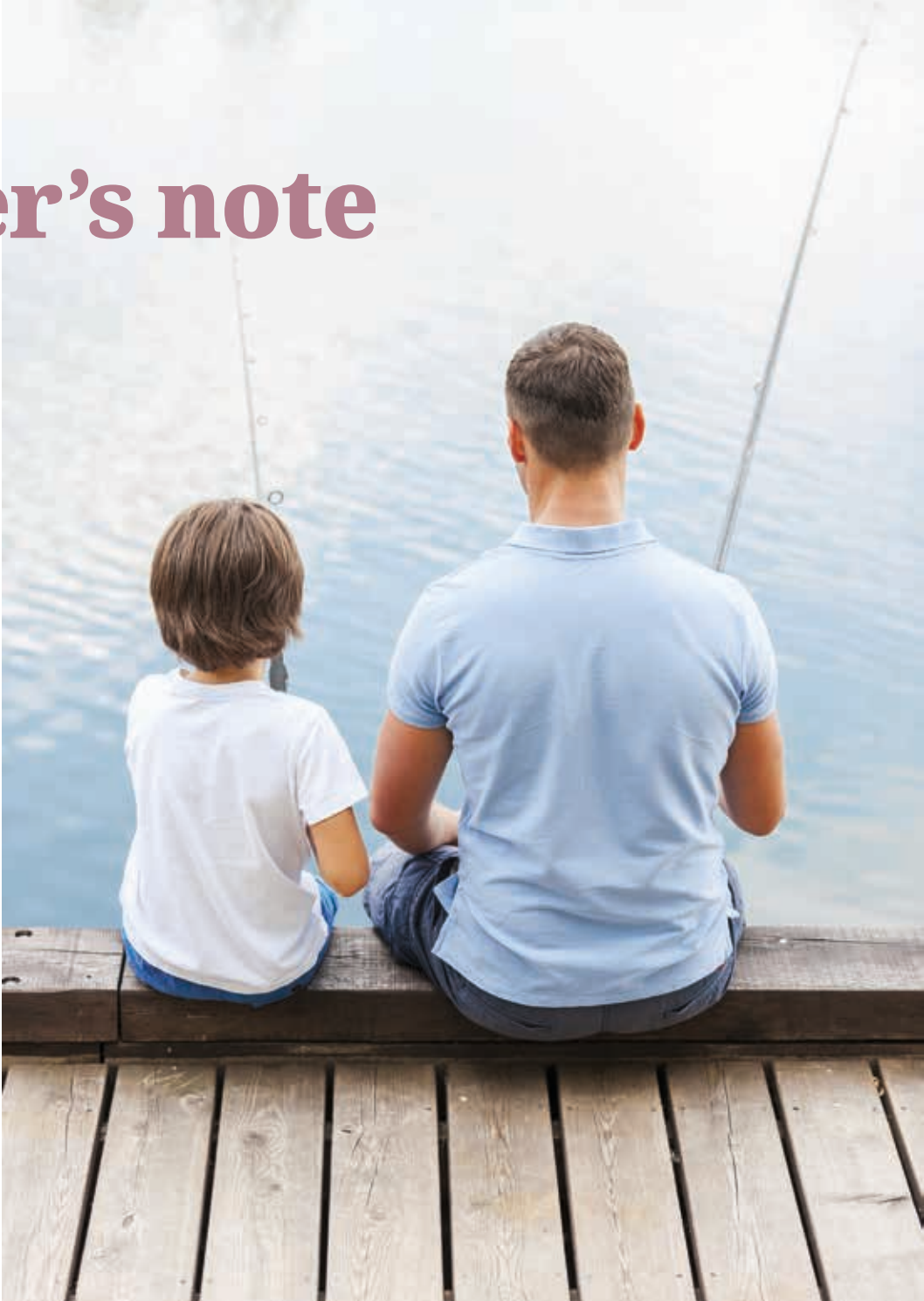
As a dad of three wonderful, young kids, this Father's Day edition means a lot to me. Fatherhood is the coolest thing I've ever done. It's wild, exhausting, and full of joy. Every season brings new challenges and new magic. One of the biggest tensions I wrestle with is being fully present while also providing. The work never really stops—but neither does the opportunity to grow in how I show up. I keep learning and adjusting—because my kids are watching, and they're worth everything.

This month, we're spotlighting three real estate pros who work hard and show up even harder for their families. Their paths differ, but they share grit, heart, and a deep commitment to both clients and their kids. They're building legacies with purpose, compassion—and probably a steady stream of dad jokes (just a hunch).

Our Partner Spotlight features Blair Mitchell of Phoenix Home Renovations NWI. Blair isn't just rebuilding homes—he's reshaping how his business serves agents. With a stronger team and renewed focus, he's becoming the go-to contractor for agents who need fast, reliable help—and he's a proud dad as well.

Our Rising Star, Derek Durish of The Durish Group at Haven Realty Homes, is the definition of "no excuses." He's a sanitation worker by morning, a realtor by afternoon and evening, and a softball coach for his daughter's team in between. His story is one of raw hustle, early mornings, late nights, and a whole lot of heart.

Our Cover Story features Brent Wright of McColly Real Estate. What began as a curious step into real estate turned into a purpose-driven career built on integrity and connection. Brent has sold



over 825 homes, serves on multiple boards, owns a construction company—and still finds time to coach his daughters' teams. He's not just closing deals; he's building a legacy rooted in service, community, and family.

I'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone who joined us for our Spring Event on May 15. The energy was incredible, the conversations were flowing, and the connections were real. Special thanks to



event sponsors Meridian Title and Premier Title for their support in making the event such a hit!

To all the hardworking, joke-cracking, life-juggling dads out there—this one's for you. Happy Father's Day from all of us at *Northwest Indiana Real Producers!*

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for a Realtor to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about Real Producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention-- we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

Q: Does Real Producers have events?

A: Yes! Along with the magazine, we will host quarterly events exclusive to this community, where you--the best of the best--get together at local venues to socialize, mastermind, deepen connections, and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine, email, and on social media.

Q: Do real estate agents have to pay for the magazine?

A: NO! The magazine is FREE to agents and funded by the partners who advertise.

Q: What kind of content will be featured?

A: This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing

Q: Who are our partners?

A: Anyone listed as a “Preferred Partner” in the front of the magazine is funding and fueling this community and is an essential part of it. They are the top professionals in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine and attend our events. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best agents in the area, but the best affiliates as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: How can I recommend a feature story?

A: If you are interested in nominating Realtors to be featured, scan the QR code, email, or call us. With so many wonderful nominated agents, the decision each month is difficult — so make sure we know who you are! We would love your feedback on how we are doing and what, if anything, we can do better to help everyone in the industry **Collaborate, Elevate** and **Inspire** each other.



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Phoenix Home Renovations NWI

PHOENIX RISING: BLAIR MITCHELL’S VISION FOR A REALTOR-CENTRIC FUTURE

Phoenix Home Renovations NWI is a full-service renovation company serving Northwest Indiana, bringing craftsmanship, integrity, and vision to every home project. With complementary divisions for full-scale home renovations and specialized real estate repair services, Phoenix is uniquely positioned to support both homeowners and busy real estate professionals.

Blair Mitchell, the driving force behind Phoenix Home Renovations NWI and Tri-Town Cabinets, initiated a strategic restructuring at the start of the year, aiming to strengthen his businesses for sustained growth and improved service delivery. This proactive step involved a significant reinvestment in Phoenix’s operational framework, bringing in key personnel to amplify their capabilities.

On the renovation front, seasoned project manager Josh Perritt, boasting three decades of industry experience,

now spearheads operations. The real estate sales division welcomes Matt, tasked with driving growth in this crucial sector. Internal talent has also been recognized, with Mel stepping up as the project field manager for renovations and Carl transitioning his electrical expertise to the role of field project manager for the real estate division. These strategic placements reflect Blair’s commitment to expertise and streamlined efficiency.

Blair’s wife, Kristen, has assumed the role of CEO alongside him. Complementing this, Kia Ganz, a long-time associate with a robust financial background, has been appointed as CFO. Blair describes this year as a pivotal “reinvesting of the wheel,” a focused effort to solidify roles, overcome challenges, and lay a foundation for future success.

Looking ahead, Blair outlines Phoenix’s core strategy: to become even more deeply “realtor-centric.” The company operates through two complementary divisions: Comprehensive Renovations

and a specialized Real Estate Repair service. Blair, alongside Matt and Carl, will focus on expanding the Real Estate Repair arm, directly addressing the nuanced needs of real estate agents and their clients. This includes efficiently handling the often time-sensitive handyman tasks and smaller projects that can consume valuable time for busy agents juggling multiple properties and clients.

Blair vividly recalls a compelling client success story. On a Friday morning, Blair received a call from an agent facing a critical situation: water damage in the basement of an \$800,000 home mere hours before closing. Phoenix’s rapid and decisive action – coordinating immediate water extraction, negotiating credit for necessary remediation and new flooring, and completing the flooring installation by the following Monday – not only salvaged the deal but also blossomed into a series of subsequent projects for the grateful homeowner, including garage upgrades, driveway expansion, fencing, interior flooring enhancements, and plans for outdoor living spaces. This illustrates the tangible benefits of their reliable and responsive service tailored to the real estate market.

A cornerstone of Phoenix’s efficiency and reliability is its extensive and meticulously vetted network of subcontractors – what Blair refers to as his “little black book,” encompassing every essential trade in Northwest Indiana. He emphasizes the stringent vetting process each partner undergoes, ensuring that only trusted and dependable professionals are entrusted with their projects. This level of quality control and safety provides invaluable peace of mind for both homeowners and the referring realtors.

Blair’s own experience as a licensed real estate agent provides him with a unique and empathetic understanding of the industry’s inherent pain points. He recalls the frustrations of coordinating

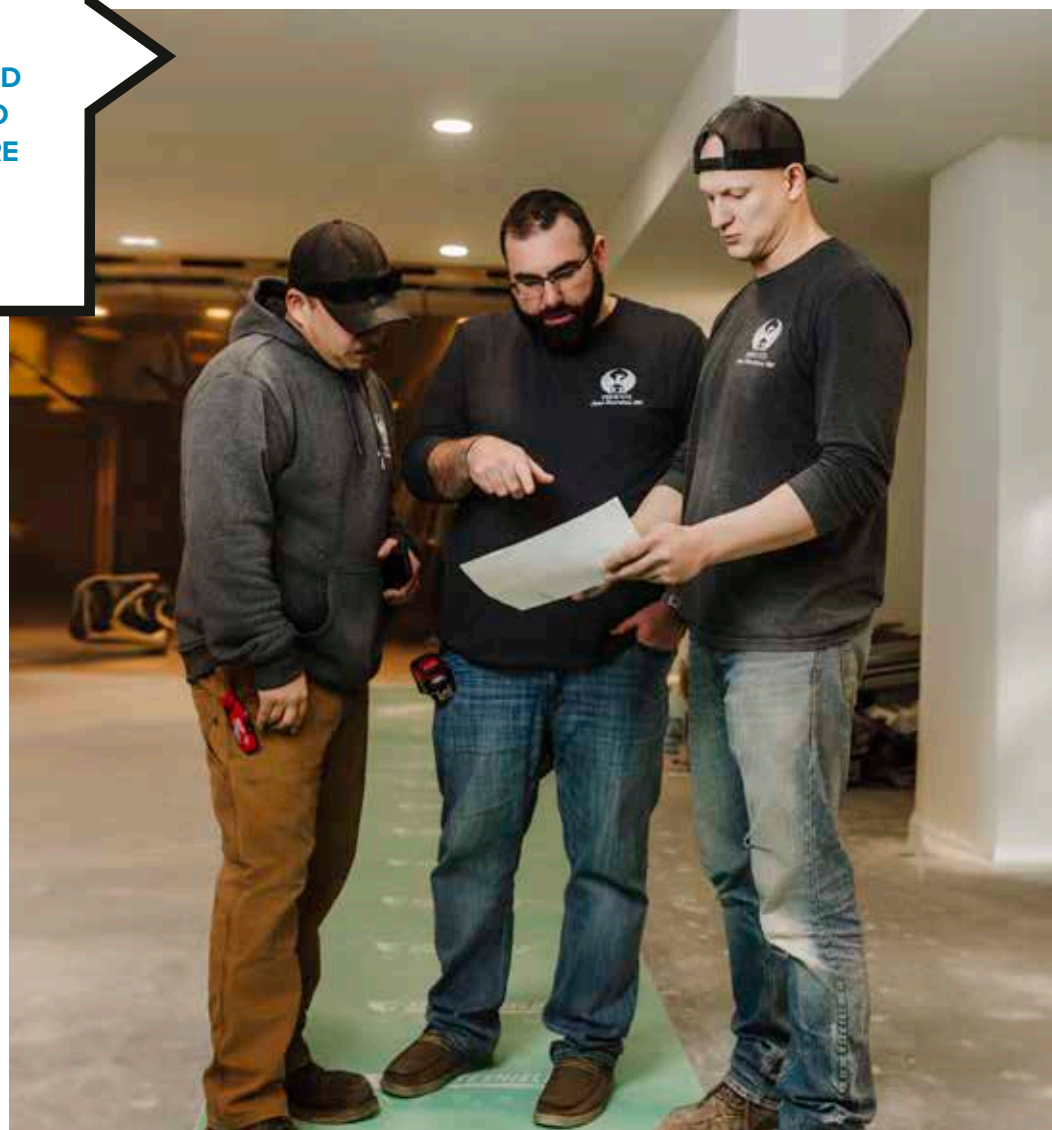




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contractors for pre-listing repairs or addressing a laundry list of inspection findings. Phoenix's "one-call" solution directly tackles this complexity, offering agents a single, reliable point of contact for virtually any home-related need, which frees them to concentrate on their core responsibilities: listing and selling properties.

While Blair maintains an active real estate license, he clarifies that its purpose is purely logistical. It grants him and his team expedited access to properties via the MLS, providing crucial information for gathering, such as accurate seller details and clearer property images, which are vital for efficient quoting and faster service turnaround. He does not use his license to solicit clients; instead, he prioritizes referring clients back to the originating agents,



which reinforces his partnerships within the real estate community.

Tri Town Cabinets, a separate yet synergistic entity, originated from a specific and challenging cabinet sourcing endeavor. Initially envisioned as a direct supplier to builders and investors, its strategic focus has since been refined.

By deeply understanding and proactively addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by real estate professionals, Phoenix aims to be more than just a renovation company; it strives to be a vital partner in building a more efficient, reliable, and ultimately more successful ecosystem within the real estate industry.

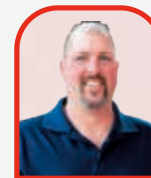


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BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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PHOTOGRAPHY

Derek Durish isn't your typical real estate agent. For the past three and a half years, he has been juggling two different worlds: helping clients find their dream homes while navigating the early morning routes as a sanitation worker. This unique duality has not only fueled his real estate career but has also shaped his grounded perspective and strong work ethic. As he puts it with a hint of amusement, "Trash and real estate aren't two things that often go together," but Derek somehow makes it work.

Derek's journey into real estate was sparked by a tangible vision of success within his own family. Observing his cousin in Texas and Florida build an "empire" through investment

properties, reaching a point where his children's college was fully funded, ignited a desire in Derek to explore a similar path. Derek recognized the power of real estate paired with hard work.

Long before he started handing over keys and celebrating closing deals, Derek understood the home-buying process. Having already purchased two properties himself, he'd been "on the client side and in the client's shoes." Derek bought his first home at the age of 22. This personal experience became a foundational element in his approach to real estate. However, the leap into the

industry wasn't solely driven by a passion for property or the allure of wealth; it was also a quest for something deeper. Derek found himself "searching for purpose in the world." For twelve years, he had worked in sanitation, a path presented to him in high school. While acknowledging the security of that path, real estate emerged as a chance to define his potential.

While building a financial base for his family, Derek recognized the potent force that real estate could be. Balancing the demanding schedule of a sanitation worker – often starting his day at 3 AM – he recalls the intense grind: working from 3 AM to 3 PM, then closing out his shift and jumping into real estate from 4 PM to 11 PM. This demanding schedule pushed him beyond his perceived limits. "It pushed me emotionally, mentally, intellectually," he



reflects on the unexpected personal growth. Real estate became the catalyst that took him out of his comfort zone into a sphere of endless opportunity. Reflecting on his dual career path, Derek acknowledges that some might question his commitment to real estate while still working in sanitation. But he firmly believes it depends on one's stage of life, emphasizing the benefits his situation provides for his family, financial security, including insurance, and a pension.

Now leading his own team, he credits his mentor, James Barath, for instilling in him the principles of effective leadership. He emphasizes being a solid leader, having good follow-up, making a plan, keeping things written down, being consistent, and, most importantly, managing client communication.

Derek defines success through the lens of his family. "I define success as being able to be supportive and there for my family." He readily acknowledges the pivotal role his wife plays, stating unequivocally, "My wife is key to all this success, and I definitely couldn't have done it without her." Together, they navigate life with their two children: Xavier, 14, who attends 8th grade at Grimmer Middle School and has shown an interest in entrepreneurship, and Sophia, 13, a dedicated member of a travel softball league that keeps the family busy with



**“SOMETIMES YOU CAN ONLY
LEARN WHEN
YOU’RE THROWN IN THE FIRE.”**



around 100 games a year. Derek isn't just a spectator; he actively coaches Sophia's team.

He and his wife, high school sweethearts who have been together ever since, have grown alongside each other, witnessing each other's evolution. As a leader, Derek describes his style as "accessible, action-oriented, and very active." He's known for his friendly and energetic approach, a trait he playfully terms having "the Big Durish Energy."

His advice for new realtors is direct and practical: "surround yourself with good people who will guide you." He also acknowledges the inherent learning curve, stating, "Derek said that sometimes you can only learn when you're thrown in the fire."

Derek's dedication and results speak for themselves. He has achieved recognition within his brokerage, thanks to his consistently high performance. This success was built on a foundation of hard work, a desire to exceed expectations, and a genuine commitment to serving his clients.



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Brent W. Wright
OF MCCOLLY REAL ESTATE

**STILL CLOSING:
BRENT WRIGHT’S
LONGEVITY IN
REAL ESTATE**

BY GIAVONNI DOWNING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELINDA
NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Brent Wright has transformed an accidental career into a meaningful journey of helping others. A unique blend of entrepreneurial spirit and problem-solving skills marks his path to becoming a successful real estate agent. His early business ventures instilled in him the

importance of collaboration, a lesson he carries into his real estate practice.

Originally aspiring to open a Domino’s franchise, Brent’s entry into real estate was serendipitous. What began as a class to understand property laws quickly became a natural calling. Brent’s personal experience was a part of his driving desire to help others.

“When I was 20, I was one of those people who bought with the no-money-down loans, but I did not have anyone to help me or guide me through the process.” This personal insight

fuels his commitment to client advocacy.

During his real estate education, he discovered an innate ability to grasp complex concepts, consistently achieving top grades without extensive studying. This early success hinted at the problem-solving prowess that would define his career.

Recruited by Tracy, now the president of McColly, he initially expressed reservations about becoming a top agent. He ultimately decided to jump into real estate in a unique

way. “I took a different approach, and I still do this to this day, which is I try to help people, versus just sell.” This has put him at odds with banks during the recession. His fiduciary duty to his clients always took precedence, guiding his ethical and client-centered approach.

Brent’s professional philosophy centers on putting clients first. He recalls a pivotal moment when he advised a client against selling a home, instead suggesting a creative solution that allowed the homeowner to buy out





Brent pictured with his assistant Jill Pickering

his spouse and remain in the property. This client-centric approach reflects his belief that real estate professionals should be advisors, not salespeople, prioritizing individual needs over transactional gains.

With an impressive track record of selling over 825 houses in 15 years, Brent has been the number one agent in McColly for multiple years and has been ranked in the top 10 in Indiana. However, he's quick to downplay these achievements, emphasizing the importance of the people behind the numbers. Each sale represents a family's journey, a perspective that keeps him grounded and motivated.

Beyond real estate, Brent is deeply involved in community leadership. He serves on the board of directors at NIRA and the Portage Chamber of Commerce. He also sits on the city's planning commission. He uses these platforms to solve problems and support local business development. This extends to his small construction

company, Wright Homes, where he builds a few houses annually.

Family plays a central role in Brent's life. Married for 12 years and the father of three daughters, aged 4, 8, and 10, he is intentional about maintaining a work-life balance. He coaches his children's sports teams and attends their events, reflecting his belief that success isn't measured by professional achievements alone, but by the lives you impact.

His approach to life and business is shaped by a Bob Marley quote he once heard: "The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and the ability to affect those around him positively." This ethos permeates his professional interactions and community involvement.

This philosophy is reflected in his real estate practice, where he prioritizes clients' needs over quick sales. He's particularly passionate about helping clients



understand the critical difference between needs and wants, a lesson he hopes to instill in his children.

Brent's background is as diverse as his professional interests. Born in Germany and raised in multiple locations due to his father's Air Force career, he developed adaptability at an early age. Growing up in a military family with

frequent moves and a large extended family shaped his view on possessions and connection, which developed his sense of self-sufficiency.

He played baseball and wrestled in high school, experiences that taught him resilience and the value of teamwork. These early lessons translated into his professional

approach, understanding that success is rarely an individual achievement.

Time management is another of Brent's strengths. Managing multiple roles, including real estate agent, community leader, construction company owner, and dedicated father, requires exceptional organizational skills. He credits Warren Buffett's

wisdom about intelligence, specifically the ability to think simply, and applies this principle to streamline his professional and personal processes.

For aspiring real estate professionals, Brent offers advice: focus on helping people, not just making money. He's critical of agents who don't invest in understanding the



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nuances of the business and believes the industry would benefit from professionals who are more committed to client welfare than to personal gain.

Looking forward, Brent remains open to opportunities. While he’s considered starting his own brokerage, he’s not fixated on aggressive expansion. His primary goal is maintaining the quality of service that has defined his career. He’s more interested in continuing to learn, adapting to industry changes, and staying present for his family.

Brent Wright sees beyond transactions to the human stories behind each property. He values genuine connections, problem-solving, and improving people’s lives.

His story is a reminder that true professional success comes from understanding that every client is more than a potential commission – they’re a person with dreams, challenges, and a story waiting to unfold. His dedication extends beyond individual clients to fostering a stronger, more ethical real estate community.

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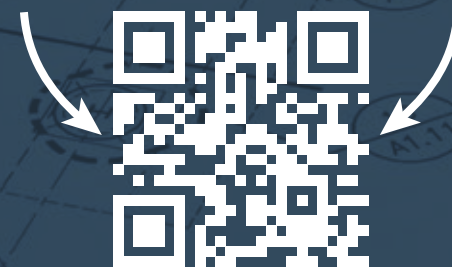
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