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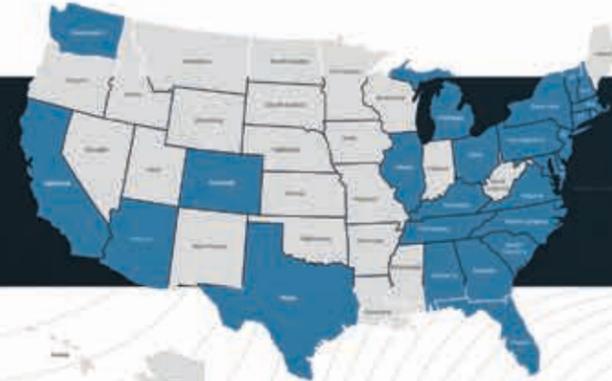
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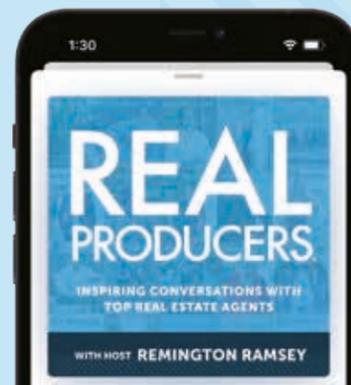
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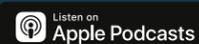


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# BIG NEWS!

Long Island Real Producers Is Growing —  
And We're Just Getting Started!!

We couldn't be more excited to share this incredible news with our community! Christine and I are thrilled to step into the role of Publisher – Area Directors for *Long Island Real Producers Magazine*. After acquiring the magazine from Kristin Brindley, we're all-in on making this the ultimate resource for our vibrant real estate community—and the journey ahead is nothing short of exciting!

### A Heartfelt Thank You

First, a huge thank you to Kristin and her amazing team for their dedication and support. Their hard work laid the foundation of this fantastic publication, and we're grateful to carry the torch forward with even more energy and passion.

### Our Commitment to Connect, Inspire, Elevate

Our mission remains the same: connect, inspire, and elevate the best of the best real estate agents and ad partners on Long Island! *Long Island Real Producers* will continue to be a valuable platform celebrating your successes, sharing compelling stories, and spotlighting our elite network of industry professionals. Together, we're building a community that's stronger, more connected, and more exciting than ever!

### What's Coming Up?

Hold on tight—big things are on the horizon! We're launching a sleek, redesigned website that will make it easier to access past issues, find contact info for our preferred Ad Partners, and stay connected. Plus, we're creating more opportunities and events for featured agents to share their inspiring stories, connect with other premier agents and network with the top industry professionals.

2026 is shaping up to be an incredible year of growth, innovation, and new opportunities—and we're thrilled to have you with us every step of the way. The future is bright, and we can't wait to see what's next!



With enthusiasm and gratitude,

**Blaise Ingrisano & Christine Ingrisano**  
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When it comes to buying or selling residential property in New York, the closing costs can be a shock. Between New York State's transfer taxes and mortgage taxes, buyers, sellers, and even lenders are often stuck with thousands in unavoidable fees.

### But there's good news.

If you're working with Citizens Bank—or any of the major institutions like Wells Fargo, Citi, Chase, or Bank of America—you may be eligible for a Purchase CEMA (Consolidation, Extension, and Modification Agreement). A Purchase CEMA can save all parties thousands in closing costs by reassigning and modifying the seller's existing mortgage in place of a brand-new one.

### Let's break it down:

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This means qualifying clients can not only reduce tax-related costs with a Purchase CEMA but also receive below-market mortgage rates based on their banking relationship.

As of now, only one law firm—**Abrams Garfinkel Margolis Bergson, LLP (AGMB)**—has the exclusive ability to handle Purchase CEMAs for these big banks, including Citizens Bank. That means if you're interested in exploring this opportunity, your team needs to be working with someone who can facilitate it properly.



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# GEORGE GATT

From Blueprints To Breakthroughs

BY GEORGE PAUL THOMAS  
PHOTOS BY ANDREW MALARY PRODUCTIONS

Some people are born into real estate. Others find their way to it. And then there's George Gatt, who, from a young age, saw both ends of the spectrum: luxury city development and the harsh realities of an uncertain rental market. Born in Astoria and raised in Levittown, George's story is one of grit, gratitude, and relentless growth.



At the March 2025 Real Producers Magazine Party, George Gatt and his broker, Stephen Portelli, celebrated his recognition in the 40 Under 40 issue



Inspired by his father's role as a superintendent in NYC construction and shaped by his family's housing struggles during his parents' divorce, George developed a unique appreciation for the power of real estate to change lives. "My experiences shaped my desire to help others navigate the market, no matter what side of the transaction they are on," he explains.

### A Career Reimagined

Before diving into real estate, George was pursuing a career in physical education, backed by a bachelor's degree and academic honors at SUNY Brockport. But his heart pulled him elsewhere. As a born entrepreneur, he found himself constantly brainstorming, always looking to create something meaningful and his own. That ambition crystallized when he entered the real estate world in April 2022.

"Right out of the gate, I knew I'd found the right path," George says. "It's a business where hustle and heart matter—and I've got both."



ensure every action brings them closer to their ideal outcome,” he says. “People remember how you make them feel—and I make it my mission to ensure every client feels understood, respected, and supported.”

At Stephen Joseph Properties, George leads The Gatt Group and serves as a social media and industry development advisor. His sharp eye for strategy and tech-savviness helps fellow agents elevate their branding and stay ahead of industry shifts.

He credits much of his success to his broker and mentor, Stephen Portelli. “Stephen’s not just a leader—he’s a role model,” George says. “He’s taught me to lead with integrity, to stay calm

under pressure, and to show up every day ready to grow. Everything I do is a reflection of the standard he’s set.”

That mindset translated quickly into results. In just his second full year, George closed nearly \$7 million in sales across 15 transactions, added thousands more in rental and commercial leases, and set his sights on doubling that volume in 2025.

Stephen himself brings experience in flips, new construction, and general contracting, and the two share Maltese roots that add another layer to their partnership. “It’s not just business,” George says. “It’s family.”

Behind every success is a story—and George’s includes battles few see. Diagnosed with severe Crohn’s disease only three months into his real estate career, he’s learned to balance a demanding industry with daily health challenges. Rather than hold him back, these experiences have sharpened his focus and strengthened his resolve.

“I’ve learned to turn obstacles into opportunities,” he shares. “Discipline, empathy, and adaptability—those are things that don’t show up on a business card, but they’re the backbone of everything I do.”

George’s family is a source of unwavering support. “My parents are hardworking and selfless, and my sister, Angelina, is a constant source of inspiration,” he says. “I am blessed to have such a great family.”

And when he’s not working? It’s fire pits, steak dinners, backyard BBQs, and spontaneous weekend getaways with

George takes pride in delivering concierge-level service, staying available to his clients at all times, and building relationships that extend far beyond the closing table. “I quickly identify my client’s goals and build a tailored plan to



George celebrates 25 surrounded by loved ones at his favorite steakhouse

the people he loves. He enjoys traveling the states, playing pickleball, exploring financial markets, and he never says no to a new steakhouse.

George also supports causes close to home, including the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation and the Foundation Fighting Blindness. His donations to local schools—especially around the holidays—reflect a simple belief: giving back isn’t optional; it’s essential.

#### Looking Ahead

George’s future is as bold as his present. He plans to start a family and grow into real estate development, flipping homes, and creating affordable housing on Long Island. At the core of it all is his faith.

“God is the foundation for everything I do,” he says. “He gave me the vision, the opportunity, and the strength to do what I love.”

#### His advice to aspiring agents?

“Be patiently aggressive. Plant the seeds. Water them daily. You might not see the results right away, but consistency will compound. And never forget—every deal is a chance to help someone and earn their trust for a future referral.”



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# LIVING IT, LOVING IT, LEADING IT

BY GEORGE PAUL THOMAS  
PHOTOS BY CHRIS AT DYNAMIC MEDIA SOLUTIONS



# JESSICA | MELANIE EPSTEIN | COGAN & LIZA BENDETT

When you sit down with Jessi Epstein, Melanie Cogan, and Liza Bendett, it doesn't feel like you're talking to three top-producing real estate pros. It feels like catching up with old friends—ones who just happen to have built one of the most respected teams on Long Island. They laugh easily, finish each other's sentences, and share a bond that runs deeper than business.

Together, they lead the Scout Residential Team at Compass, a powerhouse group known for high standards and even

higher care. But the numbers—over \$154 million closed in 2024 and already over \$140 million as of writing, with more than \$34 million in pending sales—only tell part of the story. What really defines these three women is how much they love what they do and who they do it with.

### Different Roads to the Same Destination

Jessi, Melanie, and Liza didn't plan to end up here together, but looking back, it feels like fate.

For Jessi Epstein, real estate was a natural fit. She started as a corporate attorney, sharp and determined, but found herself drawn to homes, design, and the human side of helping people make life-changing moves. "I live here. I sell homes here," she says, speaking of Roslyn and East Hills, where she's as much a neighbor as she is an agent. "That connection makes everything more meaningful."

Then there's Melanie Cogan, who came from the fast-paced world of tech. She





built teams, led client services, and thrived in startup environments. When she pivoted to real estate, she brought that entrepreneurial mindset with her. “I’ve always liked taking big swings,” she says with a grin. “Launching our own brokerage before joining Compass was one of those moments. Scary? Yes. Worth it? Absolutely.”

And Liza Bendett grew up around the business—her family worked in real estate—but she carved her own path through development and marketing. Early in her career, she created a marketing department for a developer, learning the ins and outs of the industry from every angle. “I love strategy,” she admits, “but at the end of the day, it’s about people. That’s why this work never gets old.”

#### Building Scout Residential

The trio’s partnership started when Melanie and Liza launched Scout Residential in 2019, bringing a fresh, marketing-forward approach to Long Island real estate. They weren’t interested in just doing things the way they’d always been done. They wanted to create something modern, client-focused, and collaborative. Their success caught the attention of Compass, and soon, Scout joined forces with the brand, growing in reach without losing its boutique feel.

Jessi’s arrival was the missing piece. Her legal background and community ties blended perfectly with Liza and Melanie’s vision. Together, the three women became a team that clients not only trust but genuinely enjoy working with.

“We’re not just colleagues—we’re family,” Liza says. “We lean on each other, we celebrate wins together, and we pick each other up when things get hard.”

#### Why They Click

Each of them brings something different to the table. Jessi’s calm,

client-first approach makes her the steady voice in the storm. Liza is the strategist, always thinking three steps ahead. Melanie? She’s the one who reminds everyone to dream big and go for it.

They agree on one thing: relationships matter more than anything. “This job isn’t about transactions,” Melanie says. “It’s about people trusting you during one of the biggest moments in their lives.”

That mindset has paid off. Most of their business comes from referrals and repeat clients, proof that their clients feel cared for long after the closing papers are signed.

#### Life Beyond the Deals

Despite their success, the three women make time for the things that matter most.

Jessi lives in East Hills with her husband, Brad, their two kids, Emma and Asher, and their mini-goldendoodle, Willow. She enjoys tennis, spending time with local family and friends, and generally being an active part of the community she serves. “It’s special when clients become neighbors,” she says. “You get to see the memories they’re making.”

Melanie, based in Roslyn, is married to Brett, has two sons, Ben and Dylan, and a dog named Piper. She cheers on the Indiana Hoosiers as both sons are IU past and present students. She loves a good game of Canasta or Mah Jong, and still talks about the time she hit a hole-in-one. “It’s true,” she laughs. “I barely play golf, but I have that one bragging right.”

Liza balances work with family life in Roslyn, where she and her husband, Blake, are raising three kids: daughter Andi and twin boys Brendan & Baker. Add three dogs to the mix, and her house is never quiet. She loves to travel, cook,

and—when she gets the chance—dream about writing a book.

Philanthropy is also part of who they are. They support organizations like the Sunrise Association, local autism programs, and community charities. “You have to give back,” Liza says. “That’s how you build something that lasts.”

#### Looking to the Future

Even with all they’ve achieved, the three women are just getting started. Jessi wants to keep growing her personal brand and invest more in her

community. Liza envisions expanding their legacy while mentoring new agents. Melanie stays motivated by outdoing herself year after year. “Every year, I compete with myself,” she says. “That’s what keeps me going.”

Their shared vision? To keep Scout Residential at the top, not just for the numbers, but for the experience they deliver.

When asked what advice they’d give to new agents, their answers reflect who they are.

Jessi says, “Get out there, meet people, and keep learning. Growth never stops.”

Liza adds, “Be consistent. Show up every day, know your market, and listen. Listening builds trust.”

Melanie’s advice is simple: “Stick with it and keep your chin up. Hard work always pays off.”

Together, Liza, Jessi, and Melanie have built something rare: a team that blends heart with hustle, friendship with professionalism, and ambition with authenticity. They’ve proven that success doesn’t have to come at the expense of relationships—it can be built on them.

As Melanie likes to say, “The difference between good and great is guts.” With these three leading the way, there’s no doubt Scout Residential is on a path to greatness.

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