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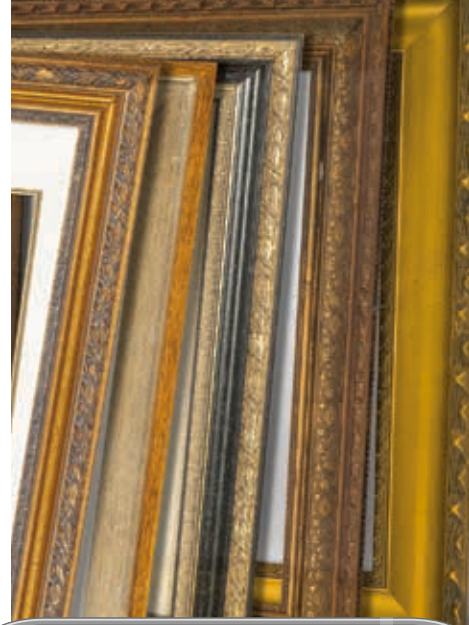
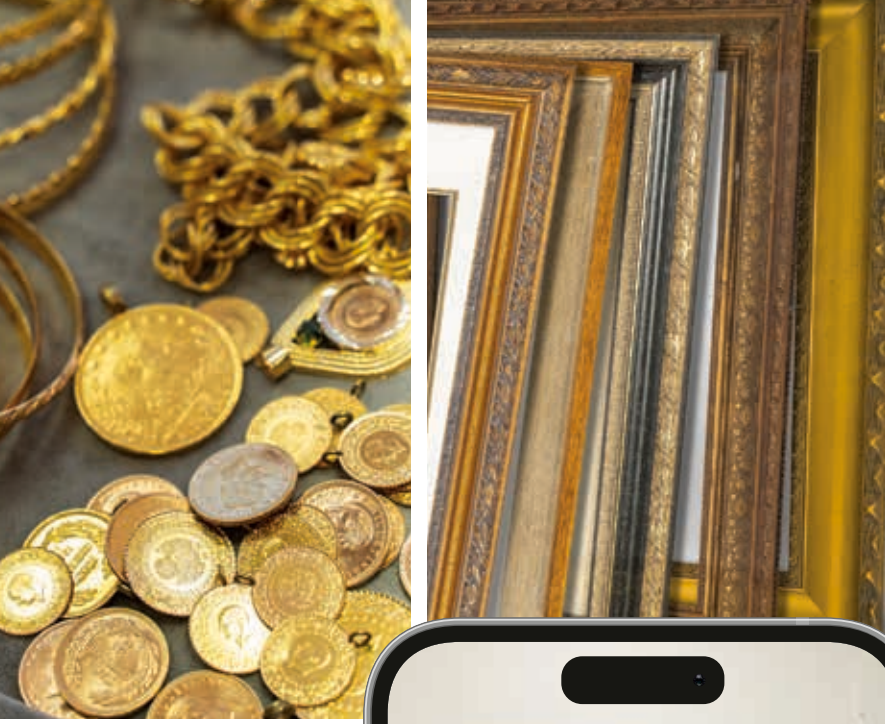


Agent on the Rise
CARLI WHALEY
Wallace Real Estate

Partner Spotlight
FLOORING AMERICA

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Untapped Tools

WITH SARAH MASLOWSKI

BY REBECCA RAMSEY
CAPTURED BY LANA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY

We kicked off 2026 with a unique learning experience, “Untapped Tools” sponsored by Mortgage Investors Group, Everything Cool Estate Sales, Summer Dove Bookkeeping and HomeTeam Inspection.

This is a PRIVATE and EXCLUSIVE event that is FREE for you as a top producer to gain valuable insights and collaborate with other top agents across east TN in real estate. We brought our A-game with top 100 nationally recognized agent, **Sarah Maslowski**, from Atlanta. She went in-depth as to how to utilize YouTube as an agent tool - drilling down into the nuts and bolts to launch your business into

overdrive - lots of surprising facts! Our own preferred partner, **Kelly Wigington**, owner of Summer Dove Bookkeeping gave us lots of insights for setting up your real estate as a business and money management tools.

Sarah Avilla, owner of Regulate With Sarah, has us literally tapping on ourselves using an EFT technique for emotional regulation to deal with fears, uncomfortable thoughts and how we can overcome them from the inside out.



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CARLI
Whaley
**WALLACE
REAL
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Location: Lake Loudon

Enjoying the Perfect Combination - Education and Growth

Carli Whaley never set out to become a real estate agent, much less someone who would help shape how new agents learn the business. Her journey started in a histology lab at UT Medical Center, transitioned through stay-at-home motherhood, took a detour through insurance sales, and eventually landed her in real estate in 2016. Now, a decade later, she has carved out the absolute ideal role for herself with Wallace Real Estate's Lakeside Office: part-time education coordinator, part-time active agent—and she's having the time of her life, fully invested in both.

When Carli decided to return to work after staying home with her young children, those early morning laboratory shifts no longer made sense for her household. A friend in the insurance industry explained how she could get her licensing paid for, earn base pay plus commission, and build a career with more flexible hours. Carli took the opportunity and worked in insurance for a while...until she realized something crucial: insurance really wasn't fun for her.

That same friend, now in real estate, encouraged her to get her real estate license. So, with some insurance sales experience under her belt and an offer of mentorship, Carli made the switch. She's been licensed for ten years and earned her broker's license three years ago. Now, despite the challenges, she's resigned to her fate. "I'll be one of those little old ladies who dies with a license in my hand, because every time I've threatened to quit, I'm like, no, I can't...I don't know what else I would do."

What Carli discovered over the years is that while she's competent at sales, her real strength lies elsewhere: she's good with people. She loves the education piece—sitting down with first-time homebuyers and walking them through the process step by step. And her new role at Wallace lets her do exactly that, just with agents instead of clients.

“*I get to work directly with clients while also helping agents develop their skills.***”**



Wallace had been running a comprehensive three-week onboarding program that wasn't working well for anyone. Experienced agents transferring in didn't need all that information; they just needed to learn the company's systems. New agents, meanwhile, were drowning in too much information delivered too quickly. The company decided to overhaul its education department, moving a significant portion online so people can learn at their own pace—and Carli took over coordinating the in-person education, focusing on hands-on learning that can't happen through a screen.

The role is technically part-time, though Carli admits she's putting in more hours than that right now as they build out the new system. She's still selling full-time as well, which might sound overwhelming but, actually, it suits her perfectly. "It's the best of both worlds for me," she said. "I get to work directly with clients while also helping agents develop their skills. It makes my little ADHD heart very happy."

BY LUCY REYNOLDS AND PHOTOS BY AMY SULLIVAN PHOTOGRAPHY



What makes the position even better is the environment. Carli has worked in healthcare, insurance, and various other industries, and she has experienced her share of toxic workplaces. Under Jim and George's leadership, however, Wallace is different. "I almost want to cry because I'm so grateful for how amazing it is to work with this particular group of people," she shared. "It's just the right amount of support and autonomy. I never feel micromanaged, but at the same

time, I feel like somebody's always available to help, cheerfully and enthusiastically."

That balance matters to Carli, whose life outside real estate includes three children: a 28-year-old and two teenagers still at home. As long as her 18- and 16-year-old want to hang out with her, she'll be interested in whatever they're doing, whether that's playing Fortnite in the evenings or something else entirely. When she has time—which isn't often these days—she paints and sells her work at local breweries around Knoxville. She also loves to bake; in fact, she used to run a home bakery when she was staying home with her kids.

Having turned 50 in March, Carli describes her life now as a "choose your own adventure" every day. She's in what she recognizes as a rare place: genuinely excited to start each new day. "I really love what I'm doing right now," she exclaimed. "This is the happiest I've ever been."

Where does she see herself in five years? She's not entirely sure—and she's okay with that. Right now she's focused on deepening her connection to the real estate community, honing her skills, doing the best she can where she is, and taking each opportunity as it comes. "I'm in a really good place," she summarized, "and right now, I'm just enjoying it!"



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I'll be one of
those little old
ladies who dies
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CELEBRATING **THREE DECADES** OF LOCAL EXPERTISE

BY LUCY REYNOLDS AND PHOTOS BY AMY SULLIVAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Flooring America co-owner Mike Roberts was working in commercial and residential real estate years ago when his friend Doug Bailey showed up wanting to lease a small space behind Mike's office. But Doug had one condition: Mike had to become a 50/50 partner in Doug's new flooring venture. When Mike did the math on the proposed rent versus the cost of half the company, it was a no-brainer. Suddenly, he was in the flooring business.

What started in 400 square feet has grown considerably over the past 30+ years. The company moved to 1,200 square feet, then 20,000, then 50,000 square feet. Now co-owner, Randy Williams came aboard as CFO in 1996, bringing financial expertise from previous flooring acquisitions and mergers. Along the way, the business model evolved too. Bailey and Roberts Flooring led to GCO Carpet Outlet, which became Flooring America in 2006, expanding from just carpet and vinyl to all types of flooring.

In the early 1990s, when the company was located on Baum Drive, store manager Dale Titlow joined the team after literally walking across the parking lot from Cherokee Distributing looking for a job more compatible with family life. Thirty-five years later, he's still there.

That kind of longevity defines Flooring America. Their average employee has been in the business 20 to 25 years. Mike himself has 44 years of flooring experience. It's a stark contrast to big box stores where, as Randy pointed out, the person helping you might have been working in the paint department yesterday. "We've got a deep knowledge," he explained, "and most big boxes simply can't because they turn people over a lot."

The company operates as part of a national co-op with more than 500 locations across North America, which gives them significant advantages while maintaining local ownership. They get the buying power, the advertising resources, and the clout of a national organization without the bureaucracy. "When you walk in and see Mike and me," Randy said, "you see the people who make the decisions."

The showroom itself reflects strategic thinking from the national marketing team working with major manufacturers. They've researched and selected the best-selling products and most popular colors, stocking only

“**CUSTOMERS WANT A PRODUCT THAT'S BEAUTIFUL, THAT PERFORMS, AND MAKES THEM FEEL GOOD.**”

— MIKE ROBERTS, CO-OWNER

items that manufacturers literally pay to place there. It's a curated selection designed to show customers what's actually working in the market.

But products are only part of the equation. What really sets Flooring America apart is their commitment to consultation. Mike is adamant about this: "Before showing anyone a product, you need to understand their problem. Someone furnishing a rental they plan to sell in two years doesn't need a \$12 product—a \$9 option makes more sense. But a homeowner planning to stay long-term needs to understand life cycle costs and how spending \$1.00 or \$1.25 more per square foot delivers significantly better value over time."

"I don't think any customer wants the cheapest product known to man in their home," he summarized. "They want a product that's beautiful, that performs, and makes them feel good. And if we solve those three problems for people, they're going to buy."

Dale sees it from the front lines every day. When customers come in, whether in January or July, they see the same faces—a continuity that builds confidence. He emphasizes building personal relationships, asking probing questions about projects and needs. That consistency matters in an industry where people often feel overwhelmed by options and confused about what they're actually buying per square foot.

The hesitancy the staff sees in customers stems from lack of knowledge. As

Location: AR Homes model home in Windriver





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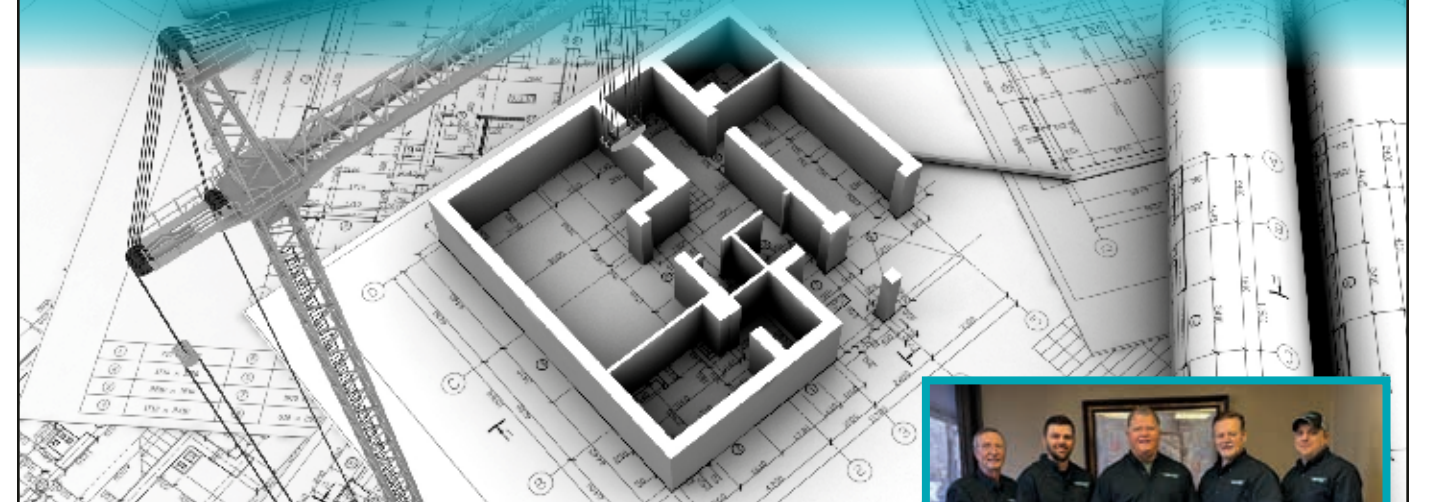
– RANDY WILLIAMS, CO-OWNER

Mike sees it, their job is to remove that “badge of reluctance” through education. Sometimes customers think they want one thing when they actually need something else entirely.

Without a doubt, Flooring America’s two Knoxville locations operate with a solid foundation: deep product knowledge, local ownership with national backing, and a highly experienced team. Their consultation approach has built a business that runs almost entirely on word of mouth and repeat customers; they do virtually no advertising. After three decades of business, their proven reputation does the work.

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FROM CLASSROOM TO CLOSING TABLE

BY LUCY REYNOLDS AND
PHOTOS BY AMY SULLIVAN
PHOTOGRAPHY

After 16 years as an early childhood educator and a military wife supporting her husband's service, Emily Golec knew she was ready for a change. With her husband preparing to retire from the military, she found herself drawn to real estate because of her own experiences in remodeling and house-hunting. When she got her license in 2013, she jumped in with both feet, and something clicked immediately. "Honestly, it's been a passion ever since," she said. "I don't even feel like it's work. I love it."

Now a top producer with Keller Williams Realty, Emily's enthusiasm has sustained her through 13 years as an agent, building a career centered not on transactions but on relationships. Her background in education proved to be the perfect foundation for guiding clients through what can be an overwhelming process, particularly for first-time buyers who have ideas from online searches but little understanding of what actually lies ahead. She finds genuine satisfaction in walking people through each step, helping them build wealth through real estate whether they're purchasing their first home,





“As an investor in real estate myself, I love working with investors.”

selling to maximize their return, or venturing into investment properties.

And Emily isn't just helping others invest in real estate—she's doing it herself. After her husband retired from the military, he became their project manager, overseeing renovations while she handles the design work. She gravitates toward flipping properties more than holding rentals, although they've done both. That hands-on experience gives her credibility when talking with clients interested in building wealth through real estate investing. “As an investor in real estate myself, I love working with investors,” she said. “Whether it's rentals or renovations, I love those things.”

After life as a military wife, Emily also appreciates the opportunity to work with veterans, both those she knows personally and those she meets through the real estate process. It's another way she connects with clients on a level deeper than a simple business transaction.

When asked what she wants to be remembered for, she didn't mention sales numbers or awards. “For the relationships I've built and having compassion toward others and helping others,” she remarked. “Real estate is not always about the money; sometimes people just need somebody to hold their hand and help them through the process.”

That philosophy has served her well, along with what she describes as a fortunate network of support. An early mentor brought her in and guided her through those first crucial months in the industry. Since then, she's surrounded herself with a close-knit group of agents who serve as sounding boards when challenges arise—and she says every broker she's worked with has been excellent.

Emily appreciates working with area agents who are positive, noting how much easier it is to navigate challenges when everyone involved brings constructive energy to the table. That perspective extends to her advice for other agents: “We can



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“Being a military wife, I also appreciate the opportunity to work with veterans.”

learn from each other and support each other,” she said. “Even when you have troubles in a deal, it’s so wonderful when you have another agent that you can work with who has a positive spin.”

At this point in her career, Emily still wakes up excited about her work. Family motivates her—her son and daughter, and particularly her grandson—but so does the work itself. Real estate never gets boring because there’s always something new, always another person to help, always another challenge to solve. She recently attended Keller Williams’ Family Reunion, where British author and motivational speaker Jay Shetty left such an impression that she’d choose him for a hypothetical dining companion if she could. “He’d be a fabulous person to have dinner with,” she said. “He’s very inspirational, very pleasant and calming.”

Outside of work, Emily loves gardening, walking, traveling, and going to concerts—in fact, she recently saw the Eagles at the Sphere in Las Vegas. She enjoys listening to audiobooks, lately focusing on industry-related titles like Chris Voss and Steve Shull’s *The Full Fee Agent*, which reinforced what she already practices: *working with people you genuinely enjoy*. A trip to Italy is at the top of her bucket list, and if she had time to learn something new, she’d like to learn a little bit more about AI and how to use it in her business.

If she had to completely change careers tomorrow, Emily thinks she’d find something simple she could do from home, maybe turn a hobby into work so she could spend more time with her sweet grandbaby. But for now, 13 years in, the passion that drew her to real estate in the first place shows no signs of fading—she’s here to stay.



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I am an enthusiastic new member of the mortgage industry, dedicated to helping individuals and families achieve their homeownership goals. Raised in the Seymour area, I am focused on building my business by providing excellent customer service and expert guidance to my clients throughout the mortgage process.

Outside of my professional life, I am passionate about fitness and enjoy staying active. I also love spending time outdoors, especially walking my dog, Nova, which helps me stay grounded and energized.

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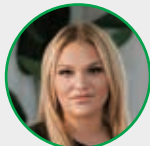
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