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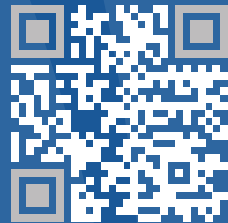
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The Power of PROXIMITY

WHY THE ROOMS YOU CHOOSE SHAPE THE RESULTS YOU CREATE

BY GABRIEL CHANDLER

Success in real estate is rarely about information alone. It's about **environment**.

Who you spend time with.
What conversations your part of.
Which rooms you consistently choose to enter.

We often hear the phrase *"your network is your net worth,"* yet many professionals continue to operate in isolation—staying busy, staying active, and hoping momentum follows. But growth doesn't happen by chance.

Hope isn't a strategy. Proximity is.

The most effective agents understand this. They don't simply work harder—they place themselves in environments where perspective expands, relationships deepen, and opportunity naturally follows. They know that the right conversations can accelerate progress faster than effort alone ever could.

That understanding is why Real Producers exists.

A Room Designed With Intention

Real Producers isn't another networking group or industry association. It's a carefully curated platform created for the top 300 agents in our market—because when high-level professionals gather with purpose, the impact multiplies.

Every feature, every event, and every introduction is intentional. The goal isn't volume—it's alignment. We bring the right people together so collaboration happens organically, trust forms naturally, and growth becomes sustainable.

This is what turns presence into progress.

Busy Versus Intentional

There's a difference between motion and momentum.

Staying busy can feel productive—but true growth comes from investing in relationships that stretch your thinking, sharpen your execution, and open doors you didn't even know were there.

If you're reading this, you've already earned your place among the best in the business. The real question is this: are you fully leveraging the ecosystem around you?

Are you showing up consistently?
Are you building meaningful relationships with partners and peers?
Are you placing yourself where long-term opportunities are created?

The Next Quarter Starts Now

April marks a natural reset point. The first quarter is behind us, and the foundation for the rest of the year is being set right now.

This is the moment to be intentional about where you invest your time, energy, and attention.

If you're already engaged—continue leaning in.
If you've been on the sidelines—this is your invitation.

This is your community.
This is your network.
This is Real Producers.

I look forward to seeing you at the next event. Let's make this quarter count.



Gabriel Chandler
Publisher
Cape Fear & Brunswick
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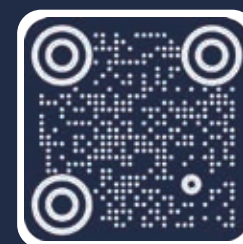
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Does the Code of Ethics expect a REALTOR® to verify buyer and sellers identity?



The North Carolina Real Estate Commission's monthly eBulletin has included descriptions of several cases where licensed agents were disciplined for failing to discover what has been called "seller impersonation fraud" or a "fake seller scam." In addition to facing potential discipline by the Real Estate Commission, could the failure of a REALTOR® to discover such a scam also result in discipline under the Code of Ethics?

While the outcome of any ethics proceeding will ultimately depend on the facts of that particular case, we believe that there

are several articles of the Code of Ethics that could apply if an agent listed a property for sale without taking reasonable steps to verify that their client is actually the owner of that property.

Article 2. Article 2 of the Code of Ethics obligates REALTORS® to avoid misrepresentation of material facts relating to the property or the transaction in which they are involved. While REALTORS® are not expected to discover latent defects in the property, ownership of real property is not "latent"; it is almost always a matter of public record. Failure to verify a known fact could therefore lead to an Article 2 violation in some cases.

Article 11. Article 11 of the Code states that the "services which REALTORS® provide to their clients and customers shall conform to the standards of practice and competence which are reasonably expected in the specific real estate disciplines in which they engage." Given the proliferation of fake seller scams and their prevalence throughout the industry, a professional standards hearing panel could conclude that failure to conduct due diligence as to a seller's alleged identity constitutes incompetence.

Article 12. Article 12 of the Code requires REALTORS® to be honest and truthful in their real estate communications and to present a "true picture" in their advertising, marketing, and other representations. Standard of Practice 12-4 is perhaps most directly on point: "REALTORS® shall not offer for sale/ lease or advertise property without authority." If a REALTOR® fails to use reasonable diligence to confirm whether their seller-client is the true owner of the property they are listing, Article 12 may also apply.

Scammers are becoming more sophisticated every day, and so this article should not be read to cast blame on any REALTOR® who becomes a victim of a scam. It should also be noted that other articles of the Code could apply depending on the circumstances. All that said, listing agents are expected to be vigilant and take reasonable steps to verify a seller's true identity. Failure to do so may not only violate the License Law, but also the Code of Ethics.

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Corey HUNT

WRITTEN BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY: LOGAN BURKES OF BURKE'S MEDIA

Crossing New Thresholds

Corey Hunt's real estate career is rooted in something that can't be taught in a classroom: work ethic. Born and raised in Wilmington, North Carolina, Corey understands the local market not just from data and trends, but from lived experience. Today, as a member of the Warwick Team with Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage, he brings that hometown knowledge together with consistency, hustle, and a genuine desire to guide clients through some of the biggest decisions of their lives.

A Wilmington Native with Blue-Collar Roots

Growing up in Wilmington gave Corey a front-row seat to the area's growth and evolution. From established neighborhoods to new construction communities, he has watched the region transform—and that familiarity has become a powerful asset in his business. Corey attended East Carolina University, where he studied Communications with a Business minor, a combination that would later prove invaluable in client relationships and negotiations.

Before real estate, Corey owned and operated a landscaping company. That experience instilled discipline, accountability, and an appreciation for long hours and physical work. "Coming from a blue-collar background makes you appreciate what you get to do every day," he says. "You learn quickly that showing up—especially when you don't want to—is part of success."

From Dabbling to Diving In

Corey has held a real estate license since 2014, initially using it for personal purchases and investments. Over time, he became increasingly drawn to the flexibility and variety the profession offered. About three years ago, he made the decision to go all in.

"The transition was eye-opening," Corey admits. "From the outside, real estate



can look easy, but you don't know what you don't know." Determined to shorten the learning curve, he immersed himself in on-the-job training and sought guidance from more experienced agents. That commitment paid off when he joined Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage full time in June 2023.

After starting as a solo agent, Corey joined the Warwick Team six months

later—a move he credits as a major turning point. "Rob Warwick has been a tremendous help," he says. "We have a great working relationship, and being from Wilmington gives us a shared understanding of the market and our clients."

Momentum and Measurable Results

Since committing to real estate full time, Corey's production has accelerated



“This business has very high highs and very low lows. You can have the deal of your life happening while another deal is completely falling apart.”

quickly. His career volume now sits at approximately \$33 million, with nearly \$20 million closed in the past year alone. Along the way, he has earned recognition from Coldwell Banker and, as part of the Warwick Team, multiple awards for top production.

While the numbers are impressive, Corey is quick to point out that success hasn't come without challenges. “This business has very high highs and very low lows,” he says. “You can have the deal of your life happening while another deal is completely falling apart.”

What gets him through is perspective. By stepping back, focusing on the bigger picture, and treating each day as a fresh opportunity, Corey has learned to stay steady through the swings that define real estate.

A Day Built on Discipline and Availability

Corey's typical day starts early. He begins by reviewing the MLS hot sheet, grabbing

coffee, and heading to the gym. From there, it's emails, follow-ups, showings, and listing appointments. Much of his day is spent onsite at the Waterstone Community, where he meets buyers, shows homes, and stays closely connected to new construction opportunities.

“I enjoy learning new strategies and staying up to date with communities and builders,” Corey says. “Every day is different, and I like that.”

What Sets Him Apart

If there's one thing Corey believes distinguishes him, it's his willingness to work when others won't. Early mornings, late evenings, weekends, holidays—he understands that real estate doesn't run on a nine-to-five schedule. “You have to work on other people's time,” he explains. “If you want to grow, you have to take the business when it comes.”

That mindset carries into how he treats clients. Whether he's representing a





“There will be slow days. That’s why you have to take the business when it shows up.”

\$175,000 purchase or a \$2 million sale, Corey approaches every transaction as if it were his own. His phone is always on, and his goal is simple: provide clear guidance, honest advice, and steady support from start to finish.

Life Outside the Transaction

When he’s not working, Corey enjoys being on the water—boating, jet skiing, surfing, and recently, spear fishing. He’s also an avid sports fan, following ECU football and the Carolina Panthers. Family plays a central role in his life, and he credits his parents, Randy and Heidi, as his biggest supporters. “They’ve always been there—from sports growing up to answering questions about life and business,” he says.

Defining Success & Looking Ahead

To Corey, success isn’t just measured in volume. It’s about waking up each day excited about his career and enjoying the opportunity to help people make meaningful decisions. His goal for this year is \$25 million in sales, with plans to eventually double that production.

His advice to up-and-coming agents is straightforward: answer the phone, be ready to show property, and go with the flow. “There will be slow days,” he says. “That’s why you have to take the business when it shows up.”


At the heart of it all, Corey Hunt simply loves what he does—and that passion shows in the way he serves his clients, his team, and his hometown market.

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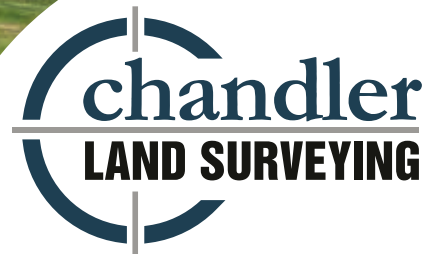
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HAROLD & JACOB

ANSWERING
THE CALL
TO SERVE

WRITTEN BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY T.J. DRECHSEL

For Jacob Dempster, real estate isn't just a career—it's a calling shaped by family, mentorship, and a passion for helping others achieve their dreams. Born and raised in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Jacob grew up watching his father balance a thriving law practice with being a present and devoted dad. That example of leadership and service would lay the foundation for Jacob's approach to business: combine hard work with integrity and prioritize people above all else.

A Career Built on Vision and Mentorship

Jacob earned his marketing degree from Methodist University's Reeves School of Business in 2019 and was licensed in real estate by March of 2020. "I knew I wanted a career that allowed me to build something meaningful while leaving room to be present for my future family," he says. He immediately joined the Harold Chappell Team at NextHome Cape Fear, where he learned the nuances of the industry and how to run real estate as a true business.

His first months coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a challenge that might have overwhelmed any new agent. "I didn't close my first transaction until six months in," he recalls. But Jacob leaned on Harold's guidance, learning to work by referral and to focus on providing exceptional service long after a closing. This mentorship would shape not only his early success but the leadership style he now brings to the NextHome Cape Fear office.

Teamwork and Leadership at the Forefront

Today, Jacob is a key partner in NextHome Cape Fear and a guiding force for the team's agents. A typical day begins at 8 a.m., opening the office and preparing for the team's daily call, where they coordinate strategies and discuss client needs. Much of Jacob's focus is on growth—both in nurturing client relationships and helping agents expand their businesses. He even travels

weekly to NextHome's Jacksonville office to mentor staff there. "Being a leader and protector—for both agents and clients—is the most rewarding part of my career," he explains.

The results speak for themselves. In 2025, the Harold Chappell Team closed over \$84 million in sales, and Jacob continues to focus on growth through referrals, relationships, and mentorship. "Working by





“REAL ESTATE IS A SERVICE INDUSTRY.

Our job is to provide an exceptional experience for clients and agents alike.”



referral changed the game for me,” he says. “It allows me to work with people I genuinely care about while having time for family.”

Passion Beyond Real Estate

Jacob’s personal life is rich with travel, cooking, and exploration. His love of travel began in childhood, with family trips across the U.S., and expanded in college while studying abroad in England, Ireland, and Scotland. He and his wife, Lauren, are committed to exploring the world together before starting a family, with a trip to Italy planned for 2026. Cooking is another passion—he often experiments with new recipes and shares them with colleagues, blending creativity with camaraderie.

Jacob’s commitment to service extends to the

community. He supports Canine Companions through NextHome, contributes to his church LifePoint, and works with WARM NC on home restoration projects. “Real estate is a service industry,” he says. “Our job is to provide an exceptional experience for clients and agents alike.”

The Mentors Behind the Success

Much of Jacob’s growth can be traced to the influence of two key mentors: his father, who taught him the value of kindness, integrity, and balance, and Harold Chappell, whose decades of experience have been a blueprint for excellence. Harold, a former top-producing agent and successful entrepreneur, has guided Jacob from his first transactions through to becoming a partner in the brokerage. “Harold has

shown me how to be a great agent, a great businessman, and a great mentor,” Jacob notes.

Harold Chappell: A Legacy of Excellence

Harold’s story is one of entrepreneurship and dedication. Born in Nash County, North Carolina, he earned an accounting degree from King’s College in 1969 and later built IllumElex Corporation into one of the largest lighting management companies in the U.S. After selling the business in 1996, he transitioned to real estate, founding what would become NextHome Cape Fear and growing it into two thriving offices with a team that closed over \$84 million last year.

For Harold, the heart of real estate has always been relationships. “Success comes as you build trust,”



“WE WANT TO BE THE HAPPIEST

and most productive office, not just the biggest.”

a new agent, helping a first-time homebuyer, or consulting on a complex transaction, they approach every opportunity with care, expertise, and dedication.

Looking Ahead

Jacob's goals are as ambitious as they are thoughtful: grow the NextHome Cape Fear office, expand the team with motivated agents, and continue refining systems that prioritize people over transactions. “We want to be the happiest and most productive office, not just the biggest,” he says. Both mentor and protégé recognize that real estate success isn't defined by numbers alone—it's measured by the impact they have on lives, the trust they build, and the legacy they create.

In Wilmington's dynamic real estate market, the partnership between Harold Chappell and Jacob Dempster exemplifies the power of mentorship, vision, and human-centered leadership. Together, they are not only selling homes—they're building a community rooted in trust, integrity, and shared success.

he says. “Trust with staff, clients, agents, and vendors is the greatest gift this business offers.” He continues to mentor Jacob, helping him develop not only as an agent but as a leader, ensuring the next

generation of NextHome agents is equipped to thrive.

A Focus on People and Purpose

Both Harold and Jacob share a philosophy that sets NextHome Cape Fear

apart: Humans Over Houses. Their work emphasizes relationships, mentorship, and integrity, creating a culture where agents are supported, clients are guided, and communities benefit. Whether it's mentoring



Pictured left to right - Doug Pratt, Jessica Niedomanski, Jonathan Peele, Brina Neeley, Justin Barber, Josh Whitaker

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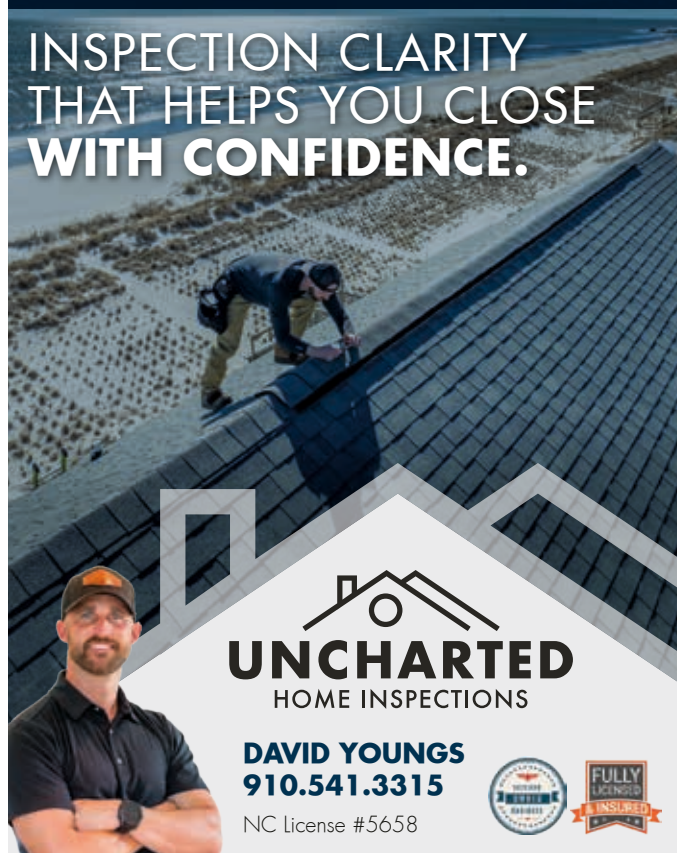


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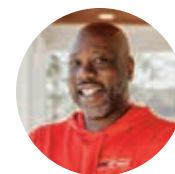
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Jonna Baker

MADE FOR THIS

WRITTEN BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY BRADLEY STICKLAND

Jonna Prince Baker's story begins and thrives in the coastal charm of Wilmington, North Carolina. Born and raised in the Masonboro area, Jonna has spent the majority of her life rooted in this vibrant community. The city's charm, the warmth of familiar streets, and a deep connection to the coast have shaped her personal and professional identity, creating a realtor whose knowledge runs as deep as her love for home.

Early Inspiration and a Lifelong Passion

Jonna's fascination with real estate started long before it became a career. As a child, she joined her mother on weekend drives across Wilmington—from Wrightsville Beach to Carolina Beach—exploring neighborhoods and imagining possibilities. Those long rides, punctuated with discussions of home designs, green spaces, and community layouts, planted the seeds of her eventual profession. While she may have dozed off during those excursions as a youngster, the memories would shape her understanding of what makes a neighborhood more than just a collection of homes—it's about community, care, and vision.

At 25, encouraged by someone close, Jonna took the decisive step to pursue her real estate license through Laney Real Estate. Shortly thereafter, she began her career at Clark-Teachey and later moved to Coldwell Banker, where she gained invaluable experience and exposure to residential development at Sentry Oaks. Her early years combined mentorship, hands-on learning, and a growing appreciation for the intersection of real estate and construction—an intersection she would later make central to her career.

From Real Estate Agent to Broker and Business Owner

In 2002, Jonna earned her Broker's License, solidifying her foundation to lead her own team. Partnering strategically with a future business partner who pursued a General Contractor's License, she combined her expertise with construction knowledge, creating a holistic approach to real estate. This collaboration laid the groundwork for the growth of their business and informed Jonna's unique ability to guide clients through both buying and building.

Over the years, Jonna expanded her horizons, founding George Rouse Builders and Rouse Realty, and joining high-performing teams such as the Jennifer Bullock Team at RE/MAX Executive. These experiences allowed her to refine her skills, learn from mentors, and build a reputation as a trusted, hands-on agent. Today, Jonna leads Jonna Prince Realty, Inc., a boutique brokerage based in her home office. Despite being a single-agent operation, she brings unmatched dedication, managing every step of each transaction personally, ensuring clients receive attentive and personalized service.

Challenges and Triumphs

Jonna's journey hasn't been without obstacles. Entering a male-dominated construction and real estate environment at a young age, she initially faced skepticism and the challenge of earning credibility. But Jonna embraced learning, preparation,



Professionally, she has been recognized multiple times as a top producer, particularly during her tenure with the Jennifer Bullock Team. Last year, Jonna closed over **\$5.5 million in sales**, and her commitment to excellence continues to set her apart.

and perseverance, letting her work speak for itself. Over time, her consistency, professionalism, and integrity earned respect from clients, contractors, and colleagues alike. Those experiences shaped her into a resilient, confident leader who thrives on challenge and impact.

Professionally, she has been recognized multiple times as a top producer, particularly during her tenure with the Jennifer Bullock Team. Last year, Jonna closed over \$5.5 million in sales, and her commitment to excellence continues to set her apart. Her hands-on approach, combined with her construction and remodeling expertise, allows her to guide clients with a level of insight that few agents can match.



Passion, Family, and Community

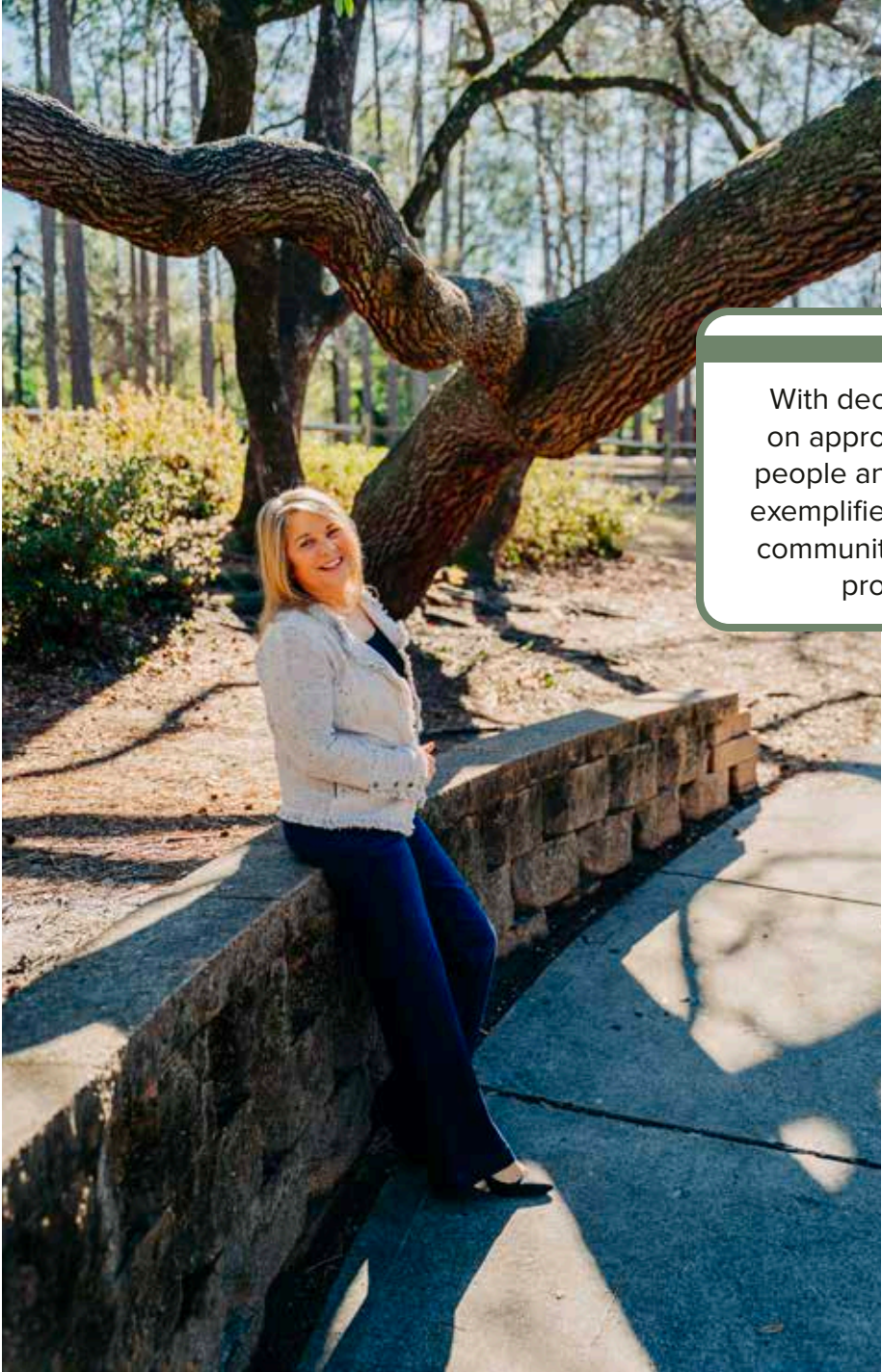
At the heart of Jonna's life is family. She and her husband, Travis, along with their children—Chance, Cameron, and Caitlynn—share a love for the simple joys of life: amusement parks, arcade games, walks with their Chocolate Lab, Lila Grace, and family board game nights. These moments keep her grounded and fuel her dedication to her clients. Jonna's approach to work-life balance is intentional: she prioritizes family and personal time, then dedicates focused hours to her business, ensuring she can be fully present in both areas.

Beyond family, Jonna supports her community through holiday drives, coat and food donations, and helping neighbors in need. She believes that small acts of care can make a significant impact, reflecting the values that guide her personal and professional life.

A Realtor Defined by Integrity and Relationships

Jonna's philosophy centers on honesty, transparency, and accessibility. Being hands-on in every transaction, returning calls promptly, and prioritizing communication, she builds trust and lasting relationships. Her clients benefit from a professional who not only understands real estate but also genuinely cares about their goals and experiences.

Her advice for up-and-coming agents is simple yet profound: be hands-on, be available, and communicate consistently. Persistence, resilience, and authenticity are the keys to success in a competitive industry.



With decades of experience, a hands-on approach, and a dedication to both people and place, **Jonna Prince Baker** exemplifies what it means to be a realtor, community member, and family-focused professional in Wilmington.

Looking Forward

Jonna Prince Baker continues to grow her business thoughtfully, with long-term goals of expanding her expertise and maintaining a client-focused, integrity-driven operation. For her, success isn't measured solely by sales volume—it's about the satisfaction of clients, the happiness of her family, and the fulfillment that comes from living a life aligned with her values.

With decades of experience, a hands-on approach, and a dedication to both people and place, Jonna Prince Baker exemplifies what it means to be a realtor, community member, and family-focused professional in Wilmington. She's not just selling homes—she's building relationships, shaping communities, and leaving a lasting legacy.

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people-First Perspective

Marcia Merkle

WRITTEN BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY: LOGAN BURKES OF BURKE'S MEDIA

Marcia Merkle never expected her second career to mirror the fulfillment of her first—but four years into real estate, she sees the connection clearly. After retiring from New Hanover County Schools, where she spent 26 years teaching and mentoring/coaching beginning teachers, Marcia stepped into a profession that once again placed people, purpose, and partnership at the center of her work.

Now a Realtor with Barber Realty Group serving Wilmington and the greater Cape Fear region, Marcia approaches real estate with the same heart that guided her career in education. “One similarity between the two is the honor/joy of coming alongside somebody in their journey and walking with them as they take their next steps,” she says. That philosophy shapes every client interaction—and



explains why so many clients quickly become family.

From the Classroom to the Closing Table

Marcia loved her years in education, particularly the opportunity to support and retain beginning teachers as they refined their craft. Retirement became a doorway into something new. “I had no idea that after retiring and stepping into the real estate world that I would love it as much as education,” she reflects.

At the same time she earned her real estate license, Marcia partnered with her husband, Steve, in their renovation company, Kitchen Creations. Together, they discovered they were living at the intersection of real estate and renovation—an overlap that allows them to serve clients in a uniquely innovative manner.

Where Real Estate Meets Renovation

Kitchen Creations has become a powerful extension of Marcia’s real estate work. The company offers discounts to buyers and sellers who partner with them, helping sellers prepare homes for the market and enabling buyers to envision what a property could become. In many cases, renovation estimates can

be provided within minutes—removing uncertainty and empowering confident decisions.

“The privilege is very much the same,” Marcia says of her work across education, real estate, and renovations. “We get to be part of somebody’s story and usher them into a new season of exciting adventures.”

The Power of Relationships

Although Marcia has been in real estate for just four years, she credits much of her growth to collaboration with other agents across the Cape Fear region. “I didn’t realize when I got into the business how vital those relationships would be,” she admits. Working alongside professionals who share a values-driven mindset has reinforced her belief that success is bigger than any single transaction.

That people-first perspective is one reason Barber Realty Group felt like home. Marcia’s journey into real estate was influenced by two key figures: a CrossFit friend whose passion was clearly PEOPLE—not just sales—and her father, who transitioned into real estate after a 30-year engineering career. That CrossFit friend, Greg Barber, would later become her Broker in Charge. Her father’s example left a lasting imprint. “His desire to serve people with excellence and integrity reframed my thinking,” Marcia says. “Real estate is much more than a job—it’s an opportunity to serve.”

Life Beyond Business

Marcia and Steve share a deep love for adventure—and for their two-year-old boxer, Samson, who goes nearly everywhere with them. Whether paddleboarding, boating, kayaking, hiking, camping, or off-roading in their Can-Am side-by-side, the trio embraces life outdoors. Motorcycle rides and travel to new





places round out a lifestyle rooted in curiosity and exploration.

Faith at the Center

For Marcia, faith is not separate from her work—it informs and even transforms it. She has been involved with Lifepoint Church for 19 years and currently serves

as Small Group Coordinator at the Lifepoint Carolina Beach Campus. In that role, she supports leaders who create safe spaces for connection, reflection, and growth.

“Lifepoint is more than a church,” Marcia says. “It’s a place where

the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared unashamedly and lives are changed.” Her own life is a testament to that transformation.

The church’s motto, “No Perfect People Allowed,” reflects a philosophy Marcia lives out daily—meeting people where they are and walking alongside them. Lifepoint’s outreach partnerships include First Fruits Ministries, Vigilant Hope, Good Shepherd, Samaritan’s Purse, Convoy of Hope, and global missions in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Africa. Marcia has personally served with several of these organizations, including three years as a missionary in Honduras before moving to Wilmington.

Giving Back in a Tangible Way

Gratitude fuels generosity in Marcia and Steve’s lives. In 2026, Kitchen Creations will give away a kitchen to a deserving family—an idea they prayerfully considered for more than a year. “We have been joyfully overwhelmed with the word-of-mouth referrals and friendships that have developed through remodels,” Marcia shares. “Our heart is to give back to the community and bless a sweet family in need as we have been blessed by the Lord.”

A WHY Bigger Than Business

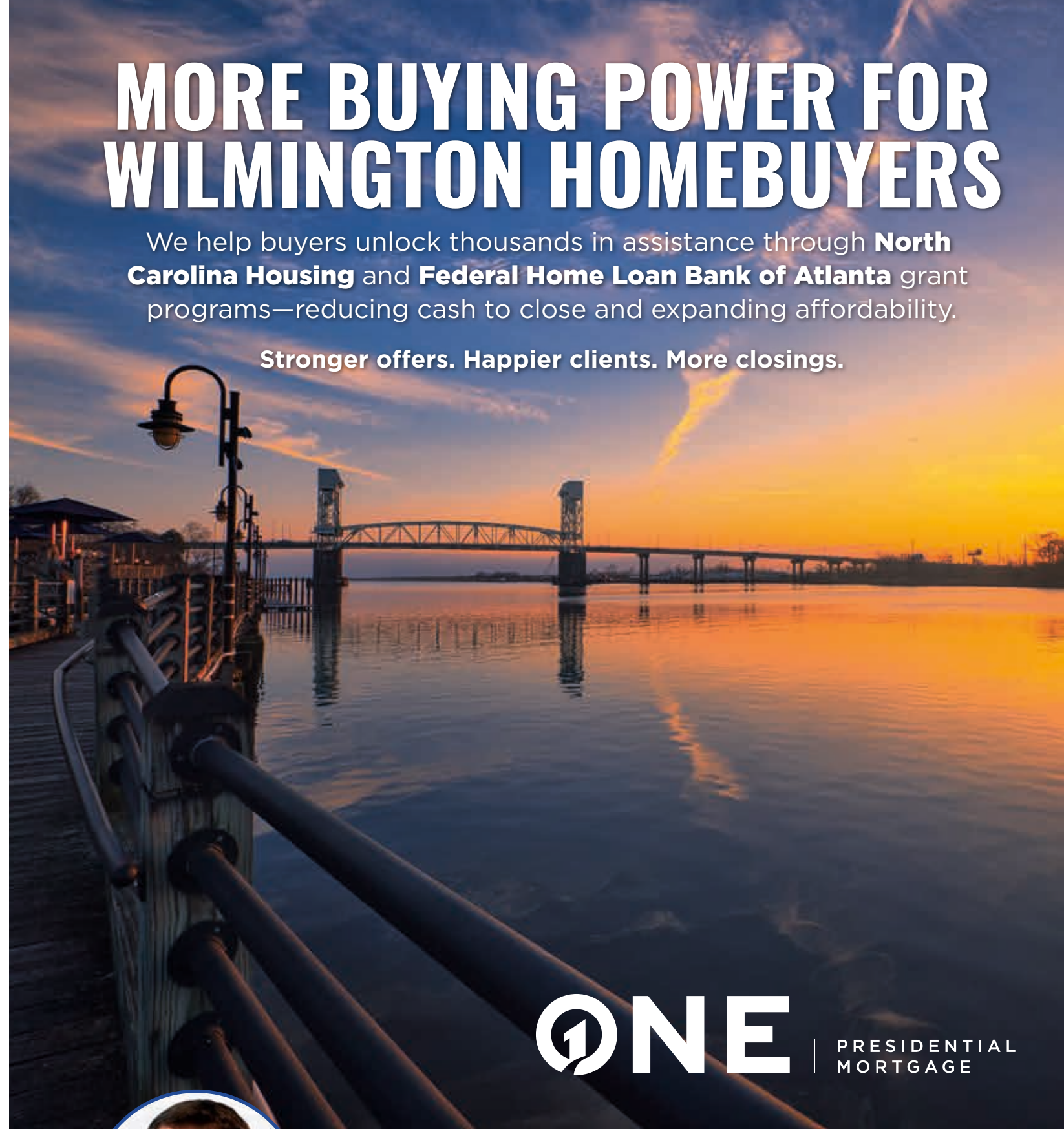
At the core of everything Marcia does is a simple but profound truth: her “why” extends far beyond real estate or renovations. “I am in awe of the fact that I have the privilege of being part of somebody’s story,” she says.

Whether guiding a buyer/seller, collaborating with an agent, serving her church, or giving back to the community, Marcia Merkle continues to show that the most meaningful success is found not in transactions—but in relationships, service, and purpose.

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MORTGAGE INVESTORS GROUP

COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY

WRITTEN BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY JACOB SHNIDER



Mortgage Investors Group (MIG) has officially arrived in southeastern North Carolina, bringing with it more than 35 years of experience as one of the Southeast's most respected independent mortgage lenders. Founded in 1989, MIG has built its reputation on personalized service, clear communication, and a commitment to helping homebuyers find financing solutions that truly fit their long-term goals.

Now, with a growing presence in Wilmington and the surrounding coastal communities, MIG is offering a fresh yet deeply seasoned mortgage resource to one of North Carolina's most dynamic markets.

Operating out of its Wilmington office at 1209 Culbreath Drive, Suite 213, MIG combines the strength of a long-established regional lender with the responsiveness and accessibility of a local team. The result is a high-touch lending experience designed to support first-time buyers, move-up clients, relocations, and refinances—all while serving as a reliable partner to Realtors throughout the region.

A Company Built on Experience and Trust
What sets Mortgage Investors Group apart is not simply its longevity, but how the company

is structured. MIG's in-house processing and operational support allow loan officers to focus on education, communication, and strategy. Clients benefit from transparency, consistency, and a smoother path from application to closing.

At the local level, the Wilmington branch is led by Branch Manager Don Owens, whose consultation-based approach emphasizes clarity, preparedness, and thoughtful guidance. The branch also benefits from the leadership and market knowledge of industry veteran Jeff Gilley, who is well known and highly respected throughout the Wilmington area. Together, they provide a strong foundation for a team-oriented culture that prioritizes relationships over transactions.



A Local Team with Complementary Strengths

Powering MIG's southeastern North Carolina presence is a tight-knit team of three local loan officers: Adam Herendeen, Andrew Buchbinder, and Tom Pritchard. While each brings a distinct background and skill set, they share a common philosophy—putting clients and partners first.

Adam Herendeen is known for his proactive communication and problem-solving mindset. His ability to anticipate issues and keep all parties informed helps transactions stay on track and reduces stress for both clients and agents.

Tom Pritchard brings a calm, steady presence to every transaction. With decades of experience working directly with homeowners, Tom is valued for his thoughtful guidance, attention to detail, and ability to relate to clients navigating important financial decisions.

Andrew Buchbinder adds a client-first, strategy-driven perspective shaped by nearly two decades of experience in sales, marketing, communications, and leadership. His consultative approach focuses on helping buyers understand their options and feel confident about the path they choose.

Together, the three loan officers collaborate closely, drawing on one another's experience to ensure clients receive well-rounded support and Realtor partners have dependable, knowledgeable lending professionals at their side.

Serving the Market with Purpose

Mortgage Investors Group specializes in full-service residential mortgage lending, offering a wide range of loan products tailored to individual needs. Rather than quoting rates in isolation, the team focuses on building personalized solutions that align with each client's financial picture and long-term objectives.



This approach resonates strongly with top-producing Realtors in the region. MIG's partners value dependable pre-approvals, fast and honest communication, and a team that addresses challenges early and collaboratively. By working transparently and proactively, MIG helps protect both the client experience and the agent's reputation.

Rooted in Community and Relationships

Beyond the loan process, MIG's local team is deeply invested in the community it serves. The Wilmington area's blend of coastal living, military presence, and steady growth makes it a unique market—one that benefits from lenders who understand both local nuances and broader market conditions.

While the mortgage industry often demands availability beyond traditional hours, the MIG team embraces that responsibility as part of its commitment to service. Being present when clients and partners need guidance is not viewed as an inconvenience, but as a core part of the job.

A Mortgage Partnership Built to Last

At its core, Mortgage Investors Group's expansion into southeastern North Carolina is about building

Mortgage Investors Group specializes in full-service residential mortgage lending, offering a wide range of loan products tailored to individual needs. Rather than quoting rates in isolation, the team focuses on building personalized solutions that align with each client's financial picture and long-term objectives.

lasting relationships—within the community, with Realtor partners, and with the clients who trust the team with one of life's most important financial decisions. By combining regional strength with local expertise, MIG offers something increasingly rare in today's lending environment: experience without ego, expertise with empathy, and a truly collaborative approach to home financing.

For Realtors and homebuyers alike, MIG's Wilmington team represents a mortgage partner committed to clarity, consistency, and long-term success—today and well beyond the closing table.

The 2026 Luxury Market Playbook

Position. Negotiate. Elevate.

BY GABRIEL CHANDLER

This week, top agents from across Cape Fear and Brunswick didn't show up for another networking event.

They showed up for a shift.

Hosted by Real Producers, *The 2026 Luxury Market Playbook* brought together some of the most driven agents in the market for a focused, high-level training led by Todd Conklin — a brokerage CEO, luxury market strategist, and one of the leading voices in modern real estate positioning.

And from the moment he took the stage, it was clear:

This wasn't about motivation. This was about control.

LUXURY ISN'T A PRICE POINT — IT'S POSITIONING

One of the biggest takeaways from the session challenged a belief that still holds too many agents back:

Luxury is not defined by the home. It's defined by the agent.

Todd broke down how top-performing agents are no longer competing on effort, hustle, or even service — they're competing on **perception, authority, and narrative control.**

In today's market:

- The agent who **controls the narrative** controls the listing
- The agent who **builds authority** commands pricing power
- The agent who **positions correctly** wins before the conversation even starts

This isn't theory. It's how modern markets are being won.



FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO AUTHORITY

A major theme throughout the training was the shift from being a “good agent” to becoming a **market authority.**

Because good agents:

- Work hard
- Stay busy
- Chase opportunities

But authority-driven agents:

- Attract listings
- Set the terms
- Operate with leverage

Todd introduced frameworks like the **Authority Pipeline Engine™**, showing how agents can turn their digital presence into a consistent pipeline of inbound listing opportunities — not by being louder, but by being more precise.

The message was simple, but not easy:

If you're still relying on effort alone, you're already behind.

THE ROLE OF AI IN THE MODERN CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Another key layer of the conversation focused on AI — not as a gimmick, but as a tool for **scale without sacrificing quality.**

Todd broke down how top agents are integrating AI to:

- Deliver faster, more personalized communication
- Enhance the client experience without losing the human element
- Create systems that allow them to operate at a higher level consistently

The takeaway wasn't “use AI.”

It was:
Use systems to create leverage — or get replaced by those who do.

A ROOM THAT MATTERS

What made this event different wasn't just the content.

It was the room.

Real Producers events aren't built for the masses — they're built for the agents who are actively shaping the market.

And that showed.

The conversations were sharper.
The questions were deeper.
The intent was different.

This is what happens when you put the right people in the same room with the right strategy.

What Happens Next

The real value of an event like this isn't what happens during the session.

It's what happens after.

Because the agents who execute on what was shared:

- Will refine their positioning
- Will elevate how they show up in the market
- Will separate themselves from the noise

And over the next 6–12 months, that gap will become obvious.

FINAL THOUGHT

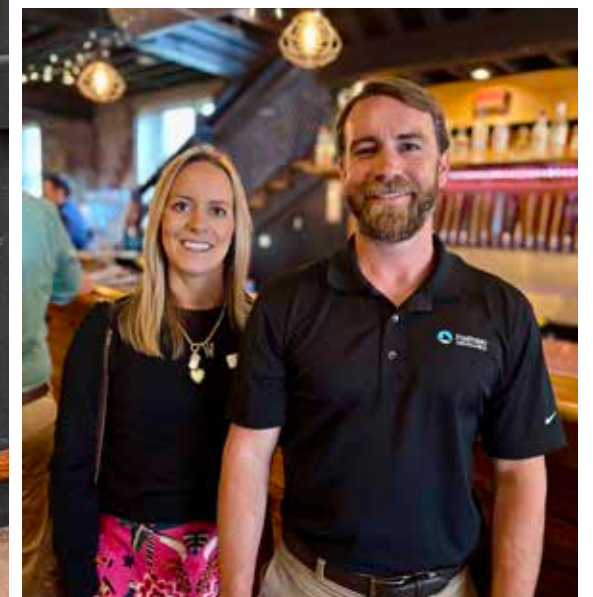
The market is changing. Fast.

Consumers are more informed.
Technology is evolving.
And the gap between average agents and elite operators is widening.

The ones who win won't be the busiest.

They'll be the ones who:

- Own the authority.**
- Own the listings.**
- Own the market.**





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