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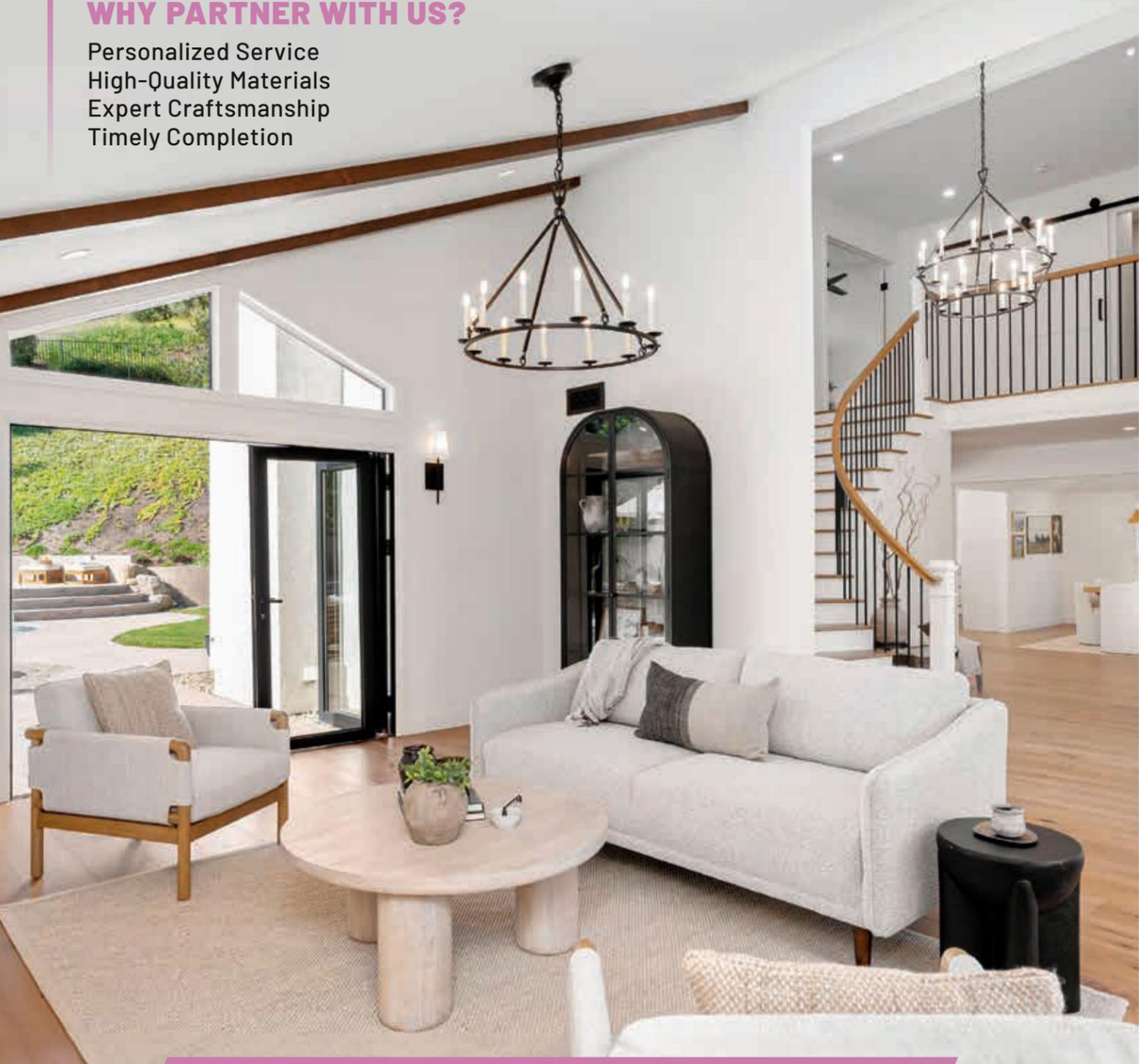
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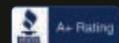
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Contents



16 Melissa Still



34 Dani Thomas

IN THIS ISSUE

8 Preferred Partners

12 Meet The Team

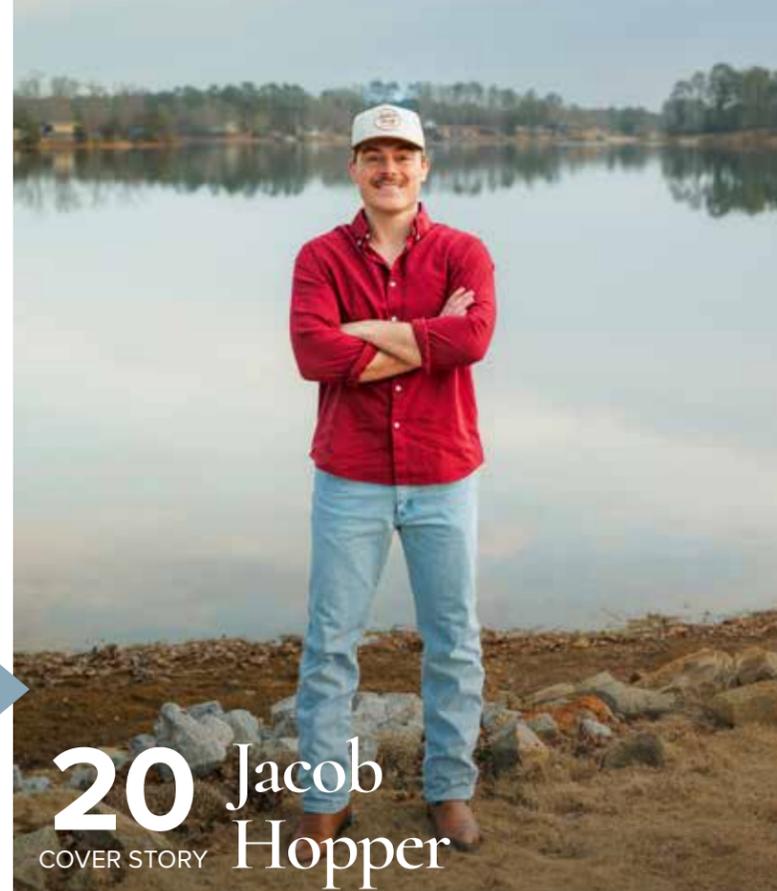
14 Publisher's Note: April 2026

16 Top Producer: Melissa Still

20 Cover Story: Jacob Hopper

26 Preferred Partner Spotlight: Davis
Climate Control

34 Agent Spotlight: Dani Thomas



20 Jacob Hopper
COVER STORY

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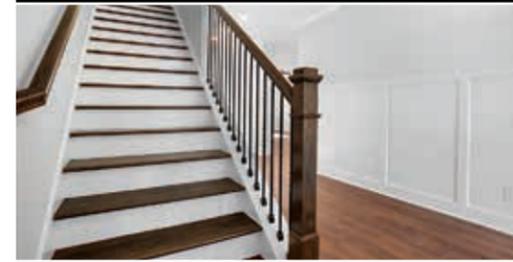
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robert.smith@realproducersmag.com
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Sierra Smith
Co-Owner & Publisher
sierra.smith@n2co.com
402-560-4555



Amy Porter
Director of
Content/Relations
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Sheena Summers
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April 2026 HAPPY EASTER COLUMBIA!

As we step into April and celebrate the Easter season—a time that represents renewal, growth, and gratitude—we want to take a moment to sincerely thank you, our readers, for your continued support of *Columbia Real Producers*. This publication is built on relationships, shared stories, and a collective commitment to excellence within our real estate community. Your loyalty and engagement allow us to continue highlighting the people behind the production—the leaders, innovators, and trusted professionals who elevate our industry every day. We are truly grateful to have you alongside us on this journey.

Our April issue proudly features professionals who exemplify dedication, leadership, and impact within the Columbia real estate market. Gracing our cover this month is **Jacob Hopper with eXp Realty**, whose vision and drive have positioned him as a respected leader among his peers. Jacob's commitment to growth, collaboration, and service reflects the very spirit of what it means to be a Real Producer, and we are honored to share his story as our Cover Feature.

We are also thrilled to recognize **Melissa Still with Keller Williams Realty** as our *Top Producer*. Melissa's consistent performance, professionalism, and client-first approach continue to set a high standard within the industry. Her success is a testament not only to her expertise, but also to the trust she has earned through hard work and integrity—qualities that truly define top-tier leadership in real estate.

This issue's *Agent Spotlight* shines on **Dani Thomas with RE/MAX Home Team**, whose passion for real estate and genuine connection to her clients make her stand out. Dani's dedication to service and community highlights the importance of building relationships that go beyond transactions, and we are excited to share her journey with our readers.

Rounding out this month's features is our *Preferred Partner Spotlight*, highlighting **Jay Topolski with Davis Climate Control**. Jay and his team have built a reputation for professionalism, responsiveness, and trusted expertise, providing an essential service that keeps homes comfortable and clients confident long after the transaction is complete. Their dedication to quality workmanship and strong partnerships within the real estate community makes Davis Climate Control a valued resource in our market, and we are proud to recognize their contribution this month.

As we reflect on this season of renewal, we are reminded of how fortunate we are to be part of such a strong and supportive real estate community. From all of us at *Columbia Real Producers*, thank you for being loyal readers, contributors, and champions of this publication. We wish you a joyful and meaningful Easter and look forward to continuing to celebrate your successes in the months ahead.

With gratitude and warmest wishes,



Robert and Sierra Smith

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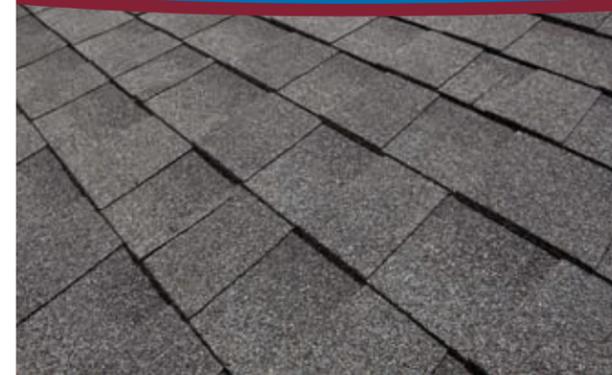
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AMY PORTER

Keller Williams Realty

Warmth, integrity, and an unwavering sense of advocacy define Melissa Still—qualities that have quickly distinguished her as a trusted real estate professional within the Columbia market. Licensed in 2023, she began her career as a member of Keller Williams Palmetto with Ancone Real Estate Pros, one of the Midlands top teams and recently became a solo agent with Keller Williams Realty. Melissa brings a refreshing blend of heart, discipline, and strategic clarity to her business. Those closest to her describe her as genuine, protective, passionate, dependable, and straightforward—traits that translate seamlessly into the way she serves her clients. For Melissa, real estate is not simply a career; it is an extension of who she is and how she shows up for others.

Melissa's path to real estate was both intentional and deeply personal. After years dedicated to raising her two sons, she built her professional life around their schedules by working in the public school system. As her boys prepared for college, she found herself standing at the edge of a new chapter—one that real estate had long been quietly calling her toward. What ultimately propelled her forward, however, was witnessing her own parents endure a stressful and disheartening experience while trying to sell their home. Watching people she loved feel unprotected and overwhelmed ignited a fire within her. Melissa became determined to be the kind

of agent who advocates fiercely, communicates clearly, and ensures her clients never feel alone in the process. That commitment remains the cornerstone of her business today.

In just two and a half years, Melissa has built a thriving practice rooted in trust, transparency, and results. Her first full year in real estate saw an impressive 30 units closed with a total volume of nearly \$9.7 million—a testament not only to her work ethic, but to the relationships she cultivates. Since entering the industry in 2023, Melissa has surpassed more than \$20 million in total sales volume, an extraordinary accomplishment achieved in less than three years. While the numbers are impressive, Melissa is quick to credit her success to consistency, advocacy, and genuine connection—an approach she proudly sums up as #STILLbuying #STILLSelling, built on long-lasting relationships rather than transactions alone.

As a listing agent, she specializes in helping homeowners sell with ease, particularly those looking to downsize or simplify their lifestyle. On the buying side, Melissa supports first-time homebuyers, relocations, and veterans, guiding each client with patience, education, and confidence. No matter the transaction, her approach remains consistent: listen first, advocate always, and deliver with intention.

At the heart of Melissa's success is her ability to truly

hear her clients. She believes the perfect home is about far more than bedrooms and square footage—it's about lifestyle, priorities, and the life someone is building. By combining thoughtful listening with targeted searches, neighborhood expertise, and clear communication, Melissa creates a process that feels both strategic and personal. Her goal is simple yet powerful: to help every client step into a home that feels just right, while making the journey smooth, informed, and even enjoyable.

While every transaction holds meaning for Melissa, some experiences leave an indelible mark. One such moment involved working with a family whose youngest son was courageously battling leukemia—a family with whom Melissa shared a deep personal connection through the local school system. Advocating for them through both the selling and buying process during such a challenging season was more than a professional responsibility; it was an honor. That experience reinforced what drives her every day: treating clients like family and recognizing that real estate often intersects with life's most vulnerable moments. For Melissa, success is measured not just in closings, but in compassion and impact.

Melissa credits much of her growth to the mentors and relationships that surround her. Her “work mom,” Ashlyn Ancone, whom she first met 15 years ago as her son's kindergarten



teacher, has played a pivotal role in her real estate journey. Alongside Ashlyn and her husband, Keith, Melissa has found guidance, encouragement, and leadership that continue to shape her career. She also speaks gratefully of the collaborative culture at Keller Williams Palmetto and the many agents who have generously shared their time and knowledge. To Melissa, these relationships underscore a truth she lives by: success in real estate is never achieved alone.

That belief is rooted in a life experience that shaped her long before real estate ever did. When her oldest son was born nearly ten weeks

early and spent months in the NICU, Melissa learned firsthand what it means to advocate relentlessly. As a new mother navigating the unimaginable, she discovered the power of asking questions, trusting her instincts, and speaking up when it matters most. Those “momma bear” instincts now define how she conducts business—protecting her clients, paying close attention to detail, and approaching every situation with empathy and resolve. That chapter didn't just strengthen her; it defined her.

Today, Melissa is deeply passionate about helping clients navigate a market that often feels

overwhelming. She prides herself on being a steady presence—bringing clarity, strategy, and calm to some of life’s biggest financial and emotional decisions. She is equally passionate about growth, continuously sharpening her skills, building meaningful connections, and staying ahead in an ever-evolving industry. Looking ahead, Melissa envisions expanding into real estate investing and, eventually, mentoring new agents, giving back to the profession that has given her so much.

Beyond real estate, Melissa’s life is anchored by family. She and her husband, Lance, have been married for 25 years and are the proud parents of two sons, Wyatt and Landon—both Citadel men who share a love for golf and fishing. As a family, they treasure time spent in the South Carolina Lowcountry, cheering on the Gamecocks, hosting gatherings, and occasionally indulging in back-porch karaoke. Melissa also finds joy in boating on Lake Murray, sunsets at Folly Beach, and supporting causes close to her heart, including March of Dimes and SisterCare—organizations that reflect her commitment to advocacy and community.

To Melissa, success is the balance between being content and driven—grounded in gratitude while fueled by purpose. Perhaps one of the most “real” truths about her journey is that she entered this career later in life, taking a leap of faith just shy of 50, even turning in her resignation before registering for the real estate exam. It was a risk built

on intuition, courage, and self-belief—and one she has never regretted.

If there is one thing Melissa Face Still wants to be remembered for, it is being real: honest, kind, compassionate, and deeply committed to people. Through her business, she strives not only to serve her clients well, but to elevate the reputation of the industry itself by setting a standard rooted in care, trust, and professionalism. In every sense of the word, Melissa isn’t just selling homes—she’s building lasting connections. And that is exactly what makes her a Real Producer.



Favorite Quote

My high school English teacher used to quote an unknown author and it has always stuck with me... “A smart man knows what he does not know...” I interpret it as meaning #1 Don’t be afraid to admit when you don’t know something. #2 Don’t be a “know it all”. #3 Never stop learning and evolving.

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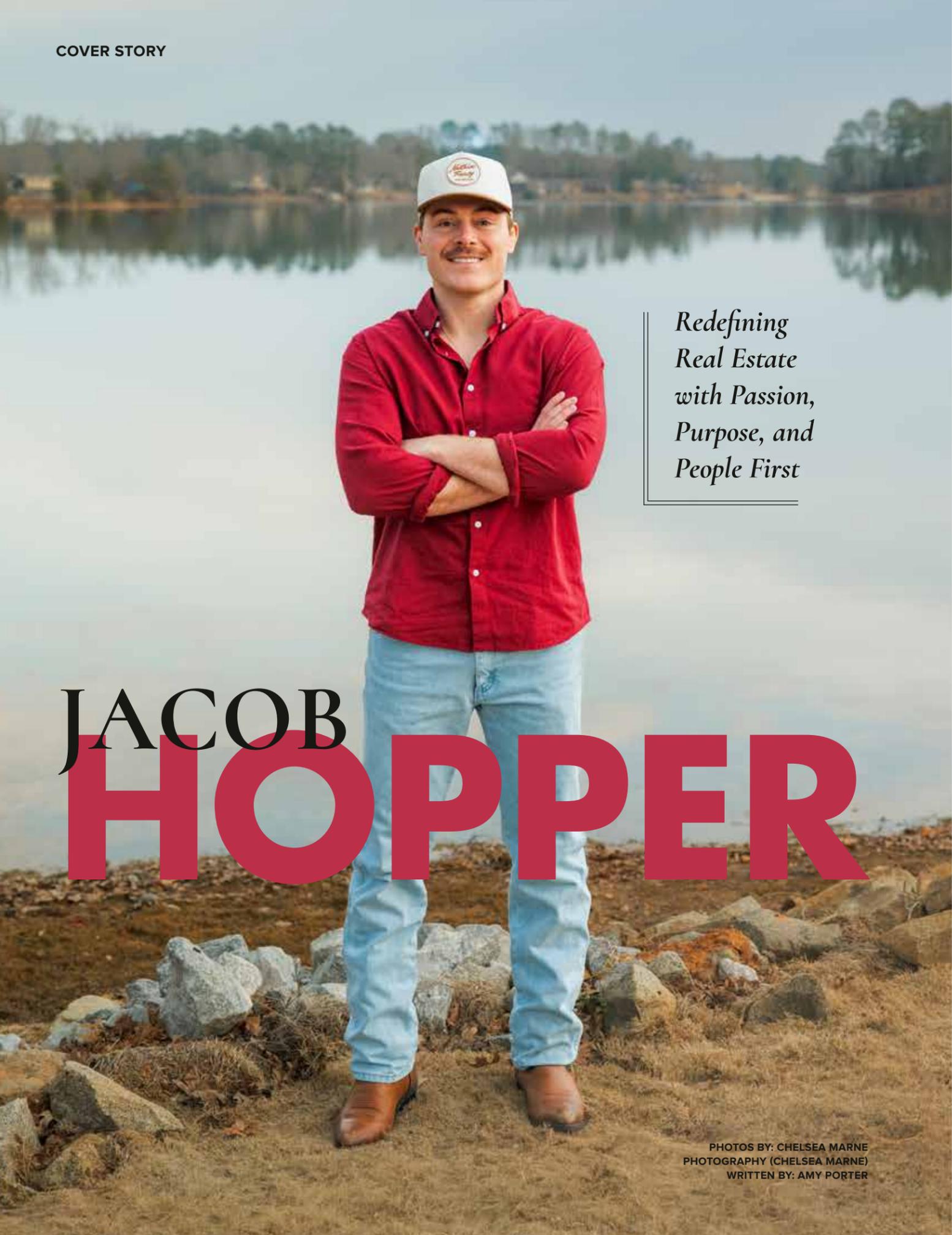
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JACOB HOPPER

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JACOB HOPPER is not your average realtor—he is an ambitious, empathetic, and visionary professional who has carved a remarkable path in the competitive world of real estate. Licensed in 2018, Jacob has spent the last seven and a half years building a career defined not only by impressive numbers but by the trust, loyalty, and gratitude of his clients. Growing up around family investors, he developed an early fascination with real estate and the power of property ownership. But for Jacob, it was never just about buying and selling homes—it was about guiding people through some of the most meaningful moments of their lives, whether it's finding a family's dream home or helping a couple sell a property they've loved for decades.

Jacob's journey in real estate began at Keller Williams Realty, where he spent three years as a solo agent honing his craft and learning the intricacies of the market. In 2021, he made the pivotal decision to join eXp Realty, drawn by the brokerage's innovative business model, supportive community, and opportunities for agent growth. "eXp allows agents to grow in every aspect of the business," Jacob says. "From multiple streams of income to retirement opportunities, it's a model that supports long-term success. The sense of community and agent-to-agent support here is unmatched." Since joining eXp, Jacob has successfully built a dynamic team, fostering a culture that emphasizes collaboration, mentorship, and growth—both personally and professionally. "I could not do this on my own, I'd like to give an honorable mention to Kayley Smith who works very hard to keep everything running smoothly. She is my right hand lady and I can't praise her enough for everything she does for the team. I'd also like to give a shoutout to the agents who have been with me the longest and that's Kayla Setzler and Gabrielle Ross. They are both two power houses and have unbelievable talent".



“

Success comes from relationships & how you manage them, not just outcomes.”



Specializing in the greater Columbia metropolitan area, including an hour radius around Lake Murray, as well as the Charleston Trident region, Jacob's approach to real estate is as creative as it is personalized. He begins by understanding his clients' unique wants, needs, and "must-haves," then crafts a tailored strategy to meet those goals. Whether sending targeted mailers to a neighborhood, cold-calling property owners for investors, or exploring off-market opportunities, Jacob consistently thinks outside the box to ensure his clients' dreams become reality. One particularly memorable moment came when an elderly couple faced challenges with their closing date. Going above and beyond, Jacob coordinated with a local church to store their belongings,

transported them late into the night, and arranged temporary accommodations until they could move into their new home. Their emotional gratitude was a profound reminder of why he entered this profession in the first place.

Jacob's impressive career speaks volumes: since starting at age 22, he has achieved nearly \$120 million in sales, with more than \$23 million in the last year alone. But for Jacob, success is measured not only in volume but in the depth of relationships he cultivates. "We aren't just looking to seal another deal," he emphasizes. "We want to create long-lasting relationships and be someone clients can trust with their real estate decisions throughout their lives. I want to be the person they call when

they have questions about anything to do with real estate." This client-first mindset, coupled with creativity, perseverance, and empathy, has become the hallmark of his brand.

Behind Jacob's professional achievements is a personal story of growth and resilience. Once an introvert struggling with anxiety, he credits personal development, notably to Tony Robbins' book *Awaken The Giant Within*, for helping him transform into the confident, outgoing professional he is today. "The first year was the most stressful of my life," he recalls. "I had to overcome fear, embrace a new version of myself, and learn to show up as the person I knew I wanted to be." This journey of self-transformation not only

strengthened his professional skills but also shaped the core values that guide his business and relationships.

Jacob also attributes much of his drive to his family, particularly his mother, whose "grind" work ethic inspired him to push beyond limits and pursue excellence in everything he does. Family remains central to his life, whether it's enjoying cookouts and lake days with loved ones or spending time with friends. He also finds joy and balance in traveling, college football, and fitness, ensuring that his energy and focus remain high in every aspect of life.

Giving back is equally important to Jacob, who supports the Wounded Warriors Foundation and MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital, among other organizations. For him, service is not just about charity—it's an extension of his belief in building meaningful connections and leaving a positive impact on others.

Looking forward, Jacob envisions continued growth: expanding into new markets, cultivating more mentorship opportunities, and helping other agents achieve their full potential. His advice for up-and-coming real estate professionals is rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability: "Think outside the box, see the opportunities around you, and always communicate clear expectations. Success comes from relationships and how you manage them, not just outcomes."

Jacob Cory Hopper is a true reflection of what it means to be a "Real" Producer. Through his unwavering commitment to his clients, his innovative approach to business, and his focus on personal growth, he has not only achieved extraordinary professional success but has also inspired those around him to strive for their best. Above all, he wants to be remembered as someone who encouraged growth, embraced challenges, and inspired others to be the best version of themselves—a legacy that transcends sales numbers and milestones, leaving an indelible mark on the South Carolina real estate landscape.





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In the bustling world of real estate, comfort is key. For top-producing REALTORS® and homeowners alike, Davis Climate Control stands out as a cornerstone of reliability in the Lexington, South Carolina, area. Owner Jay Topolski has transformed this locally owned and operated heating and air conditioning service company into a family-oriented business that prioritizes customer satisfaction above all else.

Jay's journey in the HVAC industry began in 2002, in his hometown of Wheatfield, New York, near Buffalo. His passion for the trade grew over the years, culminating in a bold move to South Carolina in 2021 when he purchased Davis Climate Control. Now, with over four years at the helm, Jay has infused the company with his personal philosophy of treating clients like family.

"Our motto is simple: treat people with respect, offer fair pricing, and always be honest," Jay explains. This approach has set Davis Climate Control apart in a competitive market. The company's commitment to

customer service, clear communication, and swift action has earned them a reputation for reliability among homeowners and real estate professionals.

In an industry where trust is paramount, Davis Climate Control has positioned itself as a go-to partner for REALTORS®. "We understand the importance of maintaining relationships in real estate," Jay says. "Our goal is to be someone REALTORS® love to refer to, knowing we'll never jeopardize their client relationships."

The company's success is built on a foundation of competitive pricing, professional presentation, and rapid response times. These qualities are especially crucial in the fast-paced real estate market, where timely HVAC services can make or break a sale. Whether it's a last-minute repair before a home showing or a full system replacement, Davis Climate Control ensures the job is done efficiently and effectively, giving REALTORS® and homeowners peace of mind.

Jay finds fulfillment in solving problems efficiently and affordably. "There's nothing quite like fixing someone's equipment quickly and at a reasonable price," he shares. This dedication to customer satisfaction has helped Davis Climate Control navigate recent industry challenges, including equipment price hikes since 2020 and the increasing presence of private equity groups in the local HVAC market. These challenges have reshaped the landscape of the HVAC industry, but Jay remains steadfast in his commitment to providing quality service without compromising affordability.

Adapting to these changes, Davis Climate Control has focused on growth to secure better equipment pricing and increase volume. The company has also introduced financing options to help clients manage larger investments in their home comfort systems. These financing solutions have been particularly beneficial for homeowners looking to upgrade their HVAC systems without straining their budgets, ensuring that comfort remains accessible to all.

For Jay, business success is deeply intertwined with family life. He and his wife, Heather, are proud parents to five children: Hannah (age 14), Ella (age 13), Henry (age 9), and Luke and Colton (4 year old identical twins). When not overseeing HVAC operations, Jay can be found cheering on his daughters at softball games or tossing a football with his sons. His dedication to family is evident not only in his personal life but also in the way he runs his business.

This family first mentality translates directly to his business approach. "We want to build lasting relationships with our clients and partners," Jay explains. "It's about creating a legacy of honesty, fair pricing, quality workmanship, and genuine care for our customers." This philosophy has resonated with clients, many of whom return to Davis Climate Control for their HVAC needs year after year. The company's emphasis on building trust and fostering long-term relationships has become a cornerstone of its success.



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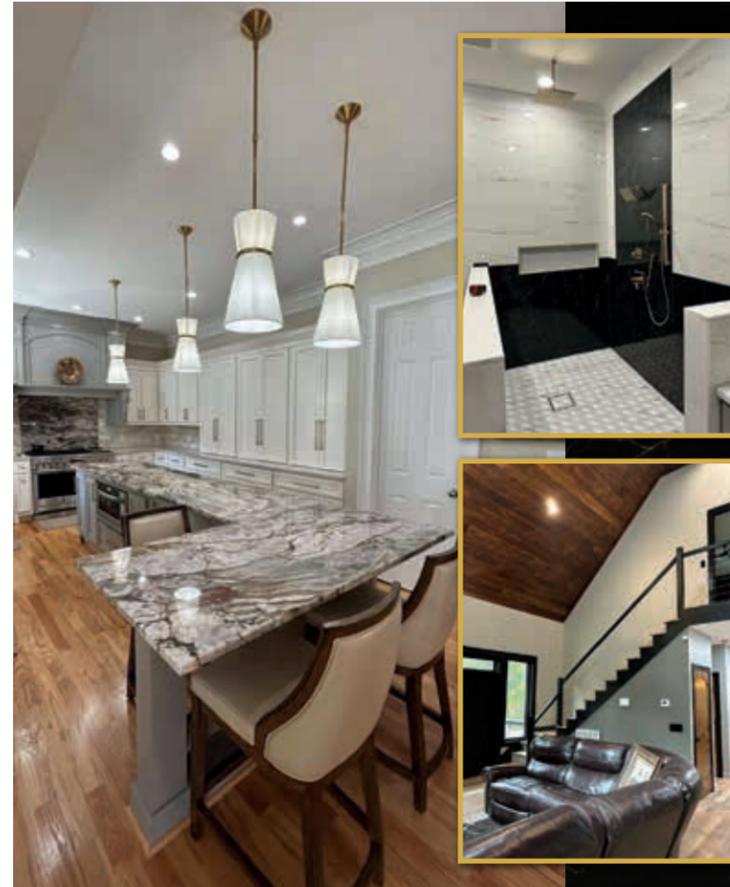
Looking to the future, Davis Climate Control aims to continue its growth while maintaining the personal touch that has become its hallmark. Jay is committed to expanding the company's reach without losing sight of the values that have made it a trusted name in the Lexington area. For REALTORS® seeking a reliable HVAC partner, Jay offers this advice: "Choose a company that values your reputation as much as their own. In this business, trust and integrity are everything."

As the real estate market evolves, Davis Climate Control remains committed to providing top-notch service with a personal touch. By combining technical expertise with a family-oriented approach, Jay Topolski and his team are ensuring that homes in the Lexington area stay comfortable, and REALTORS® stay confident in their HVAC recommendations. The company's ability to adapt to industry changes while staying true to its core values has positioned it as a leader in the local HVAC market.

For more information about Davis Climate Control's services, visit Davisclimatecontrol.com or call 803-359-6638. With their dedication to excellence and customer care, it's clear why this local HVAC company has become a trusted partner in the real estate community. Whether you're a homeowner in need of reliable service or a REALTOR® looking for a dependable referral, Davis Climate Control is ready to deliver comfort with a personal touch.



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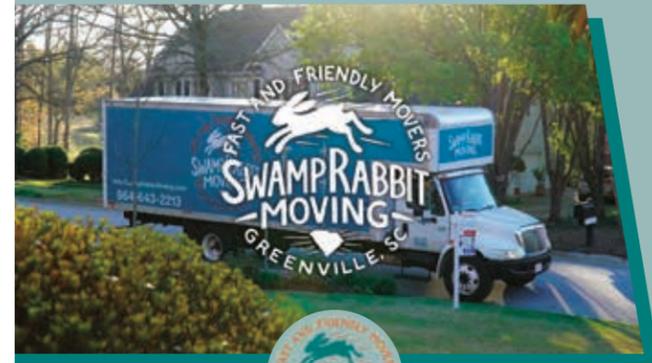


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MEET DANI THOMAS

For Dani Thomas, real estate has never been just about houses—it has always been about people. Licensed in 2019 and now six years into a thriving residential real estate career, Dani brings a rare blend of passion, creativity, grit, and authenticity to every transaction. A former educator and finance professional, her path to real estate was anything but conventional, yet perfectly aligned. Having spent years buying, remodeling, and selling homes of her own—particularly older homes rich with character—Dani often found herself saying, “One day, I’ll sell real estate.” When a pivotal career crossroads arrived, she decided that “one day” had finally come. She went all in, and the Columbia market is better for it.

Dani chose to build her business with RE/MAX Home Team, drawn not by size but by substance. She was intentional about surrounding herself with driven, successful professionals who would push her to grow—and she found exactly that. Under the leadership of broker John Smith, whose commitment to agent success and genuine care stood out immediately, Dani found both support and inspiration. Early in her career, she spent a year shadowing industry legend Patti Smith, assisting with transactions and paperwork. That experience proved invaluable. In Dani’s words, it was a gift—one that exposed her to more real-world transactions and lessons than any class ever could. From Patti, she learned not only how to negotiate fiercely and effectively, but how to do so with integrity, fairness, and unwavering respect for clients and colleagues alike.

At the core of Dani’s success is her people-first philosophy. She believes the key to finding the right home isn’t simply checking

boxes on a wish list, but truly knowing the person behind it. Dani takes time to understand her clients’ lives—their family dynamics, routines, hobbies, and unspoken needs—often uncovering priorities they didn’t yet realize mattered. She intentionally shows a range of properties early on, paying close attention to what clients don’t like, knowing those reactions often reveal more than what they say they want. This thoughtful, intuitive approach has earned her deep trust and long-lasting relationships.

Her dedication to clients is perhaps best illustrated through a story her clients will never forget. While helping buyers relocate from Alaska during a red-hot market, Dani braved a pouring rainstorm to FaceTime them through a new construction showing. With no driveway, no steps, and a yard that quickly turned to quicksand, she quite literally got stuck—sinking thigh-deep in mud. Undeterred, she slipped out of her shoes, army-crawled to the porch while protecting her phone, and finished the showing with professionalism (and humor) intact. The home was secured, the clients are still thrilled, and the story has become a perfect reflection of Dani’s “whatever it takes” mentality.

Like many high-performing agents, Dani has had to learn how to work with her strengths rather than against them. Openly sharing her ADHD, she recognized early on that while she excels at relationship-building, negotiation, and problem-solving, administrative details were not where she shined. Her solution was both strategic and empowering—she hired an exceptional transaction coordinator, Priscilla, and unapologetically made her “the

boss.” This decision allowed Dani to focus on what she does best, brought balance back into her life, and elevated her business. It’s a testament to her self-awareness and leadership that she views asking for help not as a weakness, but as a strength.

Beyond the relationships she treasures, Dani’s results speak loudly. With a career volume of more than \$34,585,096 and newly inducted into the RE/MAX Hall of Fame, her business continues to grow year after year. Yet even with those milestones, Dani measures success differently. She is deeply passionate about fair housing and expanding access to homeownership for all. Helping first-time buyers, in particular, fuels both her educator’s heart and her belief in homeownership as a pathway to long-term stability and wealth. One of her most meaningful experiences involved assisting an elderly veteran in purchasing his first home, where she learned his parents had been signers of *Briggs v. Elliott*, the case that became *Brown v. Board of Education*. Hearing his story reminded Dani of the profound privilege it is to truly see and know people—and of the powerful role real estate can play in shaping more inclusive, diverse communities.

That same sense of purpose carries into her philanthropy. Dani donates a portion of every closing to Children’s Miracle Network and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, inspired by witnessing firsthand the life-



changing care St. Jude provided to a friend’s child battling a brain tumor. She also supports local charities, her church, and the arts—an extension of her belief that strong communities are built not just through housing, but through creativity, culture, and compassion.

Family remains the anchor of Dani’s life. Married to her husband Dave since 1999, she is the proud mother of four children—twins Callie and Lily (23), Ellie (21), a senior at the University of South Carolina, and Charlie (15), a sophomore at Spring Valley High School. Together, they enjoy USC football, traveling, and time on Lake Murray. Outside of real estate, Dani embraces life with enthusiasm—singing in her church choir and praise team, hiking, skiing, traveling the world, and immersing herself in art, music, and live performances. And while many assume she was a cheerleader, Dani proudly reveals her lesser-known identity as a band nerd and percussionist, with a special talent for mallets and African drumming.

Dani Thomas

THE HEART BEHIND
REAL ESTATE SUCCESS



FAVORITE QUOTE:

Jane Goodall: You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.



There's another side of Dani that surprises people. She is a self-proclaimed space nerd, fascinated by exploration and the possibility of what lies beyond our world. In fact, after reaching a major business goal a few years ago, she rewarded herself by attending Space Camp. One day, she says with a laugh, she fully intends to travel to space. For Dani, dreaming big has always been part of the plan.

Looking ahead, Dani sees real estate not as a chapter, but as a calling. Retirement isn't on her radar—she loves this work too much. Instead, she hopes to continue growing her business as a platform to give back, mentor others, and eventually teach and train future agents. Her advice to those coming up in the industry is refreshingly honest: any personality can succeed in real estate if you focus on your strengths and show up every single day. Consistency, she believes, is what turns effort into impact.

When asked how she defines success, Dani offers a definition that feels both grounded and aspirational—doing what you love, using it to make a difference, knowing there is always more growth ahead, and having the ability to keep pursuing it. Ultimately, she hopes to be remembered as someone who loved God, loved people, and never forgot to have fun along the way. In a business driven by numbers, Dani Thomas stands out by leading with heart—and that may be her greatest achievement of all.



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