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Heart & Hustle:
REX STEPHENS

Tips of the Trade:
LISA ALEXANDER

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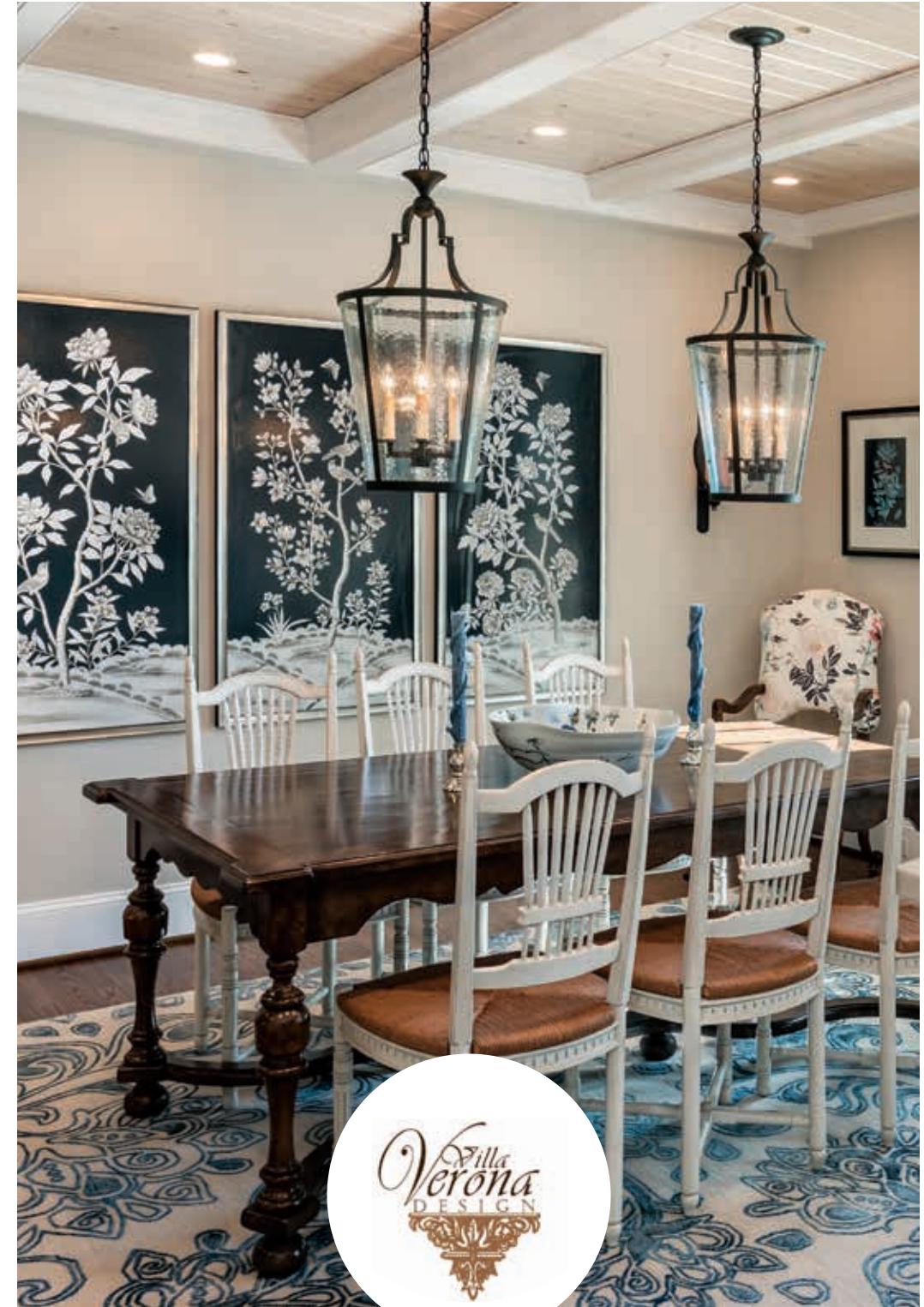


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Will Sawyer **20**
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April 2026 HAPPY EASTER UPSTATE!

Happy Easter and welcome to the April 2026 issue of *Upstate Real Producers Magazine*. Spring is a season of renewal, growth, and gratitude—and it offers the perfect opportunity to pause and say thank you. We are incredibly grateful for you, our dedicated readers, who continue to support this publication and the professionals featured within its pages. Your engagement allows us to do what we love most: celebrate the realtors, partners, and leaders who elevate the Upstate real estate industry through hard work, integrity, and heart.

This month, we are proud to feature **Will Sawyer of Keller Williams Greenville Upstate** as our Cover Feature. Will's story reflects both determination and vision, as he continues to build a business rooted in leadership, collaboration, and service. His commitment to excellence and consistent growth makes him a standout in our market, and we are honored to showcase his journey on the cover of this issue.

Our Top Producer Feature highlights **Diane Blackwell with Keller Williams Drive**, whose results speak volumes about her dedication and expertise. Diane's ability to consistently perform at a high level, while maintaining strong relationships and an unwavering focus on her clients, exemplifies what it means to be a true professional. Her success is well-earned, and we are excited to recognize her achievements.

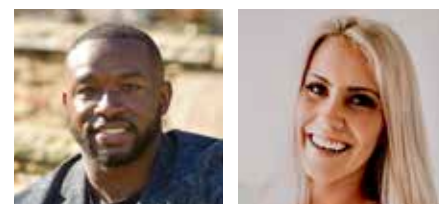
We are equally honored to spotlight **Rex Stephens of Real South Realty** in our Heart & Hustle Feature. Rex represents the heart behind the hustle—bringing passion, authenticity, and a people-first approach to everything he does. His story is a reminder that success in real estate is not only measured in transactions, but also in the lives impacted along the way.

In our **Tips of the Trade** feature, **Lisa Alexander of Del-co Realty Group, Inc.** shares valuable insight drawn from her experience in the industry. Her practical advice and thoughtful perspective offer readers tools they can immediately apply to strengthen their own businesses, reinforcing the importance of continuous learning and shared knowledge within our community.

We are also pleased to feature **Elijah Proctor** in this month's Preferred Partner Spotlight, representing **Birdhouse Home Inspection Services**. Trusted partnerships are essential in real estate, and Elijah's dedication to thoroughness, transparency, and client education makes him a valuable resource for agents and homeowners alike. His commitment to protecting buyers and supporting smooth transactions strengthens our entire real estate community.

As we celebrate Easter and the season ahead, we extend our sincere appreciation to every reader, contributor, and partner who makes *Upstate Real Producers Magazine* possible. Thank you for allowing us to tell your stories, celebrate your successes, and grow alongside you. We wish you a joyful Easter and a spring filled with renewed energy, opportunity, and continued success.

With gratitude and warmest wishes,



Robert and Sierra Smith
Publisher, *Upstate Real Producers*

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REAL ESTATE
PRODUCTIONS (GVL REP)
WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

In the world of real estate, it's rare to encounter an agent whose passion, integrity, and heart are as evident as Diane Blackwell's. Recognized this April as a Top Producer in the Upstate Real Producers Magazine, Diane has built her career on more than transactions — she has built a legacy of connection, trust, and community impact. Through her brand, Love That Greenville, Diane doesn't just help people buy or sell homes; she helps them fall in love with life in Greenville, South Carolina.

Since becoming a licensed agent in Greenville in 2019, Diane has focused her expertise on residential sales and relocations throughout the Upstate. She has guided countless families through life-changing transitions, ensuring that every client feels supported and understood. Her career volume surpasses \$45 million, with \$12 million in sales just last year, yet Diane measures success not in numbers alone, but in the satisfaction and joy of the people she serves. "Every client becomes part of my story," Diane explains. "I approach each transaction with honesty, gratitude, and heart. My goal is to help people find a place where they truly belong, not just a house to live in."

Diane's journey in real estate spans over fifteen years, beginning on the West Coast, where she first earned her real estate license. Yet her move to Greenville nine years ago marked a transformative chapter in both her personal and professional life. Joining Keller Williams Drive as the Director of Agent Services, Diane helped launch and nurture the office, learning the business from the ground up while supporting other agents in their growth. This experience offered her a deep understanding of real estate operations, but it also ignited a desire to build something uniquely her own — a business that reflected her values, vision, and unwavering dedication to people. Thus, Love That Greenville was born, a brand that embodies her philosophy: real estate is about people, place, and purpose.

Diane's approach to real estate is deeply personal. She takes the time to understand each client's lifestyle, goals, and dreams, matching them with neighborhoods and homes that resonate with their story. One particularly memorable experience involved helping a family relocate to Greenville from across the country. From coordinating virtual tours to offering insights about local amenities, schools, and community culture, Diane ensured that every step was seamless. Watching them fall in love with their new home and the Greenville area reaffirmed why she chose this career: to make meaningful differences in the lives of others.

Diane BLACKWELL

LOVE THAT
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Her path has not been without challenges. Relocating to a new city meant starting from scratch — rebuilding her network, forging relationships, and establishing a business in unfamiliar territory. There were moments of doubt and burnout, like any career in real estate, but Diane overcame these hurdles with persistence, faith, and a steadfast focus on her purpose. Her mentors — her coach Kathryn and her sister Debra, a veteran agent in Oregon — have guided, encouraged, and inspired her, reinforcing that success is built not just on skills, but on heart, resilience, and vision.

Outside of real estate, Diane's life is rich with family, faith, and community engagement. She and her husband Cleve, along with their children Hailey and Witt, and three cats, embrace an active lifestyle centered on outdoor

adventures, cycling, and travel. She states that “My husband, Cleve, is truly the backbone of my success. He believes in me on the days I doubt myself, celebrates every win with me, and supports the long hours, late-night calls, and emotional demands of this business. I couldn't do any of this without him, and I'm thankful every single day for the love and encouragement he gives me.” Her faith is a cornerstone of her life, providing guidance, grounding, and perspective. “Throughout every high and low in my career, my faith has been the anchor that carries me. I believe that every opportunity, every client, and every blessing in my business is God-given. I try to approach my work with a spirit of gratitude and service, knowing that everything I have comes from Him.” Diane also makes giving back a priority, supporting organizations like Meals on Wheels and World Bicycle Relief, a cause connected to her family's love for

cycling and global impact. She aspires to extend her philanthropic reach locally, creating more opportunities to strengthen Greenville's community.

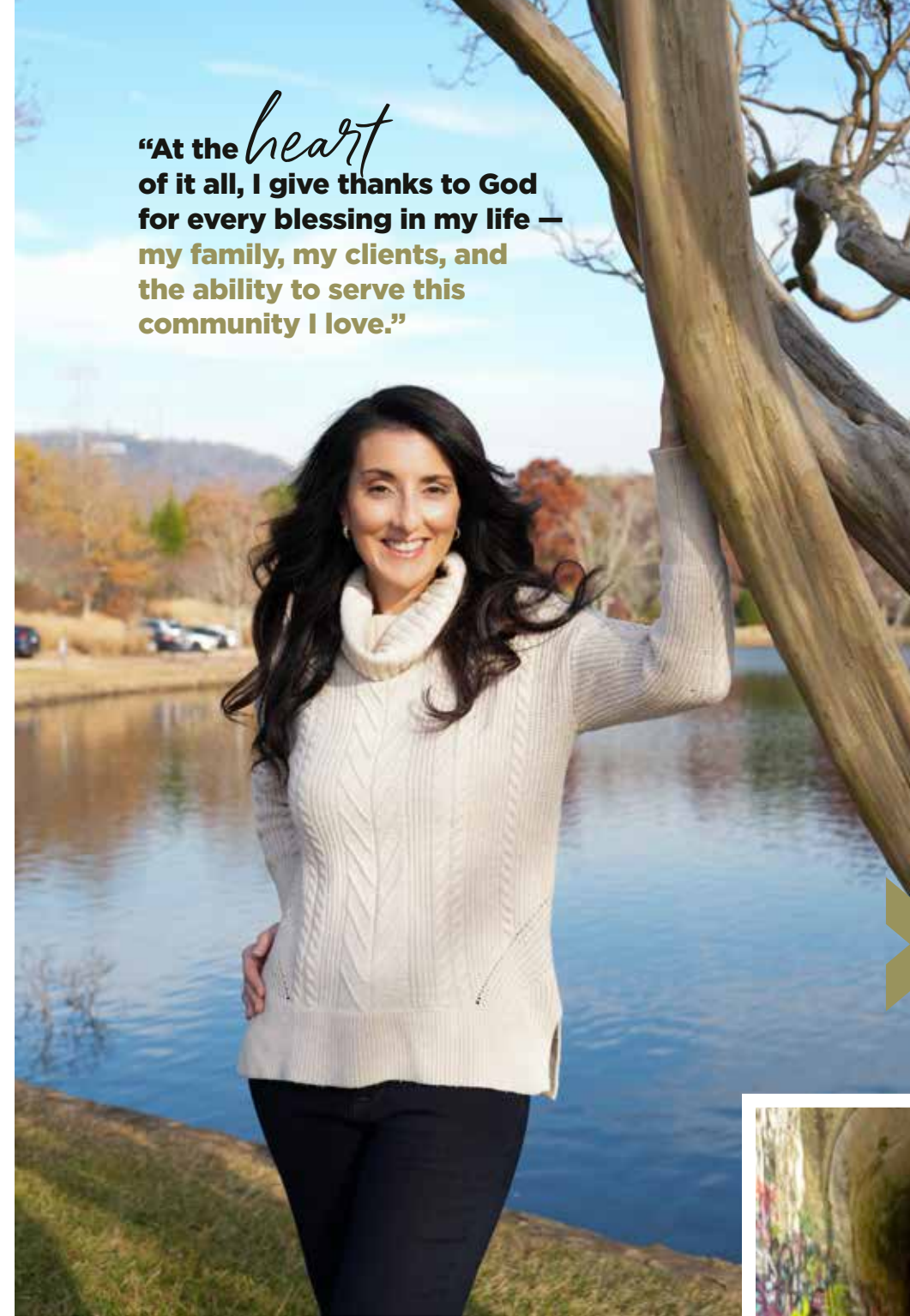
Diane's personal history further shapes her professional approach. Raised in a close-knit Portuguese family, she learned early the values of hard work, kindness, and connection. Though she faced the loss of both parents at a young age, the lessons they instilled — faith, resilience, and gratitude — continue to influence her daily life and how she interacts with clients. These principles are evident in every aspect of her business, where relationships take precedence over transactions, and where each interaction is infused with care, authenticity, and warmth.

Her advice to aspiring real estate professionals is as much about mindset as it is about strategy: lead with heart,

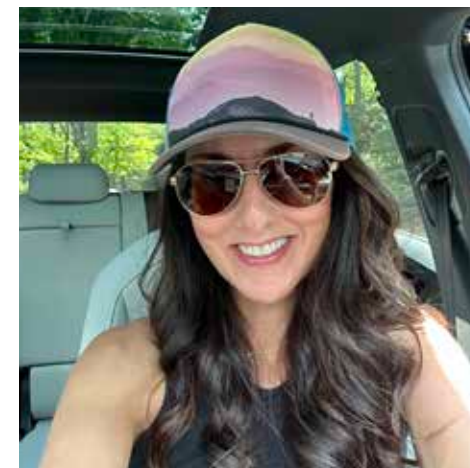
remain consistent, and always honor your client's journey. “This business is built on relationships, not transactions,” Diane says. “Show up every day, do the right thing even when no one's watching, and never lose sight of your “why.” Her philosophy resonates not just in her client interactions, but in her overall approach to life — balancing business success with family, community, and personal fulfillment.

For Diane Blackwell, recognition as a Top Producer is more than a career milestone; it is a reflection of the lives she has touched, the trust she has built, and the legacy she is creating through Love That Greenville. She hopes to be remembered as someone who gave more than she took, who supported, uplifted, and genuinely cared for others. In every deal, every interaction, and every moment, Diane exemplifies what it means to be a Realtor who leads with heart — proving that success is measured not just in sales, but in the meaningful impact one leaves on their community and the people around them.

“At the heart of it all, I give thanks to God for every blessing in my life — my family, my clients, and the ability to serve this community I love.”



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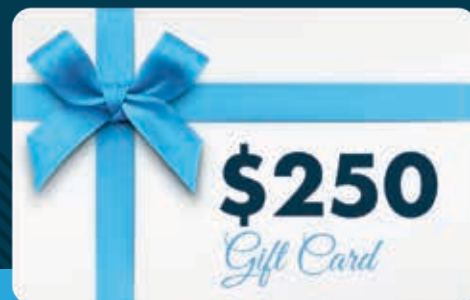
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Will Sawyer

BETTING ON HIMSELF & BUILDING SOMETHING BIGGER

PHOTOS BY: TRES DABNEY (TRUE NORTH PRODUCTIONS) • WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

There are careers born from careful planning, and then there are careers forged through resilience, humility, and the courage to pivot when life delivers the unexpected. For Will Sawyer of Keller Williams Greenville Upstate, real estate was never part of the original plan—but it became the vehicle through which he discovered his purpose, his confidence, and the leader he was meant to become. Licensed in 2018 and now approaching eight years in the business, Will's journey is a powerful reminder that sometimes the path forward only becomes clear once you're willing to let go of the one you thought you were destined for.

Will's professional story begins not in real estate, but in medicine. Like many high-achieving students, he spent years with his eyes fixed firmly on one goal: becoming a doctor. That dream began to unravel during his senior year of college, when setbacks in biochemistry and the reality of medical school admissions forced a hard reckoning. Faced with uncertainty for the first time, Will leaned into trusted guidance—specifically from his uncle by marriage, a successful Realtor in Columbia, South Carolina, who saw in Will both the work ethic and the relational strengths needed to thrive in the industry. Encouraged to make a leap of faith, Will chose Greenville, earned his license, and stepped into real estate with equal parts determination and humility.

Since day one, Keller Williams Greenville Upstate has been the only brokerage Will has ever called home. He began his career

on the Kirby Zane Team, where he spent his formative years learning the fundamentals of the business. In 2021, he made a defining decision—to step away from the team structure and bet on himself as a solo agent. It was a move met with skepticism by some, including a moment that still stands out to Will today: being told outright that he wouldn't last on his own. Rather than allowing that doubt to derail him, Will used it as fuel. With no safety net and no guarantees, he committed to outworking expectations, getting creative with lead generation, and saying yes to opportunities that stretched him far beyond his comfort zone.

That commitment has paid off. With a career volume estimated between \$160M and \$170M and a staggering \$60M in production last year alone, Will now outperforms many teams as an individual producer—an outcome that once felt unimaginable. Yet, despite the numbers, Will is quick to acknowledge that his greatest obstacle has never been the market, competition, or external circumstances. It has been himself. Overcoming self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and the pressure of rapid growth has required intentional focus, self-awareness, and an unwavering commitment to personal development. Even today, he openly admits there are moments when he feels unworthy of how far he's come—but instead of letting that slow him down, he channels his energy into what he can control: driving leads, building systems, and putting the right people in the right seats as he grows his team.



At the heart of Will's success is a refreshingly simple philosophy. Before ever showing a home, he sits down with his clients to understand not just what they want—but why they want it. This intentional approach allows buyers, many of whom are relocating from out of state, to make confident, informed decisions without second-guessing themselves later. Rather than chasing transactions, Will focuses on clarity, education, and trust—ensuring every client feels supported long before an offer is written. It's a strategy rooted in respect for both the process and the people involved.

As his business continues to scale, Will's passion has shifted toward leadership and legacy. He is deeply invested in becoming the kind of leader others want to follow—someone who creates opportunity, fosters growth, and sets a standard through example. When asked what has been most rewarding

about his career so far, his answer has nothing to do with volume or accolades. Instead, it's the personal transformation. The once timid, uncertain college graduate has grown into a confident, grounded professional who understands that success in real estate is inseparable from personal growth. To evolve in this industry, Will believes, you must first be willing to evolve as a human being.

Outside of the office, Will's life is centered around his wife, Blaire, and their dog, Waylon. Together, they value time spent with family and friends, traveling, skiing, staying active, and enjoying the outdoors. Golf remains a meaningful pastime—perhaps unsurprising given that Will once played Division I golf at Wofford College, a lesser-known chapter of his story that speaks to his competitive spirit and discipline long before real estate entered the picture.



When asked to define success, Will doesn't hesitate. For him, success is constant growth—becoming healthier, more peaceful, more present, and more connected to the people and work that matter most. It's about reaching more people through business, cultivating deeper relationships, and giving maximum effort where it counts. Looking ahead, Will sees real estate not just as a career, but as the foundation that will fund the life he envisions—one built on purpose, integrity, and freedom.

In the spirit of Real Producers, Will offers straightforward advice to those striving to grow: this business isn't complicated. Talk to more people about real estate. Whether it's one-on-one conversations, social media, videos, open houses, or daily outreach, visibility and consistency matter. If your business isn't where you want it to be, chances are you're not in front of enough people yet. Standing out, he insists, doesn't require anything extraordinary—just mastery of the data,

Looking ahead, Will sees real estate not just as a career, but as the foundation that will fund the life he envisions—one built on purpose, integrity, and freedom.”



understanding the story it tells, and the ability to communicate that story clearly and authentically.

Ultimately, what Will wants to be remembered for goes beyond production. He hopes his legacy reflects honesty, strong morals, and a life rooted in faith.

Will Sawyer's journey is proof that success isn't always about having the perfect plan. Sometimes, it's about having the courage to pivot, the discipline to outwork doubt, and the humility to keep growing—no matter how far you've already come.

His favorite quote—“People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but never forget the way you made them feel”—isn't just something he believes; it's something he lives by, in business and beyond.





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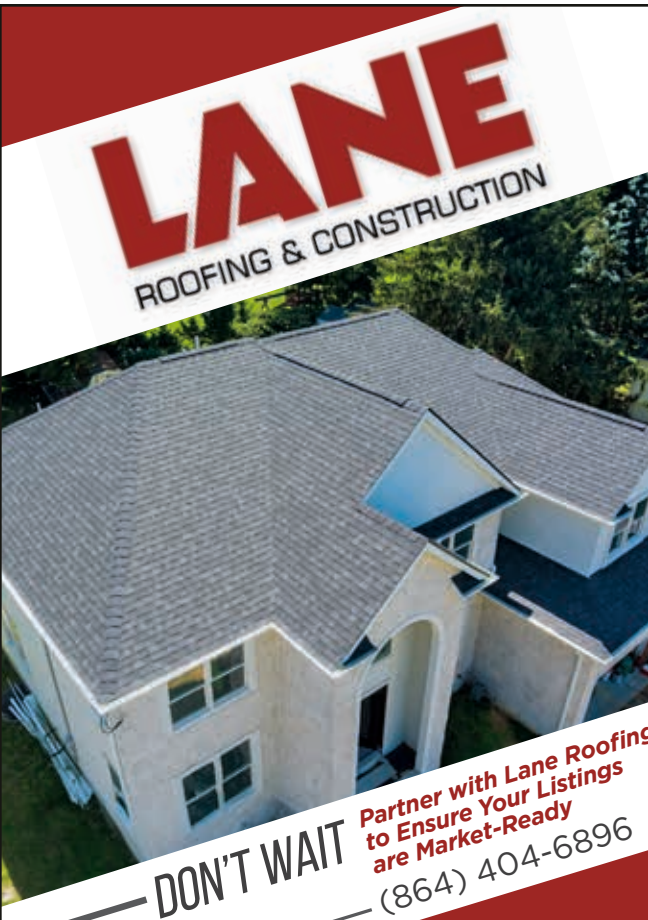
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Inspecting Homes & Protecting Dreams

At Birdhouse Home Inspection Services, every crawl space explored and every attic examined serves a deeper purpose. For owner and operator Elijah Proctor, home inspections aren't simply about checking boxes or documenting defects. They're about educating and equipping families to step into the next chapter of their lives with confidence. Operating from Belton, South Carolina, this certified, family-owned business brings more than three years of dedicated service to top-producing REALTOR® professionals across Anderson and surrounding areas. Their motto, "Inspecting Homes & Protecting Dreams," captures a philosophy that resonates through every aspect of their work, from comprehensive residential inspections to specialized mold, radon, and termite detection services. In 2025 alone, Birdhouse helped more than 150 individuals find peace of mind in their home buying and selling process.

Birdhouse Home Inspection Services offers residential home inspections covering interior and exterior structures, HVAC systems, electrical and plumbing

components, roofing, attics, basements, crawl spaces, fireplaces, and foundations. Beyond standard inspections, the company provides air and surface mold testing, radon detection, and annual home testing. What distinguishes Birdhouse in a competitive market is a commitment to thoroughness paired with rapid report delivery. Same-day reporting keeps transactions moving efficiently, while Proctor's accessibility for follow-up questions ensures both REALTOR® professionals and their clients feel fully informed.

Originally from Lowndesville, South Carolina, Proctor's journey into home inspection began after more than 5 years in home renovation, following a 15 year career in the construction industry. He pursued formal training and certification through ICA and InterNACHI, becoming an InterNACHI Certified Professional Inspector. Active membership in the Inspector Empire Building mastermind group keeps Proctor connected to industry best practices and forward-thinking strategies. Staying focused on a 20-year vision for the company drives him to build

meaningful relationships and develop consistent systems that ensure every inspection experience exceeds expectations.

"We pride ourselves on being available to address any concerns that arise, creating a supportive partnership rather than a transactional service. We enjoy equipping clients to make informed decisions on one of life's biggest investments, their homes," Proctor explains. That fulfillment drives adaptation and continuous improvement. Throughout his time in the industry, Proctor has witnessed technology transform home inspection processes. Access to advanced software platforms and reporting tools has vastly improved the speed and detail of documentation. Rather than resist these changes, Proctor invests countless hours each week mastering new skills in various software systems and pursuing continuing education. That dedication ensures that Birdhouse delivers the most current methods for assisting clients and supports REALTOR® partners with reliable, detailed information.



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“
For us, it isn't simply about getting your business; it's about creating a lasting relationship with those we serve.”

Looking ahead, Proctor envisions building a sustainable operation with continued growth that benefits REALTOR® partners and the community. Future plans include expanding service offerings, refining reporting processes further, and deepening relationships with the real estate professionals who trust Birdhouse with their clients' transactions. "For us, it isn't simply about getting your business; it's about creating a lasting relationship with those we serve," Proctor emphasizes. At Birdhouse Home Inspection Services, clear communication, realistic expectations, and mutual respect create smoother transactions and more satisfied clients.

Proctor's advice to real estate professionals centers on partnership and communication. Understanding that inspectors play a critical role in the transaction process, he encourages REALTOR® professionals to view inspectors as allies rather than obstacles. Proctor also highlights the importance of choosing inspectors who prioritize education and accessibility, qualities that empower clients to make informed decisions rather than fearful ones.

Building a family-owned enterprise comes with inherent challenges, particularly in an industry where consistency and reputation matter deeply. Proctor has worked intentionally to create systems that guarantee every inspection meets the same high standard, regardless of external variables. Market

shifts and evolving client expectations require agility, but staying grounded in core values, being thorough, responsive, and genuinely invested in client outcomes, provides a stable foundation. The home buying process can be nerve-wracking, but Birdhouse positions itself as a steady, knowledgeable presence that offers reassurance in an uncertain landscape.

At Birdhouse Home Inspection Services, Elijah Proctor protects dreams by equipping homebuyers and sellers with the information they need to move forward confidently. For REALTOR® professionals seeking a dependable, responsive, and genuinely invested inspection partner, Birdhouse offers the thorough expertise and personal touch that builds trust and supports successful closings.

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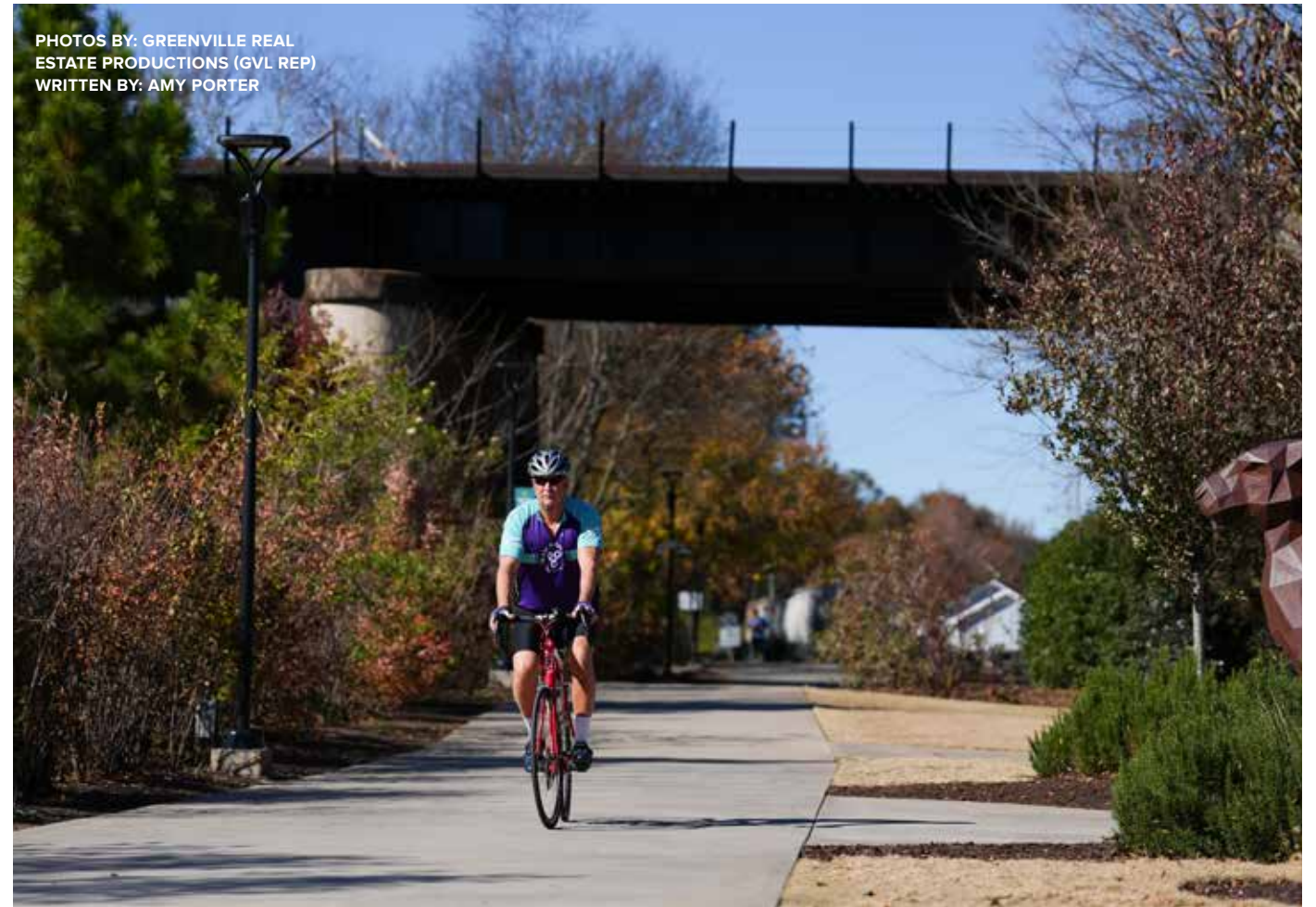
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REX STEPHENS

GUIDING VETERANS AND FAMILIES HOME WITH HUMILITY AND DEDICATION



PHOTOS BY: GREENVILLE REAL ESTATE PRODUCTIONS (GVL REP)
WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

REX STEPHENS' journey into real estate is one defined by resilience, passion, and a steadfast commitment to service—both to his clients and his community. Currently a leading Realtor with Real South Realty, Rex has built a career grounded in listening, understanding, and guiding clients to their dream homes, all while maintaining a humility that sets him apart in the competitive world of real estate. Since earning his license in 2014, Rex has helped countless buyers, from first-time homeowners to seasoned property investors, with a particular focus on serving our veterans community as a certified Military Relocation Specialist. His dedication to veterans is more than professional—it is personal.

Rex's path to real estate was forged through adversity. In 2009, a severe cycling accident threatened not only his mobility but his livelihood. At the time, Rex owned a catering company and previously a restaurant, but the physical demands of those businesses became impossible after the accident, which left him at risk of long term medical issues. With determination and the grace of God, he fully recovered and discovered a new calling in real estate—a career that allows him to serve others while still challenging and inspiring him every day.

Over the years, Rex has cultivated a reputation for going above and beyond for his clients. He believes that truly listening and setting realistic expectations are

the foundations of success in real estate. This approach has led to memorable experiences, including helping a client find their dream home in an Air Park Community in Gilbert, South Carolina, complete with a private airplane hangar—a search that took him well beyond his usual territory but resulted in lasting friendships. His professional achievements are equally impressive, with a personal career high volume of \$15 million and a proven track record in Greenville, Spartanburg, Pickens, and Anderson counties.

Beyond the office, Rex is deeply committed to giving back. An avid cyclist, he participates each July in the "Ride 2 End Alz," a South Carolina fundraiser that

raised \$4.2 million in 2025 for Alzheimer's research. He is also a Special Olympics powerlifting coach, a role that began as a way to bond with his son, who has autism. Through dedication and coaching, his son has competed in national and world championships, achieving milestones that have brought joy and pride to the family. Rex also supports the South Carolina Special Olympics, showing that his heart for service extends far beyond his real estate career.

Family is central to Rex's life. Married to his wife Bobette for 37 years, he is a proud father of four and grandfather of three. His children serve in meaningful roles across the country, from the U.S. Air Force

“TRUE SUCCESS. IS BEING IN A VOCATION YOU ENJOY THAT ALSO ALLOWS YOU TO LIVE A FULL LIFE.”



to special education and veterinary work in Colorado, and his family enjoys travel, especially to Florida and Colorado, is a cherished part of his life. These personal connections, coupled with his love for outdoor activities like cycling, hiking and snow skiing, provide a strong foundation for the balance he seeks in both work and life.

Rex credits much of his professional growth to mentorship from Tony Therburg with Veterans United, whose guidance has helped him refine his

expertise and embrace new technologies, including AI in real estate. He recently returned from Columbia, Missouri, where he attended #Homebase2025, a national event for top agents, further cementing his commitment to excellence and continuous learning.

For Rex, the most rewarding part of real estate is helping someone achieve what they once thought impossible—homeownership. His philosophy is simple yet profound: work hard, be humble, and always look for ways to serve others. Whether through his professional efforts or charitable endeavors, Rex Alan Stephens exemplifies the heart and hustle that define the best of the Upstate’s real estate community.

“True success,” he says, “is being in a vocation you enjoy that also allows you to live a full life.” With unwavering dedication, a servant’s heart, and the humility of a man who knows the value of hard work, Rex is leaving an indelible mark—not just in real estate, but in the lives of the clients, families, and communities he serves.

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Trust IS BUILT ON Truth

BY LISA ALEXANDER
DEL-CO REALTY GROUP, INC.



In an industry built on relationships, trust is the currency that matters most. For Lisa Alexander, broker-owner of Del-co Realty Group, Inc., trust isn't created through flashy promises or sugarcoated conversations—it's built through honesty, even when that honesty is uncomfortable.

beginning, she creates alignment between herself and her clients. Everyone starts with the same facts, which reduces emotional decision-making and minimizes surprises once the transaction is underway.

This approach has had a direct impact on the efficiency and success of her business. Deals either move forward with clarity, or they pause before frustration sets in. Time is saved, stress is reduced, and transactions tend to move more smoothly.

But beyond efficiency, Lisa believes honesty strengthens relationships in ways that extend far beyond a single deal.

"Early honesty builds trust," she says. "Clients know I'm not just trying to close a sale. I'm guiding them based on experience and facts. When things get stressful—and they often do—they trust my advice because I've been transparent from day one."

That trust has become the foundation of her long-term success. Many of Lisa's repeat clients and referrals come from moments when she chose honesty over convenience. Even when the answer wasn't what clients hoped to hear, they appreciated the transparency—and remembered it.

For newer agents, Lisa sees this tip as a mindset shift that can define an entire career. Being truthful may feel risky at first, but in reality, it positions an agent as a professional advisor rather than a salesperson.

"Short-term discomfort leads to long-term respect," Lisa notes. "Clients may not always like the answer, but they value knowing you're looking out for their best interests."

In a fast-moving, competitive real estate market, Lisa Alexander's Tip of the Trade is refreshingly simple—and profoundly effective: lead with honesty, set expectations early, and trust will follow.

"One thing I always do to build trust with my clients is give advice upfront and be truthful," Lisa shares. "My job isn't to tell people what they want to hear. It's to tell them what they need to hear so they can make smart decisions."

Lisa's perspective comes from decades of experience and a career deeply rooted in real estate. After graduating college in 1994, she began working with Prudential Carolinas, where her mother owned the first Prudential franchise in South Carolina. From there, Lisa expanded her expertise in new construction with Ryan Homes before becoming the New Homes Division Sales Manager for Prudential C. Dan Joyner Company in 2000. In 2006, she took ownership of the family business, and in 2010—alongside her tech-savvy husband—revamped the company with a modern, systems-driven approach. Today, Del-co Realty Group supports more than 20 agents, with Lisa placing a strong emphasis on systems that help agents succeed at every level.

At the heart of her leadership and client philosophy is early, honest communication.

"When I give clients honest feedback upfront—about pricing, inspections, timelines, or expectations—it prevents bigger problems later," Lisa explains. "Those conversations can be uncomfortable, but they make everything else easier."

Rather than avoiding difficult topics, Lisa addresses them head-on. By establishing clear expectations from the

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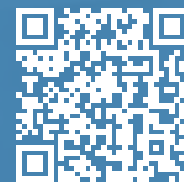
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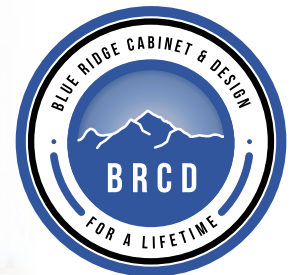
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