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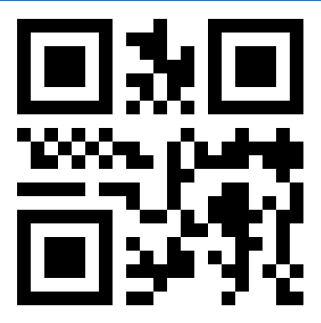
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Contents

PROFILES



12 Jenny Bolger



16 Philip DeVries



22 Shyanne Queen

IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 Preferred Partners
- 10 Meet the Team
- 11 Event Announcement: Swing for a Cause
- 12 Rising Star: Jenny Bolger
- 16 Niche Agent: Philip DeVries
- 20 Why Relationships Still Matter Most in Real Estate
- 22 Agent Spotlight: Shyanne Queen
- 26 Top Producer: Katie Southwell
- 30 By the Numbers



26 Katie Southwell
TOP PRODUCER

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Jenny Bolger



Turning a Setback Into a Breakthrough

PHOTOS BY JACOB HARR WITH PHOTOREAL
PHOTOS TAKEN AT ADA HOTEL

When Jenny Bolger was laid off from her sales and marketing position on September 11, 2024, she faced a crossroads many professionals dread. Instead of hesitating, she pivoted immediately, enrolling in a real estate licensing course the very next morning and starting classes that Monday. Within a couple of weeks, she had completed her coursework and passed the state exam, and by the three-month mark, she was already closing consistent transactions. Now, a year and a half later, Jenny has completed 14 sales totaling more than \$5 million in volume with Bellabay Realty.

Real estate was always on Jenny's radar, but the idea of a commission-based income kept her from pursuing it. In the meantime, she had built a diverse professional background that included stints as a cosmetologist, a logistics coordinator, an Airbnb operations manager, and a sales and marketing role for a transportation company. Each role taught her valuable lessons about client relationships, problem-solving, and communication. When her company faced financial difficulties and began downsizing, being part of a five-person layoff proved to be the catalyst Jenny needed to finally take the leap into real estate.

Jenny's rapid success in real estate has set her apart in a competitive industry. She credits her early achievements to a strong work ethic and a relationship-driven approach. Her focus on educating clients, communicating clearly, and guiding them through the process with genuine care has resonated with buyers and sellers throughout West Michigan. In an exceptionally short time frame, she has developed systems, processes, and relationships that allow her to consistently serve clients at a high level while continuing to learn and grow.



Although Jenny operates as a solo agent, she draws strength from the supportive environment at Bellabay Realty. The brokerage fosters a collaborative culture where knowledge is shared freely and wins are celebrated collectively. In an industry that can feel cutthroat, Jenny appreciates working within what she describes

as “a family of real estate professionals who genuinely want to see each other succeed.”

As for Jenny’s business philosophy, it centers on creating trust through clear communication and education. She takes the time to explain the process so clients don’t feel overwhelmed, and she has been intentional about building organizational systems early in her career to stay present and responsive.

“I want to be remembered as someone who truly cared — about people, about doing things the right way, and about showing up with integrity,” Jenny said. “In real estate, I hope clients remember how supported and confident they felt working with me, not just the outcome of the transaction.”

For Jenny, the most rewarding aspect of her business has been witnessing clients’ happiness at closing and knowing she played a meaningful part in helping them reach a major life milestone. At the same time, Jenny values the personal growth that comes with daily learning and the flexibility real estate provides. As a mother to 14-year-old Sofia, she deeply appreciates having control over her time and the ability to be present for her family.

As she looks ahead to the future, Jenny sees real estate as the foundation for the life she is building. Her goals include deepening her involvement in the real estate community through volunteering and potentially serving on an association board. She believes giving time and presence can be just as impactful as financial contributions. Professionally, she is focused on refining her systems, improving time management, and serving clients at an even higher level as she continues to grow.

For agents just starting out in the industry, Jenny encourages them to bet on themselves and commit fully, emphasizing that consistency matters far more than perfection. Building real relationships rather than simply chasing transactions has been a key to her success, as well as her willingness to ask questions and learn along the way.

In a remarkably short time, Jenny has proven that not having a traditional timeline doesn’t stop someone from being able to build a thriving business. As she continues to grow, she remains focused on showing up for her clients with the same determination that launched her career. ▀

“I want to be remembered as someone who truly cared — about people, about doing things the right way, and about showing up with integrity.”



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Philip

DEVRIES

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Philip DeVries has always followed a path that blends curiosity, hard work and a deep appreciation for the outdoors. From his early days moving across the country to building a niche career in real estate, he has had a journey that is anything but ordinary.

“I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan,” Philip explained. “My family moved to

North Carolina and then to northern Illinois until I was in the fifth grade. We moved to Grand Rapids when I was 12, and I have lived here ever since.”

That sense of movement carried into Philip’s early ambitions. He began college at LeTourneau University in Texas, pursuing a dual major in business and aviation. “I really wanted to be

a helicopter pilot,” he said. “I have about 10 hours of lessons and flight experience, but I never went as far as getting my license.” Philip eventually completed his business degree at Grand Valley State University, setting the stage for a career grounded in practical skills and entrepreneurial thinking.

Philip’s first professional chapter began in the family business. “My first job out of college was in our family business as an assistant product manager at a local medical company called DLP,” he said. The company specialized in products used during open heart surgery and biopsy procedures. It gave Philip a strong foundation, but a major transition came in 1995 when the company was sold to Medtronic.

This moment sparked a career pivot. “I had always had a love of homes and building, so it seemed like a good fit,” Philip said. He entered the real estate industry, spending his first decade focused on commercial properties. “A good family friend encouraged me to go the commercial route because it was a lot more family friendly, hours wise,” he shared. “I was newly married and starting to have kids. Commercial real estate is more of a traditional 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, type of job — and that sounded good to me.”

Eventually, Philip found his true niche. Today, he owns Michigan Outdoor Properties, a brokerage he started 20 years ago. “I really love the outdoors and wanted to start a niche real estate



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company that focused on the outdoors,” he said. Philip’s business concentrates on recreational and lifestyle properties, including hunting land, cabins, cottages, waterfront homes and farms.

Philip’s passion has proven to be a perfect match, especially in recent years. “After COVID-19, we were selling all of our inventory quickly, and new listings are very hard to come by,” he said. “When you get them, they don’t sit around long, and of course, prices have increased due to low inventories as well. I think people really reconnected with the outdoors during 2020, and my best years of sales have been since the pandemic.”

While the properties are unique, Philip says his approach to clients is what truly sets him apart. “I really work hard for my clients,” he explained. “When you meet me, I want to instill trust quickly with how I listen to my clients’ wishes and work extremely hard.” That dedication often turns business relationships into something more meaningful. “By the end of most transactions, they are not only clients but friends as well,” he added.

Philip’s favorite part of the job is not just walking land or touring properties, however. “I thrive in the negotiation stage of the transaction,” he said. “It is always a win if all parties are happy with the deal at the end of the day and the transaction closes smoothly.”

Outside of work, Philip lives the lifestyle he sells. “If I am not spending time at our lake house in Lake Ann, Michigan, you can find me hunting, fishing, riding



Photo submitted by Philip DeVries



Photo submitted by Philip DeVries

“I thrive in the negotiation stage of the transaction. It is always a win if all parties are happy with the deal at the end of the day and the transaction closes smoothly.”

bikes or riding motorcycles,” he said. Philip’s greatest joy, though, comes from family. He and his wife, Robertta, celebrated 35 years of marriage in May of 2026. Together, they have four grown children and three grandchildren, with more expected. “All the kids live locally, which is a blessing,” he said.

Philip also values personal growth, even if he takes a less traditional approach. “I am not much of a podcast listener or a self-help book reader: I am more of a fiction reader,” he admitted. Still, a few titles have made an impact. He recommends Scattered Minds by Gabor Maté for its insight into ADHD, a condition he was diagnosed with as an adult. He also points to Boundaries by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. “All of us, real estate professionals especially, can get caught up in the ‘yes’ cycle,” he said. “This is a great read for those who need to focus on self-care and saying ‘no’ when appropriate.”

One of the most meaningful parts of Philip’s life has been his connection to Mully Children’s Family, an organization in Kenya. “I visited them for the first time more than 20 years

ago,” he said. What began as a mission serving 350 children has grown to more than 8,000. “The founder Charles Mully has become a true friend and an inspiration,” Philip added.

Philip’s philosophy extends into his advice for others in the industry. “Figure out who you don’t want to work with,” he shared. “Some people and projects are not worth the effort.” He learned this lesson through experience, noting that not all deals are created equal. “It costs the same to list and sell a \$10,000 one-acre lot as it does to list a \$1,000,000 farm,” he said. “As soon as you put the key in the ignition of the car, you are losing money on the small stuff.”

After three decades in the business, Philip still finds joy in the work and the people. One standout memory involved helping Amish families relocate. “From starting out as an ‘English’ man whom they didn’t really trust at first to becoming, in time, very close friends has been amazing,” he shared.

Reflecting on it all, Philip feels a deep sense of gratitude. “It has been a fantastic life,” he said. “For 18 of those years, I was able to work from home and watch my kids grow up firsthand.”

For Philip, real estate is about more than transactions: It is about creating spaces where families can connect, unplug and build lasting memories. “Buying land is not only a great financial investment, but it is also a great investment in our future generations,” he concluded. ▀

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Why Relationships Still Matter Most in Real Estate

In an industry driven by transactions, listings, contracts, and closings, it can be easy to forget what truly drives long-term success.

Relationships.

After meeting hundreds of top-producing real estate professionals through Real Producers, I've noticed something interesting: The agents who build lasting businesses are not always the ones with the biggest marketing budgets or the largest social media following. They are often the people who consistently invest in relationships.

They show up. They stay connected. They genuinely care about people. And because of that, people remember them.

One of the biggest misconceptions about networking is that it is about finding people who can help you. The most successful networkers take a different approach. They walk into a room asking, "How can I help someone else today?"

That mindset changes everything.

The best conversations happen when we are curious. Instead of immediately talking about our business, we take the time to learn about the person standing in front of us. What are they working toward?

What challenges are they facing? What kind of clients do they love serving?

People want to feel seen, heard, and understood. When they do, real relationships begin to form.

In real estate, referrals are often viewed as the ultimate goal. While referrals are important, they are usually the result of something much bigger.

Trust.

Think about the professionals you refer your clients to. You likely know them, trust them, and feel confident they will take care of the people you send their way. That trust was not built from one conversation: It was built through consistent interactions over time.

The same is true for your clients and referral partners.

Relationships come first. Referrals follow.

Another lesson I have learned over the years is the importance of being intentional with your connections. Sometimes people make introductions simply because two people are in the same industry. The most valuable introductions happen when there is a genuine reason for the connection.

Before introducing someone, take the time to understand what they are looking for. Who is their ideal client? What type of referral partner would be valuable to them? What goals are they working toward this year?

When we connect people with purpose, we create opportunities that are meaningful instead of random.

Finally, if you want to stay top of mind, you have to stay visible.

People cannot refer you if they forget about you.

Visibility does not mean constantly selling yourself. It means consistently showing up. Attend events. Engage on social media. Reach out to past clients. Support your community. Stay involved in the conversations happening around you.

The professionals who continue to grow year after year understand this. They know that every event attended, every conversation held, and every relationship nurtured creates another opportunity to build trust.

At the end of the day, real estate is still a people business.

Technology will continue to evolve. Marketing strategies will change. Market conditions will shift.

But relationships will always matter.

The agents who build the strongest businesses are the ones who focus on people first, lead with generosity, and consistently invest in the relationships that matter most.

Because in this industry, relationships are not just part of the business.

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Shyanne QUEEN

LEADING BY LIFTING OTHERS

PHOTOS BY
JASPER FUENTES

In just seven years, Shyanne Queen has transformed from a newly licensed agent into an associate broker and the owner of Michigan's first Epique Realty branch office. As a single mother and Native American entrepreneur, she has built a thriving real estate practice that reflects the power of strategic thinking, disciplined execution, and a commitment to building something that lasts.

Shyanne earned her real estate license in 2019, but her path into the industry began long before that. She was raised in a family of licensed builders and grew up on job sites alongside her father, uncle, and grandfather, learning the construction and remodeling trades from the ground up. While completing her academic career at Michigan State University, where she earned dual Bachelor of Arts degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice, she worked part-time as a showing assistant. Immediately after completing her Master of Science in Psychology, Shyanne transitioned into full-time real estate, where her formal education in psychology and sociology merged seamlessly with her practical construction



knowledge that was passed down through generations.

Shyanne's accomplishments in such a short time frame are remarkable. Last year, she closed \$3.4 million in volume while building her team and completing her broker's license. She was nominated for Young Professional of the Year through the Grand Rapids Association of REALTORS® (GRAR), named a Visionary Award Finalist for the Grand Rapids Junior Chamber Rising Leaders Awards, and is the current president of Grand Rapids Young Professionals (GRYP). She also has been featured in multiple professional publications and invited to speak at Grand Valley State University for Women in Business and the Real Estate Club. She holds the Graduate REALTOR® Institute (GRI) designation along with multiple NAR certifications, including RENE, SRS, PSA, C2EX, and AHWD.

As she continues to grow her team, Shyanne is focused on mentorship, streamlined systems, and innovative marketing to support agents at every stage. Today, more than half of her real estate business is driven by digital strategy and social media, where her content generates over one million monthly views. Through her coaching platform, Coach Shyanne, she mentors real estate agents and entrepreneurs nationwide in branding, digital strategy, and business growth. She is also launching her Social Media Success Course, designed to help professionals build scalable, sustainable businesses through strategic content, automation, and advanced marketing systems. At the core of Shyanne's approach is a belief in collaboration over competition, equipping agents with the tools and leadership skills to build independent, lasting careers.



“FOR UP-AND-COMING AGENTS, SHYANNE ENCOURAGES THEM TO TREAT THEIR JOB LIKE A BUSINESS FROM DAY ONE.”

while transitioning more fully into the luxury market. Beyond production, she is focused on continuing the legacy her father, uncle, and grandfather built in construction and property ownership by developing a strong, intentional real estate portfolio. Real estate supports her broader vision of coaching, national speaking, and education, allowing her to build legacy, develop leaders, create wealth responsibly, and expand her impact far beyond individual transactions. Her goal is to multiply influence through mentorship and educational platforms that will continue long after individual deals are closed.

For up-and-coming agents, Shyanne encourages them to treat their job like a business from Day One. She also believes in building assets: a personal brand, a team, leadership presence, and multiple streams of impact. Agents should think beyond transactions and focus on creating sustainable businesses that align with their values and long-term vision.

Shyanne demonstrates what's possible when vision is paired with discipline and purpose. Through her leadership, she continues to inspire others to think bigger and build with intention. ▀

For Shyanne, the journey to her career success has not been without significant challenges. She opened her branch office while completing her broker's license, and as the sole provider for her children — Jaylah, 15, and Kaiyenne, 10 — Shyanne faced immense pressure while also navigating serious health challenges within her family. Instead of stepping back, she leaned into disciplined time management, invested in

marketing, and strengthened her digital presence. That season taught her that challenges do not define trajectory — response does. By staying strategic and grounded, Shyanne turned pressure into growth and built a stronger foundation for her branch office and team.

As she looks to the future, Shyanne plans to expand her branch office by growing a larger, high-performing team



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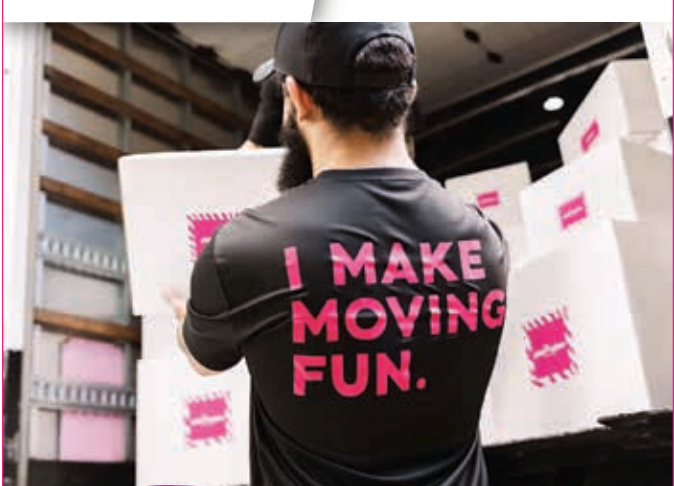


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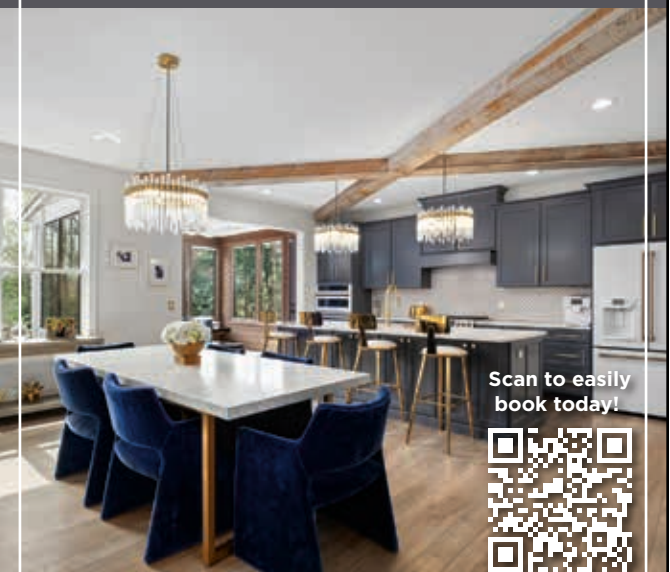
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TOP PRODUCER

Katie Southwell

PHOTOS BY JACOB
HARR WITH PHOTOREAL

Integrity in Every Transaction

With 21 years in real estate, Katie Southwell has built a career defined by trust. An agent with Keller Williams Grand Rapids East, she has achieved \$155 million in career sales volume, including \$28 million in transactions last year alone. Beyond the numbers, her success is rooted in her thoughtful strategy and deep commitment to serving her clients well.

Katie's journey into real estate was rooted in family from the very beginning. Her father worked in commercial real estate, and her sister was already established as a residential agent when Katie decided to return to the workforce after nine years as a stay-at-home mom. Prior to that, she had a career in teaching. While remaining in education may have been the more predictable path, joining her family in real estate felt like the right one. Together, they combined their experience and launched their own brokerage, Dodgson Southwell Properties.

More than two decades later, Katie has become known for her care, clarity, and consistency. Most of her business comes through referrals — evidence of the trust she cultivates with every client. In 2025, she



ranked number 27 among approximately 3,400 agents and teams in the Grand Rapids market.

As an independent agent, Katie guides her clients through every step of the home buying or selling process — from the first showing to closing — allowing her to focus on doing fewer transactions

exceptionally well. She's especially passionate about preparing homes to compete at the highest level and helping clients make smart, long-term decisions. Her favorite part of the job is taking a listing, staging it, refining every detail until it's show-ready, and ultimately seeing a seller's reaction when it sells for more than they ever expected.

After many years in the industry, Katie will admit that the most challenging aspect of her job is breaking the news to a client when they lose in a multiple-offer situation. "When you know how badly a client wants a home, but you also know your responsibility is to protect them from overpaying or taking on unnecessary risk, it's an

emotional balancing act,” she explained. Over time, Katie has come to accept that doing the right thing matters more than winning, even though she still reflects on every offer and asks herself how she could have done better.

As she looks to the future, Katie is focused less on expansion and more on evolution. She remains committed to doing meaningful work, building strong relationships, and continuing to show up for her clients. She also aims to be more intentional in supporting women’s health and cancer-related organizations — causes shaped by her own experiences and those of loved ones, including her sister and brother-in-law.

For new agents in the industry, Katie believes that when they focus on honesty, long-term relationships, and doing what’s right for people, then success follows naturally. “Real estate is still a people business, and it still works best when people trust each other,” she said.

According to Katie, success isn’t measured solely in volume or rankings, but in trust earned, risks avoided, and clients who feel confident in their decisions. As she continues to evolve both personally and professionally, her steady commitment to relationships ensures that her impact will extend far beyond any single transaction. 🏡



Photo submitted by
Katie Southwell

“When you know how badly a client wants a home, but you also know your responsibility is to protect them from overpaying or taking on unnecessary risk, it’s an emotional balancing act.”





2025

BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S WHAT THE TOP AGENTS IN GRAND RAPIDS SOLD IN 2025



\$4,493,856,286
SALES VOLUME



10,873
TOTAL TRANSACTIONS



36
AVERAGE TRANSACTIONS PER AGENT



\$14,979,521
AVERAGE SALES VOLUME PER AGENT

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