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*Marketrac, January 2023.





Sarah
Monzo



Turning Setbacks Into Comebacks

PHOTOS BY MELISSA DOUGLAS CO.

Before she was helping families unlock the doors to their new homes, Sarah Monzo was trying to unlock her purpose. It took years of soul searching, several career pivots, and the encouragement of a tight-knit family before she found her way into real estate and onto one of the top-producing teams in Michigan.

Sarah's path to real estate wasn't obvious at first. She spent a decade bouncing between college courses, the hospitality industry, and various administrative roles, never quite finding her place.

For Sarah, her answer arrived through her husband, Regan, and his family. "I married into the Monzo family, where they come from generations of entrepreneurship, specifically in real estate and investing," she said. Her brother-in-law, Erick Monzo — the only licensed agent of his generation at the time — became her mentor. "Without this exposure, I'm not sure I would have felt compelled to consider this as a career path," Sarah added.

When Sarah and Regan bought their first home with Erick as their agent, Sarah began to take real estate seriously. "I really enjoyed the process!"

she said. Sarah loved the deals, the negotiations, and the possibilities in every property. She even loved watching HGTV. Add in the future flexibility she wanted for motherhood, and she knew she had found something special.

Sarah earned her license in 2016 and dove into the industry as an inside sales agent (ISA) for The Monzo Group with Keller Williams Great Lakes. "My role was designed to integrate a lead generation within our group by farming prospective sellers and buyers and cold calling," she said. Sarah spent her days shadowing seasoned agents, attending training seminars, and preparing to become a full-time agent. "I had developed a passion for the industry and had every intention of diving in," she explained.

When Sarah became pregnant with her first son, she shifted her real estate career into more of a "hobby." By 2019, she and her husband welcomed identical twin boys. "I had a bit of an identity crisis," she said. "I knew I wouldn't be able to physically and mentally balance three boys under three while chasing after a full-time professional career."

In 2020, with her boys a little older and a family support in place, Sarah returned to real

estate full-force. “Fast forward to COVID-19 — I was itching to launch the career I wanted to work toward back in 2016,” she explained. “It was the best decision I ever made!”

Today, Sarah is an agent with The Monzo Group, a powerhouse team of more than 100 agents. Founded nearly two decades ago by Erick, the team averages more than 1,000 closed homes each year and ranks as the #1 Keller Williams team in the country for units sold. For Sarah, who’s now 10 years into her career, it’s a full-circle moment she never imagined back when real estate was just something she’d “pressed pause” on.

In the industry, Sarah is known for her authenticity and her ability to change the way people perceive real estate agents. “My sales approach is professional and knowledgeable, yet not high-pressure, which resonates well with almost everyone I meet,” she said.

Although Sarah is glad to be back in real estate, she’ll admit that balancing work in an industry with no traditional work hours is still her greatest challenge. However, she has learned to set boundaries, embrace discomfort, and remain persistent. “Becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable is a critical aspect of the job,” she shared.



“Becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable is a critical aspect of the job.”



Photo by Jenn Carter

When she’s not working, Sarah is embracing an energetic and loving household in Shelby Township. She and Regan have three sons — Hudson, 8, and twins Jamison and Greyson, 7. As a family, the Monzos enjoy supporting their boys’ passions in sports and music, traveling to new places, attending concerts and local festivals, spending time with friends, and making the most of a summer weekend in Caseville. Sarah also volunteers at her children’s school, binge-watches true crime, and cherishes quiet moments of self-care.

Sarah is equally passionate about community outreach — especially The Monzo Group’s annual “Miracle on Monzo Street,” which provides holiday support for families in need. “It reflects our deep commitment to giving back,” she said.

For new agents, Sarah reminds them to not fear rejection. “Plant your roots where your employer is committed to genuinely investing in you and your future,” she explained.

“Replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations,” Sarah added. “Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth. Every setback is a setup for a comeback.”

As she continues building her career, Sarah remains committed to serving families with authenticity while being a role model for new agents finding their footing. Her path into real estate may have taken time, but it ultimately led her exactly where she was meant to be. ▀

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DOMANSKI

PHOTOS BY GINA DINVERNO PHOTOGRAPHY
PHOTOS TAKEN AT LOMBARDO HOMES MODEL AT PRESTON CORNERS VILLAS IN SHELBY TOWNSHIP

Marie Domanski brings decades of experience and integrity to her role as an agent at Real Estate One. Known for her commitment to service, she approaches every relationship with the goal of supporting people through one of life's biggest decisions. "My motto has never changed: 'Your REALTOR® for Life!'" she said.

Before real estate, Marie excelled in retail management, earning awards

such as Manager of the Year. Her success also earned her incentive trips, including a Caribbean cruise, Rio de Janeiro, and New York. "A top-producing real estate agent inspired me to get my license because of my success in retail," she explained.

Marie began her real estate career in Toronto in 1995, where obtaining a license required rigorous training. "I completed three levels of 40-hour coursework and passed three examinations," she recalled.

"That strong educational foundation shaped the way I continue to serve my clients today." Marie later completed additional courses in mortgage financing, real estate law, and property appraisal after spending two years gaining hands-on field experience.

In 2018, Marie relocated from Ontario, Canada, to Michigan and

earned her U.S. real estate license in 2019. "I had to rebuild my business like a brand-new agent. If I wanted life's comforts, I had to earn them myself," she said. "Those early experiences taught me the satisfaction of building success through dedication and effort."

Marie's dedication has fueled impressive career growth. Her accomplishments include the Real Estate One Gold Award, recognition as a Real Producers Top 500, and the Military Relocation Professional (MRP) designation from the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR). "Relocating high-ranking officers — including a general, colonel and several majors — has been one of the most meaningful parts of my work," she said.

For Marie, one of her most treasured moments came when a retiring general presented her with a custom coin of honor. "He told me the coin is only given to individuals of exceptional integrity," Marie said. "Receiving it was a humbling reminder that real estate is about trust and making a meaningful impact."

Although Marie works independently, she is a mentor in her office, training and coaching new agents. "I love helping newer agents grow and succeed," she said. Besides supporting her colleagues, Marie also feels



“

Stay determined,
act with integrity,
and never stop
learning.”

honored to guide clients through life-changing moves. “Real estate is about building trust and creating lasting relationships,” she added.

Outside of work, Marie is often with her family. She and her husband have been married since 2012, and they share a blended family of eight adult children and 13 grandchildren. “We love spending family time together — swimming, hiking, celebrating special occasions, or simply enjoying everyday moments,” Marie said.

For up-and-coming agents, Marie reminds them to stay true to their values. “Stay determined, act with integrity, and never stop learning,” she said.

At the core of Marie’s work is a career shaped by care, consistency, and trust. “Real estate is about making a meaningful impact — on clients, on colleagues, and on the community,” she said. Marie carries this philosophy into every interaction, ensuring that each connection is worthwhile. ▀



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AT PRESTON
CORNERS VILLAS
IN SHELBY
TOWNSHIP

Years before Shannon Savona entered the real estate industry, she was the unofficial go-to person in her social circle for home advice. “People would ask me to help with paint selections or contractor referrals, and they often told me I’d be a great agent,” she explained. “After enough nudges, I went and got licensed.”

Shannon’s business has grown consistently each year since entering the industry in 2021, fueled by referrals, client trust, and a passion for helping people make confident real estate decisions. Even in a market challenged by low inventory and economic uncertainty, 2025 became her strongest year on record, reflecting her resilience, expertise, and results-driven approach.

Shannon’s path to real estate began with a strong foundation in marketing and business, which she studied at Eastern Michigan University. Outside the classroom, she grew up figure skating, a discipline that required hours of training and careful time management. “It was a foundation for my success,” she said.

Shannon later transitioned into education, where she implemented robotics and automation programs within schools across Michigan. “I was very passionate about my work to provide industrial technologies to education programs,” she shared. The experience prepared

her to communicate clearly, solve problems creatively, and advocate for others — skills her clients now depend on during real estate transactions.

A lifelong Clinton Township resident, Shannon is now raising her family in the same





“
WHEN YOUR FOCUS IS ON BEST SERVING
YOUR CLIENTS, SUCCESS WILL COME.”

For Shannon, forming connections with others is her favorite part of being an agent. “I truly enjoy building relationships with people and helping them with their goals,” she said. “I love working with my clients and getting to know them.”

When asked about her definition of success, Shannon mentioned that it’s “being able to provide for my family and also be present for them.” She and her husband, AJ, have been married since 2007 and have three children — Mya, 15, Leah, 13, and Dominic, 9. Mya is a competitive figure skater, while Leah and Dominic both play hockey. “We enjoy all the time we spend with the kids and their love for the ice,” Shannon said.

As for Shannon, when she has free time, she enjoys golfing, bowling, boating, and visiting the family cottage. She also gravitates toward self-help books — her favorite is “The Energy Bus” by Jon Gordon.

For new agents in the industry, Shannon believes that they should learn consistency. “Build your CRM, time block your week, and focus on your sphere,” she shared. “You can build a referral-based business earlier than you think if you focus in the right areas. When your focus is on best serving your clients, success will come.”

Whether she’s guiding first-time buyers or seasoned homeowners, Shannon approaches every transaction with care. “Treat every client like family, and do the right thing,” she said. It’s a philosophy that reflects her commitment to both her clients and the community she proudly calls home. ▀

community where she grew up. “I come from a family of hard workers, and that provided a great example of ‘work hard, play hard,’” she explained. Those values are especially helpful as the market transitions from a long-running seller’s market into a more balanced environment. “This is very exciting for my buyer clients,” Shannon added.

At Realty Professionals, Shannon works with a small team that

consists of herself and one additional team member. “Lauren McDowell and I work together to better serve each client,” she said. Their teamwork is reflected in Shannon’s hands-on method, especially when inventory is tight. “I am creative with looking outside of the MLS for homes,” she added. To find the right fit for her clients, Shannon regularly calls on FSBOs and taps into her agent network for off-market opportunities.

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PHOTOS TAKEN AT LOMBARDO HOMES MODEL AT STILLWATER CROSSING IN MACOMB TOWNSHIP

From Family Roots to a Thriving Business

Benny and Alkida Offer have spent more than a decade building a business rooted in faith, family, and the kind of relationships that outlast any single transaction. The husband-and-wife duo operate The Leone Team out of the Keller Williams Lakeside office, and with a surname like Offer, they seemed destined to be involved in making offers to buy and sell homes, but the meaning behind their team name stretches back long before their real estate career.

Benny grew up with deep ties to his Italian heritage and had a particularly close bond with his grandfather, Benedetto “Ben” Leone. When his grandfather passed away in 1993, Benny — whose middle name is actually Benjamin, which was given to him in honor of his grandfather — made a quiet promise to carry the name forward, and he has kept that promise ever since. Benny’s entrepreneurial spirit led him to drop out of college and start his own businesses, and every business he has created has carried the Leone name: a lawn maintenance company, a cleaning company, and a property management firm. In Italian, “Leone” means “lion,” and they

have kept the same lion logo since 1996. When he and Alkida came to Keller Williams Lakeside, the lion logo and the Leone name came with them. Their second son, Benedetto, carries the name as well, representing a second generation of the tribute.

For Benny, his early interest in real estate began when he was

young, first through playing Monopoly and later, in his 20s, by reading “Rich Dad Poor Dad” by Robert Kiyosaki and other real estate books. He then began playing Monopoly in real life with his rental portfolio, purchasing his first investment property in 2006 and eventually building up to approximately 17 rentals — more than 30 units in total, many of them duplexes. He was so

immersed in the investment world that he found himself constantly pestering his real estate agent to get in to see houses, so eventually it made sense for Alkida to get her license in 2013 to support the family’s growing investment activity. Benny followed in 2014. “I was giving people so much advice about rental properties. I said, ‘Why don’t I just get my real estate license too



and make this a full-time thing?” Benny shared.

Benny and Alkida have built both their lives and their business around their faith in Jesus Christ. That foundation aligned naturally with Keller Williams’ values of “God, family, then business,” which resonated with them from the very beginning. Benny has often led prayers at awards and banquets, and he and Alkida launched a Bible study and prayer group at the office this past February. “We wouldn’t have the business we’ve had without the Lord’s blessings,” Benny said.

The Leone Team has grown, contracted, and grown again over the years. At its peak, Benny ran a team of six or seven agents with a transaction coordinator, surpassing \$20 million in volume. Today it’s just the two of them, husband and wife, working together like

they did in the beginning. Benny describes himself as an introverted extrovert — he loves to read and think quietly, but is also the main negotiator, always ready to attend training sessions. He figures he has logged over 1,000 hours of real estate, personal growth, and negotiation training. He also loves teaching others about real estate and business, and leads much of the marketing and social media efforts. As for Alkida, she handles the backend operations, the paperwork, the filing, and a robust client base of her own, particularly within the Albanian community, where she is well known and deeply trusted. She grew up in communist Albania, immigrated to the United States in 1996, worked several restaurant jobs to pay her way through college, earned a business degree, became an American citizen, and speaks three languages. According

“GOD,
FAMILY, *then*
BUSINESS.
We wouldn’t
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Lord’s blessings.”

to Benny, “She is the hardest working person I have ever known.”

Last year, The Leone Team’s numbers reflected how strong the partnership and relationships with their clients have become. The two of them closed with more than \$13 million in volume and landed in the Real Producers Top 100 in Macomb County, coming in at #35 out of over 6,000 agents! It also marked their first time in the top 100. “By God’s grace, some timely help from family, and amazing loyalty from long-standing clients, it ended up being the best quarter of sales in real estate since I’ve been in business,” Benny said.

The couple attributes their work ethic, positive attitudes, and faith to the unconditional love, support, and old-fashioned values modeled by both of their parents. As for their career success, Benny and Alkida attribute it to their real estate training and, even more importantly, their ability to truly understand their clients’ situations. They put themselves in their clients’ shoes, seek to understand their needs, and lend an empathetic ear — often by listening more and talking less. “We want our clients — who often become like family after closing — to feel important, like they are our only client at that time,” Benny said.

Another way Benny and Alkida value their clients is by showing appreciation. Years ago, the couple started gifting

pies to all of their past clients during the week of Thanksgiving. They both agree that “preparing the week before is the busiest week of the year, but the two days we hand out our pies are definitely the most rewarding days of the year for us. Getting a chance to see all those wonderful people we’ve had the chance to work with after all these years is what we love about being agents. It’s so great to reconnect with them and catch up on their lives. We get to see our clients in all seasons of life, not just when they are moving. It’s very rewarding.”

The transactions that stand out most in the couple’s memories are the ones that required them to be not only agents, but also counselors and problem solvers, and go the extra mile. During the pandemic, they helped a young man whose Canadian fiancée was suddenly unable to cross the border due to the ever-changing COVID-19 travel laws while they were already looking at houses. Benny and Alkida kept the group text going for months, praying for them and lifting their spirits. He eventually had to buy a home while they were still waiting for the border to reopen, and when it did, she could finally walk through the front door of their own house, a house that she had never seen in person and was finally hers too. Another COVID-era deal involved a seller living in Italy, a prospective buyer from France living in Michigan, and a closing

that ultimately had to take place at the U.S. Embassy in Sweden — the only one open at the time. Benny and Alkida set alarms for the middle of the night to accommodate the six-hour time difference so they could be available if their client had any issues signing the closing documents at an Embassy from another continent. “You can’t make this stuff up,” he said.

For Benny and Alkida, another blessing of being real estate agents is getting their children involved in the business. Over the years, the kids have helped check on rental properties, stuff envelopes, take part in videos, and hand out pies at their Thanksgiving client appreciation event. One year, the whole family even participated in the Romeo Peach Festival parade, walking down Main Street wearing their red KW polos shirts and handing out candy and real estate brochures.

In Benny and Alkida’s lives, family and faith fills every corner of it. As a family of five, they attend St. Lawrence Church in Utica, where all three children attended grade school. Benny and his oldest son are lectors during Mass, and all three children have been altar servers. Sports play a big part of their lives as well. Their older son Tomassino is a senior and will be heading to college in Illinois this fall to play college baseball and study business. Their younger son Benedetto plays high school soccer, basketball and baseball, and their daughter in middle school, Luciana, plays volleyball, basketball and



softball. “At any given time, you can find us involved in church, real estate or sports — or driving to one of those places,” Alkida joked.

In the years ahead, Benny and Alkida plan to keep the business focused and deliberate. While real estate remains the priority, Benny is also exploring opportunities to pursue his passion for leadership

and personal development speaking, along with potential writing projects. Alkida — a leader in her own right — is developing an online bookstore for the Albanian community, where books in that language are notoriously difficult to find. She also founded a nonprofit organization for women entrepreneurs that helps them learn about marketing and business

practices. The organization hosts several events each year where women business owners gather as vendors to sell their products and services and support one another. As for real estate, a transaction coordinator may join the team eventually, but for now, the priority is growing what they’ve built and pouring into their children and their clients.



For anyone thinking about entering the real estate industry, the couple reminds them that they must be prepared to be an entrepreneur — which means treating it like a business, investing in education, and building relationships. “Dive into the books and videos, attend the classes — everything that has to do with entrepreneurship — and look at it as a career,” Benny said. Alkida added, “You have to really put in the work when it all relies on you. Being a real estate agent means you have to be self motivated and ready to work when your clients

are available. You have to put yourself second and your client needs first.”

For Benny and Alkida, real estate has always been a vehicle for honoring their faith and family, for serving clients through the hardest and happiest moments of their lives, and for building something that lasts. In every family they serve, that purpose continues to guide the work they do.

As Benny likes to say, “For us, when it comes to our clients, it’s not a one-time thing ... It’s a lifetime thing.”

“We want our clients — who often become like family after closing — to feel important, like they are our only client at that time.”



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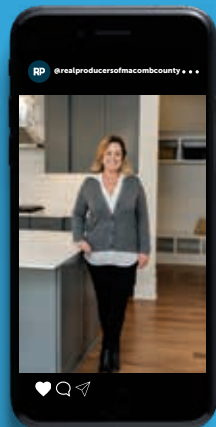


26
AVERAGE TRANSACTIONS PER AGENT



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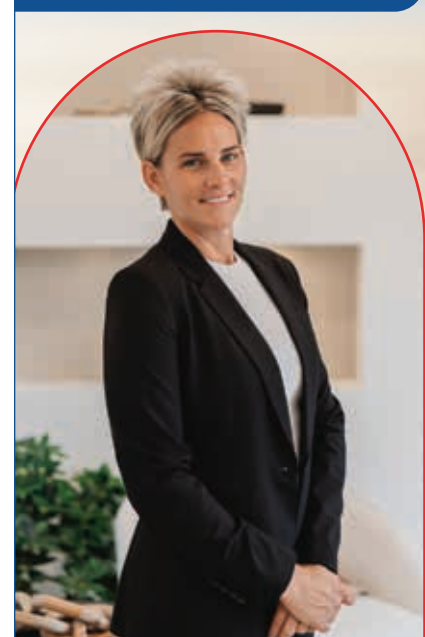
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