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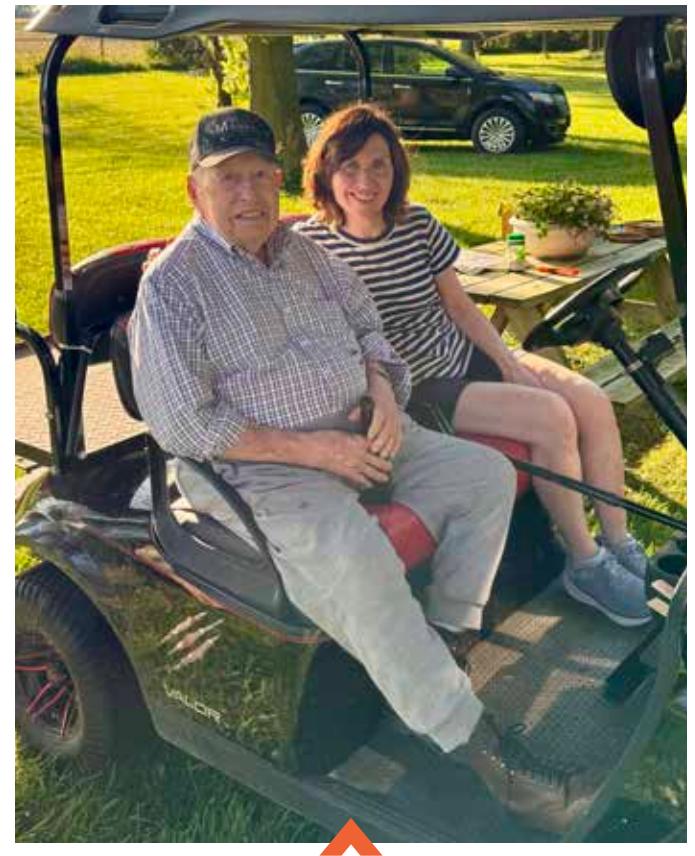
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BEST OF THE SPRINGS
2023
The Gazette



Eugene Twenhafel (Brian Gowdy's grandpa). Photo taken summer 2025

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Publisher's Note

At the time of writing this, it's mid-December, and I'm preparing to travel to attend my grandpa's funeral. He was just a month away from turning 101 years old. Despite his age and limited mobility, his mind remained sharp, and he lived on his own in his longtime farmhouse until the end.

One of my grandpa's core values—the one he passed down to me most clearly—was simple: the more you give, the more you receive. He learned it from his mother (my great-grandmother), and he lived it daily. He loved giving, especially around Christmas. Several of my favorite childhood memories are of my sister, my cousins, and me going to Grandma's house on Christmas Eve and exchanging gifts after church. My grandpa would always buy toys for us from the Dollar Store, usually supplemented by cash or a check. And while the money was more significant, he was always more excited to give us the simple Dollar Store gifts.

This year, our family will be gathering for his funeral instead of for Christmas Eve. It will be different—but still meaningful.

My grandpa lived in Posey, Illinois, a town of about 65 people. It's the sort of place where everyone knows everyone. There were over 100 people at his 100th birthday celebration. I imagine his funeral will be just as full, if not more so—not because of obligation, but because of the life he built.

If I were to connect this to real estate, I'd say a lasting business isn't built only on transactions—it's built on trust, service, and long-term relationships. The agents and partners who make the deepest impact aren't always the loudest or flashiest. They're the ones who show up, who give generously of their time and energy, and who invest in people without keeping score.

My grandpa didn't measure success by speed or scale. He measured it by stewardship—of land, of relationships, of family. That's a perspective worth holding onto in a fast-moving industry like real estate.

Thank you for being part of this community, and for continuing to show up for one another. Those small, consistent acts of giving matter more than we often realize.



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◀ Brian Gowdy and his grandpa (2018)

Reflections from the Editor

This month's stories illustrate that success is rarely born from a straight line; it's often a non-linear path shaped by movement, disruption, and/or adaptation. Whether through frequent relocations, market crashes, career pivots, or life-altering personal challenges, these professionals faced uncertainty and grew in resilience.

They each value relationship, too. Their impact comes not from chasing status or volume, but from showing up for others with presence, integrity, and care. These individuals lead collaboratively, prioritizing trust, education, and service. Their influence expands because people feel seen and supported.

Instead of collecting accolades, their successes are measured in rooted families, restored confidence, progress, and lives made steadier through guidance. Together, these stories reflect

a values-led approach to real estate, grounded in humanity, purpose, and the enduring power of helping people find their footing and their place.

I hope you enjoy reading this month's feature stories!!



Tabby Halsrud
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Rachel MORRIS



FINDING HOME IN EVERY CHAPTER

CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY

For Rachel Morris, real estate isn't just a career — it's the culmination of every step she's taken to find her own sense of home. Her journey, spanning from Georgia and Florida to Texas, Chicago, Denver, and finally Colorado Springs, has been anything but linear. But at every stop, she discovered lessons about people, perseverance, and the meaning of belonging — lessons that now define her work as a REALTOR®.

"I never imagined I'd be in real estate," Rachel admits with a laugh. "It wasn't even on my radar."

Born in Georgia and raised between there and Florida, Rachel grew up traveling back and forth between her parents' homes after they separated when she was two. The constant moving taught her adaptability early on — a skill that would one day become one of her greatest strengths.

"I didn't really have one place that felt like home growing up," she says. "That's probably why helping people find their home means so much to me now."

After earning her degree in Criminal Justice and Psychology, Rachel thought her path might lead to law school. But once in graduate

school, she realized the field wasn't the right fit. So, she did what she's always done best — she adapted.

Rachel returned to bartending, a role that turned out to be unexpectedly pivotal. "I worked in an upscale Italian restaurant in Dallas, and I had a group of regulars who became like family," she says. "One of them owned a staffing firm and had been trying to hire me for months." When she finally made the leap, Rachel found herself thriving in business development — traveling, meeting clients, and building relationships. "I worked in healthcare staffing at first," she says. "Then I moved into administrative staffing, and eventually IT staffing

into a management position — and a spark. "My boss at the time was a REALTOR® and convinced me to get my license so we could work together," Rachel says. "So, I worked full-time and went to real estate school at night for six weeks."

She passed the exam on the first try in 2018, but she wasn't quite ready to take the leap. "Real estate is terrifying at first," she admits. "You can't really do it part-time, so I put my license on ice for a bit."

That changed when she was offered a position in Colorado Springs. "I decided to go all in," she says. "That was 2020 — during one of the wildest markets we've ever seen. I was showing 20 homes a day sometimes.





It was exhausting, but I absolutely loved it."

For Rachel, the thrill of the chase — helping clients find the perfect home and celebrating their wins — came naturally. "It's an adrenaline rush," she says. "But it's also so meaningful. You're making a difference in someone's life. You're helping them build stability, especially for families."

That purpose is personal. "I moved around so much as a kid," she says. "Now, helping families find that one place they can call home — where their kids will grow up and make memories — that hits home for me."

In 2022, Rachel joined The Summit Group, where she found the mentorship, balance, and camaraderie she had been looking for. "When I met Jed and Natalie, I just knew," she says. "They're amazing people, and the team culture they've built is unmatched. It really does feel like family."

Three years later, that "family" has grown in more ways than one. Rachel's partner, Ryan Deese, eventually joined the Summit Group as well, forming a team within the team. The couple now works side by side while raising their young daughter — and they recently shared the exciting news that baby number two is on the way!

"Working with Ryan has been a growth experience," she says. "In the beginning, we each had our own approach, which made

things a bit challenging. Over time, we've learned how to lean into our strengths. He brings the business focus and strategy, while I bring the relational side. Together, we give clients both sides — the structure and the heart."

That heart shows in every interaction. Rachel lights up when she talks about her clients, especially first-time homebuyers. "They're so fun to work with," she says. "They're nervous and excited, and I love guiding them through the process — teaching them, celebrating with them, helping them see that they really can do this."

Outside of real estate, Rachel's world revolves around family and the outdoors. "I love hiking — I've done ten fourteeners so far," she says. "I used to do the Incline all the time, though I'm not quite back to that yet since having my daughter," she laughs. "We love going to the zoo, taking walks, just being outside."

She also loves to read when she can steal a quiet moment — a rarity with a one-year-old at home. "Most of my free time is mom time, and I wouldn't have it any other way," she says. Through every twist in her journey, one thing has stayed constant: Rachel's belief in finding purpose through perseverance. "I've had so many moments where I didn't know what was next," she reflects. "But every step brought me here — to a career I love, a family I adore, and a life that finally feels like home."

Q&A

WITH INSPECTOR CLARK HEMKER →



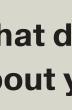
What brought you to this field?

I served in the Army for over 12 years. After my service, I spent several years searching for a career that I truly loved and felt excited about. After trying a few office jobs, I realized I needed something different. Being a home inspector had been on my mind for several years, so I finally decided to jump in and make it a reality.

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What do you love about your work?

What I enjoy most about being a home inspector is the opportunity to help people. I've always loved serving and assisting others. I also enjoy being out in the field, exploring both new and old homes, and interacting with clients.



What do you like to do outside work?

Outside of work, I love spending time with my wife of 17 years and our 10-year-old twin girls. We have two cats — Millie and Murphy — and a goldendoodle named Ruby. I coach my girls' volleyball team and am usually busy with endless DIY projects around the house. I also enjoy woodworking and have built many pieces of furniture. I grew up in Wisconsin and am a big Packers fan. I'm also into hockey — GO AVS GO!

Ryan Deese

CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY

FROM DEEP ROOTS TO NEW HEIGHTS

For Colorado Springs native Ryan Deese, life has always been about growth — from tending lawns as a kid to helping families plant roots of their own. His story is one of perseverance, cultural pride, and the drive to keep climbing — both figuratively and, in his case, literally.

Ryan's story begins right here in Colorado Springs, where both sides of his family were brought by military service. "My grandfathers were both in the military," Ryan explains. "One was stationed in Hawaii, the other in Arizona, and they, both ended up in Colorado. That's how my parents met."

That heritage — part Native American and part Asian — continues to shape Ryan's sense of identity. His mother's side of the family belongs to the Tohono O'odham Nation, a desert tribe in southern Arizona near the Mexican border. "We went back to visit the reservation once when I was younger," he says. "It was humbling — a reminder of what my family went through and how much resilience it takes to preserve your culture."

From an early age, Ryan learned the value of hard work. His first job was mowing lawns alongside his father, who



owned a small lawn care business. After graduating from Palmer High School — where he still holds the high jump record of 6 feet, 9 inches — Ryan attended college in Washington, earning a degree in Digital Technology and Culture.

When he returned home, the job market was tight. "I worked at Hollister as a manager for a while," he says. "I even considered getting an MBA before deciding to start my own business instead."

Drawing from what he knew best, Ryan launched Legacy Lawn Care, a company he built from the ground up. "We grew it to over 100 residential and commercial clients, plus a snow removal division," he says. "Eventually, I handed it over to my brother. It felt right — Legacy was meant to live on."

Through that business, Ryan met several local real estate agents, including Greg Luczak, who became a pivotal mentor. "I was doing yard cleanups for Greg one day, and I asked how much he



made doing real estate," Ryan laughs. "When he told me, I thought, 'Okay, that's it — I'm getting my license.'"

Ryan started studying right away, but the timing was tough. He failed the exam by a single point, then COVID-19 shut down all testing centers. "I would've had my license in 2020, but everything froze," he says. "I'd already sold my lawn business, so I picked up construction work until the world opened back up."

In 2021, he officially earned his license and joined The Luczak Group, diving into real estate full time. "I'd already been making cold calls with Greg for months," he says. "By the time I got my license, I hit the ground running."

Ryan's early success was fueled by his network — clients from lawn care, sports, and the military community — but it didn't come easy. "The past few years have been a wild ride," he admits. "Switching brokerages, finding my place, staying consistent through market changes — it's been survival mode at times. But I've learned so much along the way."

Now with The Summit Group, Ryan has found a team that feels like home — and one that includes his partner

in both life and business, Rachel Morris. Together, they've built a rhythm that works. "We're a team within a team," he says. "She brings warmth and empathy, and I bring structure and strategy. It just clicks."

Among his favorite career moments was helping a single father buy his first home after more than a year of searching. "He didn't have much, but we found him a house he could afford and love," Ryan says. "That's when it really hit me — this job isn't about the paycheck. It's about helping people who just need someone to believe in them."

When he's not working, Ryan's a full-time athlete, family man, and girl dad. He and Rachel have a

young daughter — and another child on the way — and they spend most of their free time outdoors or on the go. "I still play in three basketball leagues," he says with a laugh. "I golf, I hike, I do whatever keeps me moving."

At his core, Ryan's guiding principle is simple: integrity. "I just want people to walk away from meeting me and think, 'That guy's genuine,'" he says. "I value honesty, humility, and being true to yourself. I've met a lot of people in life who are unapologetically themselves — and that's who I strive to be too."

From his roots in Colorado Springs to his growing family and career, Ryan's journey reflects exactly that — a man true to himself, committed to his craft, and always ready for the next leap.



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Dakota and Jenny Shafer, owners of Structure Custom Builds, have carved out a reputation as trusted builders who put people first—through every sketch, slab, and signature. With deep roots in Nebraska, the Shafers' journey began at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where they met and later launched a life together grounded in shared values and complementary strengths.

Dakota was recruited directly out of college by a national homebuilder and found himself quickly immersed in large-scale production in Colorado Springs, managing projects in Stetson Hills during the early 2000s. Although he started as a construction superintendent, his knack for client interaction and attention to detail soon led him into sales, where he thrived. When the market shifted in 2008, Dakota pivoted into custom homebuilding, ultimately partnering with G.J. Gardner Homes for 15 years before transitioning fully to the Structure Custom Builds brand in 2020.

Jenny's background began in education, where she taught high school theater for a decade.



As their family grew, so did the desire for a more balanced life. Jenny brought her tech-savvy skill set and creative energy to the business full-time—managing marketing, operations, and bringing fresh perspective to the client experience. Together, they've proven that working as a married team is more than feasible—it's a formula that works.

While Structure Custom Builds may be a new name to some,

it's far from a new venture. The Shafers had been operating under that name throughout their time with G.J. Gardner. The only change is that they're now fully independent. The process, the people, and the commitment to excellence remain the same. This rebrand allows them to better reflect their vision: luxury custom homes designed with integrity and delivered with care.

Structure Custom Builds stands out not only for the quality of

their work, but for how they work. Their pre-construction process includes a fixed-price model and full design selections before contract—offering stability and clarity to clients from the start. Their site even includes an interactive tool for landowners and real estate agents: enter any Colorado land address, and you can explore floorplans, topography, and utility data—a resource designed to streamline land transactions and support thoughtful planning.

Dakota and Jenny are also passionate about empowering real estate agents. They offer CE-certified “Custom Building 101” and “201” courses, partnering with brokerages and title companies to educate agents on everything from soils testing to HOAs—ensuring that buyers and agents alike feel confident navigating the custom-build process.

At the core of their business is a commitment to transparency, communication, and relationships. “No one builds a perfect home,” Dakota says, “but we do everything we can to communicate clearly and deliver with honesty. We treat our clients like family.” Jenny adds, “We don’t disappear after the handover—we stay connected.”

That heart for people extends well beyond the business. The Shafers are active in their church, sponsor local schools, and are deeply involved in supporting foster families through organizations like Fostering Hope and Fostering Futures. Whether they’re delivering meals, organizing events, or repairing bicycles for the unhoused through the “More Than a Meal” outreach, the Shafers live their values daily.

At home, Dakota and Jenny are proud parents to Kaden and Claire, who are both active in the arts and their church praise band. The family enjoys traveling, reading, and staying connected through community service.

Structure Custom Builds isn’t just about beautiful homes—it’s about meaningful partnerships, intentional design, and creating spaces where life unfolds. For clients seeking a custom homebuilding experience rooted in integrity and guided by seasoned professionals, the Shafers offer not just a builder—but a trusted advocate for the journey.



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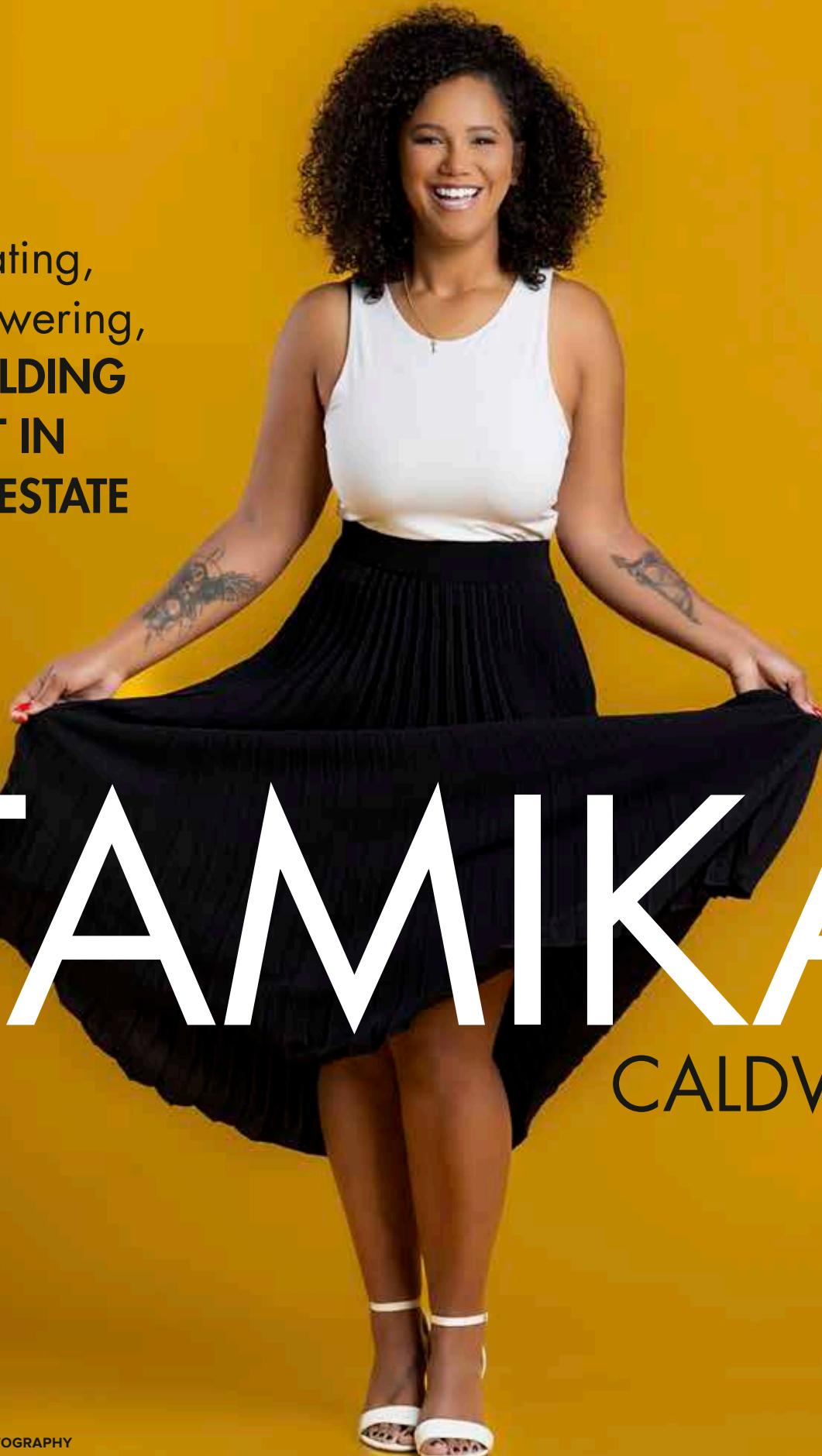
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TAMIKA CALDWELL



CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Tamika Caldwell's path to real estate didn't begin with open houses or contracts—it started with people. Born in Denver but raised all over the world due to her mother's military career, Tamika spent much of her childhood overseas before returning stateside, living in Virginia and Hawaii before eventually landing back in Colorado in 2014.

Her career journey has been just as dynamic. Before real estate, Tamika pursued acting and modeling, then built a thriving career as a personal trainer. It was during that time that one of her clients, REALTOR® Heather Burroughs, planted the seed: "You'd be great at real estate."

At first, Tamika set the idea aside. Life was full—divorce, raising two children, and managing her personal training business. But when COVID-19 shut everything down, she saw an opening. She used stimulus funds to put herself through real estate school, officially earning her license in June 2021.

Her first year in real estate was far from ordinary. Newly remarried and pregnant, Tamika leaned on the trust she had built with her personal training clients, many of whom became her first buyers and sellers. To sharpen her skills, she joined a team and quickly gained valuable experience, closing a dozen transactions in her first year. But after realizing most of her business came from her own sphere, she stepped out on her own.

Over the next two years—despite welcoming two



more children—Tamika built momentum, proving that she could balance motherhood and a growing career. By her third year, with her youngest children out of the infant stage, she

went all in, nearly hitting six figures in production.

For Tamika, real estate is about more than numbers. It's about restoring trust and confidence for buyers and

sellers who may have had negative past experiences. "I want my clients to feel educated and empowered throughout the process," she explained. "Especially first-time buyers—I'm a hand-

“I make sure they have all the information, so when they make a decision, it feels like their decision, not something they were pushed into.”



Looking ahead, Tamika is expanding her reach. Recently licensed in Hawaii, she hopes to eventually transition her business there, while building a small Colorado-based team to keep her roots strong.

Outside of real estate, life is full. Tamika and her husband—an MMA fighter—share four children, whom they homeschool with the support of her family. Boxing and fitness remain a big part of her life, as do hiking and traveling together as a family.

Through it all, her passion for real estate comes back to empowerment: giving clients clarity, confidence, and the assurance that they're making the right move for themselves and their families.

holder. I make sure they have all the information, so when they make a decision, it feels like their decision, not something they were pushed into.”

This commitment to client care has become her signature. She has never purchased leads, instead growing her business organically through

referrals, her sphere of influence, and her strong presence on TikTok, which has become a surprising but steady source of new clients.

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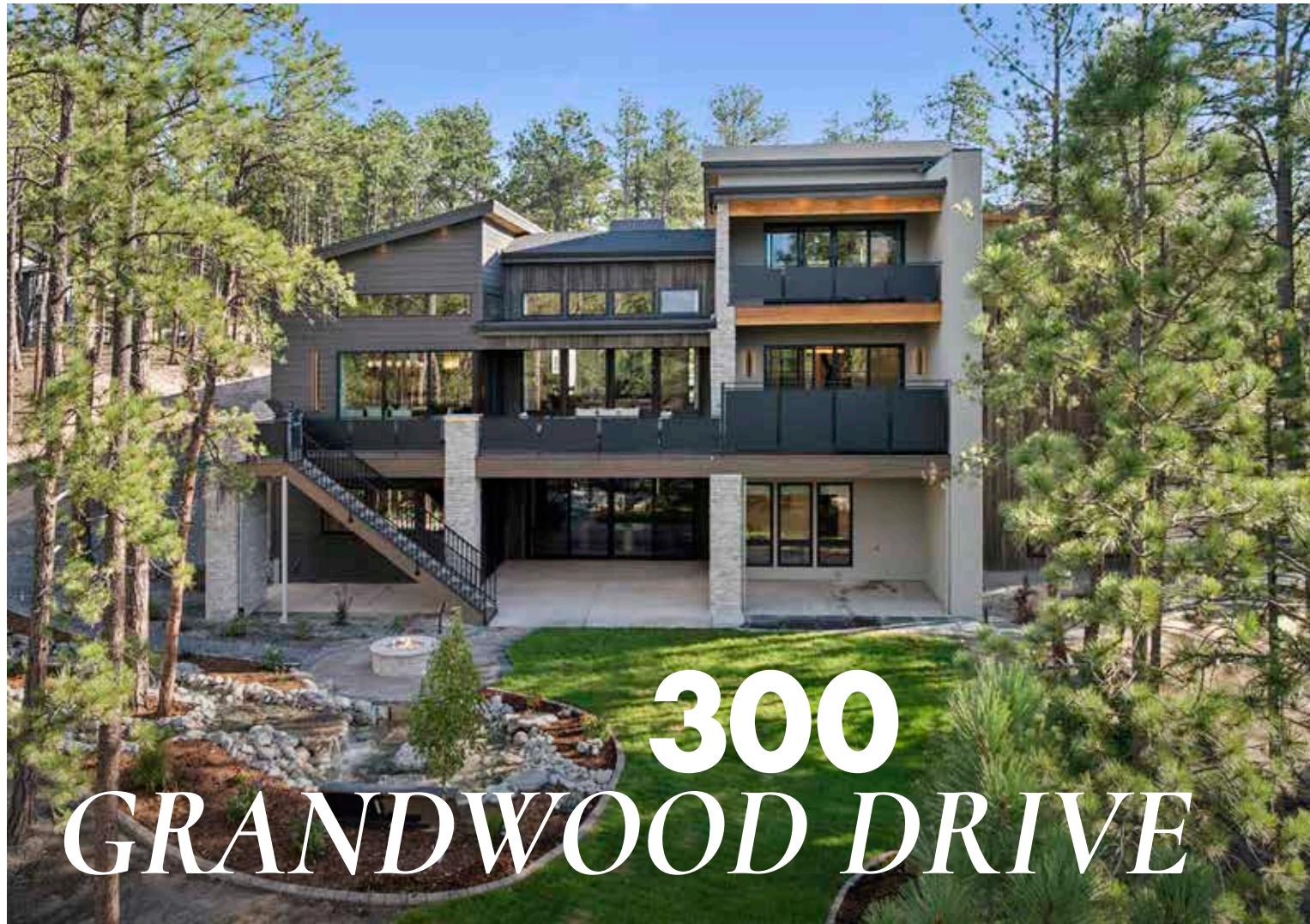
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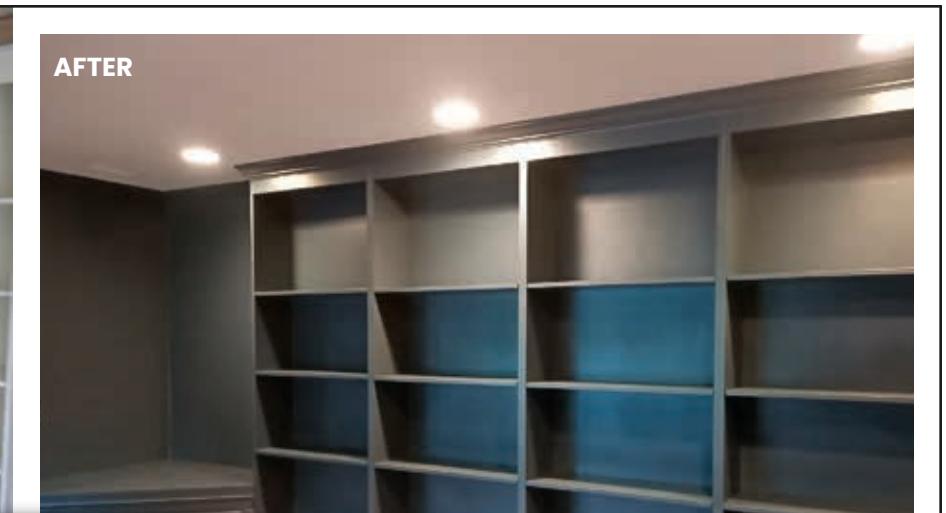
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Hector Alanis

CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Rooted in family, shaped by
struggle, and driven by purpose.



Hector Alanis is a rising force in Southern Colorado real estate — a relationship-driven professional known for his relentless work ethic, strategic negotiation skills, and deep commitment to elevating the industry. As a top-producing agent and respected leader, Hector has built a reputation for delivering results, earning trust, and representing his clients with unmatched dedication.

Hector's roots in Colorado Springs run deep. He moved to the city in 1995, when his step-father was stationed at Fort Carson, an experience that shaped his appreciation for the military community he now proudly serves. Growing up in the Pikes Peak region gave him firsthand insight into its neighborhoods, culture, and growth — knowledge he brings to every client he guides.

His ambition was shaped early. Coming from a humble, financially challenged upbringing, Hector watched his mother work tirelessly to give him and his siblings a better life. Her strength, dedication, and sacrifice inspired his determination to break generational barriers and pursue success from a young age.

That drive led him to take on heavy responsibility early in life. While still in high school, he worked full-time night shifts as a janitor at the Army hospital on Fort Carson, all while attending school during the day. The

demanding schedule built discipline, grit, and resilience — qualities that would later fuel his business journey.

But Hector's journey hasn't been easy. He has faced real hardship. One of the most difficult chapters of his life was the 2008 housing market crash, when he lost his home and was forced to live out of a hotel with his family for months. Eventually, he was able to rent a house and stabilize their situation, but the experience changed him forever.

Those hard times taught Hector to appreciate everything he has and to never take anything for granted. They also reminded him that material things mean nothing — what truly matters is family, health, and the strength to rebuild. This perspective grounds him today and drives how he serves others.

By his early 20s, Hector had launched several businesses, including a car detailing shop, a Sprint store, a Cricket Wireless store, and a tax preparation

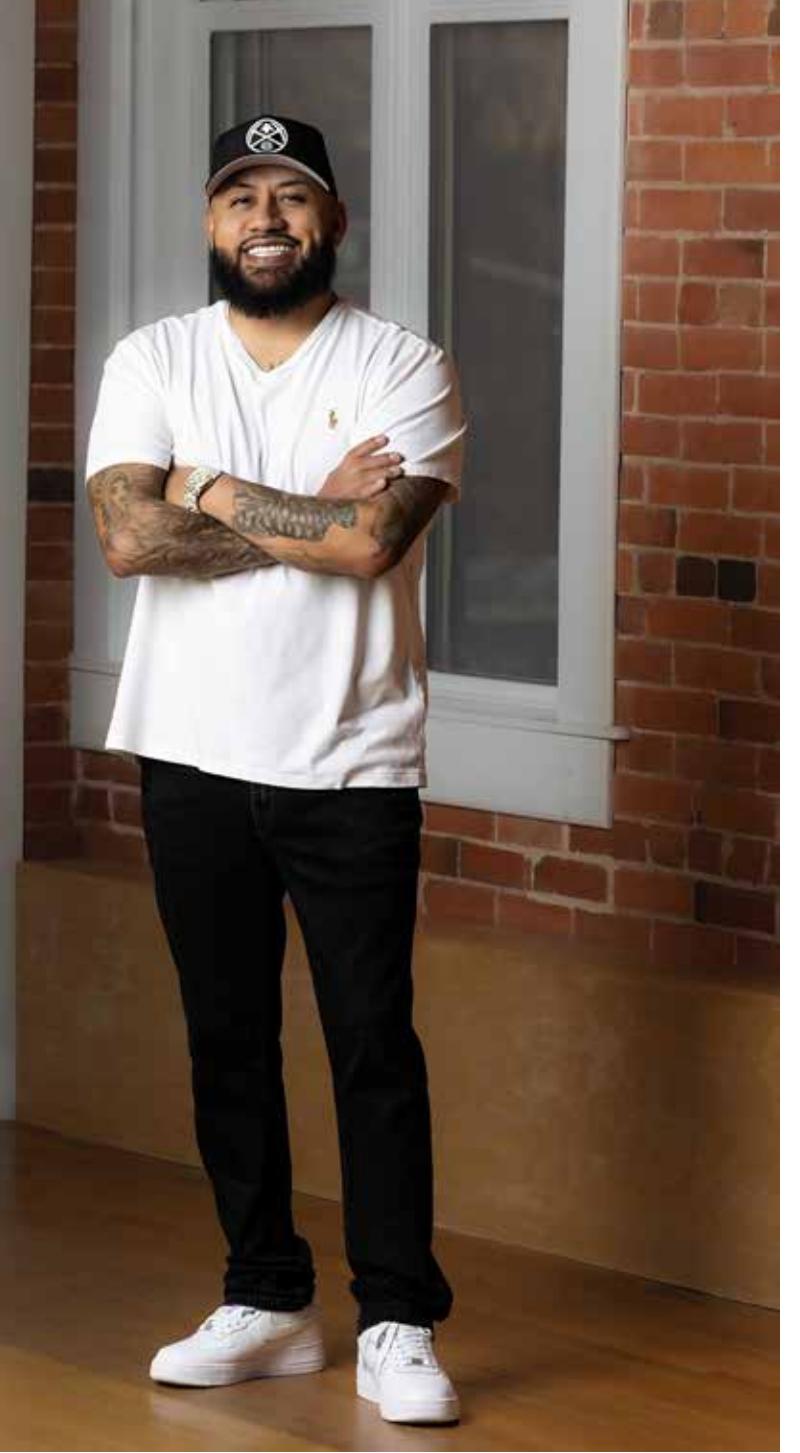
business. These ventures sharpened his entrepreneurial skills, but none matched the life-changing impact of his true calling: real estate.

In 2019, Hector earned his real estate license and proudly became a member of the National Association of REALTORS®. Entering real estate proved transformative. He openly shares that this industry changed his life in the most positive way, giving him and his family financial freedom and opportunities once only imagined.

Real estate also opened the door to investing and flipping homes. Inspired by watching HGTV's Flip or Flop, Hector had always dreamed of transforming distressed properties. He began flipping homes in Pueblo, and now does so locally in Colorado Springs, finding immense joy in turning rundown houses into beautiful homes for new families.

Beyond business, real estate gave Hector purpose. What he loves most is helping





He has always strived to be one of the best in the industry — not for titles, but to serve clients, colleagues, and his community with integrity.

Hector's career recognition includes the President's Circle Award from Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, placing him among the top 5% of agents nationwide. A Peak Producer in Colorado Springs top 10% of agents. Today, as a founding leader with PAK Home Realty's expansion into Colorado Springs, he is committed to developing high-performing agents through collaboration, mentorship, and elevated professionalism.

Outside of work, Hector finds his greatest joy in family. He and his wife, Juanita, met in 2000, and together they have built a beautiful blended family. Together for 25 years, they enjoy traveling — especially to beach destinations — and have visited Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas, with plans for more international trips soon. At home, Hector loves discovering new TV series and binge-watching them with his wife, and he's always excited to catch the latest movies in theaters.

Being featured in *Colorado Springs Real Producers Magazine* is a true honor for Hector. With so many exceptional realtors and leaders in this community, he is grateful to be recognized among them. He has always strived to be one of the best in the industry — not for titles, but to serve clients, colleagues, and his community with integrity.

Rooted in family, shaped by struggle, and driven by purpose, Hector continues to build a legacy defined by resilience, service, humility, and gratitude.

Whether negotiating an investment deal, guiding a first-time buyer, or helping a family relocate to the Springs, Hector's mission remains the same: serve with integrity, deliver excellence, and create lasting impact.

people achieve one of the biggest dreams of their lives: homeownership. Guiding families — especially those who once believed it wasn't possible — fuels his passion every day.

Driven by growth, Hector earned his Bachelor's Degree in Management from the University of Phoenix, strengthening his leadership and business acumen.

In 2024, he served as President of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP) Southern Colorado Chapter,

championing education, empowering Latino agents, and advocating for sustainable homeownership. Continuing his leadership journey, Hector graduated from the PPAR Leadership Academy in November 2025, further enhancing his influence within the industry.

If Hector could give his younger self advice, it would be this: don't be afraid to try new things, don't fear what might go wrong, and never give up on your dreams. These principles continue to guide him today.

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Amber COWLES

CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Amber Cowles doesn't chase the spotlight—but it often finds her anyway.

For those who know her best, Amber's impact on Colorado Springs real estate has never been about flashy sales stats or self-promotion. Her influence comes through something quieter and more enduring: her deep empathy, her ability to lead with calm clarity, and her steadfast commitment to helping others—whether they're clients, colleagues, or family.

"I've always been wired to help," she says. "I genuinely love supporting people, solving problems, and making things work better—whether that's in a household, a business, or a real estate transaction."

Amber's path to real estate wasn't direct—but in hindsight, it's easy to see how it all led here. She was born in Iowa and spent her high school years in Plano, Texas, where she had a front-row seat to a world of wealth and privilege that didn't quite match her values. "I moved from a small town in Iowa to a city where my classmates lived next to Deion Sanders and Jerry Jones," she says. "It was a culture shift, to say the least."

After high school, Amber found her way to Colorado—a move that felt like coming home. Her parents were building a house in Colorado Springs, and during a visit, she toured CSU in Fort Collins. The minute she stepped on campus, she knew it was the right fit. "It had everything I was looking for—beautiful seasons, a strong sense of community. I knew I wanted to stay in Colorado."

After playing collegiate softball at CSU and graduating, Amber returned to Dallas for a few years to work. But the job wasn't sustainable. When her

father—a longtime executive and entrepreneur—asked her to help launch a new company in Colorado Springs, she didn't hesitate. That decision brought her back home—and ultimately led her to the baseball field where she met her future husband, Chris.

"My little brother and Chris's cousin were on the same Little League team, and my dad was coaching," she says. "When I moved back, my dad said, 'You're helping me coach this team.' That's where Chris and I met—he was the pitcher, I was the catcher. He joked, 'Bet you can't catch my fastball.' I

just said, 'Let's go.'" It didn't take long for the fastballs to turn into a relationship!

Those early years weren't easy. Chris was grinding through the toughest years of his new real estate career. Amber was navigating a startup with her dad. Money was tight, and they did what they had to do—Amber even picked up side work cleaning houses and organizing homes. "We were broke as a joke," she laughs. "But we figured it out."

Eventually, Amber landed a corporate job with a former client, where she climbed the ladder to Chief





“

It was all about listening. What are our agents struggling with? How do we evolve? That's where I thrive—behind the scenes, making things better.”

Marketing Officer. But as the travel ramped up—often flying internationally every month—she began to feel the toll. “It just wasn’t healthy for me or our young family,” she says. “I was missing too much.”

That’s when the idea of real estate re-entered the picture—this time for Amber. Chris had just entertained partnering at a new independent brokerage, and Amber had just stepped away from her CMO role. “It was a massive risk for both of us,” she says. “But I stepped in to help with what I knew—management, systems, marketing. Eventually, I got licensed so I could help open doors and support him better.”

To her surprise, she didn’t just enjoy it—she excelled. Her natural communication skills, empathy, and problem-solving mindset made her a favorite among clients. She also took on a key leadership role at The Cutting Edge, REALTORS®, helping grow the company’s culture and systems through a two-year salaried position focused on agent success and relations. “It was all about listening,” Amber says. “What are our agents struggling with? How do we evolve? That’s where I thrive—behind the scenes, making things better.”

These days, Amber balances her personal real estate business with family life and continued involvement in the company. Her schedule

see people, hear people, and encourage growth in others.”

Amber brings that same emotional intelligence to every relationship—whether it’s a client navigating a stressful transaction or an agent seeking guidance. “I’ve taken a lot of hard experiences and turned them into empathy,” she says. “That’s my strength.”

When she’s not working, Amber jokes that she doesn’t have many hobbies of her own—“I’m a people-pleaser and caregiver by nature”—but she takes joy in supporting her family’s passions. “I prioritize Chris’s hobbies. Golf, skiing, pickleball—he needs that outlet. I just need a little quiet time.”

That said, she’s been instrumental in helping launch a company-wide pickleball league, which has become a hit among the agents and staff at TCR. “We started with a few teams last year. Now we have 50+ players across beginner, intermediate, and advanced divisions. We’ve created monsters,” she laughs.

Amber doesn’t call herself a top producer, a power agent, or a company executive—even though, in different seasons, she’s been all three. What defines her instead is presence: the way she shows up, supports others, and makes everyone around her better.

“I’m not in it for the spotlight,” she says. “I just want to be helpful. That’s what makes it all worth it.”

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Chris Cowles

CASA BAY PHOTOGRAPHY



When Chris Cowles entered real estate in 2005, he was young, ambitious, and determined to prove himself in a business that—at the time—was dominated by seasoned professionals twice his age. He was 24 years old, fresh off a college baseball career, and chasing a dream he'd been set on since the fifth grade.

"I did an essay in elementary school," Chris recalls. "It said I was either going to be a professional baseball player or a professional real estate agent. Baseball didn't work out—so here we are."

Born and raised in Littleton, Chris is a proud Colorado native with deep generational ties to the state. His grandfather served as

the foundation for what my moral compass would become in this business."

That foundation was tested right away. Chris entered the field at a time when the market was shifting—just before the crash of 2007. He remembers long days, open houses, and floor calls, scraping together momentum in a rapidly cooling market. "I did whatever I could to survive," he says. "It was hard for the first three years. But those early struggles gave me a work ethic and a sense of grit that still drives me today."

Chris also found himself at the forefront of early real estate tech. He helped launch one of the area's first real estate websites and adopted mobile tools years before they were the norm. But behind the innovation and hustle was something deeper—an inner drive that Chris calls "the tick."

"I've always had this internal nudge to grow, to improve, to take things to the next level," he says. "It wasn't about leaving a brokerage—it was about asking if I could build something of my own with the right partners."

That question became reality with the founding of The Cutting Edge, REALTORS®. What started in 2015 as a conversation over lunch with a few like-minded peers has grown into one of the most respected independent brokerages in the region. "We knew we needed different strengths at the table," Chris says. "When Gary introduced me to Rob, I wasn't sure at first. But he ended up filling a gap we needed. That's how the partnership clicked."

Now, nearly a decade later, Chris remains just as passionate about leadership and collaboration as he was on day one. "Our partner meetings on Wednesday mornings are a highlight for me—good or bad. We've built something special."

Underneath the leadership journey and business growth lies something even more central to Chris's story: faith. A graduate of Columbine High School, Chris was a senior when the tragic events of 1999 occurred. The aftermath became a turning point.

"That moment shaped me," he says. "It shook me up. I started going to church again. I began asking bigger questions about how I wanted to serve others. That year after Columbine changed my life."

That sense of service—rooted in faith—is still core to how Chris approaches real estate. "We're not just salespeople," he says. "We're advisors. Sometimes we're part counselor, part accountant, part negotiator."





People need guidance, not just transactions."

Chris is quick to deflect praise, especially when it comes to recognition. "I've never been an awards guy," he admits. "I'd rather see my agents or my wife get the spotlight. She deserves more than she gets."

Family remains the heartbeat of his life. Chris lights up when he talks

about his wife, Amber, their kids, and the extended family that continues to anchor him. "My grandpa used to say, 'You're nothing without your family.' And I've never forgotten that. Even in business, that's been my core."

Outside of work, Chris is an avid golfer, skier, and pickleball player—often on the course with friends or his teenage son. But no matter how busy life

gets, his priorities stay clear. "I couldn't do any of this without my wife and kids. I might survive on my own—but I'd be lonely and miserable," he says with a laugh. "They're my foundation."

As he looks ahead, Chris continues to invest in the long game—mentoring agents, building partnerships, and laying the groundwork for generational

wealth he hopes to pass down to his children. "Real estate has created a nest egg for my family," he says. "If my kids turn out to be good, contributing members of society, I'd love to pass that on."



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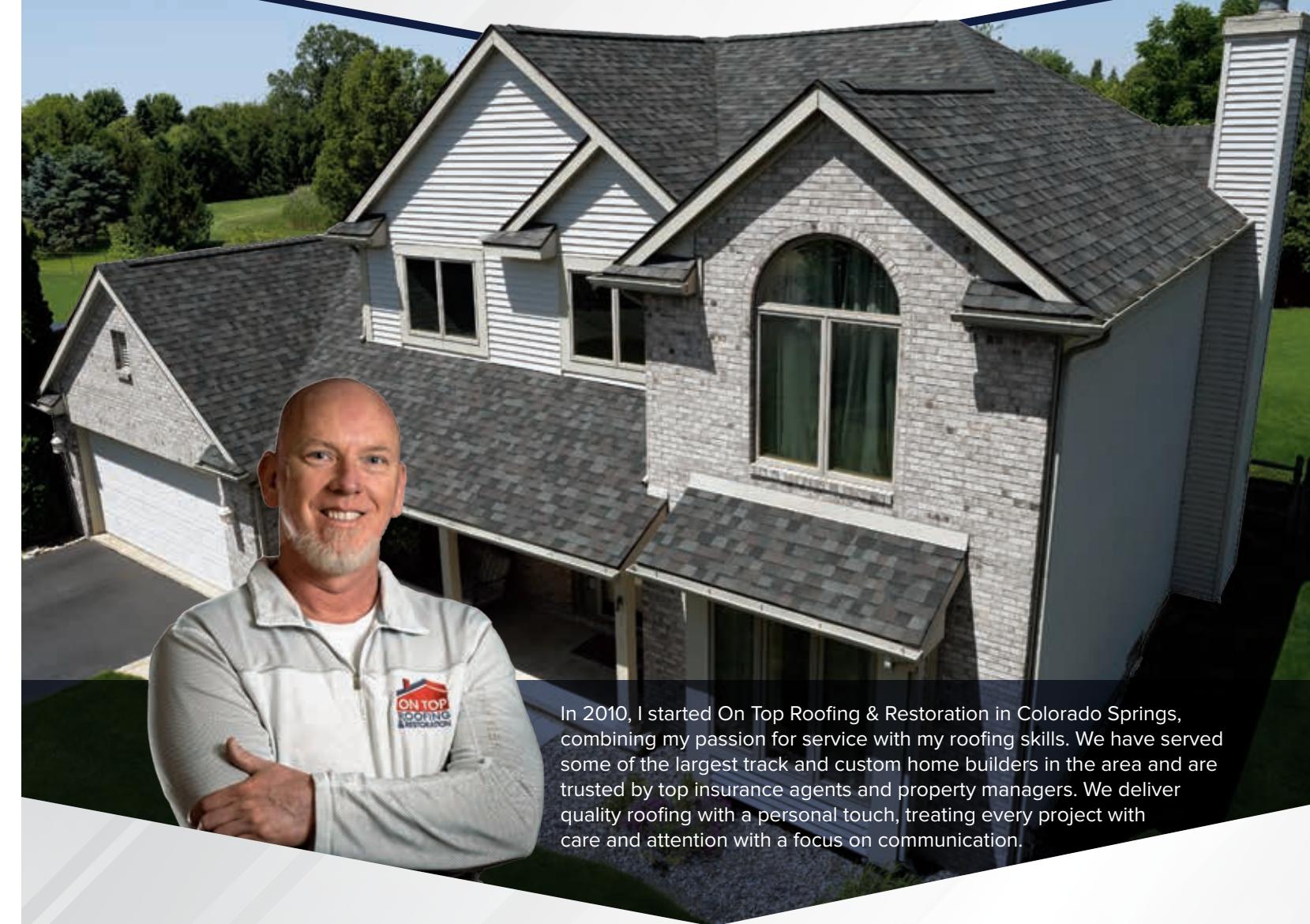
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3. Steve Herron's path to real estate is marked by reinvention. After nearly two decades in publishing and sales, including national roles with major distributors and publishers and a move to Colorado Springs in 2008, Steve made a decisive pivot in 2016. Drawing on a lifelong connection to real estate through family and his strengths as a teacher and guide, he earned his license and went full-time in 2017. Since then, his greatest highs have come from helping first-time buyers navigate homeownership with clarity and confidence, work that reflects both his integrity and his coaching mindset. Outside of real estate, Steve is a connector at heart. He loves walking his community, discovering local coffee shops and small businesses, gardening and xeriscaping his yard, hiking Colorado trails, traveling the state, and collecting Hot Wheels. Deeply rooted in family, faith, and community, he's known for elevating others and finding joy in bringing people together.

4. Welcome Olivia Roemer and Megan Walz, owners of Avenue Transactions aboard *Colorado Springs Real Producers*! Olivia and Megan have built their business around the client experience and bring high-performance transaction coordination services to agents anywhere in the country. If you're in the market for a TC, please consider Avenue Transactions!

5. Congratulations to Zack Star, owner of CO Roofing & Solar, for winning PPAR's 2025 Affiliate of the Year!

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