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For **Destiny McFarland**, escrow is more than a job—it's a *service-driven calling rooted in trust and problem-solving*. As an Escrow Officer at Truly Title's Tyler office, she brings four years of industry experience and a steady, confident approach to every transaction.

Originally from Athens, Texas, Destiny began her career as a receptionist and worked her way up, gaining a full understanding of the title process from start to finish. She primarily handles residential sales and refinances, with plans to expand into commercial transactions. Known for proactive communication, clear timelines, and anticipating issues before they arise, Destiny ensures every deal stays on track.

Her relationship-first mindset has earned the trust of Tyler's top real estate professionals, built on consistency and results. Outside of work, Destiny enjoys life with her husband, their two sons, while studying to become a CPA and preparing for a mission trip to the Amazon. She values **Truly Title's** energetic, supportive culture and believes the best advice for buyers and sellers is simple: *ask questions and never assume*.



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One Year In



From Vision to Impact

This issue marks a milestone I don't take lightly—one full year of publishing *East Texas Real Producers* under my leadership. When I reflect on the past twelve months, the word that comes to mind is gratitude. Gratitude for the agents, partners, and community members who believed in the vision, supported the mission, and trusted me with something deeply personal: their stories and their brands.

Stepping into the role of publisher was both exciting and humbling. With that role came the responsibility to not only maintain the standard of excellence this magazine represents, but to elevate it—issue by issue, story by story. Over the past year, I've learned, stretched, adjusted, and grown. My commitment moving forward is simple but powerful: to continue getting better. Better at telling meaningful stories. Better at creating value. Better at serving the agents and partners who make this publication what it is.

To our advertising partners—thank you. You saw the vision and chose to stand with this magazine, knowing that what you do behind the scenes plays a vital role in helping agents succeed. Your services, expertise, and support matter, and it is truly an honor to showcase businesses that help move transactions forward and strengthen the real estate community as a whole. This magazine would not exist without you, and I'm deeply thankful for your belief and your investment.

To our agents—especially those who have been here from the beginning—thank you for trusting me to tell your stories. Real Producers has always been about more than production numbers. It's about journeys, resilience, leadership, and the people behind the success. Being allowed into your world to

highlight your achievements is something I value more than words can express.

A special congratulations to the Top 300 Class of 2026. This recognition represents consistency, dedication, and excellence in a demanding industry. You've earned your place, and we are proud to celebrate you. I look forward to honoring this new class at our upcoming celebration later in February—an event designed not just to recognize success, but to bring together a community that continues to raise the bar.

As we move into this next year, I do so with hope, clarity, and renewed purpose. This magazine will continue to evolve, but its heart will remain the same—celebrating deserving agents, spotlighting impactful partners, and fostering meaningful connections. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your publisher and storyteller. I'm honored to walk into this next chapter with you, and I'm excited for all that's still to come.

Here's to another year of growth, collaboration, and elevated impact.

With gratitude,



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FAQs

ALL ABOUT EAST TEXAS REAL PRODUCERS



Q: Who Receives This Magazine?

A: The top 300 agents in East Texas based on volume for the previous year and our Preferred Partners. There are thousands of agents in the region and you, in this elite group, are the cream of the crop. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication, and proficiency.

Q: Do Real Estate Agents Have To Pay For Magazines Or Events?

A: NO! The magazine and events are FREE to agents and funded by the partners who advertise.

Q: What Kind Of Content Will Be Featured?

A: This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing for a REALTOR® to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about Real Producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention— we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

Q: Who Are Our Partners?

A: Anyone listed as a “Preferred Partner” in the front of the magazine is funding and fueling this community



and is an essential part of it. They are the top professionals in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine and attend our events. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area, but the best affiliates as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: Does Real Producers Have Events?

A: Yes! Along with the magazine, we will host quarterly events exclusive to this community, where you—the best of the best—get together at local venues

to socialize, mastermind, deepen our connections, and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine and on social media. Stay tuned for info on our launch party this Fall!

Q: How Can I Recommend A Business Or Feature Story?

A: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® to be featured, know of top-notch affiliate partners who you believe should be a part of our community, or would simply like to network; email or call us. I look forward to hearing from you!

Email: Cherika.Johnson@n2co.com

INSPECTION GATOR

WRITTEN BY
LANEY SCHROEDER
PHOTOS BY
INLINE IMAGES

In East Texas real estate, there isn't much room for uncertainty during the option period. You want people who show up, communicate clearly, and don't add stress to an already emotional process. For nearly two decades, that's exactly what the Ballards have built with Inspection Gator Home Inspection—and now, with the growing reach of theXTermiGator and the upcoming EnviroGator Environmental Services, their impact is only expanding.

After spending time learning Derek and Jessica's story, it's clear their success didn't come from chasing growth. It came from doing things the right way, consistently, for a very long time.

Derek Ballard's journey into home inspection didn't begin with a business plan. It began with experience. After more than 20 years in the fine paper industry—paired with hands-on construction work—he found himself ready for a change. Shift work had taken its toll, and he wanted a career where his skills could directly help people. Home inspection made sense. It was practical, people-focused, and rooted in problem-solving.

"I wanted to build something that reflected my work ethic and values," Derek stated. "Doing excellent work, treating people right, and showing up with integrity every single time, that's what keeps me passionate in this profession." In 2007, he launched Inspection Gator with a clear purpose: provide honest, thorough inspections without creating unnecessary fear. Educate clients. Support agents. And do excellent work.

Jessica Ballard stepped into the business naturally, bringing a background that balanced structure and heart. Her

experience spans accounting, education, and leadership roles, including serving as an After School Coordinator for Mount Pleasant ISD. Long before Inspection Gator, Jessica had already built and managed teams, thriving on systems, communication, and the customer experience.

"When Derek started the company, I believed in what he was building," she said. "As it grew, I stepped in where my strengths are. Growth was never the goal—it was simply the result of doing things well."

Together, they designed Inspection Gator to solve one of the biggest pain points in real estate transactions: time. With a large, well-trained team—known affectionately as the "Gators"—they offer 24/7 online scheduling, weekend availability, and typically book inspections within one to three days. Phones are answered by real people. Scheduling is handled start to finish. Agents aren't chasing details, and clients aren't left wondering what comes next.

But what truly sets them apart is how they communicate results. "We're always honest about what we find," Derek explained, "but we focus on being helpful, not alarming." Their reports emphasize clarity, education, and practical next steps—empowering buyers rather than overwhelming them.

That approach has earned trust across East Texas. Inspection Gator was named 2024 Affiliate of the Year by the Longview Area Association of Realtors and 2023 Affiliate of the Year by the Texarkana Board of Realtors. Nationally, they received the 2022 Better Your Best Year Award through InspectionGo, standing out among more than 200 inspection companies nationwide.



Yet when you ask Derek and Jessica what shaped them most, neither starts with awards or milestones. Derek credits his mother—a "4'8" powerhouse,"



"I truly believe God called Derek and me to be exactly where we are, and that He was preparing us long before we ever stepped into this industry."

as he calls her—who worked three jobs, lived her faith daily, and modeled unwavering ethics. Teachers, mentors, and friends reinforced lessons in calm leadership and excellence that still guide him today.

Jessica points to her parents' encouragement during difficult seasons, mentors who taught her to understand the numbers behind a business, and moments that required her to step into leadership early. Moving to East Texas after meeting Derek was one of those moments—an adjustment that became a gift. "I think I was always meant to be an East Texas girl," she said.

Family remains at the heart of everything Derek and Jessica do. Together, they have built a life rich in connection—raising six grown children, celebrating nine grandchildren with a tenth on the way, and cherishing time spent together whenever possible. Whether it's road trips close to home or flights across the ocean to Spain to visit family, their lives are shaped by togetherness and shared experiences.

When asked what he is most grateful for, Derek doesn't

hesitate. "Jessica is my steady anchor," he says. "She brings wisdom, clarity, and a calm leadership that makes everything better. I'm the big-picture guy—always moving forward—and she's the one who keeps us aligned and grounded. If I come home with ten ideas, she helps me figure out which two are actually good—and how to make them happen. We make a strong team, and I'm grateful for her every day."



Jessica's gratitude echoes that same sense of purpose and faith. Beyond being thankful for a healthy, loving family, she reflects, "I'm grateful for all the doors God has opened and the

people He has placed in our path who have helped shape our journey. I truly believe God called Derek and me to be exactly where we are, and that He was preparing us long before we ever stepped into this industry."

When asked how they define success, their answers were refreshingly grounded. For Derek, success means honoring his faith, meeting the needs of his family and clients, and having a little margin left at the end of the day. For Jessica, it's accomplishing meaningful goals, watching the team thrive, and knowing her work made life easier for others.

Their vision for legacy mirrors that simplicity. Derek hopes Inspection Gator is remembered for professionalism, trust, and steady leadership. Jessica hopes to be remembered as someone who encouraged others—who showed that excellence comes from learning, listening, and leading with care.

For those stepping into the industry, the Ballards' guidance centers on commitment, humility, and service. Mastering your craft, remaining open to learning, and staying flexible in a constantly changing environment are essential. When people are making one of the largest financial and emotional decisions of their lives, responsibility, preparedness, and a willingness to grow matter more than anything else.

Eighteen years in, Derek and Jessica Ballard are still exactly who they set out to be—people-first, dependable, and grounded in values that don't fluctuate with market cycles. In an industry where trust is everything, that steady integrity is the foundation of every service they provide.

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Ashlyn TOMLIN

WRITTEN BY BELLA RUBIO

An Unexpected Path Home

Ashlyn has a smile you do not forget. The first time you meet her, you just know she is different; she is friendly and warm. Her faith is the core of who she is. It anchors her character, desire to serve others, and work ethic. How she treats others and the approaches she takes are evidence of her strong faith.



Photo by Kim Cooley

A native to East Texas, Ashlyn grew up in Tyler with what she calls “a front-row seat” to the life of real estate. Watching her father, Larry Lewis, balance a successful career as a REALTOR® while being committed to his family made a lasting impression. Her mother was equally influential, modeling a life rooted in passion and serving others. Reflecting on her upbringing, Ashlyn shares, “I hope to continue this legacy as I raise my children and passionately help those around me.” Seeing both of her parents actively involved in her and her twin brother’s lives shaped her perspective in the years to come when unexpected changes would lead her to a new but fulfilling direction.

Soon after high school, Ashlyn moved to the Dallas–Fort Worth area to pursue a bachelor’s degree at the University of Texas at Arlington. Not long after she started her studies, the COVID-19 pandemic altered her plans. She returned to her hometown in East Texas, later stating, “My original plans changed, but I was honestly relieved to be back in the place I call home.” Being home reignited a passion she was familiar with, and before long her heart was being pulled to pursue a career in real estate.

After passing the real estate exam and becoming a REALTOR®, Ashlyn wasted no time diving into her new career. In

her first month of being a REALTOR®, she answered a call that would change her life in a way she never expected. The out-of-state call was from a gentleman hoping to move his family back to East Texas. When Ashlyn met with the couple, she was surprised to discover the wife was a childhood friend she had not seen in a while. What started as a routine client call became something unexpected, something more she did not see moving her way.

Once Ashlyn helped her clients settle back into East Texas, that same childhood friend began a new job and later introduced Will Tomlin, a coworker, to Ashlyn. After meeting her childhood friend’s coworker, Ashlyn never imagined that something as unwelcome as COVID-19 would push her to change direction and begin a new career in real estate, one that would ultimately lead her to meeting her husband. Reflecting on the call that changed her life, Ashlyn says, “I will always be thankful I answered that random phone call!”

Being motivated to grow in her profession, Ashlyn quickly pursued continuing education and earned a Graduate REALTOR® Institute (GRI) designation through the National Association of REALTORS®, this was an intensive 60-hour course that sharpened her skills. Having determination and enthusiasm, she continued attending

educational classes, events, and networking opportunities hosted by the Greater Tyler Association of REALTORS® (GTAR).

While attending one of these events, a fellow REALTOR®, Kelly Raulston, approached Ashlyn and encouraged her to become involved with a GTAR committee. Ashlyn later stated, “If Kelly had not taken the time to come up to me and invite me, I probably would not have attended a committee because I was new and hardly knew anyone. It’s important that we introduce ourselves to new members, invite them to get involved, and let them know they’re welcomed.” Taking a leap of faith after Kelly’s invite, Ashlyn joined the Member Engagement Committee, a decision that would begin a rewarding leadership journey.

Before she realized it, a year had passed, and Ashlyn found herself committed to serving on the committee. Every month she was able to attend the meetings; she contributed new possibilities and fresh ideas that would enhance member engagement for the association as a whole. The influence she was making quickly caught the attention of leadership, which led to her being nominated for the 2025 Membership Engagement Chair. With excitement, she accepted the leadership role. As the new chair she moderated Q&A panels, hosted After Hours, networking events with other organizations, collaborated with other committees to have educational programs featuring renowned speakers, and made time from her



Photo by Bella Rubio



Photo by Bella Rubio



Photo by Ryan Roberts

“My original plans changed, but I was honestly relieved to be back in the place I call home.”

busy work schedule to speak with new members during orientation, encouraging them to join committees that aligned with their interests.

It is remarkable to think it started with a friendly invite and ended with this new powerhouse REALTOR® making a meaningful impact on new homeowners across East Texas by elevating the work of local REALTORS®. What’s an even more fascinating part of Ashlyn’s leadership story is that she took on this role during a major life transition. Serving as committee chair, Ashlyn and her husband welcomed their first child. With this major life transition, she balanced leadership, work life, and motherhood, while leading with professionalism and dedication. Ashlyn has been an agent with East Texas Preferred Properties since September 2025. On December 2, 2025, she was nominated and recognized by the Greater Tyler Association of REALTORS® as Rookie of the Year, receiving an award that celebrated not only her dedication and impact but also the success achieved in her first year of leadership.

When asked how she defines success, Ashlyn points to Matthew 22, where Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment. He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

your mind, a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

That perspective shapes everything she does, from how she cares for her family to how she serves her clients and community. Ashlyn explains, “If I am continuously pouring into my relationship with God and discovering who He is and loving those around me well, then I am living life with its intended purpose. This definition of success flows through every avenue of my life, whether it’s how I aim to love my family or treat my clients.”



Photo by Uliana Yurchenko



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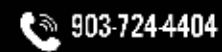
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Mark Coleman

A LEGACY BUILT ON ANSWERING
ONE CALL AT A TIME



WRITTEN BY DAWN SIMS
COVER PHOTO BY STEPHEN TILMON WITH
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Mark Coleman's phone never stops ringing —and that's not a figure of speech.

As I sat across from him in his office, calls came in steadily, texts lit up his screen, and yet not one went unanswered. Behind me sat a bookshelf that quietly told the story of how long he's been doing this: a collection of cell phones spanning decades, from a bulky Motorola bag phone to a BlackBerry and every version of the iPhone after then. It was part museum, part proof of concept. In an industry obsessed with new technology, Mark's success hasn't come from chasing trends, but from mastering something far more timeless—being available, being present, and answering the phone. It's a habit that has built a 36-year real estate career, a thriving East Texas brokerage, and a reputation that precedes him long before he ever picks up the call.

Mark didn't grow up dreaming of contracts, closings, or commission checks. He grew up on a farm in Carthage, Texas, where land wasn't an investment strategy—it was a way of life. You worked it, respected it, walked it, and learned it. That early connection would ultimately shape everything that came later, even during the years when real estate wasn't yet on his radar. After one semester at Panola College, Mark knew traditional college wasn't for him. He pivoted toward continuing education at Tyler Junior

College, originally without a clear endgame. It was there that he noticed real estate classes being offered. Something clicked. He earned his license, packed up, and headed to Dallas, joined a brokerage and sold a few houses along the way. It wasn't glamorous, but it was real, and it planted a seed.

Life pulled him back to East Texas when he took a job as a new car service manager for Mercedes in Tyler. Real estate became a side hustle—until it didn't. In just six months, Mark earned \$18,000 selling property on the side. That was all the confirmation he needed. He went full-time and never looked back. His first broker in East Texas was Gary Johnson with Century 21, a name Mark still credits with shaping his early career. Those were not easy years to get started. Interest rates hovered between 16 and 18 percent, and business didn't come without effort. Mark earned the Centurion Award his very first full year—placing him in the top one percent of agents nationwide—but even then, the lesson was clear: success came from showing up, grinding, and staying available. Opportunity followed consistency. Mark eventually opened REMAX's first office in town, growing it into the number two office in sales locally. Still, the pull to build something

of his own was strong. That instinct led him to launch Texas Farms & Ranches, which later expanded into two distinct branches: Texas Farms & Ranches focusing on residential and land, and Park Village handling commercial real estate. Today, his brokerage includes seven employees and fifteen agents, backed by systems that feel both impressive and deeply personal.



If you ask Mark where his love for land truly comes from, he won't point to a deal or a designation. He'll tell you about his "senior summer" in high school, spent working on a 45,000-acre ranch in Nebraska. While his friends were at the lake, Mark was working long days, learning what it meant to care for land and appreciating the reward of honest labor. That experience stayed with him. Whether he's walking a property with a buyer, hunting on it, or flying over it to help a client understand what they



really own, God's green earth is personal to Mark.

Flying, like real estate, wasn't something Mark planned. In 1982, he remembers watching jets cross the sky and thinking it might be nice to fly someday. So he did. He earned his license and, over the years, owned five airplanes, three helicopters, and two hot air balloons—yes, balloons, inspired by REMAX's iconic logo. Today, he's downsized to one plane and one helicopter, which he leases part-time but keeps close enough to use when business or life calls. Flying helps him see properties differently—and occasionally, it helps him unwind.

Mark's business is as layered as his interests. Alongside

traditional buying and selling, he handles more than forty bank repossessions a year, works with over thirty banks, and manages upwards of 150 rental properties. It's a workload that demands structure, so he built a team around it: three assistants, a full-time maintenance staff, and systems that allow him to offer extra services like repair coordination and even a courtesy moving van for clients. It's all part of thoughtfully serving people with great care.

When I asked Mark why he thinks he's been so successful, his answer came instantly. "Because I answer my phone." Not sometimes. Always. He even answers calls labeled as spam. In

fact, he laughed as he told me about picking up a "potential spam" call from Pittsburg the day before—one that turned into a listing. That philosophy shows up everywhere. So when Mark Coleman says answering his cell is the not-so-secret to his success, good Lord, I believe it! Even if he is at 5000 ft, he will answer his satellite phone from an airplane or

if he's flying a helicopter, his cell is bluetoothed into his headphones and by God, he's answering the call.

Mark has been in real estate for 36 years, but he remembers the days of thermal paper and MLS books arriving every two weeks. Today, he's incredibly tech-savvy, yet he still relies on handwritten yellow



Even if he is at 5000 ft, he will answer his satellite phone from an airplane or if he's flying a helicopter, his cell is bluetoothed into his headphones **and by God, he's answering the call.**

His flexibility allows him to show up when others can't, and he sees that as a responsibility, not a burden.



Post-its. As we sat in his fully decorated office—every inch unmistakably Mark Coleman—his phone rang nearly a dozen times, with close to twenty texts chiming in. Each call got a handwritten note, placed carefully around his keyboard. Later, he explained his system: paper first, CRM second. Old school meets modern efficiency.

Like many high achievers, Mark knows his weaknesses well. Overcommitment tops the list. He rarely says no. Delegation is another challenge—he likes being involved in every aspect of his business. Those traits can be exhausting, but they're also part of why his clients feel so taken care of. He's sold everything from a \$500 house to a \$28 million ranch, and every client gets the same level of care.

Outside of real estate, Mark serves as a volunteer firefighter with West Harrison County Fire Department and Judson Fire Department, responding to more than 100 calls a year. When I asked why, his answer was simple: "Because I can." His flexibility allows him to show up when others can't, and he sees that as a responsibility, not a burden.

Family grounds him. His face softened before my eyes as he spoke of them. Mark has been married to his wife Jennifer for 20 years. His daughter Chloe, 19, soon to be an esthetician is preparing to open her own business in Hallsville, and Mark will be right there helping her. His stepson Dylan runs All N One Moving, a thriving business Mark helped him start. Even Mark's stepdad, A.D. Davis, now 86, still sells real estate alongside him. Work and family often collide—but in the best ways.



Mark says his long-term goal is to slow down eventually. Maybe a cabin in Colorado for weekend getaways. But not yet. He still shows up to the office at 7 a.m. and leaves around 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. He hunts once a year, rides his motorcycle to clear his head, finds peace in the mountains, and relaxes flying, taking in the view from the sky. He even plays piano and



Mark Coleman hasn't built his career on secrets or gimmicks. He's built it on doing the simple things exceptionally well, day after day, call after call, year after year.

guitar—hidden talents from a man who seems to have a few lives' worth of experiences packed into one.

His advice to agents, new or seasoned, is refreshingly straightforward: "Treat this like a real job. Come to the office. Be present." One of his earliest lessons at Century 21 was the mantra "CITTO"—Come In To The Office. Today, he admits, that doesn't always mean a physical desk. It means answering texts, emails, social media messages, and phone calls. It means showing up for clients consistently.

From my own place in this business, sitting across from Mark felt less like an interview and more like a masterclass. A reminder of what truly matters in real estate. Not the automation, not the shortcuts, not the layers we sometimes put

between ourselves and the people we work alongside and serve—but the human connection. The willingness to answer the phone, to respond with respect, to show up with consistency, and to simply treat every agent, lender and client like they matter...because they do.

Mark Coleman hasn't built his career on secrets or gimmicks. He's built it on doing the simple things exceptionally well, day after day, call after call, year after year. And as I walked out of his office, I felt something I didn't expect—a renewed sense of purpose. A reminder that no matter where we are in our careers, we can all be better, do better, and serve better. Sometimes, the path forward isn't about reinventing the wheel—it's about picking up the phone and answering when it rings. Every time...just like Mark.

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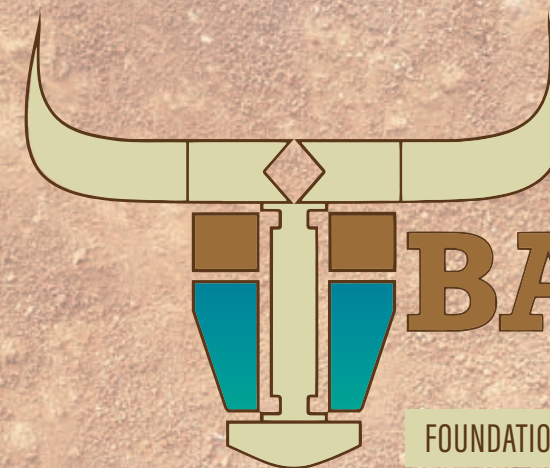
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