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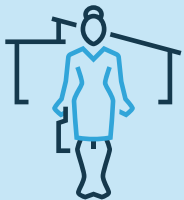


6,429



AVERAGE
VOLUME
PER AGENT

\$9.2 MILLION



AVERAGE
UNITS PER
AGENT

22

Lacey Whitaker

Iron Valley Real Estate

STORY BY JACKI DONALDSON
PHOTOS BY SUSAN FOWLER,
FOWLER STUDIOS PHOROGRAPHY



Lacey Whitaker pours herself into every client. She's been known to pay for repairs out of pocket, clean and prepare homes before move-in, gift home warranties and lawn care, and even bake a gender reveal cake upon request. Lacey is all in because she knows exactly what not having a home feels like.

Her early years were marked by instability that most people only read about. She lived homeless in Los Angeles as a young child and later grew up in a house in Hawaii without electricity, running water, or plumbing. After bouncing between states and caretakers, she landed in a children's home in North Carolina. Those six years, she says, were the best of her childhood. She was safe. She did well in school. She was at peace.

That history shapes everything about how Lacey works today. She treats all clients like she's ushering them into the stability she fought so hard to find. Climbing into bathtubs for size comparisons, getting on her hands and knees to inspect details, and pointing out red flags that could talk buyers out of a home, she treats clients like family, and they respond in kind.

Her journey through real estate reflects the same personal, wholehearted approach. She started at Aweigh Real Estate, moved to RE/MAX Peninsula, and this year joined Iron Valley Real Estate after reconnecting with broker Kerrie Obbink, a former colleague who had stepped into a leadership role. Kerrie





shared her vision for building strong female leadership at Iron Valley—something that resonated instantly with Lacey. “I wanted to help her grow her office,” Lacey shares. “I thought, if I’m here for six months or six years, the least I can do is help her reach that vision. And we have exploded.”

“
I have never let
anything in my life
hinder my positive
outlook on life. I’ve
always been a super
happy, bubbly
person—even
while living in a
children’s home.”

Since joining in July 2025, Lacey has helped bring several women to the brokerage simply by being the person agents reach out to for support and honest insight. Her extroverted spirit draws people in. “I am a cheerleader,” she shares. “I was a cheerleader in high school. I’m a cheerleader in life. I want everyone to succeed.”

Lacey works solely by referral, and her impressive momentum stems from the unwavering support of her husband, Daniel—a Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force, her best friend since eighth grade, and the person who put his own promotion on hold for a year so she could establish her career. Their story—10 years apart before reconnecting over Facebook when he needed to rehome his dog, then marrying on the top of the Stratosphere in Las Vegas—still feels serendipitous to her.

Lacey’s path between childhood and real estate took several turns. After having

her daughter, Brookley, at a young age, she joined the Army to support her child and pay for college, intending to sign for three years but—after a paperwork mishap in a snowstorm—ended up serving for six. She served as a supply sergeant before being medically retired for a knee injury. She got her college

her. “It haunts me,” she comments. “But you know what? When it was time for them to sell, they still called me. They still wanted me to list their house. They didn’t blame me, even though they could have—because it really was a thousand percent my fault. But they didn’t.” Moments like



degree and worked at Toyota and then a dental office before reconnecting with Daniel and finally stepping into real estate during their time in Alaska. On her very first day as a showing agent, she unexpectedly put two homes under contract. Her personality, energy, and hyperfocus, she now realizes, were made for this industry.

Ask Lacey what sets her apart in real estate, and she’ll point back to kindness—deep, consistent, uncalculated kindness. She’s willing to invest far more than she gets back in the moment because the return is lasting trust, loyalty, and community. She values having people want her for who she is rather than just for her sales performance. “I make genuine friendships that continue long after closing,” she states, “even in transactions where I make mistakes (and I absolutely have made some big mistakes).”

Lacey admits she had one bumpy buyer transaction that still weighs on

that remind her why she leads with honesty, humility, and heart—because those qualities bring people back and keep her grounded in her purpose.

Presence and joy also define Lacey personally, and she and Daniel have built a beautiful life with their daughters, Brookley and Amelia, and their mini goldendoodle, Blooper. They enjoy weekend camping trips, cruises, and pizza nights with friends. “We’re not waiting for retirement to enjoy life,” Lacey reports. “We enjoy it now.”

Lacey has never in her life postponed happiness. “I have never let anything in my life hinder my positive outlook on life,” she expresses. “I’ve always been a super happy, bubbly person—even while living in a children’s home.”

Lacey’s optimism endures, and those lucky enough to be in her orbit—in life and work—feel its ripple and are better for having experienced it.



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Mickey Wright Neely

OPULENT REALTY LLC
STORY BY MADDIE PODISH
PHOTOS BY MASON MURAWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY

Success rarely comes overnight. For Mickey Wright Neely, it took six years of quiet perseverance, humility, and an unwavering commitment to authenticity. “I got humbled very quickly,” she says. For years, she operated almost invisibly, selling only one or two homes a year. That slow climb could have been discouraging, but it became the foundation for her breakthrough.

Her transformation began when she met her now-husband, Aaron. He knew she hadn’t sold more than two houses, but instead of hesitation, he offered unwavering encouragement. “He told me to go for it,” Mickey recalls. His support gave her the confidence to quit her job, embrace her genuine self, and share her story openly. The result was immediate. “Clients flocked to me,” she shares. Vulnerability became her most powerful business strategy.



Mickey’s roots shaped her determination. Born in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Mickey grew up mainly in Pennsylvania and spent a few years living in New Jersey. At 26, she relocated to Virginia, and at 31, she unexpectedly became a single mom to her son, Chase, leaving her with the difficult choice of staying in Virginia and building a life without family nearby. “It was really hard,” she explains. “I knew I didn’t want to go back home, so I had to make this work.” Her childhood, growing up close to her parents and witnessing them push through every obstacle, fueled her passion to succeed. That drive continues today, motivated by her desire to create a legacy for her parents. “I’m working as hard as I can so I can help them buy their first home one day,” she comments.

Her career turning point came when she stopped hiding behind a polished image. “I decided to finally start being myself,” she explains. “And it worked. Being authentic is what grew my business online.” By sharing her unedited story—including struggles, doubts, and victories—Mickey discovered that transparency builds trust. “Most of my clients are single women, which makes sense because that was the story I shared,” she notes.

“
Learning that I don’t have to do everything was key. My transaction coordinator keeps my business running, and I get to be the face of it.”





Freedom has always been a driving force for Mickey. "I knew I wanted freedom for when I had a family someday, so I could be a hands-on parent," says the now-mom of two sons, Chase and his younger brother, Reece. That clarity deepened at age 36, when she received a personal revelation: ADHD. "Owning who I am completely changed everything," she mentions. With that self-awareness came more innovative business strategies. Delegating tasks became essential. "Learning that I don't have to do everything was key," she stresses. "My transaction coordinator keeps my business running, and I get to be the face of it."

Her influence extends beyond real estate. Mickey founded Santa Looks Like Me, a charity event that provides children with representation. She shares, "I wanted children to see a Santa who looks like them. We've had a black Santa, a white Santa, and even an Asian Mrs. Claus. We bring as many as we can." The event garnered immediate recognition and was even featured on Wavy-TV 10 during its first year. The event is free, and attendees bring a toy or a monetary donation. Its impact extends far beyond generosity, demonstrating Mickey's commitment to community and inclusivity.

Mickey's high-energy personality and competitiveness also shape her business. "I was a cheerleader from seventh grade through college," she says. "My mom and I even started our own cheerleading squad in New Jersey." That energy carries into marketing strategies, like her signature swag boxes, which every client receives before signing. "It's a way to show I value them and sets the tone for our partnership." She has also leveraged her social media following to create additional income streams. "Most of my followers are agents," she says. "I've done well for multiple years from selling courses online, teaching people how to do videos and marketing."

Her story demonstrates that showing up as yourself can build trust that turns into positive outcomes. Her transactions have doubled year after year. Clients didn't just buy homes; they connected with her story.

Even in a competitive industry, Mickey has never let external pressures dictate her timeline. Her guiding principle is simple: "Everything is made up." She refuses to measure herself against arbitrary rules for how quickly success should come. That mindset allows her to endure slow years without losing her footing.

Every step of her journey—from struggling agent, thriving influencer with over 47,000 followers across her social platforms, and community leader—reflects one key truth: Staying true to yourself matters more than chasing shortcuts. Mickey's climb may have taken six years, but she does not see that timeframe as a limitation. She sees it as proof that success can follow its own path. "It took six years to build my business," she remarks. "Who says it has to happen in two? Now I'm in Year 11. It's all made up, and THAT is the power of owning your story."



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Kim Dombrowski

IMPRESSIVE HOME STAGING

PHOTOS BY DYAN WITT PHOTOGRAPHY

For 16 years, Impressive Home Staging has been transforming listings into showstoppers. Their seamless process and eye for design help real estate agents sell faster—and with confidence. We sat down with the team to learn what drives their success and how they continue to elevate every space they touch.

What do you bring to the table that no one else can, and why do clients love it?

What truly sets us apart is the heart and experience behind our work. Together, our team brings over 55 years of staging expertise, and we've seen firsthand how the right design can completely transform a space—and a sale. Our extensive inventory lets us create the perfect look for any property, from cozy condos to luxury estates. But what our clients love most is how simple we make the process. We handle every detail so they can focus on what matters most—selling their home with confidence and ease.

Who's your dream client, and how do you keep them coming back for more?

Our dream client is someone who truly values the power of staging as a marketing tool and trusts our process from start to finish. They reach out early to get on our schedule but also understand that staging is the final touch—after the property is vacant, any updates are complete, and everything is clean and ready for its moment to shine. That kind



of partnership makes the entire experience smooth and successful for everyone involved. We keep those clients coming back by consistently delivering beautiful, high-quality staging that helps their listings sell quickly and for top dollar. Once they see the results—and how effortless we make the process—they know they can count on us every time.

Who's been your biggest cheerleader or mentor, and what's the one nugget of wisdom you'll never forget?

Throughout her career, Kim has been fortunate to have several mentors who've shaped her approach to business and design. But one of the most impactful influences has come from being part of professional home staging associations like The Staging Collective, HSRA, and RESA. Enrolling our team in these communities has been invaluable—they've opened doors to education, collaboration, and weekly conversations with talented stagers across the country who share ideas and support one another.

One of the biggest takeaways from these experiences has been learning about the psychology of neuroaesthetics—how design affects emotion and behavior. As our lead designer, Stacey, puts it, “I always knew staging was more than just decorating, but learning about neuroaesthetics gave language and purpose to the design principles I use every day to enhance listings.” That understanding has deepened not only our craft, but also the results we deliver for our clients.

How do your values show up in your day-to-day work and client relationships?

Our core value has always been simple: We live up to our name—Impressive—everything we do flows from that promise. When an agent tells a client that staging will make all the difference, we want to help deliver on that promise—and make agents look like rockstars in the process. That means creating an experience that's as



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seamless as it is stunning: The agent is impressed by how easy it is to work with us, the homeowner is impressed by how beautiful their space looks, and potential buyers walk in and instantly feel like they've found “home.”

But being impressive isn't just about beautiful rooms—it's about integrity and teamwork, too. We do what's right, even when no one's watching. We tell the truth, even when it's hard, because honest conversations build stronger partnerships. And we have each other's backs, both within our team and with our clients. Those values show up in every phone call, every design decision, and every install—because we believe that truly impressive results come from a foundation of trust, respect, and heart.

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KELLER WILLIAMS ALLEGIANCE

STORY BY DAN CLARK
PHOTOS BY SUSAN FOWLER,
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For Marketa Kirts, real estate is about transformation. Whether she's leading agents, teaching investors, or helping a family find a home, she sees her work as a ministry, a calling to build people as much as portfolios.

"I've always had a heart for people," she says. "I want to see them walk in their full potential and purpose. That's why I do what I do. It's not just real estate for me. It's purpose-driven work."

Marketa serves as the Owner/Agent for a new Keller Williams Allegiance satellite office launching soon in Hampton. The vision for the branch began as a prayer and unfolded through faith and timing. "When I got my broker's license, I didn't have a plan," she shares. "I just felt led to get it. Within weeks, an opportunity arose to partner with Keller Williams Allegiance to open a new office in Hampton. It was divine timing."

Her path to this moment wasn't traditional. Before real estate, Marketa worked in counseling, with an undergraduate degree in sociology, a minor in psychology, and a master's in divinity. "Counseling was my heart," she states. "My dream was always to help people heal and grow. Real estate ended up being an extension of that, just in a different form."

She first entered real estate in 2011 while attending graduate school full-time. "I needed something flexible, and real estate gave me that," she explains. "I had no husband, no kids, nothing

tying me down, so I jumped in. It was new, but I loved it immediately."

That leap of faith has turned into a career spanning more than a decade. After starting at a smaller brokerage, she eventually landed at Keller Williams, drawn by its culture of growth and ownership. "This company aligns with who I am," she notes. "I've always believed in helping others succeed. Keller Williams gives me the tools to do that at a higher level."

Her new Hampton office reflects that mission. "Our theme is simple," she comments. "We operate as a

team but with no team splits. We collaborate, we grow, we win together. I pour everything I've learned into my agents so they can build businesses that work for them."

Marketa describes herself as a lifelong encourager. "I've been a cheerleader all my life," she laughs. "Literally. I cheered in college and even repeated kindergarten because I stood on the lunchroom table doing a cheer. It's just who I am. I want to see people win."

That passion extends far beyond her team. She and her husband pastor a church together, balancing leadership

in both ministry and real estate. "My husband and I are pastors, and that calling flows into everything I do," she stresses. "Whether at church, in business, or with clients, I'm here to serve."

Her family is her foundation. She calls her two children, Legend and Kai, her "miracle babies." She reserves weekends for family days, and Fridays are always date nights. "I'm big on boundaries," she emphasizes. "God first, then family, then business. That's how I stay balanced."

Marketa's drive comes from integrity and faith. "I answer to God," she says. "He's my CEO. I want Him to be





pleased with how I treat people.” That mindset shows up in how she leads, negotiates, and mentors. “There’s enough business for everyone,” she remarks. “I’m not in competition with anyone else, just with who I was last year.”

She’s also deeply passionate about investing and education. Over the summer, she launched a Real Estate Investing 101 class, featuring local experts in contracting, law, and short-term rentals. “I love seeing people learn,” she shares. “I want to teach others how to build wealth, not just sell houses.”

“

If I help enough people win, the rewards take care of themselves.”

Her generous spirit is one of the things clients remember most. “If I have a client who’s struggling with closing costs, I’ll figure it out,” she says. “My commission is never more important than someone’s ability to own a home. I’d rather help them get across the finish line and know they were cared for.”

That level of integrity and compassion has built her business almost entirely on referrals and relationships. People trust her because she delivers results and genuinely wants to see them succeed. “I don’t give to get,” she states. “I give because that’s who I am. And the blessings always come back around.”

Whether she’s negotiating a deal, teaching a class, or cheering on another agent’s wins, Marketa leads with heart and purpose. She’s a coach, a counselor, and a businesswoman who refuses to believe success requires stepping on others to climb higher. “If I help enough people win, the rewards take care of themselves,” she asserts.

Marketa Kirts is a testament to the fact that leadership isn’t about power—it’s about people. And through every chapter of her career, she’s proving that faith, service, and relentless love for others will always lead the way.

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