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KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY

Building Success through Open Doors and Open Minds

BY LUCY REYNOLDS AND PHOTOS BY AMY SULLIVAN PHOTOGRAPHY

When J Lewis describes his journey into real estate, he'll be the first to admit that his thought process wasn't exactly strategic. "I was like, 'Yeah, that'd be kind of fun. That'd be cool,'" he remembered.

It was 2008, and the timing couldn't have been worse. The market was tanking, and real estate schools were so desperate for students that they actually offered him a discount. After training in a class of three, he passed his exams and joined the only company he interviewed with: Knoxville's first Keller Williams office.

A native of Wilmington, North Carolina, J attended UT on a full scholarship to manage the baseball team, which took him to the World Series and an SEC championship. Baseball runs deep in the Lewis family, and J just learned two years ago through a chance conversation with a family friend that his father had been set to be in the major league draft as a first round pitcher alongside Nolan Ryan. "My father never told me any of this," J said. "I knew he had torn his rotator cuff and had surgery, but I didn't know it had happened only two months before the major league draft."

After baseball, there was music. J was in a band at UT, and he met his future wife, a lead singer, when she approached

him about backing her up for one final show after she had fired her band. "I knew immediately that I wanted to ask her to marry me," he recalled. "We toured the world together for about 11 years and recorded five albums. She's an internationally recognized songwriter, and we moved to Nashville and bought a house when she got a great songwriting publishing deal there."

When the couple found out they were expecting their first child, they knew they were ready to give up the band and just be Mom and Dad. They moved to Knoxville to be near family, and that's when real estate popped up as a possible new career.

Despite the market, after J took the leap, he thrived almost immediately. "I just jumped into the training and got really good mentorship," he explained. "Then in 2014, I stepped into leadership. As a Team Leader, I help my agents with their businesses, consulting with them on the models, systems, tools, and technology that we offer here. I also search for new talent to grow the company, and I've helped open seven new offices across the area—including the recent Morristown location that became number two in market share within its first year."

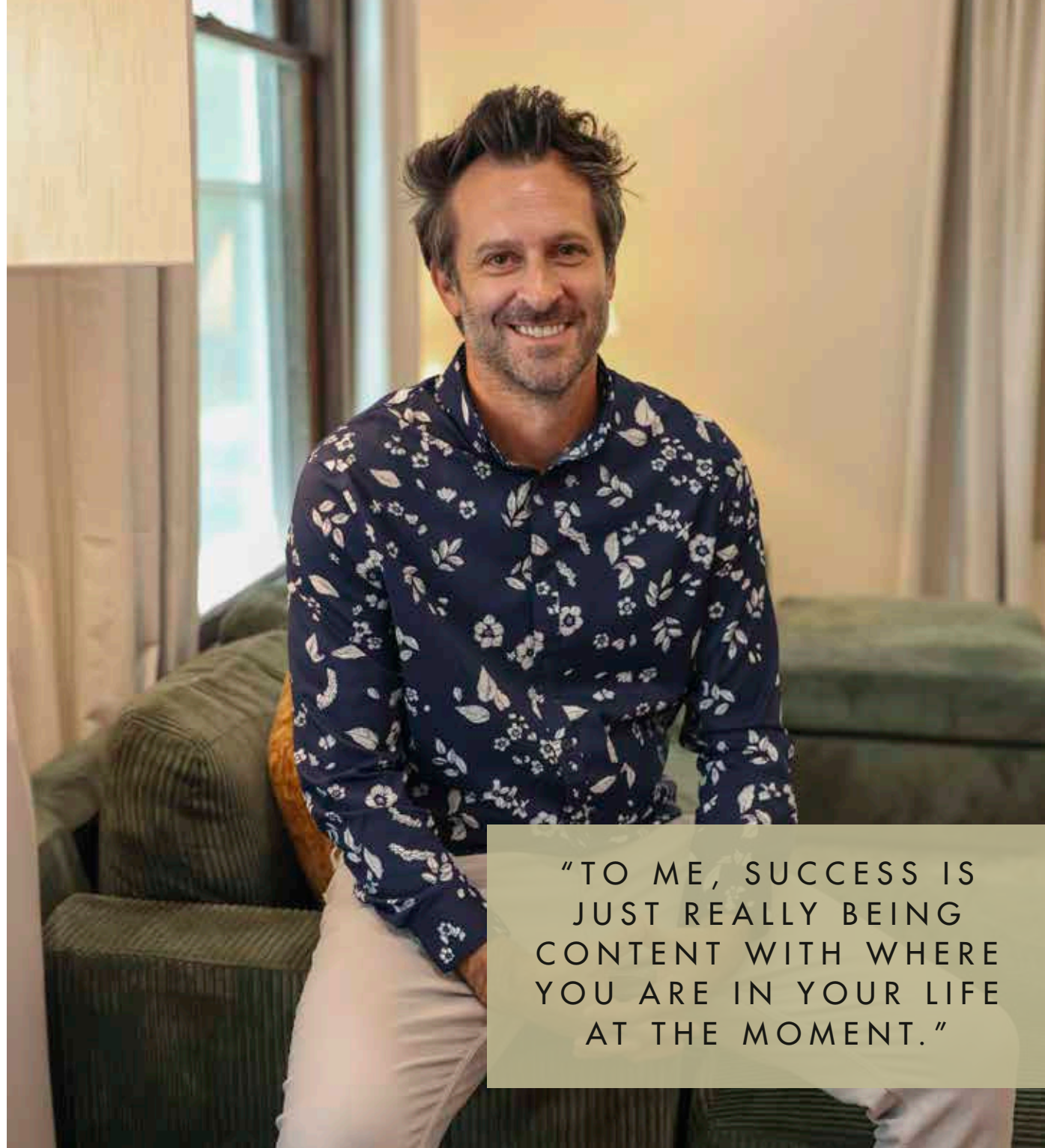
According to J, what makes Keller Williams different starts with how

they structure leadership. Unlike most brokerages where one broker handles everything, Keller Williams separates the roles. "I do not answer broker questions," J explained. "Our full-time broker handles contracts and agency questions, while I focus entirely on supporting our agents—bringing in training, leading sales meetings, consulting top performers, etc."

When you ask J about success, he doesn't talk about corporate growth or income, he talks about contentment. "To me, success is just really being content

"I HELP MY AGENTS WITH THEIR BUSINESSES, CONSULTING WITH THEM ON THE MODELS, SYSTEMS, TOOLS, AND TECHNOLOGY THAT WE OFFER HERE."





“TO ME, SUCCESS IS
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CONTENT WITH WHERE
YOU ARE IN YOUR LIFE
AT THE MOMENT.”

with where you are in your life at the moment,” he remarked. “It’s the quality of your relationships and the quality of your time, how you’re spending it.”

He wants to be remembered as someone who was always genuine and honest, who operated with integrity, who admitted mistakes and made them right, who never held himself above others, was always willing to learn,

and was someone others could always count on. These days, what gets him up in the morning is simple: “Every day is a new opportunity,” he said. “You’ve got to start with gratitude when your feet hit the floor, and then you’ve got another 24 hours to make an impact.”

His most rewarding moments are when an agent walks into his office to say that one class, one meeting, or one little

piece of advice changed the trajectory of their business and life. “When agents say ‘thank you,’ it really makes everything I do worthwhile,” he said.

As J reflected on his journey and his success in real estate, he concluded: “My hope for everyone is that they are open-minded when it comes to opportunities that are presented to them in life. I’ve learned that even though something



might not be for me, when I’ve listened, I’ve built a new relationship or strengthened one or learned something valuable from the person across the table. There are so many opportunities out there and people who have succeeded in so many ways—and it might just be worth the five minutes to hear what people have to say.”

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Taking a holistic view of each client's financial situation, Janette works toward their long-term goals, using their home as a wealth-building tool. For her, it's not just about closing loans; it's about making a meaningful difference in people's lives, improving their financial situation and helping them achieve their financial goals. "You can change a family tree by changing someone's trajectory," she remarked.

When asked what success means to her, she immediately answered, "Success is making a difference and having an impact in people's lives, impacting my community and changing the trajectory of the city that I love so much."

"We are our brother's keeper," she said. "We are commanded to take care of widows and children, and the poor we will always have with us. These are the people we have to make sure we have built a big enough table for."

Motivated by her faith, Janette has been deeply involved with Childhelp Tennessee for a number of years. She served in various leadership positions for years; now she is once again president of the board.

Childhelp serves victims of child abuse and neglect through prevention, advocacy, treatment, and investigation services. In East Tennessee, the organization serves more than 10,000 children a year across 16 counties through their Children's Advocacy Center as well as mental health, foster care, and relative care programs.

"One child dies every five seconds from child abuse," Janette reported. "That's a lot—but even one child is too many. Stop child abuse, and you can slow teen pregnancy, high school dropout rates, drug use, and prison entry rates. When children receive proper trauma healing, they grow in positive ways and become productive adults."

And as she quips, "Who better than someone who was trained as a social worker, raised in a huge

Living Out Her Life Calling

BY LUCY
REYNOLDS
PHOTOS BY
CRICKETPIX
PHOTOGRAPHY

Janette Burgin never set out to work in the mortgage or real estate industry. Growing up as the oldest of four children with two real estate agents as parents, she saw enough of the late nights and long weekends to know she wanted a different path. So she became a social worker for children instead.

But life often brings surprises, and Janette later found herself taking a job at a small mortgage brokerage. Eventually, she found her way to Regions Bank in Knoxville, where she's been serving clients in residential lending for more than 25 years now.



“

You can change a family tree by changing someone's trajectory.”



southern family, and now earns her living serving in real estate, to work toward our community goal of helping traumatized children in East Tennessee?”

The real estate community has long taken notice of her dedication. “Janette is extremely proactive in supporting the local real estate community, and for both Real Producers and Janette I’m very grateful,” said Krista Freshour, top agent with Honors Real Estate Services.

Julie Ford, top agent with Realty Executive Associates, added, “Janette is deeply engrained in the real estate community, supporting agents and buyers, and partnering with inspectors and other service professionals to strengthen our industry. Her work reaches beyond the lending process. She puts a strong sense of community before all else.”

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Success is making a difference and
 having an impact in people’s lives.”

Janette’s commitment to service earned her the Good Neighbor Award from KAAR (now East Tennessee REALTORS association) in 2022. In addition, she was recently selected for the 2025-26 TNMBA Future Leaders II Class, a year-long program focused on advanced leadership development, industry education, and professional growth.

Having grown up in southern Louisiana, Janette understands the importance of family and community. Now a Knoxville resident for more than 30 years, she is passionate about East Tennessee. She loves living in the foothills of the Smokies, and this area has become part of who she is.

With a gift for seeing beauty in all things, Janette has built much more than a successful career. With her faith, her work, and her impactful community service, she’s living her calling.

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Martha RIORDAN

BY LUCY REYNOLDS
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MR10 REALTY

BUILDING SUCCESS ON KINDNESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

After nearly a decade in radio advertising at WTVK, Martha Riordan had found her groove in business-to-business sales. But after corporate buyouts and management changes, in 2016, she knew it was time for something new. Unexpectedly, that something turned out to be real estate—and now, almost 10 years later, she and her husband, Michael, find themselves co-owners of their own boutique brokerage, MR10 Realty.

Early in her career, Martha had run restaurants and retail stores, so working with the public wasn't new. Still, the real estate industry presented its own steep learning curve. She started as a lead listing agent on a high-volume team that her husband was already managing—a team that grew from \$20 million to \$120

million in sales over eight years, handling more than 400 transactions annually. “I learned a lot really fast,” she remarked. “I have a *lot* of transactions under my belt.”

In 2021, Martha and Michael decided to strike out on their own—a decision that came down to control, location, and vision. They had both worked in the corporate world and knew what it felt like when someone else's decisions didn't align with their values. Plus, a new building was coming available right near their home, where they had raised their kids and built their life.

Martha considered the possibility of joining another brokerage, but Michael had other thoughts. “Do we really need a big brand name brokerage?” he asked. “Can we not just be a local, hometown,

specialty boutique real estate agency?” The answer was yes—yes, they could.

Initially, they worked from home as post-pandemic supply chain issues delayed construction on their building, and once they were in, it took more time to get inspections done and become fully operational. “But it was worth the wait,” Martha said. “We love our building and our location, so it has worked out well.”

Today, their team at MR10 Realty includes eight people—four agents, with a fifth starting soon, plus admin staff and a virtual assistant who helps manage their extensive database. “We want to keep our team small and have everyone be successful—and we all want to have a life, so we help each other a lot,” Martha shared. “We want

people to know who we are and that if they walk in our door and do business with us, they're going to be taken care of, they're going to be comfortable, and we're going to be accessible.”

In fact, when asked what sets her apart, Martha's answer is simple: “I answer my phone. Doesn't sound like much, but I answer my phone.” In addition to accessibility, her overall business philosophy flows from her belief in the basic rules of humanity: be honest and be kind.

In her first high-volume years in real estate, she saw clients come and go in rapid succession. Now, more than 50% of her business comes from past clients and referrals. “I'm selling houses to clients' kids or to their parents,” she said. “I'm getting to know the whole family. It's becoming more

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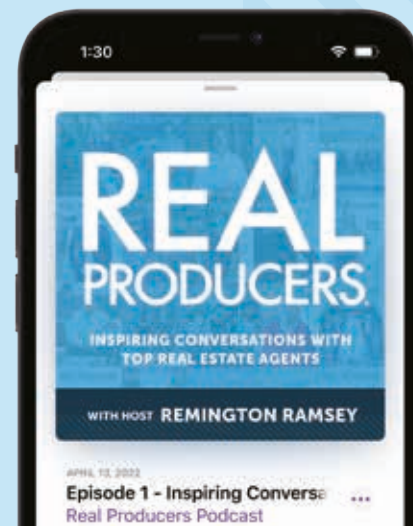
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of a repeat business, and that's what I enjoy. I'm not necessarily passionate about housing, but I'm passionate about helping people."

One of the most important lessons she has learned along the way has been patience. "Sometimes, if I think a client isn't making the right decision, I'll let them sleep on it," she explained. "I've had to learn to let everyone marinate in what the decision is going to be, because sometimes

their automatic reaction is not the right answer. So we *wait*. Everything doesn't have to be done today."

"The other thing I've learned is, you know, we're not saving lives here," she continued. "Mistakes happen, deals fall through, but everything is fixable. And 99% of the time, things happen the way they should. Michael keeps me grounded—he doesn't have the worry gene, so I do all the worrying—but he has

taught me that if you're doing the right thing, if you're doing the work, then the business will happen and everything will be okay."

In their time away from real estate, Martha and Michael love to travel, and they go on two or three cruises a year. Big news: They recently learned they'll be having their first grandchild mid 2026, so their future travels will be taking them to Philadelphia quite frequently.

Here at home, Martha's real estate wisdom is grounded in empathy for other agents. "We're all on the same side, and we all wake up unemployed every day," she reflected. "We're all really reaching toward the same goals, and it's so much easier to be kind than confrontational. Be kind, have patience, and give people grace."



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Stefanie Robinson

Stefanie brings over a decade of experience in the mortgage industry, with comprehensive knowledge spanning from initial loan inquiries to servicing and final closings. Her career began with a humble internship, which quickly ignited a deep interest in the complexities of mortgage lending. Since then, she has become well-versed in every stage of the process, playing a vital role in guiding clients on their journey to homeownership.

Her passion for helping others is evident in every detail of her work—through her strong communication skills, meticulous attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to making a positive impact. Stefanie approaches her role with a genuine dedication to service, understanding the significance of each transaction in her clients' lives.

When she's not immersed in her work, Stefanie enjoys painting, attending live concerts, and escaping to the coast to breathe in the ocean air. Grounded in core values of integrity, optimism, and perseverance, Stefanie credits her greatest motivation to the love and support of her family. A proud Knoxville native and enthusiastic Tennessee Volunteers fan, her home is filled with orange pride—especially on fall Saturdays—shared with her husband, four daughters, and dog of 17 years, Lexi.

Stefanie's blend of industry expertise, heartfelt purpose, and personal drive makes her a valuable asset to the Simple Mortgage Solutions team.

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