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Lisa Muñoz **25**
COVER STORY

Contents

PROFILES



13 Mitch Ammons



19 Elle Spikes

IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 Preferred Partners
- 8 Meet The Team
- 10 Real Producers Recognition Logos
- 13 Real Producer Rising Star: Mitch Ammons
- 19 Real Producer: Elle Spikes
- 25 Real Producer Cover Story: Lisa Muñoz
- 30 Cover Release Party

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Jason Shelden
Publisher
 512-921-4701
 jason.shelden
 @realproducersmag.com



Erin Rystad
Content Director



Emily Eyob
Operations



Leah Faye Blum
Photographer



Carrin Lewis
Photographer



Lesson Medrano
Photographer



Elizabeth McCabe
Staff Writer



Megan Taylor-DiCenzo
Staff Writer



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Tony Sandoval

Austin Division President
 M (214) 543-9000
 tony.sandoval@stewart.com



Jennifer Johnson

Business Development
 M (979) 595-5204
 jennifer.kjohnson@stewart.com



Ashley Moore

Business Development
 M (337) 764-4119
 ashley.moore@stewart.com



Ashley Long

Business Development
 M (737) 389-4771
 ashley.long@stewart.com



Miguel Benavides

Vice President of Sales
 M (512) 422-6118
 miguel.benavides@stewart.com



Kathryn McCurry

Marketing Manager
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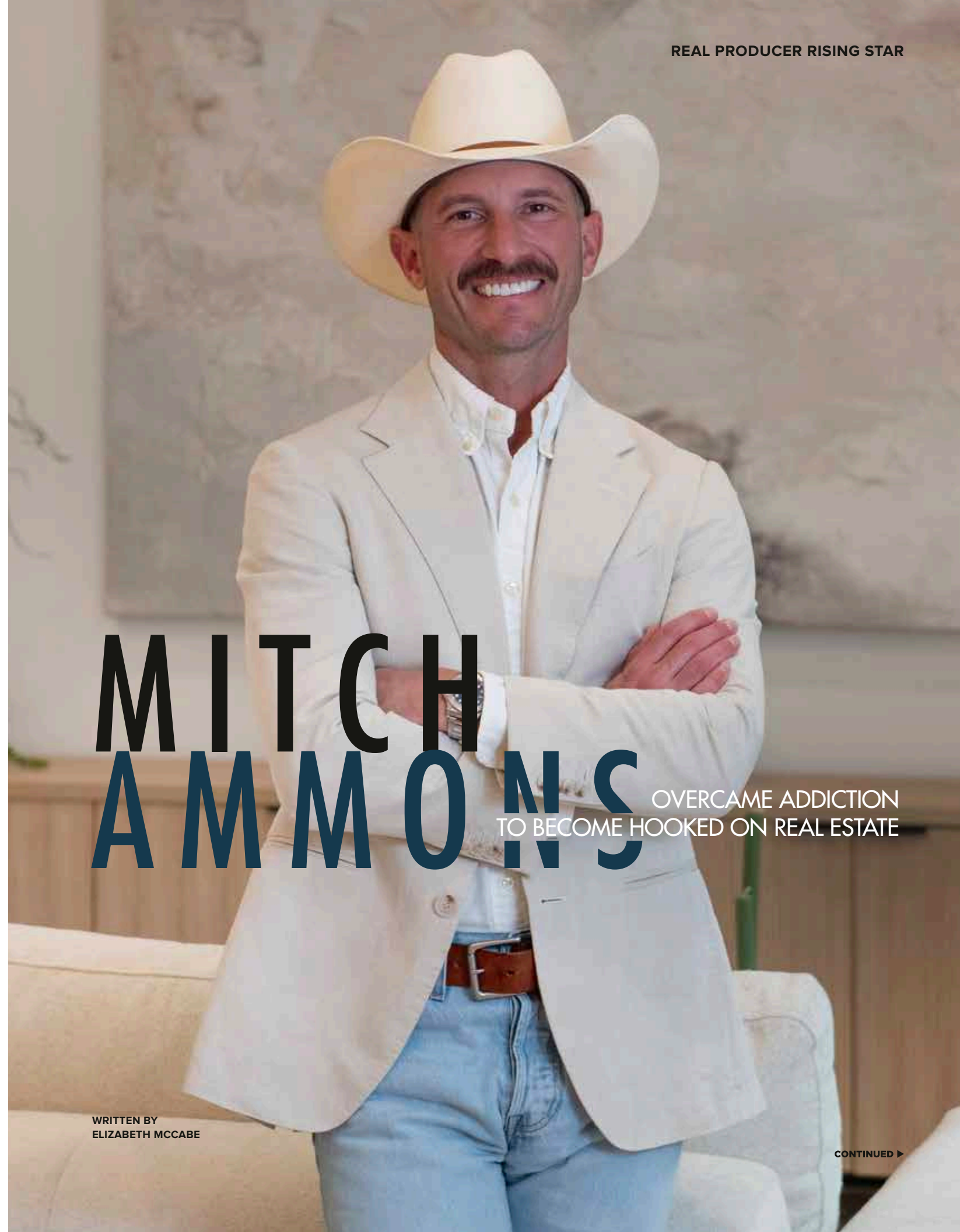
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REAL PRODUCER RISING STAR

**MITCH
AMMONS** OVERCAME ADDICTION
TO BECOME HOOKED ON REAL ESTATE

WRITTEN BY
ELIZABETH MCCABE

CONTINUED ►



When life backs you into a corner, you find out exactly what you're made of.

For Mitch Ammons, he battled years marked by addiction, setbacks, and hard truths. But today, his story reads very differently. He has found connection and community, a purpose and people he can help.

Mitch grew up in Dallas with what he describes as a great childhood. "I had a fantastic childhood," he says. "I had everything I wanted and everything I needed. We did a lot of traveling and I saw a lot of cool places, but I was shy and felt out of place."

That feeling followed him into middle school, even as his confidence began to grow through athletics. By high school, he was excelling in track and football, but something else began to take hold. The attention he received from pushing boundaries started to outweigh the satisfaction of doing well.

By 14, he was drinking. By the time he had his license, it was every weekend and he was driving.

What started as experimentation quickly escalated. Trouble with the law, getting kicked out of school, and a growing dependence on substances became part of his reality. College at the University of Arkansas was supposed to be a fresh start. Instead, it deepened the cycle.

"I wanted to make a change," he says. But wanting and doing are two very different things.

His substance use intensified. He failed out of school. Rehab followed, but so did relapse. Over the next several years, that pattern repeated itself. Arrests. Detox. Starting over. Seven times. For much of his early twenties, Mitch describes his life as being in shambles. And perhaps most striking, he admits he was okay with it.



**“THEY TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE BETTER.
HOW TO SHOW UP THE RIGHT WAY.”**



Real estate, he began to see, might be the right fit. He got his license in January 2023 and joined a team at Keller Williams. The early days weren't glamorous. He made hundreds of cold calls a day. He learned through repetition. Let's just say it paid off with seven deals in his first year. Six of those deals were from cold calls.

Still, Mitch knew he was looking for something more. He wanted a sense of community. He found it when he connected with the Landy Frost Group. The mentorship he received there became a turning point.

"They taught me how to be better," he says. "How to show up the right way."

A year later, he made another strategic move, joining Compass, where he now works alongside top producers every day. It's an environment that fuels his growth, challenges him, and keeps him learning.

And the results speak for themselves. He's doubled his business, or better, year over year. He sold 6 million in 2024, 13 million in 2025, and his goal for 2026 is 20 million.

But for Mitch, the numbers are only part of the story. What matters most is connection.

"I become people's friend when buying or selling a home," he says. "I genuinely care about their lives." That authenticity is his edge. It's also his foundation. Because for someone who once felt out of place everywhere he went, Mitch has finally found where he belongs: in community, in purpose, and in a career that rewards both.

Today, he works seven days a week. Not because he has to, but because he wants to. Simply put, he's hooked on real estate. And that might be the biggest transformation of all.

Mitch is an inspiration, kicking addiction and alcoholism to the curb and soaring above adversity to help others. His future looks bright in real estate! 🌟

him something he hadn't always had – confidence. That confidence carried into the next chapter.

After years of working in restaurants, Mitch realized something important: he loved people. He loved conversation. He genuinely cared about others' stories.

"I caught on to mentorship," he says. He started turning to people in his run club. "I found the fastest person there and asked them, 'How do you do it? Show me.'" He also asked friends in his running community how they are successful in his careers.

"What are you good at?" they asked him.

"I have no idea," admits Mitch. "I love people and talking to people. I have been waiting tables for 7 years now."

Until he wasn't. At 25, something shifted. Not overnight, not dramatically, but enough. Sobriety began to take root. And then came running.

What started as a fitness goal quickly turned into something more. Mitch set a target: run a mile in under five minutes. He hit it. Then he kept going, joining a run group, entering marathons, and steadily improving.

By 2022, he had set his sights on something few achieve: qualifying for the Olympic Trials. He did it. With a marathon time of 2:16:40, Mitch not only qualified, he placed 38th in the country at the trials in Orlando.

The discipline it took to get there wasn't just physical. It was mental. It was emotional. It was a complete rewiring of how he approached his life. And it gave

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Elle Spikes

BUILDING A BUSINESS IN WEST AUSTIN, ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME

LEAHFAYE PHOTOGRAPHY

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH MCCABE



At five years old, most kids are learning how to tie their shoes. Elle Spikes was learning how to collect rent. Not as a chore. Not as a one-time errand. As part of everyday life. “I always say I’ve been in real estate since I was five,” Elle laughs.

It’s not much of a stretch. Real estate wasn’t just something her parents did. It was the backdrop of her childhood. Her mom worked in residential real estate, while her dad built something from the ground up as an investor and custom home builder in the Dallas area. He arrived with very little and built a thriving business by doing whatever it took to get the job done.

“He was a jack of all trades,” Elle says. She watched him turn nothing into something special.

That kind of example sticks. Elle spent her early years tagging along to rental properties, walking apartment complexes, and watching firsthand what it meant to manage, maintain, and grow a business. It left an impression upon her young mind.

But real estate wasn’t her first professional chapter. Elle went to college, earned a degree in education, and spent 11 years in the classroom. Then life shifted. She and her husband, who works in tech, began a series of cross-country moves that would eventually shape everything. From Texas to

the San Jose Bay Area for five years, then on to Seattle for another five, Elle found herself adapting to new cities, new communities, and new opportunities.

It was in Seattle that real estate officially became more than background noise.

“I got my license, had my first listing... and then COVID hit,” she says.

The timing could have been disastrous. Instead, it became a turning point. Like so many

families during that time, Elle and her family made the decision to return to Texas. But returning to Dallas-Fort Worth didn’t feel like the right fit anymore.

“We had gotten used to the West Coast,” she says. The lifestyle and natural beauty had changed what they were looking for.

So they began exploring West Austin. A search led them to Lakeway, Bee Cave, and the Lake Travis area. One visit made it clear.

“We had lunch at The Hills Country Club, explored Lakeway and Bee Cave, and just fell in love with the Lake Travis lifestyle,” Elle says. “We knew we wanted to call Lakeway home and live in The Hills.”

They didn’t take a slow approach. They purchased a home in The Hills of Lakeway sight unseen and haven’t looked back.

There was just one problem: she didn’t know anyone.



“There’s no one-size-fits-all here. People are looking for different things depending on their stage of life, and part of my job is helping them see how West Austin can fit into that.”



Starting a real estate career in a brand-new city like Austin, without a sphere or local network, is one of the hardest paths in the business. Elle didn’t hesitate. She connected with a high-volume agent shortly after arriving, moving to Austin on a Thursday and starting work the very next day.

“She said, ‘Come on, let’s go,’” Elle recalls. “It was exactly what I needed.”

For three years, Elle immersed herself in the business, learning at a high level and building momentum. By year two, she made a strategic move to Compass, and not long after, she made another bold decision: to step out on her own.

“I wanted to focus on West Austin real estate and really build my brand in Lakeway, Bee Cave, and the Lake Travis communities,” she says.

That decision is paying off.

In her first year on her own, Elle closed approximately \$4 million in volume. Now, she is on track to reach \$20 million this year. It didn’t happen overnight. It has been a steady process of building relationships, staying visible, and consistently showing up.

But something else happened along the way. Five years ago, she knew only one person in Austin, her cousin. Today, she can’t go out in Lakeway or Bee Cave without running into familiar faces.

“It’s fun to sit back and reflect,” she says. “I’ve built a real network here in the Lake Travis area.”

Elle works with a wide range of clients, but at the core of her business is a highly personalized, relationship-driven approach. She takes the time to understand each client’s goals, ensuring every experience feels tailored to them.

Many of her clients are people she has met through everyday life in Lakeway, raising kids, attending events, and being actively involved in the West Austin community. Others are drawn to the area after following her on social media, where she shares what makes life in Lakeway, Bee Cave, and the Lake Travis area so unique.

She also works with a number of relocation clients, many of whom are making the same kind of transition she once did, and value having someone who can guide them not just through the home search, but

through what it’s like to truly live in West Austin.

She works with clients in every stage of life, from families planting roots to those downsizing, as well as grandparents relocating to be closer to children and grandchildren.

“There’s no one-size-fits-all here,” Elle says. “People are looking for different things depending on their stage of life, and part of my job is helping them see how West Austin can fit into that.”

That level of care and attention is what drives her business. Whether someone is moving to Austin or making a move within the Lakeway and West Austin communities, her approach remains the

same: thoughtful, informed, and grounded in a deep understanding of both the market and the lifestyle.

At home, life is just as full. Elle and her husband are raising two children, a daughter who will be a freshman in college and a son who is a sophomore in high school, grounding their family in the same Lakeway community they once discovered through a simple search.

From collecting rent as a child to building a thriving business in Lakeway and the greater West Austin area, Elle Spikes has created something meaningful, step by step, client by client, and relationship by relationship.

And she’s just getting started. 🏡

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Built Her Business The Old-Fashioned Way – On Real Relationships

Lisa Muñoz

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH MCCABE

Photo by Leah Faye Photography

CONTINUED ►



The first deal she ever closed didn't come from a script, a system, or a perfectly polished pitch. It came from trust. Not the kind you automate. Not the kind you scale overnight. The kind you earn slowly, conversation by conversation, showing up when it matters and even when it doesn't directly benefit you.

In a world now driven by AI, chatbots, and robocalls, Lisa Muñoz has built something that feels almost radical in its simplicity: a business rooted entirely in real relationships. No cold calling. No farming. No chasing strangers. Just people who know her, trust her, and come back again and again.

And it all started with two homes.

Originally from Houston, Lisa was the first in her family to graduate from high school, let alone attend college. She moved to Austin in 1995 to attend the University of Texas, paying her own way so she could build a life on her own terms. She graduated in 1999 with a degree in cultural anthropology, fascinated by people, how they live, and what shapes their decisions.

What she didn't realize at the time was just how much that perspective would shape her career.

"I quickly realized I couldn't really do anything with that degree," she says with a laugh. But real estate? That was a different story.

Lisa got her license the same year she graduated, stepping into the industry during the height of the tech boom, only to watch it crash soon after. Over the past 26 years, she's seen every kind of market imaginable. The highs, the lows, and everything in between.

But from the very beginning, she knew one thing: she wasn't going to do business the way everyone else did. Pulled into a large brokerage early on, Lisa was introduced to the traditional playbook: cold calling, door knocking, chasing leads. It didn't sit right.

"It didn't align with my values," she says.

Instead, she found a mentor who built their business entirely through referrals. That model clicked. It felt natural. Honest. Sustainable. There was just one problem: Lisa didn't have a network.

"The people I knew were other recent grads," she explains. "My sphere was tiny."

Her first year in the business, she closed just two homes. But she paid attention. She studied houses. She focused on taking care of people. And slowly, those two deals turned into four. Four turned into twelve. And something began to take shape. Lisa wasn't just building a transaction-based business. She was building a relationship-based one.

“
I became very intentional. Not just about what I did before & during the transaction, but after.”
”

Photo by Leah Faye Photography

“I became very intentional,” she says. “Not just about what I did before and during the transaction, but after.” That shift changed everything.

Today, her database includes around 1,000 households, but more importantly, it consistently generates 200 clients a year who want to work with her and her team. Many of those relationships have turned into repeat or referral clients.

And in all that time? “I think I’ve done one open house,” she says. “Ever.”

Even in a challenging market, Lisa’s business continues to thrive. The Muñoz Group did more than \$77 million in 2025, with the vast majority of it coming directly from her database. Only a small fraction, less than \$5 million, came from outside sources.

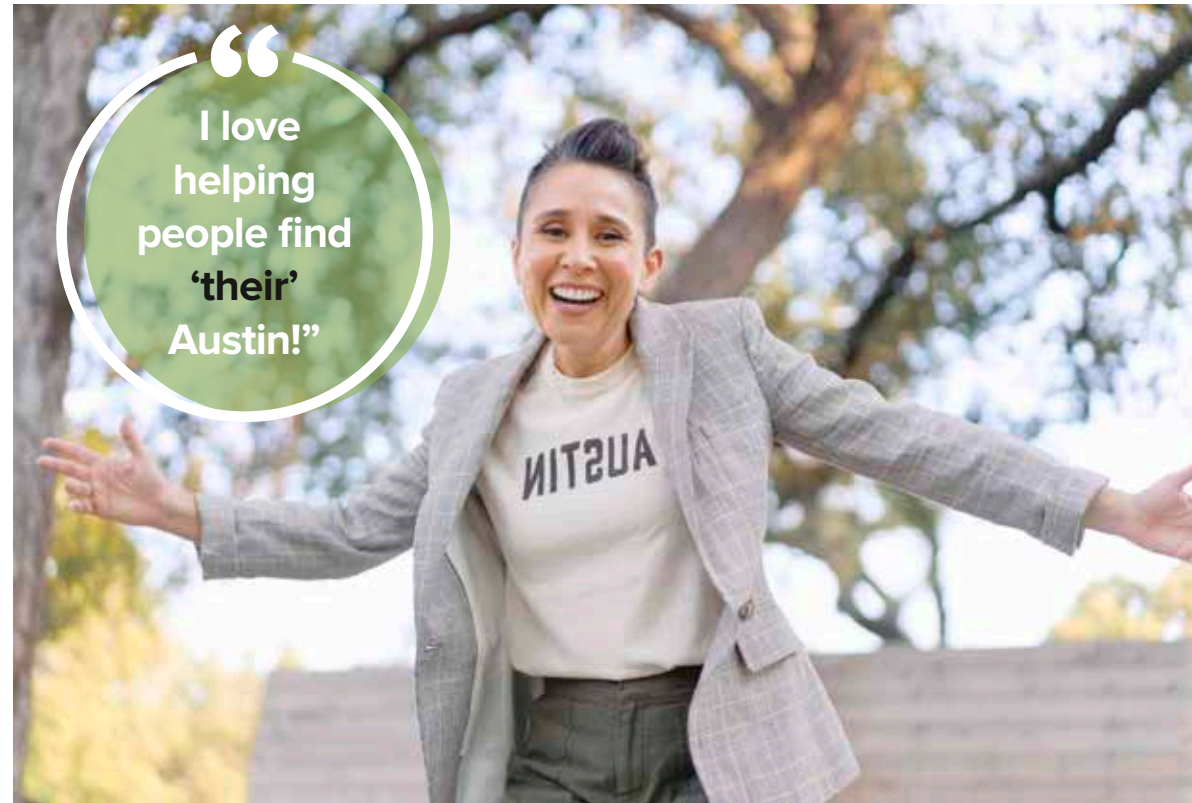
It’s not luck. It’s structure.

Lisa leads a seven-person team, but her role is anything but distant. She’s involved in everything, setting the tone and the standard for how clients are treated.

There are dedicated buyer’s agents, a listing specialist, a transaction coordinator, and an operations manager. But one role stands out: the “Head of Happiness.” That’s not a gimmick. From high-level client gifting to thoughtfully curated events, Lisa’s team is constantly looking for ways to surprise and delight the people they serve. It’s one more layer of intentionality in a business built on care.

“I’m a total house nerd,” Lisa admits. “I love Austin. I love homes. And honestly, I probably talk people out of buying or selling as much as I talk them into it.” Lisa takes great pride in providing a luxury experience at every price point. “I love helping people find ‘their’ Austin!”

That kind of honesty is rare. It’s also the reason her clients trust her. For Lisa, success is about doing what’s right for the person sitting across from her, even if that means telling them to wait.



That same instinct extends to how she’s built her team. Her listing manager? Once her favorite barista at Houndstooth Coffee. “I told them, ‘If you ever want to get into real estate, I’ll pay for your license and mentor you,’” Lisa recalls. Years later, during COVID, that barista reached out. The offer still stood. That’s how Lisa sees potential. Not just in homes, but in people.

Today, the Muñoz Group is on track to add another \$80+ million in volume this year, with an average sales price around \$700,000. From first-time buyers to luxury listings, including a recent \$5.5 million property, Lisa and her team work across the full spectrum of the market. Because for her, it’s never been about price point. It’s about people.

Outside of real estate, Lisa’s life is just as full. She’s been with her wife, Erin, for 27 years. Together, they’re raising two sons: Luca, a high school senior exploring engineering programs from Colorado to California, and Rhodes, their youngest, currently in seventh grade.

When she’s not working, you’ll likely find Lisa weight training, in a Pilates class, or stepping into a hot yoga session. And always—always—with a great cup of coffee in hand. Because some things never change. And in Lisa Muñoz’s world, that’s exactly the point.

In an industry constantly chasing the next big thing, she’s built something enduring by staying grounded in what matters most: relationships, integrity, and showing up for people, long after the transaction is done. ❧

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Jay Gagne is a Raymond James financial advisor who began his career back in 1995. He offers his clients more than 29 years of continuous investment management and financial planning expertise. Jay has achieved a Certification from the prestigious Wharton School of Business in Pennsylvania as a Certified Investment Management Analyst (CIMA), which translates to a deep understanding and knowledge of the available financial options for his clients.

Jay has continually been recognized for his achievements, including the following distinctions and honors:

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