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Steven Smith **26**  
COVER STORY

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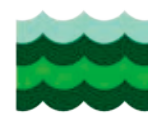


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# SCOTT GUIDRY

PARAGON INSPECTIONS

BY LAKEN FOISIE  
PHOTOS BY NEVADA REID

*For Scott Guidry, home inspections are about far more than customary checklists and filing reports. They are about providing some peace of mind during one of the biggest decisions a family will ever make.*

As the owner of Paragon Inspections, LLC and a six-year Preferred Partner and supporter of *Baton Rouge Real Producers*, Scott has built his reputation on honesty, reliability, and a calm, steady approach to an often stressful part of the real estate process. Serving primarily Ascension, East Baton Rouge, and Livingston parishes, he approaches every inspection with the same mindset. “I treat every home inspection as if my family is buying the home,” Scott said. “I want to make sure, first and foremost, that the home is safe.”

Licensed as a home inspector since 2015, Scott entered the industry with a background that serves both agents and buyers. Not only is he a licensed Realtor, but before becoming an inspector, he worked as a supervisor for an environmental services company specializing in mold remediation and corrective construction. In south Louisiana’s humid climate, that experience has proven invaluable. That expertise gives clients an added layer of confidence, especially in a market where hidden moisture issues can quickly become costly problems. Combined with his real estate license and understanding of the transaction process, Scott brings a balanced perspective to every inspection. He understands not only the structure of a home, but also the emotions and moving pieces involved in a real estate deal.

Even so, Scott acknowledges that home inspections can sometimes carry a negative reputation within transactions. “Home inspections highlight a lot of negative aspects of a home, but they can highlight the positive aspects as well,” he said. “Every house has defects...every single one.”

For Scott, the goal is never to create fear or derail a deal unnecessarily. Instead, he sees inspections as an opportunity to educate buyers and provide clarity.

“The main purpose of a home inspection is not to make note of every single minor defect, but to make sure a potential home buyer knows about any major defects,” he said.

That practical, measured mindset is one reason so many real estate professionals continue to trust and recommend him. Agents know Scott communicates clearly, stays level-headed, and focuses on helping clients understand what truly matters.

“Communication is a key part of the home inspection,” Scott said. “I don’t want to make mountains out of mole hills, but I want a homebuyer to know if there’s a mountain.”

It is a philosophy rooted in his own desire to give and receive honesty and professionalism.

While his job requires him to point out concerns and deficiencies, Scott makes it a priority to maintain a positive attitude throughout the process. “I always try to remain positive with everyone even though the home inspection typically is considered the most negative part of the real estate process,” he said. That character trait has extended into his long-standing partnership with *Baton Rouge Real Producers*.



He chooses to be a part of this platform to stay connected to the local agents and build relationships beyond the transactional part of a sale.

Like many professionals in the industry, Scott understands the demands that come with serving clients in a fast-moving market. Long days, unpredictable schedules, and the constant need to stay available can make work-life balance difficult. "One of the hardest things in the real estate industry is time management," he said. Still, family remains the driving force behind everything he does. "When I'm not working, which isn't very often, I'm normally at home with my wife and son," Scott said. In fact, he describes them as the reason behind his continued dedication and work ethic. "My wife and son are my why," Scott said. "I love helping people, but the main reason I'm still smiling while walking on roofs or crawling under houses is because I know I get to see their smiles when I get home."

That perspective keeps Scott grounded. While home inspections may focus on houses, his work ultimately centers around the families who will fill them. Whether he is climbing through attics, assessing foundations, or helping buyers better understand a property, Scott approaches every inspection with the kind of steady reassurance clients, and truly anyone involved in getting a deal to the closing table, remember long after closing day. ▾



“THE MAIN REASON I’M STILL SMILING while walking on roofs or crawling under houses is because I know I get to see their smiles when I get home.”



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# Steven Smith

Broker of The Year

“We had \$167 to our name when we got into real estate. We rolled up our loose change, headed to Orange Beach, and came back with nothing.”

BY LAKEN FOISIE  
PHOTOS BY NEVADA REID

For The Market Real Estate Co broker and Team Smith co-founder Steven Smith, success in real estate has never been about shortcuts. It has been about commitment, consistency and an unwavering focus on people.

Steven speaks candidly about the level of sacrifice required to build a successful career in real estate. For him and his wife, Laura Buck Smith, there was no safety net when they started. In fact, it came at a moment of uncertainty. Before entering the industry in 2004, Steven worked in the restaurant business, the only career field he had ever known. As he and Laura were shutting down their restaurants, he was preparing to take a job with Ruth’s Chris Steak House when Laura made a decision that would ultimately change the trajectory of their family’s future.

“As we were shutting down our restaurants, Laura decided to go to real estate school,” Steven said. “I only knew the restaurant business, so I was on track to taking a job with Ruth’s Chris at about the same time Laura brought home a commission check. I remember thinking that was more money than we made in a month. I signed up to go to real estate school the next day.”

The nature of the real estate beast is feast or famine. Though closings were lined up, Steven remembers the uncertainty vividly. While friends spent evenings socializing, he and Laura stayed focused on building their business from the ground up.

What started as an agreed upon leap of faith eventually evolved into one of the most recognizable brands in the regional market. Their reach extends throughout the Greater Baton Rouge area as well as North and South Alabama, and Steven balances the demands of managing solo agents while continuing to grow a high-producing team.

“You have to be fully in or it’s going to be really difficult to make it work,” Steven said.

That all-in mindset recently earned Steven one of the industry’s most respected honors when he was named Broker of the Year at the *Baton Rouge Real Producers Awards Gala* held in April. The recognition reflects not only years of production and leadership, but also the culture Steven and his wife, Laura, have intentionally built across their brokerage and team operations. Over the years, the accolades have followed the drive and determination.

“ I remember thinking that was more money than we made in a month...”

Steven was inducted into the RE/MAX Hall of Fame and later achieved Mega Icon Agent status while affiliated with eXp Realty. Team Smith was ranked the No. 1 large team in Louisiana for both volume and sides while also earning

“  
It is a people business  
and you have to be  
obsessed with taking  
care of your clients.”



recognition as a top 100 team nationally for transactions by RealTrends Verified. Still, Steven believes the recent Broker of the Year recognition carries special meaning because it reflects leadership more than production.

“I listen to my clients, team, and agents and do my best to take care of their needs in whatever situation comes up,” Steven said. “Being both the broker and team leader over two states can be challenging, and I have to be prepared for whatever comes my way.” That proactive approach has positioned his agents for success in shifting markets where adaptability has become essential. “I have a really good ability to forecast what the market is going to do, and I get my team and brokerage prepared for those changes months before it happens.”

Steven sees many new agents searching for fast-track solutions, but he believes sustainable businesses are built through discipline and intentional follow-up. He remains grounded in what he believes truly drives long-term success: relationships and systems. Steven emphasized that real estate remains a people-centered business despite the influx of digital tools and automated systems. “There is no secret system or magic bullet,” Steven said. “It is a people business, and you have to be obsessed with taking care of your clients.” That philosophy is one he not only teaches but lives daily through the culture he and Laura have created within their organization. He encourages agents to use technology as a support tool rather than a replacement for genuine client care.

Beyond production and brokerage leadership, Steven and Laura have also made giving back a central part of their mission. Through initiatives like The Christmas Give, they work to support families facing hardship during the holiday season. Their efforts also include stuffing more than 100 backpacks for the homeless community and providing every student at Gardere Christian School with a new pair of New Balance shoes and bags filled with essentials.



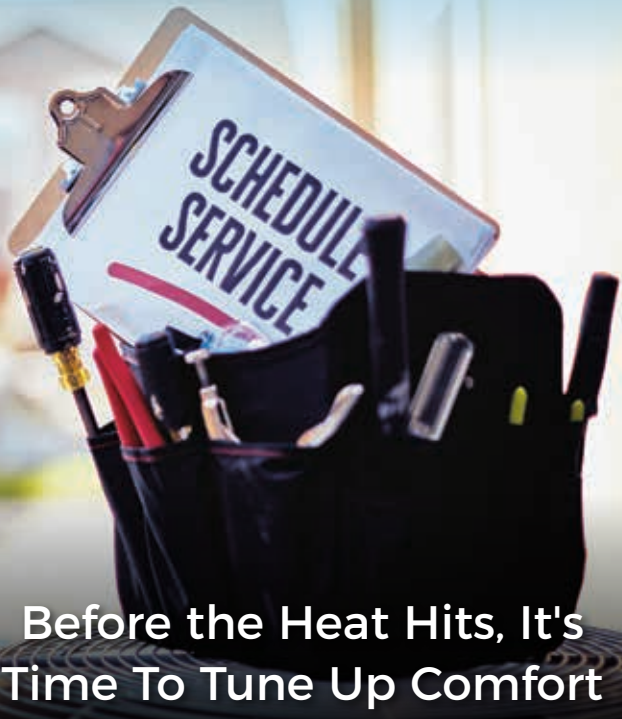
Steven credits the generosity of trade partners, past clients, family and friends for making those outreach efforts possible. “What a blessing they all are to these students and teachers,” Steven said.

Even with the demands of brokerage leadership and team growth, Steven remains deeply rooted in family.

He and Laura recently celebrated more than 25 years of marriage and are raising four children together: Wesleigh, twins Blayde and Blayne, and Leah.

“They are my reason for getting up every morning and giving 100 percent to everything that I do to try to provide for them,” Steven said. ▀

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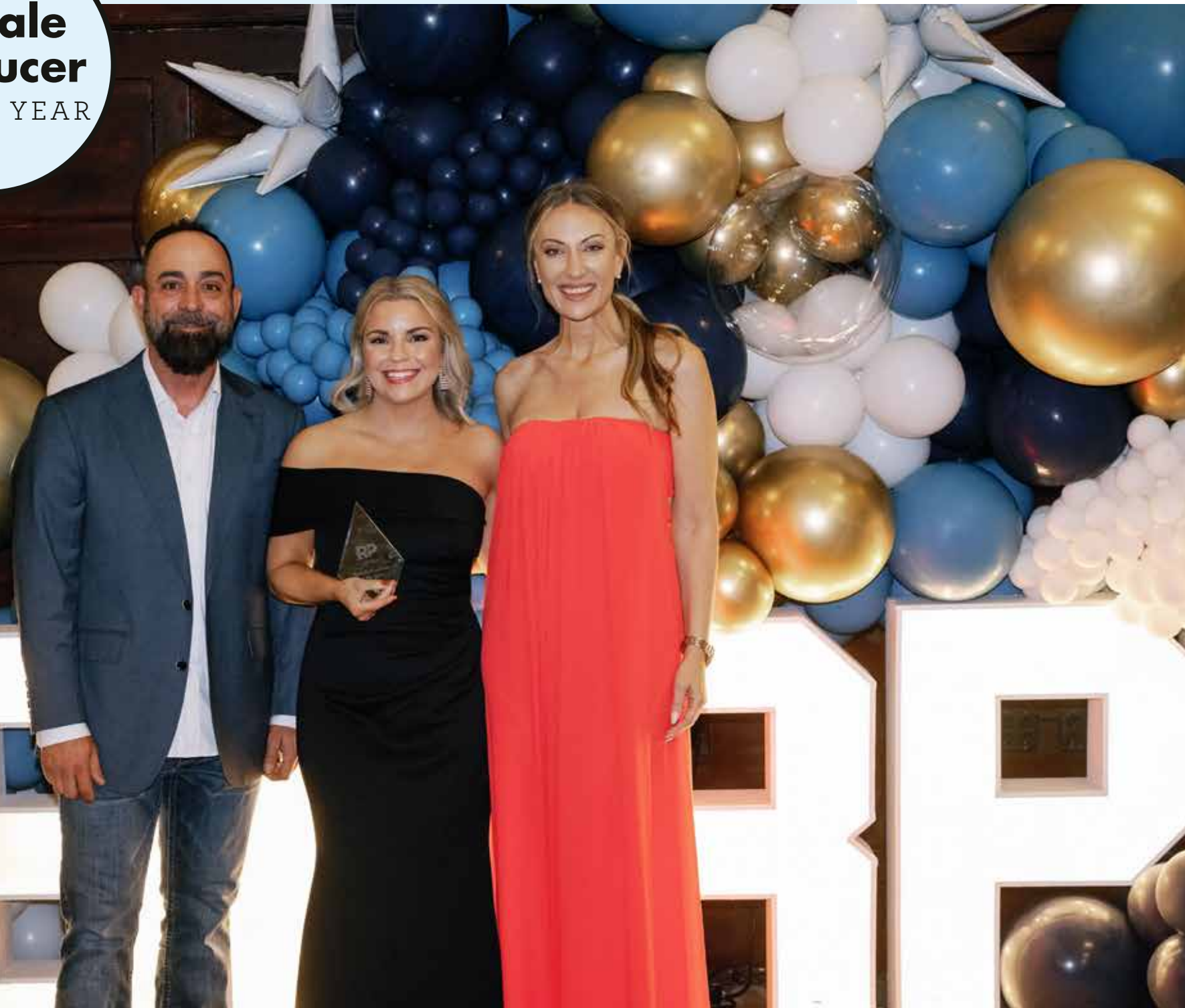
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# NICOLE Rowell

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**Female  
Producer**  
OF THE YEAR



Nicole Rowell is not new to real estate or the changes that come with the industry. She has spent nearly two decades building a career reputation rooted in relationships, trust and consistency; the qualities that recently earned her the title of Female Producer of the Year at the BRRP Annual Awards Gala.

For Nicole, the recognition represents far more than production numbers or career milestones.

“I never want to lose sight of the responsibility that comes with that,” Nicole said of being recognized as a standout leader. She said being honored by both peers and clients feels “incredibly humbling.” Professionally, Nicole said the award validates the hard work and meaningful relationships she has invested in throughout her career. Personally, it serves as a reminder that perseverance and genuinely caring about people still matter in business.

While success in real estate is often measured in sales and production, Nicole believes the defining characteristic among top-performing agents goes much deeper. “Success in this industry is about much more than numbers,” Nicole said. “It’s about trust, reputation, and how you treat people along the way.” She added that perseverance is one of the most important traits in the business because real estate demands consistency and adaptability behind the scenes. At the same time, she believes strong relationships are what truly separate great agents from the rest.

That focus on relationships has also been one of the clearest signs to Nicole that she chose the right career path. Early in her career, she realized success was not tied to transaction totals, but rather to the clients who returned years later and referred friends and family.

“That level of trust meant more to me than any milestone,” Nicole said.

Outside of real estate, Nicole stays grounded through her faith, family and close friends. In an industry that often moves at a nonstop pace, she said having meaningful relationships and time to recharge helps keep life in perspective.

Looking ahead, Nicole hopes to see more collaboration and genuine connection throughout the real estate industry. While the business can be competitive, she believes agents ultimately share the same purpose: helping people navigate major life moments.

And if there is one thing she hopes people say about her when she is not in the room, it is simple.

***“I hope others would say that I’m genuine, hardworking, and someone they can trust.”***

# STEPHEN Couvillion

**Male  
Producer**  
OF THE YEAR

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Stephen Couvillion's journey with Baton Rouge Real Producers has mirrored the steady growth of his real estate career from being named Rising Star in 2020 to landing the July 2025 cover story, and most recently earning the title of Male Producer of the Year.

For Stephen, the recognition comes with both gratitude and perspective. While the awards celebrate production and achievement, Stephen believes the recognition also carries responsibility. He said being named BRRP Male Producer of the Year challenges him to represent the *Baton Rouge Real Producers* community with integrity and professionalism while embodying the qualities associated with the honor.

"Personally, it was such a needed encouragement and validation to keep going," Stephen said.

Behind the success and accolades were seasons of doubt, burnout and significant changes within his business. He said winning the award arrived at exactly the right time and reminded him why he continued pushing forward through difficult moments.

The cover story carried an even deeper meaning because it became a celebration of family as much as career success. Stephen chose to feature his wife, Cara, and daughters, Ruby and Indy Joy, alongside him on the cover. Family is the core of Stephen's efforts and the opinion of him that matters the most. "That was so special to get to show them the trophy that 'we' won," he said.

Stephen believes consistency is one of the defining traits that separates top producers from the rest. Production matters, he said, but long-term success comes from dependability, integrity

and authenticity year after year. Part of that authenticity has come through his willingness to openly share both his business and personal life. Stephen said transparency has allowed clients and colleagues to genuinely know the person behind the brand. "I'm very transparent and love sharing my life," Stephen said. "I think that's helped people know who they're really working with."

Long before awards and recognition, Stephen discovered he was on the right career path through a single client experience early in his career. About a year and a half into real estate, he worked with a buyer whose transaction became filled with challenges and stressful moments. Through problem-solving and persistence, Stephen helped keep the deal together until the client finally closed on her home. Afterward, she tearfully told him she never would have been able to do it without his help. "That was the moment I realized how much impact we can actually have on people's lives," Stephen said. Ironically, one of the most difficult seasons of his career became the experience that shaped him the most.

In March 2020, six or seven pending transactions unexpectedly fell apart. By April, Stephen had closed zero homes and had exhausted his savings trying to keep up with bills. Then the uncertainty of COVID-19 hit. At the time, Stephen questioned whether real estate would even remain viable and considered returning to teaching private basketball

lessons to make ends meet. Instead, he doubled down. "I just worked harder than I ever had at prospecting and lead generating," Stephen said. What followed became one of the biggest turning points of his career. Over the remaining eight months of 2020, Stephen closed 63 homes.

That perseverance, paired with an appreciation for teamwork, continues to shape the way he approaches the business today. Stephen said he values collaboration and enjoys finding win-win scenarios with the people he works alongside. He also believes the industry needs more agents who prioritize cooperation over confrontation. "Being hostile and egotistical doesn't help anything," Stephen said. "The agents that approach the business with teamwork and appreciation of other agents are the best to work with."

Outside of real estate, Stephen credits his wife and children for keeping him grounded. Between the chaos of family life and raising young daughters, he joked it is hard to take himself too seriously. "It's hard to be too full of yourself when all your nice shirts have snot stains and food splattered all over them," he said.

If his first-year real estate self could see him today, Stephen believes there would be some disbelief at everything he has overcome — but also gratitude that he kept going.

# CASSIE Guedry

**Rising Star**  
OF THE YEAR

*Sponsored by FB Title Solutions*

When Cassie Guedry's name was announced as *Baton Rouge Real Producers' Rising Star of the Year*, the moment represented more than professional success. It reflected the trust she has earned from clients, peers and industry partners who have watched her quietly build a business rooted in consistency, communication and care.

For Cassie, receiving the award carried special meaning because of the caliber of professionals alongside her in the category. "Winning this award meant so much to me because I was up against so many incredible Realtors that I truly respect," Cassie said. "Being voted the winner by BRRP partners, my clients, and fellow colleagues was such an honor and something I don't take lightly."

She said the recognition also affirmed the long hours and intentional effort she pours into every relationship and transaction. More importantly, it became a reminder for her daughters that hard work and authenticity still matter. "It



also means a lot as a mom, because I want my daughters to see that when you work hard, stay genuine, and keep pushing forward, people notice and good things can come from it," she said.

While Cassie may be considered a rising star in real estate, her background prepared her for the demands of the industry long before she entered it. From working as a licensed practical nurse to investing in real estate and spending time as a stay-at-home mother, each chapter shaped the way she serves clients today.

Nursing taught her patience and calm under pressure. Real estate investing sharpened her understanding of the market and helped her see transactions through a client's perspective. Motherhood strengthened her ability to multitask, communicate and problem-solve with grace.

Looking back, Cassie believes every season of life equipped her with tools she now relies on daily in business.

Cassie said honesty and communication are the qualities she values most in the people she works alongside, adding that professionalism and kindness can significantly shape the experience for everyone involved in a transaction. She believes the industry as a whole could benefit from stronger communication across every level, from agents and lenders to vendors and clients.

As she continues growing her business, Cassie views the Rising Star award not as a finish line, but as motivation to keep improving and proving herself worthy of the recognition. "I want to continue growing, serving my clients at a high level, and showing that I'm committed to being a top producer and someone people can trust in this industry."

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# Tonya Toups Gautreau

## The Connector

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**What did winning this award mean to you?** It truly brings me joy to be in the room with top agents in our area. Often times I'm the one facilitating the rooms, people, and gatherings so it's really cool to know others see the value in those connections too! Being a connector is one of my favorite things to do.

**What responsibility comes with receiving this award, or being recognized as a stand out leader in this industry?** Just knowing that it's noticed, valued and appreciated makes me want to continue doing what comes natural- loving on people, and bringing them together to collaborate, network and grow.

**Our awards are success derived, however the roots of nominees and winners are the attributes behind the success. What do you think was the stand out character trait of the nominees in your category?** This year, more than ever, was Culture and Kindness. Collaboration over competition!!



**Was there a moment in your real estate business that you knew you were finding success and on the right career path?** Absolutely!! Leadership is tough, but when you feel like your role is a God-aligned assignment, it becomes more of a ministry than career.

**What quality do you value most in the people you work with?** There are two. Excellence and Grace.

**What part of your life outside of real estate keeps you the most centered**

**or grounded?** My faith, 100%. I'm not shy about saying that Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit are my navigational beacon.

**What is one thing our industry needs more of right now?** Good culture.

**If your first-year-in-real-estate-self could see you now, what would they say?** Look at you... You DO look better as a brunette!... and also, well done girl!!

inspired, and trusted me throughout this journey. I am truly grateful and humbled by this honor.

**What responsibility comes with receiving this award, or being recognized as a stand out leader in this industry?** Winning doesn't just recognize what you've already done, it also raises the bar for what people will look to you for going forward. One of the biggest responsibilities is being consistent in the example you've already set. Most importantly, it's a reminder that inspiration isn't a one-time moment—it's ongoing. People will naturally look to you as someone who represents positivity and integrity in your field, so continuing to live in alignment with those values becomes part of the role. My success is rooted in my faith and my relationship with my Lord and Savior. That foundation has shaped who I am and how I serve others. I truly believe that genuinely caring for people is what makes a lasting difference.

**Was there a specific moment in your career that shaped you the most? This can be prior to your real estate timeline.** Yes. When I was younger and just entering the working world, I joined a company called Home Interiors and Gifts. The owner, Mary C. Crowley, saw women as more than just homemakers and inspired me with a strong work ethic that I still carry with me today. She would always say, "BE SOMEBODY—GOD NEVER TOOK THE TIME TO MAKE A NOBODY," which impacted me deeply and reminded me that I could always make a difference in the lives of others. She also shared a simple but powerful message in 10 two-letter words that changed my perspective: "IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME." Alongside my faith and that work ethic, I learned to do what it takes to be successful while also knowing that with God, all things are possible.

**What quality do you value most in the people you work with?** In a real estate career, what people tend to value most in others usually comes down to trust and consistency above everything else. Clients want to feel that you're honest with them—even when the truth isn't what they hoped to hear. That means clear communication, no overpromising, and being upfront about pricing, market conditions, or potential issues with a property. After trust, reliability matters a lot. Real estate moves fast, so people value someone who responds quickly, follows through, and doesn't drop details. A missed call or delayed update can cost someone a deal, so consistency builds confidence. Another big one is local knowledge. Knowing neighborhoods, schools, pricing trends, and what's coming on the market helps people feel they're making informed decisions, not guesses. And finally, people really appreciate patience and emotional steadiness. Buying or selling a home is stressful, and having someone who can stay calm, explain things clearly, and not pressure them makes a big difference.

**What part of your life outside of real estate keeps you the most centered or grounded?** Knowing that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. My family comes

next. I have 2 beautiful daughters and a handsome son. They have blessed me with 7 grandchildren that I cherish dearly, and I have been blessed again with 6 great-grandchildren, with #7 on the way in December. God is so, so good to have allowed me to see all of this and to share in their lives.

**What is one thing our industry needs more of right now?** One thing the real estate industry needs right now is more trust and transparency at every level. Too often, people feel like they're being "sold to" instead of being guided. In a market that can be confusing and fast-moving, clients don't just need listings and numbers—they need straight answers, honest expectations, and someone willing to tell them the truth even when it's uncomfortable.

**What do you hope others say about you when you're not in the room?** I would hope people would say that I was a good leader, that I truly loved the real estate business, and that I treated others with honesty, kindness, and respect. I hope they would say my values and character were genuine, that I lived my faith openly, and that my love for the Lord guided the way I lived and worked every day.



Inspirer of the Year Nominees: Selina Loupe, Donna Villar, Christie Farris

# Donna Villar

## The Inspirer

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**What did winning this award mean to you?** Winning the "Inspirer of the Year" award means so much to me. I was totally shocked. I was honored just to be nominated, but actually winning is something I never expected. I am

incredibly thankful for all of my friends, relatives, and my Realtor family who voted for me and supported me along the way. Your encouragement and belief in me mean more than words can say. I am also so thankful that God blessed me

with a career that I truly love — a career that allows me to help others, build relationships, and make a difference in people's lives every day. This award is not just about me; it represents the amazing people who have supported,

# Rhett Sandusky & The Sandusky Group

Elevator Sponsored by Salon Raybon  
Team Sponsored by Paragon Inspections

## The Elevator of The Year & Team of The Year

**What did winning this award mean to you?** Winning Team of the Year is the most rewarding to me because I'm nothing without the team. I've worked extremely hard to replace "me" with "we" so winning this award shows that it's paying off. As for the Elevator Award, it just shows that what I'm doing is working. It's easy to get discouraged and think no one is paying attention. But it also helps to enjoy and have fun with what you do despite what numbers may look like.

**What responsibility comes with receiving this award, or being recognized as a stand out leader in this industry?** The responsibility I feel is to continue pouring into the team and giving them as much value as possible. I don't take leading them lightly.

**Our awards are success derived, however the roots of nominees and winners are the attributes behind the success. What do you think was the stand out character trait of the nominees in your category?** As for Team of the Year, the common rate is strong leadership. All of the team leaders nominated aren't afraid to step up and lead others, and they do it well.

**Was there a moment in your real estate business that you knew you were finding success and on the right career path?** I can't think of one defining moment, but the further along in your career you get the more repeats and referrals will come. Once I started noticing more of those, I definitely got the feeling that I was experiencing the

success of putting in consistent hard work over the years.

**Was there a specific moment in your career that shaped you the most? This can be prior to your real estate timeline.** The first year of real estate in general shaped me the most. It showed me that I didn't know much of anything, and that I really needed to humble myself and learn all that I could rather than focusing on the vanity metrics. I got knocked down a lot and I'm so grateful I got back up each time.

**What quality do you value most in the people you work with?** Honesty and respect.

**What part of your life outside of real estate keeps you the most centered or grounded?** My faith in Jesus is what keeps me the most grounded. It's what I go back to whether personally or



professionally that shapes the focus I know I need to have.

**If your first-year-in-real-estate-self could see you now, what would they say?** They'd say, "So you film yourself eating food on camera? And post it?"

**What do you hope others say about you when you're not in the room?** I hope others speak of my character rather than my profession. I want to be known as someone that valued things much higher than real estate.



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# Event Recap



Female Producer of the Year Nominees: Amanda Lass, Remy Curry, Rae Broussard, Nicole Rowell, Nia Bookter



Broker of the Year Steven Smith pictured with category sponsor FB Title Solutions representatives Darby Mann and Attorney Charles Blaize.



The Boss of the Year Nominees: Kelli Wascom, Joelle Duet Hocke, Laura Boeke, Zoie Bacon. Not pictured: Chandi Anderson and Lyric Dupont



Cover of the Year July 2025, Stephen Couvillion, sponsored by Gulf Coast Title and represented by Jene' Grand.



Male Producer of the Year Nominees: Stephen Couvillion, Rhett Sandusky, Dustin Alexander, Tyler Alexander, Brandon Richoux, Deante' Thomas. Not pictured: Richard Spears, Jr.



Broker of the Year Nominees: Darren James, Victoria Haddad, Karen Moore, Brittney Pino, Brittany Walker, Steven Smith



Team of the Year Nominees: The Sandusky Group, Constellation Home Sales, Team Smith. Not Pictured: The Newman Group



Impact Story of the Year: November Cover Story featuring Remy Curry. Sponsored by Vicki Hubbard and Hubbard Flooring Studio



The Boss of the Year Kelli Wascom pictured with category sponsor Olivier Doin with Rouge Painters.



The Elevator of the Year Nominees: Kelly Mitchell, Sara Fields, Rhett Sandusky



The Connector of the Year Nominees: Dione Collins, Tonya Toups Gautreau, Liz Laurent

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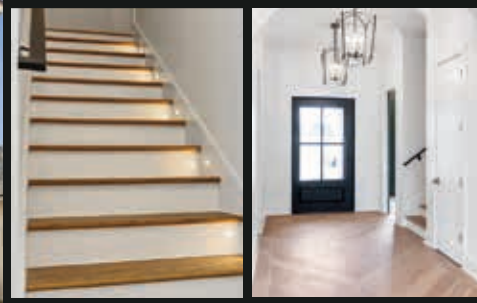
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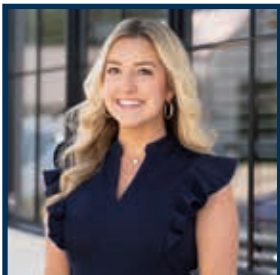
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