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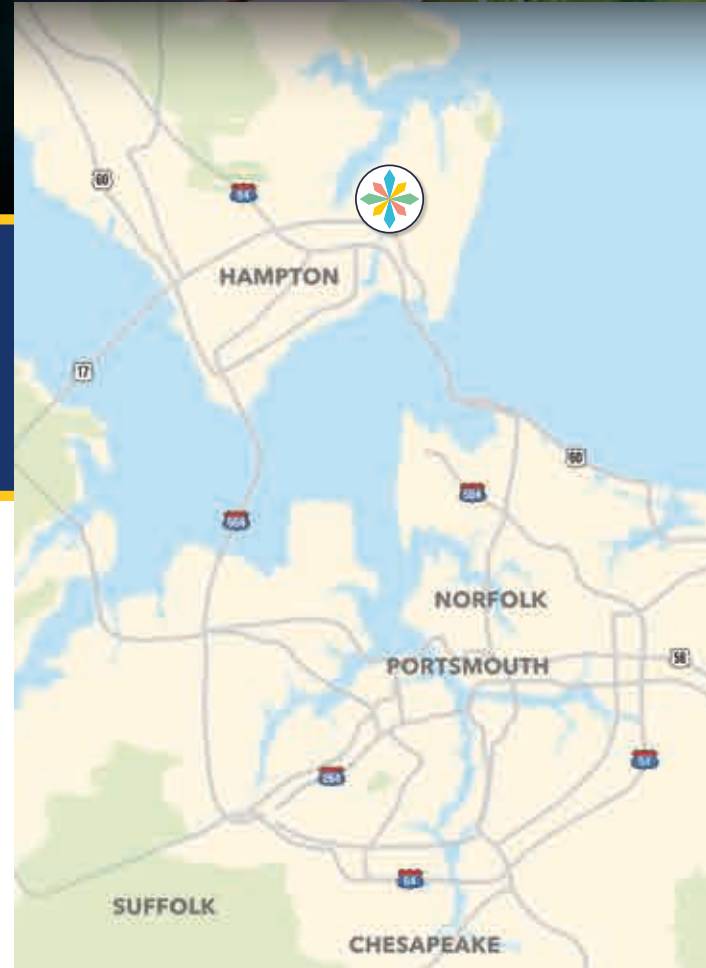
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If you are interested in nominating people for certain stories, please email us at: joni@realproducersmag.com.

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2025

BY THE NUMBERS

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TOTAL UNITS

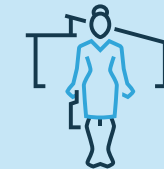


6,429



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AVERAGE UNITS PER AGENT

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Whitney Rodgers Donnell

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EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

PHOTOS BY SUSAN FOWLER, FOWLER STUDIOS PHOTOGRAPHY

Sometimes, the hardest seasons of life are simply preparing us for the life we're meant to live.

For Whitney Rodgers Donnell, that truth wasn't always easy to see. Looking back, she believes every challenge, setback, and unexpected turn served a purpose, leading her toward the life, career, and family she was meant to build.

Before real estate, Whitney spent years in the restaurant industry, eventually moving into restaurant sales and consulting with Sysco Hampton Roads. The fast-paced environment taught her valuable lessons in leadership, customer service, communication, and relationship-building, skills that would later become the foundation of her real estate career.

While her career was growing, life wasn't always easy. As a single mother, Whitney faced financial hardships, emotional challenges, and the daily pressure of providing for her two boys. "At times, I didn't know how I was going to make it all work," she recalls. "But I always believed if I worked hard, treated

people right, and kept moving forward, something good would come from it."

Then COVID changed everything.

Like many others, Whitney suddenly found herself facing uncertainty when the career she had spent years building came to an abrupt end. While helping manage a local restaurant and trying to figure out her next step, she remembered an unexpected conversation that would change the trajectory of her life.

One evening, REALTOR® Ashley Horak stopped into the restaurant where Whitney was working and immediately noticed her work ethic and ability to connect with people. "She told me, 'I think you'd be a great REALTOR®,'" Whitney says with a laugh. "I thought she was crazy. I had never considered real estate."

At first, Whitney dismissed the idea. But after losing her job and finding herself back in the restaurant industry, Ashley's words started resonating. "I sat in my car one day, crying and

trying to figure out what I was going to do next," Whitney states. "I decided to take the last little bit of money I had and invest in real estate school."

That decision changed her life.

Whitney earned her real estate license in April 2021 and quickly discovered that success would require discipline, consistency, and sacrifice. "In real estate, you wake up every day unemployed," she shares. "You have to earn your opportunities."

She spent countless hours prospecting, following up, attending training, hosting open houses, and building relationships. In those early months, she refused to leave the office until she had booked an appointment. She didn't allow herself the luxury of taking time off until she had reached important milestones because she knew the future she wanted would require sacrifice.

One piece of advice from Ashley became a guiding principle in her life: "If you aren't changing it, you're choosing it." Whitney shares, "Ashley





saw potential in me before I saw it in myself. She challenged me, held me accountable, and pushed me to become better every year.”

Just one month after becoming licensed, Whitney met Chris Donnell, who would become her biggest supporter. “Chris came into my life right as I was building my real estate career, and he’s been my biggest fan ever since,” she says. Together, they built a life centered around family, faith, and hard work, blending their two families into one. In November 2024, they purchased their family home, and in January 2025, they married in a private courthouse ceremony surrounded by their boys. “It wasn’t about a big wedding,” Whitney points out. “It was about becoming a family.”

Today, Whitney and Chris are raising their four boys together, and Whitney’s family remains her greatest motivation. “My family is my ‘why,’” she stresses. “Everything I do comes back to them.”

Known for her servant heart and genuine care for others, Whitney believes real estate is about far more than buying and selling homes. It’s about guiding clients through one of life’s biggest decisions with confidence, compassion, and unwavering support. Her goal is for every client to feel heard, valued, and cared for long after the transaction is complete.

When asked what she hopes her clients remember most about working with her, her answer is simple: “I hope my clients remember that I

truly cared, that I listened, supported them, and helped make one of life’s biggest decisions a little easier.”

Whitney believes now more than ever that everything happens for a reason. To date, she has successfully closed more than 150 real estate transactions, totaling over \$54 million in sales volume. Looking back, she can clearly see how every chapter of her journey served a purpose.

The career she lost opened the door to the career she loves. The challenges she faced built resilience and strength. The people who entered her life helped shape her growth. What once felt like the hardest season of her life became the foundation for the person, professional, wife, and mother she was always meant to be. ▀



“In real estate, you wake up every day unemployed. You have to earn your opportunities.”



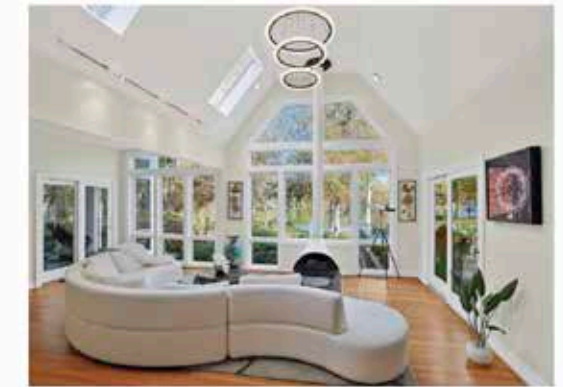
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Alexis LOHSE

AMW Real Estate

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When Alexis Lohse was in high school, she made a list in the Notes app on her phone of the professional endeavors she might pursue. She included “business owner,” “lawyer,” and a few other ideas. After graduating from York High School in 2020, she headed to college and forgot about the list.

After a couple of semesters, Alexis realized that the higher education path was not as fulfilling as she thought it would be. One day, while in that Notes app, she happened upon the list again and was surprised at what she had written in the top spot: “real estate agent.” She began considering the career

option and remembers thinking, “I have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

Alexis departed college, took the real estate course in 2021, and obtained her license in 2022. She was 21 years old.

Today, the Yorktown-born-and-raised agent, who spent her early days hosting open houses and working her sphere of influence, is enjoying a boom, thanks in large part to her creative mastery of TikTok, the platform that now almost exclusively fuels her pipeline. While she once did her own trial-and-error filming and later edited home-tour and local-content videos with voice-overs, she now mentors up-and-coming agents, and together, they film each other. Her face is now front and center in her videos, and people recognize her, follow her, and reach out when they need to buy, sell, and invest.

Alexis credits an important strategy for her social media approach, which four years after her TikTok launch included Instagram. “The biggest thing was consistency,” she shares. “For 30 days straight, I posted multiple times a day. Then I dropped to two posts a day. Now, I do one a day, but I might skip a day, too.”

Sometimes, she feels more like an influencer than a real estate agent, and much like an influencer, her hooks draw people in. One of her catchphrases is “I found it,” and her viewers are

accustomed to sound bites like “I found it—the perfect starter home.” She’s also a go-to for followers looking for the area’s hidden gems, and she’s an active member of a referral networking group.

Alexis has achieved significant accomplishments over the past four years, including hitting her income goal, purchasing a car, and then buying a house. She looks forward to securing another home, and she is quick to advise other young agents coming up behind her. “Your dreams can come true,” she tells them. “If I can do it, you can do it.” Alexis does not fixate on the end goals, however. “I focus on the steps in front of me, not the whole staircase,” she explains, adding that she does not track numbers and stats, which is easier on her brain.

As a solo agent at AMW Real Estate, Alexis is grateful to be surrounded by strong mentors and role models. She’s drawn inspiration from successful agents, business owners, and entrepreneurs who have shown her what’s possible through hard work, consistency, and a willingness to take risks. She also values the support and leadership she’s found at AMW Real Estate as she’s continued to grow her business.

When she steps away from her work, Alexis indulges her passion for travel and tries to get away once per month





FIND HER ON THE PLATFORMS

TikTok: @varealestateagent
 Instagram: @alexisvarealestateagent

LIFE LATELY

- **Current State of Mind:** Unorganized chaos.
- **Personality Type:** Extrovert through and through.
- **Instant “Yes” Purchase:** Any live concert ticket she can get her hands on.
- **Sweet Spot:** Health nut who loves baking brown butter cookies (her clients love them).
- **Dream Destination:** Greece is high on the list.
- **Favorite Coffee Shop:** Firehouse Coffee 1881, the United States Army’s oldest firehouse in Hampton.

to reset. Her next adventure is a 10-day excursion to Europe. “Travel expands the mind in so many ways,” she notes. She also loves fitness and participates in challenges (a half-marathon, 75 Hard) whenever she can. The self-proclaimed early bird goes to the gym (she wakes at 4:15 a.m.) to lift weights and do Pilates, and she finds cool parks for walking trails.

That list of career ideas still lives in Alexis’ Notes app, serving as a reminder of the real estate journey that is serving her so well. “I feel like I’ve truly grown as an individual,” she stresses. When she looks ahead, she sees the possibility of creating a team and expanding into other states. “I can only go so far by myself, but I can grow bigger, better, and faster with people,” she notes.

At the moment, Alexis is sticking with her original game plan: consistency. She’s doing what works and continuing to build a business—and a life—that reflects exactly who she is. ❏

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Some events are all about the venue. Others are all about the people. Spring Fling at Riverwalk Restaurant was the perfect combination of both.

On a beautiful spring afternoon in Yorktown, Peninsula Real Producers agents and preferred partners gathered to catch up, connect, and enjoy some well-deserved time together outside of the daily hustle of real estate. The conversations were easy, the laughs were plentiful, and the sense of community was on full display.

A special thank you to our event sponsor, PESTOUT, for helping make the event possible and to Susan Fowler of Fowler Studios Photography for capturing the moments that made the day so memorable. Please join us in reliving the afternoon through these photos.



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CASEY WALKER

COMMONWEALTH
INSURANCE

STORY BY DAN CLARK

Casey Walker's first job inside his family's insurance agency was less than glamorous. He was shipped to the farthest office and started as a file clerk, which was exactly the point. If you're going to run the business one day, you can't skip the work that keeps it running.

Casey is the president of Commonwealth Insurance in Virginia. He joined the agency nearly 15 years ago after graduating from Longwood University and officially took over the company last year. Commonwealth is a family-owned agency that's been in business for more than five decades, with seven locations and thousands of clients.

Casey grew up around business. His dad owned a road construction company, and his mom owned the insurance agency. He went to school for communications and originally thought he'd slide into something marketing-related inside the industry. Instead, he fell in love with what the job really is: relationships and problem-solving when people need it most.

Commonwealth's clients tend to stay. Casey said their average client relationship runs over a decade, which is rare in the "shop it online and forget it" world. He still recalls seeing agents help people on their worst days, including during total house fires, and walking them through what happens next, where they're sleeping that night, and how to put the pieces back together.

Commonwealth is a traditional "Main Street" independent agency, and Casey likes that description because it's accurate. The company handles just about everything except health insurance and specializes in property

and casualty, both personal and commercial. It insures families' homes and autos and pushes hard for umbrella policies because, as Casey states, everyone needs one. On the business side, the agency works with small- and mid-sized companies, contractors, and professionals such as dentists and lawyers.

The advantage of an independent agency is the options it offers. Commonwealth has relationships with roughly 45 carriers and can shop coverage across "blue blood" national companies, regional carriers, and wholesale markets that give access to solutions most people can't reach. Casey describes a scenario to illustrate: a \$3 million home located 11 miles from a fire department, where most carriers said no immediately. Commonwealth gathered data, worked directly with the fire department, and developed a proposal that secured coverage.

Casey is realistic about the market. Five years ago, insurance in Virginia felt easier. Carriers tolerated older roofs. Underwriting wasn't as restrictive. Then the market hardened, and suddenly, insurance could derail a home purchase. Casey says that shift created a renewed focus for them because they kept hearing the same story: people calling 10 places, nobody could help,

and closings were delayed because insurance turned into a hurdle.

Casey is proud of how Commonwealth shows up in that moment. "Our job in the transaction is to make the agent and the loan officer look really, really good," he explains. He wants agents to be able to say, "Call Commonwealth; they'll take care of you," and know the insurance side will get handled quickly, even when it's complicated.

Every client has an assigned account manager. About three months before renewal, the account manager starts paying attention, even before the client thinks about it. If the market is heating up for certain carriers or home values, they'll make a note, reach out early, run options, and explain the pros and cons.

Casey's job today is less about quoting and more about strategy. He spends time managing carrier relationships, planning growth, building systems, and empowering the team to do what it does best. He's careful about how they grow, too. He doesn't like moving people from carrier to carrier just to hit a quota. He'd rather grow steadily, keep loss ratios healthy, and do what's right for the customer.

Outside of work, Casey is in full girl-dad mode. He and his wife have been married for almost six years. They have two daughters, Eleanor, 4, and Lillian, 2. Most free time revolves around the pool, playgrounds, and plenty of dividing and conquering. He still gets on the golf course occasionally, plays guitar, loves to cook, and describes his perfect Sunday as family time with something



PHOTO BY MASON
MURAWSKI
PHOTOGRAPHY

on the smoker. He's also honest about the stage his family is in—two busy careers, two small kids, and the feeling that time is moving too fast.

What stands out about Casey is the mix of old-school and modern. He runs a traditional agency, but he's not stuck in the past. He wants clients to work with them however it's easiest: text, email, phone, e-sign, or in person. He understands that insurance is

“OUR JOB IN THE TRANSACTION IS TO MAKE THE AGENT AND THE LOAN OFFICER LOOK REALLY, REALLY GOOD.”



Photos on this page by Luke and Ashley Photography



a relationship business, and he thinks the industry loses something when it tries to force everything into an online-only experience.

At the end of the day, Casey's story is simple. He grew up around the work, started at the bottom, learned every piece of the operation, and now leads a company that's trying to do something rare: make insurance feel straightforward again, especially when families are buying one of their biggest assets and don't have time for confusion.

For agents and loan officers, Casey has become the kind of partner they want in their corner—someone who knows the market, answers the phone, and gets the policy in place without turning closing week into chaos. ▾



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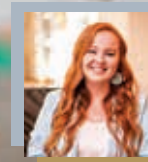
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Laura Byrd

Coldwell Banker Premier

STORY BY DAN CLARK
PHOTOS BY SUSAN FOWLER,
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Laura Byrd chose real estate when life handed her an opening, and she had the guts to take it.

She started her career in 2005, but the seed had been there long before that. Laura grew up in Hampton, graduated from Hampton High School, earned degrees through Thomas Nelson, then finished at CNU with a double major in management and marketing. After school, she worked a few different sales jobs, including six years at MCI. When MCI shut down and laid everyone off, she didn't just panic and grab the next thing. She used the severance and unemployment window to finally do what she'd wanted to do since her Thomas Nelson days.

She became a REALTOR®.

That decision fits her personality. Laura is straightforward. She doesn't sugarcoat. She tells people the truth, even when it's not what they want to hear. And because she was born and raised here, she's also local in the way that matters. She knows the area and the neighborhoods, and she understands how Hampton Roads moves.

She chose Coldwell Banker the same way she approaches everything else—with intention. The agent who helped

her sell her house worked there, but she still interviewed nine brokerages before she made her decision because she wasn't looking for brand recognition. She was looking for the right fit.

When you ask what she loves most about the job, she goes straight to the people who need it most. Helping a first-time buyer get a home is still her favorite part of the work. That kind of win sticks with her because she remembers how overwhelming it can feel when you don't know what you're doing yet. Buying a home is exciting, but it's also pressure, paperwork, countless decisions, and moments when somebody wants to know they aren't about to make a mistake. Laura's steady in those moments. She's direct, clear, and protective of her people.

She's also honest about what she's working on right now. She's focused on follow-up and staying in touch. After nearly two decades in the business, she's still trying to get better, which says a lot about how she sees the work.

If she could go back and do it again, she'd start younger and focus on follow-up earlier. She knows what builds longevity in this business: relationships, consistency, and staying connected. Even her closing gifts match that practical

approach. She keeps them useful by giving them a Lowe's or Home Depot gift card so her clients can buy something they need for the house.

Outside of real estate, Laura's life has changed a lot in recent years. Her husband passed away four years ago from colorectal cancer. It's just Laura now, along with her two Jack Russell Terriers, Bugsby and Harley. They're her people. "I don't know what I'd do without them," she shares. Her routine reflects that sentiment. Dog park. Beach walks. In the summer, she tries to go to the beach every morning and walk them. It's her reset. It's her peace. And it's also part of the gratitude that

THE ORIGIN STORY

Born at Langley Air Force Base, Laura spent her first six months in Hampton before moving to

the Philippines with her mother while her father was stationed overseas. A year later, she returned home to Hampton Roads, where she has lived most of her life.

keeps her grounded. When she talks about what she's most grateful for, she keeps it straightforward: her friends and her dogs.

For Laura, success is doing what she does well. Being solid. Being trusted. Being the person clients feel safe with. Being the friend who shows up. She wants people to remember her as someone who helps animals and people and is always a good friend. And what she most wants readers to know: She loves being a REALTOR®. She loves houses. She always has.

Now, looking ahead, she wants to keep working for at least another 12 years, then ease into part-time because she's earned the right to slow down when the time comes.

Laura has built her business on honesty, local knowledge, and a personality that doesn't pretend. In a world full of sugarcoating, she's the kind of agent who tells the truth and helps people win anyway. ▼

IN THE LOOP



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