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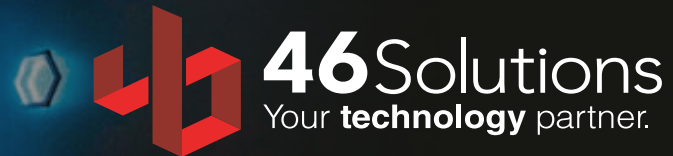


# Bob Sophiea

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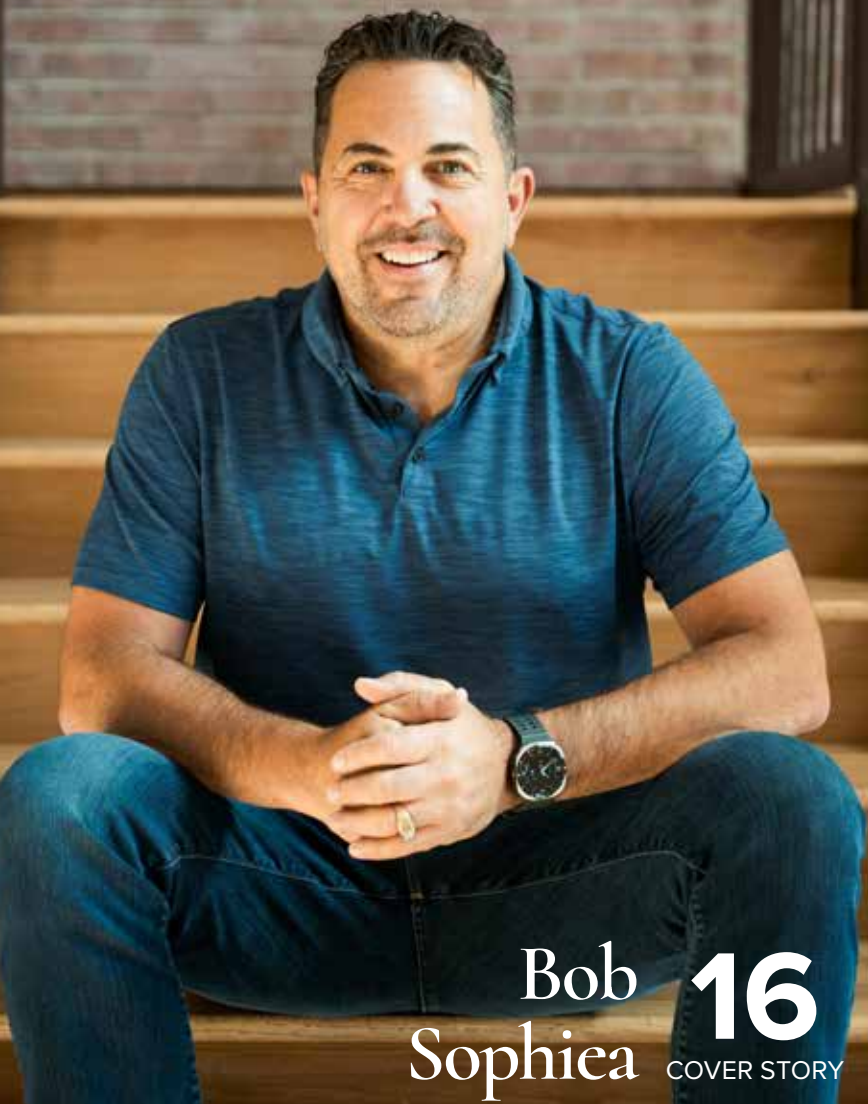
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SCAN ME TO GET STARTED



# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

There's something I've been thinking about more lately, and it felt worth putting into words.

If you've been part of *Bluegrass Real Producers* for a while, you've likely seen the magazine show up each month, attended an event, or connected with someone new because of this community. You've seen the stories, the features, the celebrations of agents doing meaningful work in our market.

But there's a part of this that I haven't always done a great job of, and that's letting you get to know me. Real Producers has never been about me. It's always been about you. The agents who are showing up, doing the work, building businesses, leading teams, and shaping the direction of this industry. My role has always been to create the space, tell the stories, and bring the right people into the room.

At the same time, I've come to realize something important. Community doesn't just grow through structure, it grows through connection, and connection requires a level of openness that I can continue to lean into. So this is a small step in that direction.

*Bluegrass Real Producers* means a lot to me, and not just because of what it represents on the surface. It represents consistency. It represents trust. It represents a standard of who we choose to be around and how we show up for each other.

When I first got involved with Real Producers, what stood out to me was the simplicity of the idea. Focus on the top-performing agents in a market. Remove the noise. Create a space where people who are already operating at a high level can connect, learn, and grow alongside each other. Over time, I've seen how powerful that really is.



I've seen relationships form that lead to real collaboration. I've seen agents support each other through both wins and challenges. I've seen businesses grow not because of a single introduction, but because of consistent presence in the right environment.

That's what this is about. It's not just a magazine. The magazine is simply the vehicle that allows this to exist. It's about

building a community where the people in it are intentional about who they surround themselves with. I care deeply about that.

I care about the quality of the room. I care about the people who are invited into it. I care about making sure that when you show up, whether it's opening the magazine or walking into an event, it feels worth your time.

And I also care about making sure that this never becomes something that feels transactional. You won't see us chasing numbers for the sake of growth. You won't see us trying to be everything to everyone. That's not the goal, and it never will be.

The goal is simple. Bring the right people together, consistently, and create an environment where meaningful relationships can take place. That takes time, and it certainly takes trust. And it takes a willingness from all of us to show up in a way that is genuine.

If I'm being honest, one of the things I respect most about this community is how many of you lead with that mindset already. You are focused. You are driven. But you also understand that long-term success is built on relationships, not just transactions. That's rare, and it's worth protecting.

As we continue to move forward, my intention is to continually be present

within that, and our team engaging with you. Not just as the person behind the scenes organizing things, but as someone who is actively engaged in the conversations, the connections, and the growth of this community.

That might look like more one-on-one conversations. It might look like more time spent at events simply listening. It might look like reaching out just to stay connected. There's no agenda behind that. It's simply a commitment to being more involved in the community that I care about. If we haven't had a chance to connect yet, I'd genuinely welcome that.

If you've been part of this for a while, thank you. Your consistency is what makes this work. If you're newer to *Bluegrass Real Producers*, I hope you feel the intention behind what we're building here. And if you ever have feedback, thoughts, or ideas, my ears are always open. This community is stronger when it's shaped by the people in it.

At the end of the day, this isn't about creating something that looks good from the outside. It's about building something that feels right from the inside. A place where you know the people around you. A place where you trust the room. A place where being part of it actually means something.

That's what we're continuing to build here in Bluegrass, and I'm grateful to be part of it with you.

Cheers,



**Aaron Hutchison**

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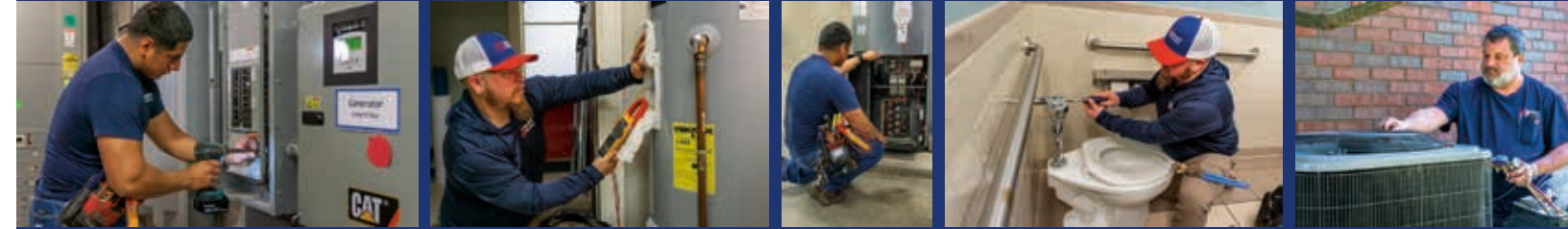
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# Bob Sophiea

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WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH MCCABE

## Is Raising the Bar in Real Estate

**“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” -  
Robert Louis Stevenson**

That quote has stuck with Bob Sophiea for a long time. Maybe because his life and his business have never been about quick wins. It’s been about showing up, planting something, and trusting that eventually, it grows.

These days, Bob is doing more than just growing. His patience and perseverance have paid off. As the CEO and Founder of New Home Collective brokered by eXp Realty, he’s one of the top agents in the Lexington market, ranked #1 in residential sales and #2 in volume in 2025, a four-time eXp ICON Agent, and a Best of Lexington Gold winner. His team even picked up Silver as one of the best real estate teams in the area.

But talk to him for five minutes, and none of that is where he starts “Who can I help?” he says. “What problems can I solve?” That’s still the focus.

### Starting From Scratch

When Bob moved to Kentucky in 2011, he didn’t have a built-in network. No long contact list. No warm introductions waiting for him “In real estate, they tell you to make a list of everyone you know,” he says. “My list was really short.”

So he did what most people try to avoid. He picked up the phone. Cold calling. Prospecting. Putting himself out there, over and over again. “I upset a lot of people,” he admits. “But about half the people I do business with today came from those calls.” It wasn’t glamorous. It wasn’t easy, but it worked. And more importantly, it built something real.

Bob started New Home Collective in 2014, and that’s when things began to click. Not because everything suddenly got smooth, but because he started trusting his own instincts. Early on, he ran Facebook ads that brought in a flood of leads. At one point, he was told to hand those leads off to other agents.

“Worst advice I ever got,” he says without hesitation. Instead, he leaned into building systems, learning through trial and error, and figuring out what actually worked. He also noticed something else. He didn’t have the kind of leadership or mentorship he needed when he started.

So he became that person. To date, Bob has helped train more than 100

agents, pushing them to either step up and produce or step out entirely. “I had to go find guidance outside my market,” he says. “Now I try to be that for other people.”

### When Life Hits You

Even with all that momentum, there are moments that stop you cold. For Bob, one of those moments came in 2022. Interest rates spiked. His business



dropped from \$60 million to \$40 million. And at the same time, something else started creeping in. "I thought I was having heart problems," he says.

His son was just two years old. And Bob realized something that shook him. "I didn't even have life insurance," he laments. Instead of hesitating, he took action. The day his life policy got approved, everything shifted. "The pressure came off," he says. "I didn't feel like I was going to have a heart attack every ten minutes."

Not long after, a conversation with a friend reframed everything. "People are always going to be born, get married, move... life keeps happening." That perspective grounded him. Instead of focusing on fear, he focused on what was still moving forward. And his business followed.

#### Real Estate, But Different

If you ask Bob what he actually does, it's not just selling houses. It's creating clarity. Through his cash offer program,

he gives clients options that simply make sense. What their home could sell for as-is. What it could be worth with some work, along with a priced-out list of updates needed, which Bob can also facilitate if the client wants to make improvements before selling. What a cash offer might look like today. There's no pressure. Just information. That same door is open to other agents too. If a fellow agent has a listing that needs work, or a client who might be better served by an as-is cash sale, Bob welcomes the call.

"It's about helping people make the best decision for them," he says. That mindset has built trust and a business that doesn't rely on hype.

#### Overcoming Obstacles

Bob is open about the fact that his life hasn't been clean or easy. There were years of struggling. With identity. With addiction. With figuring out who he was and what he wanted his life to look like. "I was a mess for a long time," he says. And then there's a story he doesn't tell lightly.

“  
It's about  
helping  
people  
make  
the best  
decision  
for them.”





**What Matters Now**

Today, Bob's life looks different. He's married to his wife, Blaire, who has become one of the top agents in the market herself. Together they're raising their son, along with her two children from a previous marriage.

Family is everything. So is balance. From Thursday afternoon through Sunday, Bob heads to the lake. It's not about checking out; it's about resetting. "That white space fuels my week," he says. He still works. Still shows up. But there's intention behind it now.

At 50, Bob isn't trying to impress anyone. "I used to care what people thought," he says. "I don't anymore." That shows up in how he runs his business, but also in how he shows up online. His social

“  
As dark as things get, you just keep walking.  
Even if it takes 25 years.”

media isn't polished or overly curated. It's real. And that's what connects. One simple post about his grandfather ended up leading to business from someone across the country. Not because it was strategic. Because it was honest. "My story matters," he says. "It's not just about selling real estate."

If there's one thing that defines Bob, it's this: He doesn't quit. "As dark as things get," he says, "you just keep walking. Even if it takes 25 years." That mindset is what built his business. It's what rebuilt his life. And it's what continues to push him forward, one client, one conversation, one decision at a time. Because for Bob, success isn't about a single moment. It's about staying in it long enough to see what's on the other side. That's priceless. ▾



In his early twenties, Bob believed he had become a father. He stepped in fully emotionally and physically, even cutting her umbilical cord. "I spent four days a week with this little girl," he says. Then he found out that she wasn't his. It stayed with him for years. Decades, really. Then one day, long after he had moved on and built a different life, that same girl reached out to him. "She told me she always wondered where her entrepreneurial spirit came from," he says. Now they're back in each other's lives. It's the kind of full-circle moment you can't plan, but it has added much happiness to his life.

# Lacy

## Hatton

PHOTOS BY JARON JOHNS



“  
If you’re the  
smartest person  
in the room,  
**you’re in  
the wrong  
room.**”

**There’s something unmistakably genuine about Lacy Hatton—and it’s likely the first thing clients notice long before they ever talk numbers or contracts. In an industry often defined by transactions, Lacy has built her reputation on connection. It’s a quality that has not only fueled her rapid rise in Central Kentucky real estate but has also earned her the kind of recognition that can’t be manufactured: the trust and praise of her clients.**

Now in her sixth year as a Realtor with RE/MAX Elite Realty in Lexington, Lacy’s trajectory has been nothing short of remarkable. She is a three-time Rate My Agent “Agent of the Year” for Fayette County, an honor driven entirely by client reviews. She’s also climbed the ranks within her brokerage and across the state, recently earning a place among the top RE/MAX agents in Kentucky and securing a spot in the RE/MAX Hall of Fame after surpassing \$1 million in gross commissions. But if you ask Lacy what matters most, she’ll quickly steer the conversation away from accolades and toward the people behind them.

“I talk to people like people, not like consumers,” she says. That philosophy is more than just a soundbite it’s the foundation of her business. Lacy approaches each client relationship with curiosity and care, taking the time to understand not just what her clients need, but who they are. That investment builds a level of trust that carries through every step of the process, often turning first-time clients into long-term relationships.

Her path into real estate feels, in hindsight, almost inevitable. Growing up, Lacy was immersed in the world of homes. Her father, a contractor, spent years building houses from the ground up and renovating properties, including the Victorian home she grew up in. By his side, she learned to appreciate the character, craftsmanship, and potential within every space.

“I’ve always loved houses their stories, their transformations,” she shares. “When you grow up in a historic home, you start to understand what makes a house feel like a home.”

Still, real estate wasn’t an immediate career choice. It wasn’t until her children were older that Lacy began looking for something that would fully engage her wide range of skills. When she found real estate, everything clicked. “It scratches all my itches,” she says with a laugh. From marketing and design to strategy and relationship-building, the role allowed her to bring together years of experience into something meaningful for both herself and her clients.

That experience includes a background in graphic design and web development,

skills she developed early through vocational programs and later refined through freelance work. Today, those talents set her apart in a crowded marketplace. Lacy’s listings aren’t just marketed they’re thoughtfully presented, with an emphasis on storytelling and visual impact that captures buyers’ attention and elevates her clients’ homes.

But behind the polished marketing is a deep understanding of what it means to build a business. Raised by self-employed parents, Lacy entered real estate with a clear-eyed perspective. She knew that “flexibility” didn’t mean less work it meant ownership, accountability, and consistency. “You’re kind of always working,” she says. “But you’re also building something that’s yours.”

That mindset proved especially valuable in the early days of her career. Like many agents, she faced the challenge of building a client base from the ground up. Fortunately, Lacy had already spent years cultivating relationships within her community through neighborhood involvement, PTA service, and local organizations. Still, she understood that relationships alone weren’t enough; she had to demonstrate her value and earn trust in a new professional capacity.





Through a combination of strategic marketing, persistence, and a willingness to learn through trial and error, she steadily grew her business. Today, she continues to lean into that growth mindset, surrounding herself with driven peers and constantly refining her approach.

“If you’re the smartest person in the room, you’re in the wrong room,” she says. It’s a belief that keeps her evolving and keeps her at the top of her game.

For Lacy, the most rewarding part of real estate isn’t the sales it’s the relationships that come with them. She speaks warmly about the clients who have become close friends and the unexpected connections that have shaped her journey. “There’s something really special about being part of someone’s ‘journey to home,’” she says. “It’s a privilege I don’t take lightly.”

Outside of real estate, Lacy’s life is just as full. She and her husband Dustin, who recently joined her in the business, have been married for 19 years and are raising two children in Lexington. Their son Jack has just graduated high school, and their daughter Charlie will be a sophomore this fall. Along with their Dalmatian, Ace, the family shares a busy, vibrant life that keeps Lacy grounded.

In quieter moments, she leans into her creative side reading, writing, and even dreaming of publishing a novel one day.



She’s also an avid thrifter, poker player, and recently discovered a passion for hand embroidery. It’s a mix of interests that reflects the same curiosity and creativity she brings to her work.

At its core, Lacy’s definition of success is simple: fulfillment. “When you can be yourself, use your skills, and help others in a meaningful way that’s success,” she says. It’s a definition she’s clearly living out. In just a few short years, Lacy Hatton has built more than a thriving real estate business she’s built a reputation rooted in authenticity, dedication, and heart. And in an industry where those qualities can sometimes be overlooked, they’re exactly what set her apart. ▾



“  
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# Rural

## The leader in rural lending

PHOTOS BY BRIANNA LORING

In a real estate landscape where creativity, flexibility, and expertise can make or break a deal, the team of rural lending experts behind Rural 1st® are redefining what's possible especially when it comes to rural lot, land, construction, and home financing. At the center of that effort are loan officers Manuel "Manny" and Brandye, two professionals whose distinct journeys into lending have shaped a shared commitment to helping clients turn long-term dreams into tangible reality.

Rural 1st, the rural consumer lending division of Farm Credit Mid-America, has carved out a powerful niche by offering specialized loan products that many traditional lenders simply don't provide. From rural lot and land loans to construction financing and home purchases, the business' versatility has made it a valuable partner for real estate professionals navigating increasingly complex transactions. Their standout offering a fixed-rate land loan on undeveloped property has proven especially impactful, along with their one-time close construction product, which simplifies what is often a complicated process.

For Manny, the path into lending began with curiosity and quickly turned into purpose. He joined Rural 1st in 2020 as a rural loan associate, a role that gave him a behind-the-scenes look at the mechanics of the business. That early exposure opened his eyes to the broader opportunities within the company, ultimately leading him to become a loan officer in 2023. His career has already been marked by impressive milestones, earning the Rising Star award at the 2025 MBAB Awards.

Manny's approach to lending is grounded in perspective. A graduate of Lindsey Wilson College, where he studied business management and served as captain of the baseball team, he credits his faith, family, and leadership mentors as the primary influences shaping both his personal and professional life. Today, that foundation translates into a people-first mindset. For Manny, success isn't measured solely in numbers it's about impact.

"The most rewarding part of what we do is seeing the happiness it brings people," he says. "Whether it's helping someone buy land, purchase a home, or build their dream house, those moments matter."

# 1st®



His career hasn't been without challenges. One of the hardest lessons has been accepting that not every situation can be solved. Even in those moments, Manny emphasizes the importance of looking at the bigger picture. Advocating for more flexibility and less rigid, black-and-white thinking in lending decisions; especially when clients' dreams are on the line.

Outside of work, Manny's life revolves around family. He and his wife, Samantha, have been married for four years and are raising their two-year-old daughter, Mia, with another child on the way. When he's not working, you'll likely find him on the golf course, spending time with family, or planning the next vacation.

Brandye's story, on the other hand, begins much earlier and with a bit more horsepower. Long before she entered the lending world, she discovered her passion for sales at just nine years old while trying to purchase her first pony. By the time she was a teenager, she was already selling ponies on commission. That early entrepreneurial spirit carried into adulthood, where she spent years as an agent selling Arabian horses before transitioning into lending.

"The concept is the same," she says. "You're helping people find what they're looking for it just happens to be a different kind of investment."

Brandye joined Rural 1st in 2021 and quickly made her mark. In 2022, she was recognized by Rural 1st sales leaders with the Rockstar Rookie award. A graduate of Midway University with a degree in business management, she shares many of the same foundational influences as Manny, citing faith, family, and strong mentorship as key drivers in her career.

Her definition of success is rooted in resilience. Brandye thrives in high-pressure situations and takes pride in navigating the most challenging deals to the closing table.

“Those aren’t always the easiest transactions,” she explains, “but getting them across the finish line is incredibly rewarding.”

That persistence and perseverance are qualities she considers both her greatest strengths and, at times, her biggest challenges. Over the years, she’s learned the importance of understanding her own limits and leaning on her support system when needed a lesson that has only strengthened her effectiveness as a loan officer.

At home, Brandye’s life is just as full. She and her husband, Brian, have been married since 2011 and are raising two energetic boys who fully embrace the family’s farm lifestyle. Between the boys, the horses, and the day-to-day rhythm of farm life, there’s rarely a dull moment but it’s a lifestyle she wouldn’t trade for anything.

Her connection to horses remains a central part of who she is. In addition to her work in lending, she writes for Welsh Review magazines, offers pedigree research for fellow Welsh enthusiasts, and enjoys driving her ponies. She also recently took up golf in 2025, admitting to a “love/hate relationship” with the game.



Imagine all the possibilities out here



Get your boots on the ground

Together, Manny and Brandye represent the kind of partnership that elevates both clients and colleagues. While their paths into lending may differ, their shared values—service, perseverance, and a genuine desire to help others coupled with Farm Credit Mid-America and Rural 1st’s core values of honesty, respect and commitment, create a consistent experience for the agents and buyers they serve.

For real estate professionals, having a lending partner who understands not just the transaction, but the vision behind it, can be a game changer. With Rural 1st, and with loan officers like Manny and Brandye leading the charge, that partnership becomes something more: a reliable bridge between possibility and reality, bringing clients Closer to What Matters®.

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# The Prather Team's Real Estate Legacy

PHOTOS BY KENI PARKS

"The only place where money is found before work is in the dictionary," says Michael Prather, owner of The Prather Team at Keller Williams Bluegrass Realty. For Michael, real estate is more than a job it's a family legacy. Michael's mother, Katy Prather, a real estate veteran licensed since 1986, inspired him to join the industry after a successful career in software sales. Together, they founded The Prather Team in 2010, consistently ranking among the top producers in the Bluegrass Association of REALTORS®. Their success stems from grit, loyalty, and a strong work ethic passed down through generations.

Their team includes four full-time agents and three administrative staff, all dedicated to personalized service. Katy says, "We don't just sell houses. We make friends." They go beyond transactions by helping clients connect with their communities, offering support like job leads and personal check-ins.

Michael believes real estate is relational, not transactional. His corporate sales background sharpened his leadership and client service skills, which now inform how he mentors agents to operate as business owners with integrity and care.

Rooted in Kentucky, Michael returned home after working elsewhere to build his career close to family. The Prather Team's approach combines deep local knowledge with a commitment to character, loyalty, and service.

Outside work, Michael enjoys family time, gardening, and golf, while Katy cultivates her beautiful flower gardens. Their philosophy is simple: serve with heart, work with integrity, and value every relationship. This blend of family values and professional excellence makes The Prather Team Kentucky's real estate dream team.



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