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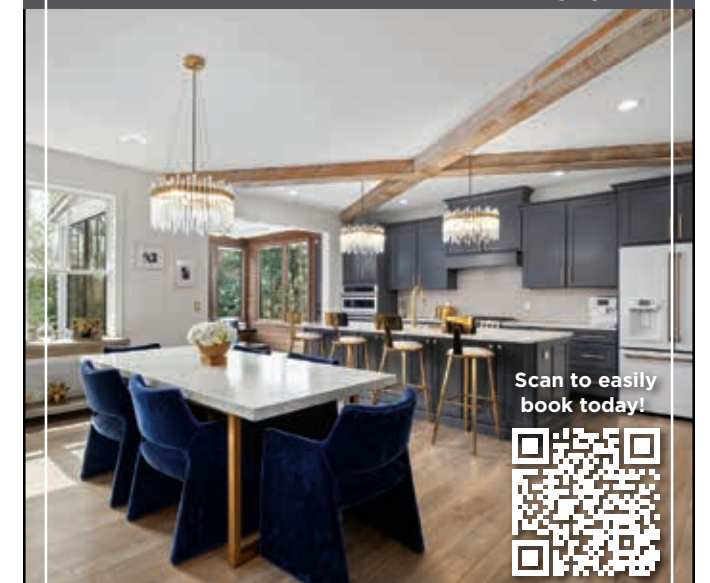
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TOP PRODUCER

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**Tammy Jo Budzynski**  
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Thank you so much for joining us at Breakfast of Champions! We enjoyed a delicious breakfast from The Atrium at Uccello's, our host, as well as heard from an esteemed panel of top producing agents in Grand Rapids. We couldn't have done it without our sponsors and our preferred partners! Be on the lookout in our next issue for some photos from the event!

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# Megan LUCZAK

TURNING  
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INTO A

**CALLING**

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**F**ormerly a grief counselor, Megan Luczak brings a rare blend of empathy and strategy to every transaction as a real estate agent. “Real estate sales are a place for compassion and for understanding your clients’ emotions,” she explained. “They’re going through huge transitions. I’m here to be a steady guide through that.”

Megan’s calm, compassionate approach was shaped by years of supporting others through life’s most difficult seasons. She earned her master’s degree in social work from Michigan State University and has a background in grief counseling at Gilda’s Club Grand Rapids, working as a full-time grief

and cancer support facilitator before pivoting into real estate.

Now an agent with Keller Williams Grand Rapids East, Megan was named the Rookie of Year in 2024 by her brokerage. “I’ve supported people during their hardest moments,” she said. “That’s given me the emotional intelligence to serve my clients deeply — not just as an agent, but as someone they can trust.”

While Megan’s work in social services gave her a deep understanding of people, her interest in real estate began years earlier. At just 20 years old, she purchased her first home — a 115-year-old historic fixer-upper in East Lansing. “I have always loved interior design,” she



shared. “I bought that home, fully renovated it, and fell in love with the process. I saw the benefits of homeownership firsthand.”

Megan’s eye for design and passion for helping others quickly turned into a business model rooted in advocacy and education. “I truly enjoy helping my friends and clients purchase their first homes,” she said. “I talk them through how to build equity and make informed decisions. I want to empower others to invest and build wealth through real estate.”

Megan’s business know-how has led her to operate a short-term rental in Norton Shores — a lakeshore retreat she named “Lake MI Nest.” “It’s been a passion project,” she said. “Hosting has been a joy, and I hope to empower others to invest in real estate for both financial freedom and lifestyle design.”

A native of Bay City, Megan comes from a tight-knit family that owned one of the region’s most respected funeral homes. “Growing up in a small town where my family was deeply involved in the community made real estate feel organic to me,” she said. “Entrepreneurship and service have always been part of my DNA.”

Megan’s foundation of family and service deepened after the unexpected loss of her father, Douglas, when she was 18. “It forced me to grow up quickly,” she recalled. “It reminded me how important it is to pay attention to the people you love — and to the people you serve. That lesson is the core of how I approach this work.”

Megan remains close with her family — especially her mom, Cynthia, who still helps with renovation projects and major financial decisions. As for Megan’s older brother, Matthew, he runs

a flower shop in Auburn, Michigan. “We grew up going to our cabin, boating, snowmobiling, and riding four-wheelers,” Megan shared. “We still get our five dogs together — we call them ‘the cousins.’”

As for Megan, she finds joy in simple pleasures. “I love hiking, taking my dogs Meadow River and Maple on adventures, and hitting the road in our Sprinter van,” she said. “Road trips, the beach — anything that gets me outside with the people I care about.”

Even outside of real estate, Megan has utilized her passion for people by creating a girls group that meets monthly. “We offer support and friendship, and I help them get into homes. It’s not about sales — it’s about relationships,” she said.

Although Megan didn’t grow up in Grand Rapids, her desire to build community has fueled her rapid business growth. “Meeting new people and building a sphere in Grand Rapids took time, but by providing great service and staying consistent, referrals started coming,” she admitted. “Getting to know my clients and their families is the best part of this work.”

For new agents, Megan wants to remind them that relationships are the most important part of any business. She also encourages them to stay curious and open as they find their footing. “Try everything that interests you and see what works,” she added.

Megan hopes that people will remember her as not only a successful agent but also a good human. “I want to be the person people turn to when they’re going through hard times or making life-changing decisions,” she said. “Someone who fills the needs of others — even if they’re not business related.”

“I’m not here just to sell homes,” Megan added. “I’m here to walk alongside people during some of the biggest changes in their lives. It’s not about closing deals — it’s about opening doors.”

“**I’M NOT HERE JUST TO SELL HOMES. I’M HERE TO WALK ALONGSIDE PEOPLE DURING SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES. IT’S NOT ABOUT CLOSING DEALS — IT’S ABOUT OPENING DOORS.**”



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# SAM AVILA

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## Building a Business Designed for LONG-TERM IMPACT

**S**am Avila, associate broker with City2Shore Real Estate - Gateway Group, has spent the past decade shaping a career around one guiding principle: service. Since earning his real estate license in 2017, Sam has helped families across West Michigan navigate one of life's most significant milestones — homeownership.

“My journey into real estate wasn't instant: It was shaped by time, responsibility, faith, and a desire to build something that truly mattered,” Sam said. “Choosing real estate wasn't simply a career move: It was a calling.”

Before stepping into real estate full-time in January of 2023, Sam spent roughly 25 years in the mortgage industry. He helped families, particularly Spanish-speaking households, secure financing and achieve homeownership. After the 2008 market crash, Sam transitioned to the automotive industry, where he honed his people skills and learned the value of leadership and customer service.

“After years of working in environments where others controlled my schedule and ceiling, I realized something deeply true about myself: I thrive when I am building, not just working,” Sam explained. “I work hard, but I work best



Photo by Kristi Duty

when I am pursuing a purpose that is meaningful to me and my family.”

At City2Shore Real Estate - Gateway Group, Sam has cultivated a business centered on trust and long-term relationships. He serves first-time home sellers and move-up buyers, consistently providing guidance through social media, community engagement, and online content. Along with his associate broker license, he has an Accredited Buyer Representative (ABR) designation through the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), and has received the City2Shore CREED

Award for exemplifying the company's core values and a Rising Star Award.

Beyond the awards, Sam measures success by how much of a positive influence he can have on another person's life. “Right now, I am deeply passionate about building a business that creates long-term impact — not just in real estate, but in the lives of the families and communities I serve,” he shared. “I wake up every day excited, knowing that the seeds being planted now will become something far greater — a business that honors God, serves people with excellence,





“**REAL ESTATE IS ABOUT MORE THAN HOUSES:** It’s about understanding people’s stories, fears, and goals, and then guiding them with clarity and care.”

mentoring others and supporting local families and organizations.

As he looks ahead to the future, Sam hopes to build a small, highly skilled team that is defined by character. His vision is to build the right team, not necessarily the largest one, with a focus on client experience and long-term community impact.

For new agents, Sam reminds them to be consistent and humble, and stay connected to their purpose. “Learn the craft, but never forget the people,” he added. “Build your business on value, not volume. Above all, stay rooted in faith.”

“Success isn’t a finish line: It’s a journey of growth, faith, and impact,” Sam said. “It’s building a business that impacts lives, not just closing deals — a business rooted in integrity, education, and genuine care that helps families build stability and generational legacy through homeownership.”

Ultimately, Sam hopes to be known not only for his professional success but also for the values he brought to every interaction. “I want to be remembered as someone who loved God, served people well, and left the world better than he found it,” he said. “Not just as a successful agent or business owner, but as a man who led with faith, integrity, and heart in everything he did.”

and makes a lasting, positive impact on families for generations to come.”

For Sam, his approach to business is personal and intentional. “I connect with people genuinely,” he said. “Real estate is about more than houses: It’s about understanding people’s stories, fears, and goals, and then guiding them with clarity and care.”

When it comes to his professional journey, Sam will admit that it has been guided by his faith and family. He credits his wife, who believed in him even when he struggled with self-doubt, and his faith in God for his perseverance and sense of purpose. “Every significant career decision I’ve made has come

from prayer, faith, and a belief that God’s timing is always perfect,” he said.

Family is a central part of Sam’s life, and they form his “why.” “They remind me daily that legacy isn’t built overnight — it’s built through love, time, and the moments we choose to make together,” Sam said. He and his wife have four children — Sam Jr., Lil, Alison, and Annalise.

Outside of work, Sam enjoys playing bass in genres that range from smooth jazz to Latin jazz and R&B as well as exploring new restaurants, traveling, and cheering on the Detroit Lions. He also serves as a musical director at his church,

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# JODY

Schwalm



## TURNING LIFE'S CHALLENGES INTO A LIFE OF IMPACT

PHOTOS BY JACOB HARR WITH PHOTOREAL

Jody Schwalm, an agent with RE/MAX United, has built a thriving real estate career through her genuine commitment to serving others. Her path into the industry began during a pivotal moment in her life, but she quickly discovered a natural talent for connecting with clients and guiding them through significant decisions. Today, she is recognized not only for her achievements but also for the care and professionalism she brings to every transaction.



Born in Florida and raised in West Virginia, Jody grew up in poverty, without electricity or running water, often going to bed hungry. At 17, she left home to join the U.S. Air Force, where she became the first female in the security police field and earned the John Levitow Leadership

Award in non-commissioned officer training.

After her military service, Jody pursued a variety of entrepreneurial ventures, including working as a Mary Kay sales director and owning a Brazilian jiu-jitsu school. She was crowned Mrs. Michigan in 2006,

and after completing her year of service, she took over leadership of the Mrs. Michigan America Pageant, serving as executive director and producing the event for local television for 11 years.

awards from RE/MAX, including the Executive Club, 100% Club, Platinum Club and Hall of Fame.

Despite her current success, Jody acknowledges the challenges she faced as a new agent. "When I first started, I honestly felt like I was 'faking it,' but I made myself do it afraid," she explained. This perseverance, along with support from colleagues and a commitment to ongoing education, helped her overcome her initial fears.

After the loss of her first husband in November of 2014, Jody faced a period of transition. With four children heading toward college, she tried several jobs over the next few years, but none provided the financial security her family needed. In November of 2017, she found her answer in real estate, leveraging her strong network and self-starter attitude to launch a new career.

As Jody grew through her early career challenges, she began channeling her passion for real estate into a deeply client-centered approach. She particularly enjoys complex transactions where she can create solutions and bring deals together. "I'm excited when I can help clients who are going through difficult times," Jody said. "My

Eight years later, Jody has become an accomplished real estate agent. In 2025, she achieved \$12.6 million in sales volume, surpassing her 2024 total of \$8 million. Her accomplishments have also earned her numerous



Photo submitted by Jody Schwalm



Photo submitted by Jody Schwalm

own life experiences have given me understanding and compassion for people facing challenges.”

When she looks to the future, Jody has ambitious goals for herself in the industry. She aims to grow her business volume and client portfolio year after year while maintaining a commitment to learning and gaining experience. “My dream is

to keep doing what I love — helping people through one of the biggest decisions of their lives,” she said.

According to Jody, success is living a life that feels balanced and meaningful. This philosophy is reflected in her personal life, where she enjoys golfing, playing pickleball, and traveling with her husband, Robert, who is the owner of True

Medicare Advisors. Together, they have a blended family of seven adult children and three grandchildren.

As Jody continues to push herself toward new goals while maintaining a strong focus on client care, she has shaped an impressive career in real estate. With her drive and dedication, she is poised to make an even greater impact in the years ahead. ▀

“ I’M EXCITED WHEN I CAN HELP CLIENTS WHO ARE GOING THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES. MY OWN LIFE EXPERIENCES HAVE GIVEN ME *understanding* AND COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE FACING CHALLENGES.”





# 2025

## BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S WHAT THE TOP AGENTS IN GRAND RAPIDS SOLD IN 2025



**\$4,493,856,286**  
SALES VOLUME



**10,873**  
TOTAL TRANSACTIONS



**36**  
AVERAGE TRANSACTIONS PER AGENT



**\$14,979,521**  
AVERAGE SALES VOLUME PER AGENT

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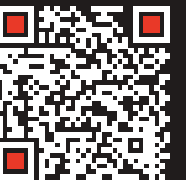
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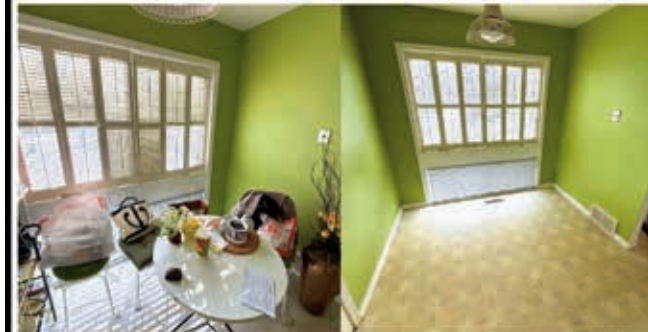
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