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MARCH 2026

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# Social Media (Dis)engagement



Brian and his dad, John, flying the drone he got for Christmas on a very cold day in Rock Hill, SC.

what we would call a “normal” market since then. We’ve seen periods of intense activity, historically low interest rates, record demand, and then a sharp slowdown that forced everyone to recalibrate. Whether today’s market is truly “normal” or simply feels strange compared to what came before, one thing has remained constant: this business is deeply human, and it’s built on connection.

This March marks six years since I became the Publisher and Owner of *Colorado Springs Real Producers*. The first issue I ever put out was our March 2020 edition with Lauren Schneider on the cover, just weeks before the world—and the real estate industry—shifted in ways none of us could have predicted.

In many ways, it feels like none of us have worked in

When I started, I built my reputation on social media. I met with three to five real estate agents per week and, each time, I would make a social media post promoting them. My goal was to build as many relationships as possible and leverage social media to get my name and face out to the real estate community. And while I still meet with agents and make posts promoting them today, I’ve hired the majority of my social media posting and engagement out to Tabby, our Editor—who does a fantastic job! While that solved a practical problem, it came with a cost I didn’t fully recognize at the time.

By the beginning of this year, I noticed something unexpected. I felt more disconnected from my friends in real estate than I had in a long time—and with that came less confidence and less momentum. While I’m constantly meeting new people in real estate, I wasn’t staying connected as I used to with my existing friends in the industry. While social media has its downsides, it’s good for staying in touch with a large, fast-moving community where time is the most valuable resource.

This year, I’m being more intentional about reconnecting. More personal outreach. More coffee meetings with no agenda. More social media engagement, even when the algorithms make it difficult. Because no amount of efficiency can replace real connection, and no business grows in isolation for long.

If there’s a takeaway here, it’s this: connection is not optional. It’s foundational. In real estate—and in life—the strongest businesses are built by people who stay present, stay engaged, and keep showing up for one another, even when it would be easier not to.

Thank you for reading this publication, for prioritizing it in the middle of busy seasons, and for sharing in our mission to elevate the culture of real estate in Colorado Springs. And thank you for supporting our advertising partners, all of whom have been vetted and referred by top agents in this community. They understand this business, they know how to serve you during a transaction, and they’re motivated to earn your trust.



I’m grateful to be on this journey with you—and I’m looking forward to what we continue building together.

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Brian and his mom, Lori, on Christmas in Charlotte, NC.

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## Reflections from the Editor

Across these stories, a clear throughline emerges: the most sustainable real estate careers are built on alignment, not adherence to a formula. Each agent entered the industry through a nontraditional path, bringing with them skills shaped in other professions such as discipline, communication, systems thinking, marketing, and relationship-building, and used those strengths to create businesses that reflect who they are. Rather than chasing industry norms or replicating someone else’s model, they built practices rooted in authenticity, allowing personality and values to guide growth.

Another defining theme is reinvention; these careers took shape amid disruptions like personal transitions, economic uncertainty, market shifts, and structural changes within teams and companies. The agents leaned into change modeling resilience, clarity, and intentional decision-making around how to collaborate, when to lead, and where to protect time and energy.

These stories underscore a people-first philosophy that transcends production metrics. Clients, referral partners, colleagues, and communities are central to business. Trust, education, consistency, and service generate momentum that outlasts market cycles and trends. Together, these stories offer a compelling portrait of modern real estate success: careers built deliberately, businesses designed to serve both clients and life, and growth defined by purpose as much as performance.

I hope you enjoy reading this month’s feature stories!!



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CASA BAY  
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## TURNING **DRIVE** INTO **DIRECTION** IN COLORADO SPRINGS REAL ESTATE

**S**ydney Burnett was born and raised in Austin, Texas, but Colorado had long been woven into the rhythm of her family life. She recalls ski trips, backpacking excursions, and climbing 14ers alongside her family growing up. After graduating high school, that pull west became undeniable, leading her to enroll at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction.

Burnett initially pursued business and hospitality management, but her academic path evolved in unexpected and formative ways. She studied abroad during her final year, spending time in London working in press and publicity; and upon returning, she expanded her studies, adding a second focus and ultimately graduating with a double major in marketing. The blend of consumer-focused business, strategic marketing, and real-world experience would later become foundational to her professional approach.

After graduation, Burnett's career took her to Duluth, Minnesota — a place the Texas native jokes was “the coldest place on Earth.” Despite the climate, she stayed for the work she loved. She joined the northern Minnesota District Office for Farmers Insurance as an Agency Business Consultant, where she supported agents in building and scaling their businesses. Her role spanned recruiting, prospecting, lead generation, networking, social media strategy, and event planning — sharpening the advisory, branding, and leadership skills that would later define her success in real estate.



While in Duluth, Burnett faced a financial reality check at Age 23 when she realized she was paying “mortgage money” on rent for a small apartment. Instead of renewing, she decided to buy a house. She approached the process head-on. “I woke up one morning and impulsively Googled how to buy a house,” she said. “I then bought a house, flipped it, made a nice chunk of change when I sold it — and that was it. I was fully ingrained in real estate.” She purchased when interest rates were low and later sold during the COVID-era market, turning a profit. That experience, paired with her role supporting insurance agents, became a turning point. Her real estate agent — a friend from the Duluth Chamber of Commerce — gave her a behind-the-scenes look at the profession, and Sydney knew she wanted in.

Burnett began to see how similar it was to what she was already doing in the insurance world. “I saw how closely real estate mirrored what I already loved doing,” she said. The difference

was emotional connection. “Most people don’t wake up excited to go buy car insurance. A house is different. Buying a home is not just a financial decision — it’s an emotional commitment to a future. Helping someone buy a home means helping them protect their future wealth; it’s stewardship of your client’s biggest investment; and I love that level of connection and true relationship building that comes from that.”

By 2022, Burnett had sold her home in Minnesota, and relocated to Colorado Springs with her boyfriend and her dog. She earned her real estate license in June of that year, stepping into the industry amid a significant market shift. Rather than seeing the timing as a setback, she viewed it as an advantage that she intentionally embraced. “The rates were no longer what they were in COVID,” she said. “That turned out to be a huge blessing. It forced me to build real skill — not shortcuts. I had to learn how to sell, negotiate, and advocate at a high level, and how to truly take care of clients.”

In 2024, she closed 42 units for approximately \$16.8 million in volume, with less than 2.5 years in the industry. In her most recent year, she closed 32 units for approximately \$13.5 million in volume, amidst going through a transition. Burnett had been on a team since she joined real estate but had always looked ahead and envisioned growth as both an independent agent, and potentially starting her own team one day. She continued to grow her business on a team through September 2025, until the



“WE’RE ALSO ALL REALLY COMPETITIVE. SO WE PUSH EACH OTHER TO BE **BETTER.**”



team she was on unexpectedly dispersed and parted ways, accelerating her timeline to becoming an independent agent.

During that time, she and several colleagues—Drake Guidry, Aidan Pena, and Brandon Tomic—ended up making the collective decision to transition to eXp Realty—separately, but together—as independent agents. “I think what was holding me back initially from leaving a team and becoming independent, was the people”. Having that element that comes with being on a team was important to me. I thrive in an environment where there’s a sense of collaboration, communication, accountability, and friendly competition; and I didn’t want to lose that aspect by going independent. Neither did the guys, so we made the intentional

but uncommon move to go over together, but independently.

“We all already knew and trusted each other’s work ethic,” Burnett said. “We all have really high standards as to how we conduct our business and the collaboration element is there for constant growth and accountability.” While operating independently, the group continues to support one another by partnering on resources and expenses, client events, sharing office space, covering showings when needed, and more. The dynamic allows them to maintain autonomy while benefiting from genuine camaraderie. “We’re also all really competitive,” she added. “So we push each other to be better.”

Looking ahead, Burnett is ready to take control of anything that comes her way. “I feel like 2025

was a year of progress that really built a smarter foundation. It is my opinion that discipline isn’t something you lose when life changes; it simply changes form. When circumstances shift, the expression of discipline evolves. What once looked like rigid schedules, constant hustle, or external pressure may later look like consistency, boundaries, patience, or restraint. This year is going to be about getting sharper, expanding, more opportunities, and really continuing to build momentum and love on my people,” Burnett said.

Outside of work, Burnett is deeply outdoors-oriented. She skis when she can, enjoys hiking, backpacking, and rafting, and prioritizes travel, even if it’s just “two nights anywhere on the map.” She also enjoys live music and concerts, DIY home projects, and has a long-term interest in flipping homes and building out her investment portfolio.

Throughout her journey, Burnett credits the people around her for keeping her grounded and moving forward, with grace and ambition. “If you fall, laugh about it and get back up,” she said, reflecting on the mindset her family instilled in her early on. The unwavering support of family, friends, her boyfriend, colleagues, mentors, and fellow professionals has shaped her career just as powerfully as her own drive.

From Austin to London, Duluth to Colorado Springs, Burnett’s path has been defined by momentum, adaptability, and a willingness to learn by doing. In real estate, she has found a field that matches both her energy and her tenacity, with room to grow in every direction she’s willing to explore.



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# Steve Herron

A CAREER BUILT ON PEOPLE, PERSPECTIVE, AND PURPOSE



Steve Herron did not begin his professional life in real estate. He was born in Russellville, Alabama, a small town in Franklin County in the northwest corner of the state, and spent much of his early career in publishing and sales. “My background is in publishing, so I kind of fell backwards into distribution,” Herron said. He started on the fulfillment side of the business, working in a warehouse that handled online orders for Books-A-Million during what he described as “a very active time when Harry Potter was big.” Over five years, he worked his way up to assistant buyer, which placed him in regular contact with publishers across the country.

That exposure led to nearly two decades in publishing, sales, and management roles. After earning a marketing degree while working full time and raising a family, Herron accepted a position managing the Southeast territory for independent bookstores. The role turned him into what he called a “road warrior,” traveling throughout the Carolinas, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia while representing multiple publishers. In 2007, that chapter ended abruptly when the entire sales team was laid off in a single conference call.

Herron transitioned into newspaper advertising sales before receiving another unexpected opportunity. A publisher offered him an in-house role, prompting a family move. In





2008, the Herron family relocated to Colorado Springs, bought a home in Briargate, and began building a new life in the community. Over the next several years, Herron navigated additional industry shifts, including a year in Bentonville, Arkansas, working as a category specialist for a Walmart vendor, followed by a return to Colorado Springs to work for NavPress, a division of The Navigators.

After almost 20 years in publishing, Herron felt ready for a change. Following the passing of his father in 2013, he made a deliberate decision to leave the industry. “After settling

my father’s estate, we had a buffer to dream and think and change some things up,” he said. Real estate had long been in the back of his mind as his sister has been in the business since the early 1980s, and his own agent in Colorado Springs encouraged him to consider becoming an agent. Herron studied for the licensing exam in 2016 and passed on his first attempt, which was a huge relief.

Once officially licensed in January, 2017, Herron went full time in July of the same year and has been pressing forward ever since. He credits his strengths as a project manager and

“

**I have the heart of a teacher and a coach, because I make sure they know what’s happening next, and what to expect.”**



problem solver for shaping how he works with clients, especially first-time buyers. “Working with first time home buyers... it just seems like you’ve really helped them launch their life into investing for the future,” he said. “I have the heart of a teacher and a coach, because I make sure they know what’s happening next, and what to expect.”

Herron is intentional about how he shows up professionally. He said his approach centers on honesty, integrity, and transparency. “I don’t ever want to come across needy, pushy, or forcing someone’s hand,” he explained. “I want people to know what they’re getting into.” He described pointing out flaws during showings and documenting “the ugly parts” of properties so clients fully understand what they are buying. Being present matters to him as well, whether that means attending construction meetings or making sure clients feel they received full value for his work.

Outside of real estate, Herron is deeply connected to his community. He walks daily, frequents local coffee shops, and enjoys getting to know business owners and neighbors. He has taken up gardening and xeriscaping his yard to conserve water and stay balanced amid the pressures of the business.

At 60 years old, Herron said he is focused on doing things that matter. He described himself as “a facilitator, a connector and a promoter,” someone who enjoys introducing people and helping others thrive. His interests include hiking, traveling around Colorado, highlighting local retailers, collecting Hot Wheels, and staying active in church and men’s groups. Married for 29 years, Herron and his wife have four children and three grandchildren, with family remaining central to his life.

Through multiple career transitions, relocations, and industry changes, Herron’s throughline has remained consistent: people. Whether in publishing, sales, or real estate, his work has been shaped by relationships, service, and a steady commitment to showing up with clarity and care.



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### People-Centered Landscaping with Purpose & Precision

BY BRIAN GOWDY



Zack Langston

That drive to serve eventually sparked something unexpected. While preparing for marriage, Zack began taking on side landscaping projects to help pay for an engagement ring and honeymoon. What started as a hobby quickly gained momentum. As projects grew in size and complexity, Zack realized it was time to make things official. In March 2019, Freedom Landscapes was born.

Early on, Zack faced the challenges many business owners know well—establishing systems, filling schedules year-round, and refining what “doing it right” looks like in a wide-ranging industry. One of his core goals from the outset was to provide full-time work to his employees through all four seasons. That meant building relationships, developing referral partners, and earning the kind of trust that leads to repeat business.

Zack Langston, owner of Freedom Landscapes in Colorado Springs, didn’t set out to become a business owner. His journey began in the Bay Area of California, where he was raised in Santa Clara. Originally pursuing a path in ministry, Zack moved to Colorado Springs to work with a local church. Influenced by mentors and coaches who invested deeply in his growth, Zack sought to pay it forward—specifically to young people navigating formative years of their lives.



Today, Freedom Landscapes is built around a clear philosophy: people-centered landscaping. Whether working with clients, employees, vendors, or other contractors, the team aims to make every decision with people in mind. This approach shows up in their reputation for clear communication, administrative strength, and a high standard of customer service. “We answer the

phone, follow up on emails, and get everything in writing,” Zack says. “We’re administratively strong—and that’s where a lot of contractors fall short.”

Zack encourages real estate agents to use landscape professionals as part of their due diligence. For buyers, getting irrigation systems, retaining walls, and drainage issues inspected before purchase can help avoid costly surprises.

For sellers, even small landscaping improvements can increase curb appeal and buyer interest. “Hardscaping raises property value. Well-maintained landscaping attracts more buyers,” Zack







explains. “They each serve a different but equally important purpose.”

Though Freedom Landscapes offers full-scale design-build services, they’re just as committed to supporting agents and homeowners with small asks. From quick inspections and guidance for DIYers to simple seasonal services like sprinkler blowouts, Zack’s team is focused on doing good work—even when there’s no big sale involved. “We’re not trying to make a dollar on every call,” he says. “We’re here to help the community.”

Freedom Landscapes also lives that mission through community engagement. The company regularly hosts nonprofit events at their five-acre property, covering costs for food, setup, and hospitality. They’ve supported organizations of all sizes and have become known as a go-to partner when a space is needed for a gathering.

The name “Freedom Landscapes” reflects both Zack’s personal goals and a broader sense of gratitude. Initially, it represented his desire for the freedom to continue his ministry work. But it also acknowledges the military presence in Colorado Springs and the service members who make that freedom possible.

At home, Zack is a builder in every sense. Though he’s no longer working hands-on in the field, he still enjoys building things in his spare time—from garden boxes to chicken coops. He and his wife, Hannah, share a love of food and travel, and their life is centered around their two young children, Bentley (5) and Blakely (3). “What drives me is serving the King of kings,” Zack says, “but here on Earth, it’s my family that motivates everything I do.”

Freedom Landscapes continues to grow—driven not just by projects and profits, but by people, purpose, and a commitment to doing things the right way.

#### Meet John Newbill

From the beginning, Freedom Landscapes has been shaped by more than just soil and stone—it’s been built



John Newbill

by relationships. John Newbill has been part of that foundation since day one. A Colorado Springs native and former Air Force brat, John met owner Zack Langston years ago while traveling to California. Their paths reconnected at a local church in Colorado, and small side projects eventually evolved into what is now a thriving business.

John brings a versatile, people-first leadership style to the company. Whether managing operations, overseeing sales, or refining the company’s public face, he plays the role the business needs most at any given time. He’s especially focused on lead generation and making sure clients are connected with the right designer or crew as efficiently as possible.

What sets John apart is his dedication to stewardship—from mentoring employees to helping families create dream outdoor spaces. “When that swing set finally goes up and the kids come running across the grass, that’s the most rewarding moment,” he says. For John, landscaping is about more than curb appeal—it’s about creating spaces where memories are made. His leadership continues to shape the company’s identity: collaborative, creative, and committed to serving others well.

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# Q&A

WITH INSPECTOR CLARK HEMKER →



#### Q What brought you to this field?

I served in the Army for over 12 years. After my service, I spent several years searching for a career that I truly loved and felt excited about. After trying a few office jobs, I realized I needed something different. Being a home inspector had been on my mind for several years, so I finally decided to jump in and make it a reality.

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#### Q What do you love about your work?

What I enjoy most about being a home inspector is the opportunity to help people. I've always loved serving and assisting others. I also enjoy being out in the field, exploring both new and old homes, and interacting with clients.

#### Q What do you like to do outside work?

Outside of work, I love spending time with my wife of 17 years and our 10-year-old twin girls. We have two cats—Millie and Murphy—and a goldendoodle named Ruby. I coach my girls' volleyball team and am usually busy with endless DIY projects around the house. I also enjoy woodworking and have built many pieces of furniture. I grew up in Wisconsin and am a big Packers fan. I'm also into hockey—GO AVS GO!





# PAM *Hensley*

## Resilience, Roots, & a Life Built on Starting Over

Pam Hensley has called Falcon home nearly all her life. A proud graduate of Falcon High School, she jokes about the “Falcon Falcons” mascot—a fitting emblem for someone so deeply tied to her hometown.

Her path to real estate, however, wasn’t straightforward. For years, Pam was self-employed, co-owning a fiber optic construction company during her second marriage. When that chapter ended, she found herself at a crossroads. It was a chance encounter in a parking lot with longtime family friend—and her



CASA BAY  
PHOTOGRAPHY



children’s former wrestling coach—Dan Kibler that set her on a new course.

“Dan had helped us buy a home years before, and he had always told me I should consider real estate,” Pam recalls. “When he saw me after the divorce, he said, ‘Now’s the time—you need to join our team.’” Encouraged by his persistence, she enrolled in

real estate school while still working, earning her license in late 2019.

Just two transactions into her new career, the pandemic hit. But with the support of the Kibler Group and Keller Williams, she adapted quickly. “There was a brief moment of panic, but Dan and Stacy are incredible at teaching you how to find the motivation. They

gave me the tools, and I just put my head down and worked,” she said.

That work ethic paid off immediately. While the average first-year agent closed around five deals in 2020, Pam completed 26. At first, she didn’t realize the significance. “I didn’t even know my numbers,” she laughed. “I was just working to provide for my



“

*I've gotten really good at starting over. It's never too late. Sometimes it's actually easier when you have to, because you don't have another option—*

**YOU JUST PUT YOUR HEAD DOWN  
AND GO.”**



kids. Someone had to point out to me that I was doing really well.”

Much of her business has continued to come from military families and her deep local roots in the community. “I’ve lived here over 40 years, so people know me. I’m always surprised when someone reaches out—it’s like, wow, you knew I was in real estate?”

For Pam, real estate is more than a career. It represents independence, stability, and the ability to start over. Twice divorced, she’s had to rebuild her life more than once. “I’ve gotten really good at starting over,” she reflects. “It’s never too late. Sometimes it’s actually easier when you have to, because you don’t have another option—you just put your head down and go.”

That grit carries over to her work with clients, especially military families

who are constantly uprooted. “Nobody tells them they can build wealth. Helping them realize that buying here can set them up for something better down the road—that’s the most rewarding part for me.”

Her resilience hasn’t gone unnoticed. Each year since starting in the business, Pam has ranked in the top 10% of agents and been invited to apply for Peak Producers. In 2025, she was officially selected.

Outside of real estate, family remains at the center of Pam’s life. Her sons Neven (23) and Hayden (21) still live at home, and she recently welcomed her first grandchild. She’s also engaged to her fiancé Brad, her “absolute best friend,” and stepmom-to-be to his 10-year-old son, Karter. The two plan to marry this September at the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame.

When she’s not working with clients, Pam enjoys gardening, raising chickens, and spending time with her beloved rescue dog, Mama—a 130-pound Neapolitan Mastiff who rarely leaves her side. She also admitted to unwinding with a guilty pleasure: reality TV, from The Real Housewives to Love Is Blind.

Looking back, Pam credits much of her success to the Kibler family. “My life is just different because of them. Stacy has this way of seeing when someone needs a new start, and she makes it happen. I’m forever grateful.”

For Pam, real estate isn’t about chasing a “big why.” It’s about working hard, caring deeply, and showing her kids—and now grandkid—that it’s always possible to start again.

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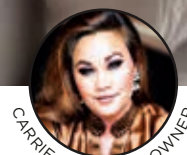
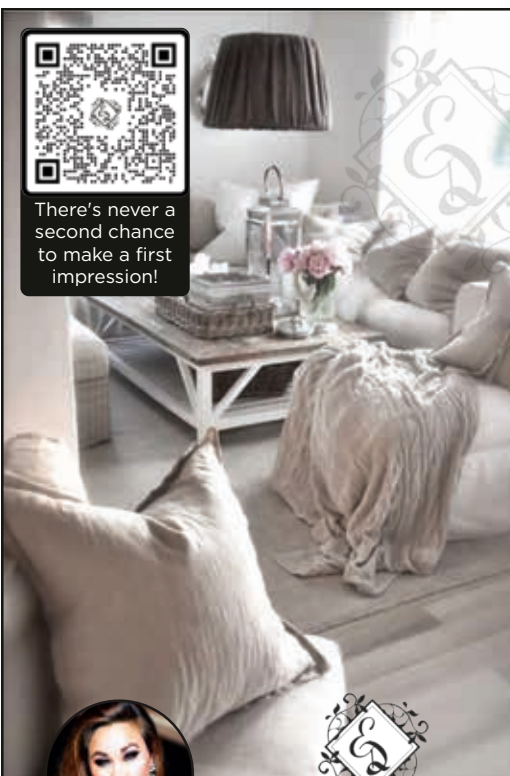
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# Kim Majors

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Born and raised in Colorado Springs, Kim Majors has spent the last 15 years building a lending career defined by strong communication, problem-solving, and a deep sense of integrity. As Vice President and Mortgage Loan Originator at Central Bank, Kim has developed a reputation for being a lender who not only understands the technical details of her work but also prioritizes transparency and partnership—both with her clients and the real estate agents who rely on her.

Kim’s path to lending was not a straight line. After earning her degree in business, she spent over a decade in the fitness industry, working as a personal trainer, group fitness instructor, and fitness manager. The turning point came when one of her longtime clients—who was a lender—recognized Kim’s potential and invited her to explore a career in lending. “At that point, I had a business degree I wasn’t using,” Kim said. “I gave it

a shot, committed to a year, and it blossomed into a whole new career. I’m very happy I made the switch.”

What drew Kim in was the constant challenge of lending: no two clients, transactions, or loan files are the same. For someone with a passion for math and problem-solving, it was a natural fit. “Every loan file is like a math problem,” she explained. “I think about it until I figure out a path.”

Today, Kim is known in the Colorado Springs real estate community for her communication, depth of knowledge, and attention to detail. Real estate agents and clients often say the same thing in their reviews—she explains every element, keeps everyone updated, and provides a sense of confidence that a deal

will make it to the closing table. “I don’t take anything lightly,” she said. “I do a ton of due diligence up front so that when I issue a letter, my partners know the loan is going to close.”

In addition to communication, Kim is also known for her ability to problem-solve. She often gets calls from agents asking her to look at files other lenders couldn’t close. She takes those challenges seriously and has successfully saved many of those transactions. “I’ve touched so many different types of files over the years that I’ve built up a lot of experience. I always want to work until I can figure out a solution.”

Her advice to real estate agents? “Find a lending partner who will support you and treat the relationship

as a true partnership. Lenders are here to help you grow your business,” she said. “In working with clients, transparency is everything. Lending can be complex and purchasing a home can be stressful. It is important to me that buyers really understand the process, so I make it a point to communicate and be as thorough as possible.”

Kim finds the most fulfillment in the moment a client closes on a home. Whether it’s a first-time buyer or a seasoned homeowner, she tries to attend every closing she can. “There’s nothing better than that excitement when they get the keys,” she said.

Outside of work, Kim and her husband Josh are raising two young children, ages six and eight, and staying active

with sports, family activities, and travel. “My time outside of work is spent cheering for my kids at soccer, baseball, basketball, and Landsharks meets,” she said. She’s also a regular presence at her children’s school events and field trips. “That’s the kind of involvement I remember growing up with my own parents. I want to give that same support to my kids.”

Kim is proud to work at Central Bank, which invests heavily in community-focused programs. One such offering is the Home Turf program, which provides a \$5,000 lender credit and special loan terms to support community reinvestment. “The bank has been an incredible place to grow my business,” she said. “They’ve given me tools and support to succeed even in a challenging market.”





"FIND A LENDING PARTNER WHO WILL SUPPORT YOU AND TREAT THE RELATIONSHIP AS A TRUE PARTNERSHIP. LENDERS ARE HERE TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR BUSINESS."



Reflecting on her journey, Kim credits several people for helping her along the way. "First I'd like to thank Mary Thorne, who introduced me to the business. Second, Dave Slater and Tim Duvall who brought me onto their team early on and helped me launch my career. Also, Ashley Roy and Erin Deleon who have always been there to help. I would not be where I am today without the amazing operations support from team members like Safiya Isa and Shyanne Culpepper. Then, Kathy Stout with Central Bank; Kathy made a huge difference in my career by introducing me to the lending possibilities that a bank has to offer." But Kim says the most important support has come from home. "My husband, Josh, believed in me and has supported me as I have grown in my lending career. He encouraged me to go out on my own, and it was the best decision I ever made."

For real estate agents looking for a lender who is experienced, responsive, and deeply committed to both clients and partners, Kim Majors at Central Bank is a trusted resource.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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# UNDERSTANDING PEAK PRODUCERS:

## A Legacy of Excellence, Service, and Community Impact

### From Trash Cleanup to Transforming Lives: The Evolution of Colorado Springs' Elite Agent Organization

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ARTICLE BY ASHLEY CANDLER, BOARD PRESIDENT OF THE PEAK PRODUCERS AND BRIAN GOWDY

In 2009, Bill McAfee, Owner of Empire Title, with his wife Ronda, began hosting roundtable discussions with Real Estate professionals across Colorado Springs. Their goal was simple but profound: understand what mattered most to the Real Estate community and discover how agents could meaningfully improve the Pikes Peak region for everyone who called it home.

What emerged from those conversations would become something far greater than anyone initially imagined.

#### Born from a Crisis, Built on Service

During those early roundtables, Colorado Springs faced a budget crisis. City services were being slashed, and trash pickup had been suspended. The city's major intersections

were littered and neglected. Rather than simply talk about the problem, the original group of high-producing agents who would later become The Peak Producers took action—physically cleaning up four major intersections and hauling away over 4,000 pounds of trash themselves. “We still have the shirt,” McAfees recall, a reminder of those humble beginnings that defined the organization’s DNA: see a need, take action, make an impact.

From those roundtables, two things became crystal clear. First, supporting the local community—not distant national organizations—was paramount. Second, this group of top-producing agents wanted to give back to their community in a serious, sustainable way. In 2010, Peak Producers was officially formed, immediately partnering with local organizations addressing homelessness, hunger, employment, and family protection.

#### Fifteen Years of Purposeful Partnerships

Over the past 15 years, Peak Producers has partnered with numerous organizations, but believes the three current partnerships exemplify the organization’s mission and values:

**Springs Rescue Mission** has been a long-standing partner in addressing homelessness throughout Colorado Springs. Their rehabilitation program specifically works with men battling addiction, helping them overcome dependency, reenter the workforce, rebuild broken family relationships, and rediscover self-respect and purpose. The program’s success has transformed countless lives.

**Mary’s Home** (Dream Centers) provides emergency housing and protection for single mothers fleeing abusive relationships—mothers desperately trying to keep their children safe and their families together. For these women, Mary’s Home offers not just shelter, but hope and a pathway to stability.

**Reclaiming Hope** plays a vital role protecting and serving victims of human trafficking. This organization provides survivors with recovery resources, counseling, and practical support to break the trafficking cycle, regain control of their lives, and build a future filled with hope and purpose.

#### More Than Recognition—A Commitment to Excellence and Service

Peak Producers is intentionally limited to 100 members representing the top 10% of Colorado



Springs Real Estate professionals by number of Closed Units. This isn't arbitrary exclusivity—it's a standard that ensures membership represents genuine market expertise and consistent performance.

One of the most persistent misconceptions about Peak Producers is that it operates as a “pay-to-play” recognition program similar to some magazines and other purchased awards. This couldn't be further from the truth. Membership is earned through verified productivity, not purchased. While members do pay annual dues, every dollar is invested in expanding the organization's impact—which includes supporting the three nonprofit partners, funding educational events, and creating collaborative programming that serves both agents and the broader community.



**The Member Value Proposition:**  
**Investment That Pays Dividends**  
Peak Producers membership delivers value that far exceeds the annual investment through multiple channels:

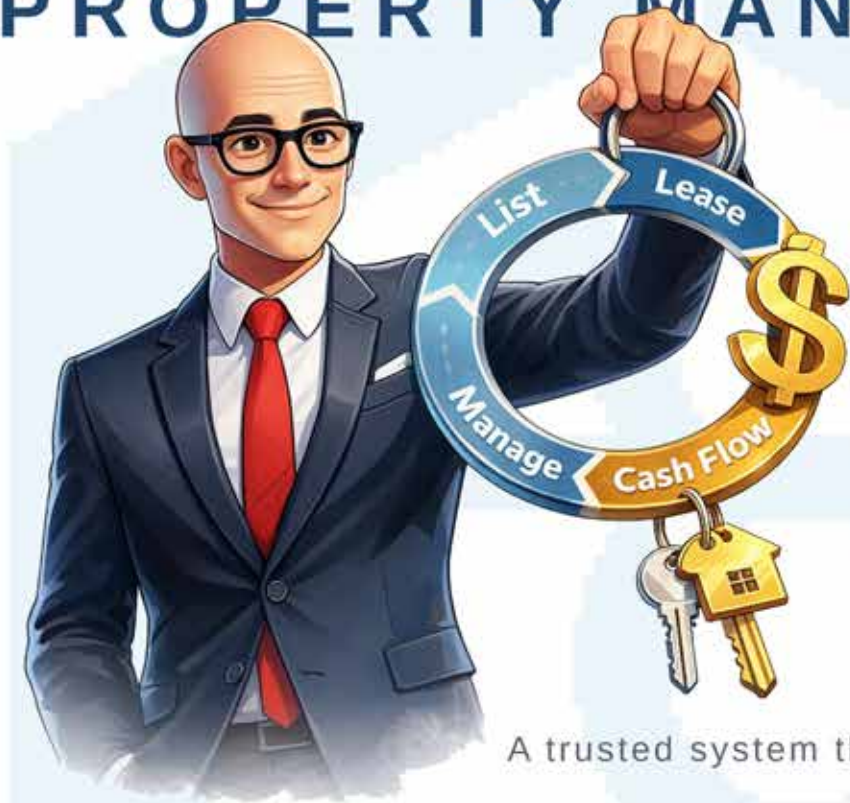
**Marketing and Professional Exposure:** Members receive year-round marketing support and professional visibility that elevates their brand in the marketplace. Peak Producers actively promotes its members as verified top performers, providing consumer-facing marketing that distinguishes them from the thousands of agents in the region.



**Listing Exposure:** Member's active listings receive enhanced visibility throughout the year through Peak Producers' marketing channels, delivering additional

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Align on price to protect value</li><li>• Prep to win on Day One</li><li>• Set expectations we both stand behind</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smart marketing</li><li>• Fast showings</li><li>• Careful screening</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Right tenant, not just fast</li><li>• Clean lease &amp; deposits</li><li>• Smooth Move-in</li></ul> |

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exposure that drives buyer interest—value that directly impacts members’ business and their clients’ results.

**Peer Collaboration:** Members participate in masterminds, educational forums, and discussions with civic leaders about market changes, regulatory shifts, and local developments. This environment fosters peer accountability, shared problem-solving, and practical support—from feedback on challenging listings to navigating industry disruptions together.

**Consumer Trust:** Peak Producers’ digital presence and community reputation help consumers understand the value of working with actively producing agents who are consistently engaged in the market and committed to both excellence and service.

**Community Leadership:** Membership represents more than personal achievement—it reflects a commitment to leveraging success for community benefit & aligning agents with a respected organization that’s been making a tangible impact for 15 years.

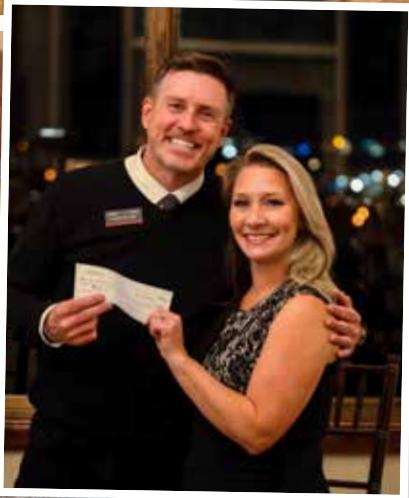
**A Message to Eligible Agents**

As membership enrollment opens for the new year, The Peak Producers will be inviting qualified agents to join our community of peers who share a commitment to excellence, a platform to amplify your professional presence, and an opportunity to be part of something larger than any individual transaction.

We would love for you to join us in our legacy of excellence and impact. Please consider applying to become a Peak Producer!

For more details and current list of active Peak Producers visit [ThePeakProducers.com](http://ThePeakProducers.com)

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# Marisa

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# Lindsay

REAL PRODUCER

In a profession that often equates growth with headcount, Marisa Lindsay is making a different case: you don’t need a team to build a big, meaningful business. In fact, for some agents, staying solo is the best way to scale—in impact, in income, and in peace of mind.

Marisa’s path to that conclusion is as deliberate as it is hard-earned. She grew up a military kid—her father served in the Coast Guard—then joined the U.S. Air Force herself, building computer networks and discovering what she truly loved wasn’t the hardware, but the camaraderie. Later, in the Alaska Army National Guard, she became a photojournalist, flying around the state to document missions and share soldiers’ stories with local media. Her final assignment in uniform was as a marketing officer for recruiting, where the lesson clicked: if you can market the Army, you can market homes.

“It’s always been about telling a story and helping people connect to it,” she says. “That’s what photojournalism taught me, and it translates perfectly to real estate.”

Marisa earned her license in 2019 and hit the ground running in February 2020—a chaotic time to start any business. She joined a brokerage where she was

the only local agent and her broker-owner lived in Florida. “I didn’t realize how much I needed an on-the-ground mentor until I’d done enough transactions to see what could have gone sideways,” she admits. After a year and a half she moved closer to home base and, ultimately, found a culture fit with eXp, appreciating the autonomy

to build the business around her personality instead of bending herself to fit a one-size-fits-all template that so many other brokerages promote.

That personality is not the stereotypical “bubbly extrovert” so many associate with sales. Marisa calls herself a strategic introvert—reserved, observant, and

highly consistent. Growing up, she made friends through performance: join the sport, play hard, let competence do the talking, then connect one-on-one. “I’m still the same way,” she says. “I become the expert, and then I let that draw people to me.”

Her plan is a masterclass in quiet discipline. She’s up by 4:00–4:30 a.m., knocking out





two hours of non-negotiables before her kids wake up, so the rest of the day can be devoted to client work. That rhythm produced early momentum—and a pivotal dilemma. By 2022, inbound demand pushed her to form a team. It grew to twelve agents, plus an assistant and TC. On paper, this was the industry’s “next step.”

In reality, it wasn’t her step. Not in the slightest.

“Leadership in the military is straightforward,” she explains. “You have SOPs. People follow them. In real estate, everyone’s an independent contractor. Consistency varies. I found myself spending energy building systems and buying tools to support work styles that weren’t mine.”

That was her first clue that things weren’t working: when you invest heavily in tools and lead sources you don’t believe in and can’t explain, you’re not scaling a business—you’re subsidizing misalignment. “I’ve never used Zillow for my own production,” she says. “But I bought it for agents who weren’t strong

on social media, which is my lane. That mismatch was a sign. You should never feel like your wheelhouse isn’t enough for your team. If you ever feel that way, it’s a sign the fit may not be right, and you won’t be able to serve them as well as they deserve.”

Over the past year, Marisa made the tough calls. She downsized the team to three agents and a transaction coordinator. Then chose an even clearer path for 2026: transition her remaining agents into local referral partners and return to solo—with a TC and a licensed assistant supporting her client work. She’s careful to note that the team chapter was built with genuine intention and respect, even though it ultimately wasn’t the right fit long-term. She’s not stepping back. She’s stepping into focus.

“Real estate is not one-size-fits-all,” Marisa says. “People can tell you what’s worked for them, but if it isn’t aligned with who you are, the burn out won’t come from the business, but from trying to be someone you aren’t. I’m still getting

pushback from mentors, even on this decision. But at the end of the day, this is my business and I need it to work for myself and my long-term goals.”

The data behind her decision is simple: the reason she has “overflow” is the way she treats the clients she keeps. Deep service produces steady referral volume. That volume doesn’t vanish just because she’s solo; she’ll place the surplus with a short list of trusted partners—and still capture the economics via referrals without carrying the cost, complexity, and emotional load of managing a team.

“Some will say that means sacrificing volume and production, and that’s 100% fine by me. I’ve been a top 5 producer in the MLS and I can tell you that fulfilling this goal didn’t bring me happiness.” She adds, “I love this business, and for me, 2026 is about doubling-down on what I do best, doing what’s best for my clients, and truly creating a business that fits my personality. It’s so exciting when I think about it!”

What she does best is listen like an introvert and execute like a systems engineer. Most of her clients are military families—people who value clarity, straight talk, and a calm operator when timelines get tight. She’s also building two leverage pillars that match her strengths:

A curated nationwide referral network (which nearly tripled its outbound volume year-over-year, approaching 150 closed

outbound referrals for 2025), with a goal of helping partners close double-digit deals annually from her introductions; and

Real Estate for Introverts, a practical training track that shows quiet-leaning agents how to build a high-trust client-roster—often largely from a laptop—through consistent content, thoughtful systems, and value-led service that turns clients into evangelists.

If you’re an agent wrestling with the “team question,” Marisa offers four clear tests:

Ask yourself why you’re starting a team? The only reason to begin one is organic client overflow.

Start small, on purpose. Before recruiting agents, hire a transaction coordinator. If you’re still at capacity, add a licensed assistant. See how far those two seats get you before you add producers.

Watch for misalignment. If you’re buying lead sources, CRMs, or marketing systems you can’t personally champion? Pause. That’s a sign you’re building for others instead of scaling yourself.

Measure energy, not just revenue. If your P&L grows while your energy collapses, you’ve traded profitability for a pace you won’t sustain.

She also offers a reality check about self-doubt. Even for agents surrounded by people, the job can feel solitary. “It’s easy to defer to louder voices or longer résumés,” she

says. “Experience matters in protecting clients; it shouldn’t override your instinct about how you work best.”

Asked for the moment she knew change was non-negotiable, she points to a pattern: repeatedly creating solutions for agents that required her to become someone else. “Every time I brought in a tool to solve an issue I didn’t believe in, I felt less like a leader and more like a money-machine for someone else’s vision rather than leading from my own,” she says. “That was the moment. Go back to who you are.”

The payoff is already visible. With her mornings reclaimed and her scope streamlined, Marisa is pouring deeper attention into a smaller client roster—and into the partners who depend on her referrals. The goal isn’t bigger numbers for their own sake; it’s a better business: profitable, principled, and most importantly, personal.

Her closing message to fellow agents is direct:

“You can build an extraordinary career without building a team. If a team fits you, fantastic—lead it well. If it doesn’t, don’t do it because the industry expects it. Stay true to who you are, serve deeply, and let your business grow from that center.”

For agents who needed permission to choose solo—to choose focus—Marisa Lindsay offers more than a blueprint. She offers proof.





# AGENT & VENDOR SNAPSHOTS



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2. Sunny Strawbridge's career journey took her from hospitality to real estate. She moved to Colorado in 2019 and dissatisfied with her former role, she transitioned to real estate in 2021, driven by a desire to serve and make a difference. Sunny's fulfillment comes from helping military families relocating to and from here, educating them on the buying and selling process, being the boots on the ground when they are afar and the strong relationships she's built with clients. She believes in the importance of continuous learning, and reflects that commitment in the Leadership Academy through PPAR for 2026. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her daughters, spending as much time outdoors and you can find her on the Manitou Incline every other week.



3. Taylor Kibler is a Colorado Springs native who made a fast pivot into real estate at 19, enrolling in real estate school the same night she decided hairstyling was not the path for her. After spending years riding with her mom, Kim Bourgois, Taylor saw firsthand the work involved in real estate. She earned her license in 2019, joined her mom's team, and grew her confidence deal by deal, learning that age does not determine ability. Today, Taylor works as a solo agent at Keller Williams and finds the most meaning in helping families, especially military families, settle into homes and build lasting relationships beyond the transaction. Outside of real estate, Taylor stays busy coaching cheer, volunteering in the community, and spending time hiking, camping, and traveling with her family.



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