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Partner Spotlight  
**CODY CASTAGNO**  
CrossCountry Mortgage

Rising Star  
**JASON BROWN**  
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January Event Recap

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# CODY CASTAGNO

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WRITTEN BY BELLA RUBIO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN TILMON WITH TILMON MEDIA



**W**hen you think of Cody, it's natural to picture someone who works hard and shows up. As the owner of CrossCountry Mortgage and having a strong presence in East Texas, he still makes time to be present at events, meetings, and committees within his REALTOR® associations. His willingness to jump in wherever needed is remarkable. He's even dressed up as Hans from Saturday Night Live to film a fundraising video, and his efforts caught attention quickly. Cody is a good sport, a man of character, and someone who leads by example.

When asked who shaped him into the person he is today, Cody credits his parents for instilling a strong work ethic early in life. At just ten, Cody recalls how his parents had him working by mowing lawns. This experience was something he would appreciate in just a few years. He had saved enough by the age of fifteen to purchase his first vehicle. Reflecting on this past memory, he shares, "Without my parents' support, I would not be the person that I am." Those early lessons in hard work continue to guide him today.

Cody spent nearly four years in banking before his mother, who had over twenty-five years of experience in the mortgage industry, asked if he would like to join her in the business. He decided to "try it out," and it became "one of the best decisions" of his life. Fast-forwarding to today, Cody is the successful owner of CrossCountry Mortgage located in Tyler, Texas. On February 15, he reached an incredible milestone—20 years in the mortgage industry—two decades of showing up, serving others, and building a legacy rooted in relationships.

When asked how he defines success, Cody explains, "Success in my business means working hard and loving it. Being willing to go the extra mile for your clients because that is how you would want to be treated. Treating the customer like a family member and caring about what they want, and need is huge as well." At the end of the day, a client could not ask for more from a mortgage company than to be treated like family.

Cody's big heart extends far beyond his business. He loves giving back to

our communities and serves wherever a helping hand is needed. He is highly involved in serving on local committees. One of the committees he currently serves on is the Community Service Committee at the Greater Tyler Association of REALTORS® (GTAR). This particular committee stays actively busy, and on any given day, you might find Cody and his staff raising money for CASA for Kids of East Texas (Court Appointed Special Advocate), donating to toy drives and food banks, collecting backpacks for children, participating in boxed fan drives, or perhaps Cody and his team are assisting with the Annual First Responder Dinner, an event that honors more than 275 first responders across six counties. His dedication is a testament to both himself and the CrossCountry Mortgage team. Cody leads with heart, and his team follows with enthusiasm. Cody has expressed, "I am passionate about helping in my community whenever I am called to do so." When you have a passion for something, it feels less like work and more like pleasure. What their team does is honorable, and I commend them for all their dedication and hard work to better our communities.

Cody's passion for helping others is also reflected in how CrossCountry Mortgage serves its clients. Their team pours everything into helping people achieve their dream of owning a home. They believe what makes them different is their "willingness to go over and beyond what a typical mortgage lender will do. For example, if the customer doesn't qualify with their initial application, we don't disregard

them as potential buyers. We look toward the future the client wants and try to put a plan together for how we can help them get there. If a client can't buy a home now, we communicate our plan to the referral partners, so everyone is on the same page and no one feels like they were disregarded or that their time was wasted." CrossCountry Mortgage invests in people and builds relationships that last.

Their commitment to clients also includes advocating for homeowners' rights. Cody and some staff are Major Investors through GTAR

**"SUCCESS IN MY  
BUSINESS MEANS  
WORKING HARD  
AND LOVING IT."**

and Texas REALTORS® for the Texas Real Estate Political Action Committee (TREPAC). A Major Investor is an individual who is recognized on a local, state, and national level for going above and beyond in supporting advocacy efforts in real estate. Cody and his team's advocacy efforts help protect affordable housing, private property rights, fair housing, HOA caps, the right to farm, and more. Their involvement demonstrates how much they care, the effort they put into their work, and their dedication to staying informed so they can serve their clients to the best of their ability.





At the heart of it all, Cody Castagno is more than a mortgage professional—he is a steady presence in the East Texas real estate community. Whether he’s helping a first-time buyer build a plan, serving quietly behind the scenes, or celebrating milestones with the people he loves most, Cody shows up with consistency and heart. His story is a reminder that success isn’t just measured in numbers or accolades, but in the lives you impact along the way. And if the past is any indication, Cody will continue doing what he’s always done—working hard, loving people well, and leaving every space better than he found it.



Cody’s efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2015, the Women’s Council of REALTORS® named him Affiliate of the Year. In 2018, GTAR also honored him as Affiliate of the Year. He was also recognized as a Presidents Club Winner in both 2020 and 2021. Cody also enjoys sharing his success with his staff, who he calls “work family,” and shares, “They are all very hard workers, and I enjoy each of them very much.”

Beyond his professional achievements, Cody’s motivation comes from home. He is happily married to his wife, Cara, and together they have three children and three grandchildren. In his spare time, when he’s not playing golf, you will find him enjoying summer vacations with his family. And of course, their beloved (and very spoiled) pets Eevee, their shih tzu, and August, their Maine Coon, are always part of the family fun.

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Originally from Athens, Texas, Destiny began her career as a receptionist and worked her way up, gaining a full understanding of the title process from start to finish. She primarily handles residential sales and refinances, with plans to expand into commercial transactions. Known for proactive communication, clear timelines, and anticipating issues before they arise, Destiny ensures every deal stays on track.

Her relationship-first mindset has earned the trust of Tyler's top real estate professionals, built on consistency and results. Outside of work, Destiny enjoys life with her husband, their two sons, while studying to become a CPA and preparing for a mission trip to the Amazon. She values **Truly Title's** energetic, supportive culture and believes the best advice for buyers and sellers is simple: *ask questions and never assume*.



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ON THE ROAD  
TO PURPOSE AND  
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WRITTEN BY  
DAWN SIMS  
PHOTOS  
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# Jason Brown



As real estate agents, we often say every home has a story. But every now and then, you meet someone whose own story is the one that leaves you a bit humbled. That's exactly how I felt sitting across from Longview's 2025 Rookie of the Year, Jason Brown, during our conversation at Silver Grizzly Espresso. What began as a simple interview with a guy that seems to be just "a good ol' boy", quickly unfolded into something that takes a hold of you...a conversation about how the unexpected ways life's hardest moments can reroute you, moving you back where the pine trees are tall and the land is vast.

Jason, an agent with Texas Farms and Ranches, has only been in the industry for about two and a half years. Yet in that short time, he has already built a reputation for his communication, strong work ethic, and genuine care for the people he serves. Last year alone, he closed 16 transactions totaling nearly \$2 million in volume, earning him Rookie of the Year honors from the Longview Area Association of REALTORS®. But his path to real estate wasn't something he had mapped out. It was one shaped by circumstance, perseverance, and an unimaginable life detour.

Before entering real estate, Jason worked in physically demanding roles as a warehouse supervisor and heavy equipment operator in the oilfield. The hours were grueling and often left little room for family life. He recalls working 112 hours in a single week

and, at one point, leaving work at 3:30 in the morning only to return again at 6 a.m. There just wasn't any downtime," he told me. "And not much opportunity for growth either." Though he had long known he wanted something different, it took a life-altering event to push him in a new direction. That is life, isn't it?

In 2019, Jason's life changed in an instant when he was T-boned while riding his motorcycle, crushing his leg between his bike and a vehicle's bumper. What followed was nearly two and a half years of surgeries, complications, and recovery that tested every part of his life: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. During our interview, he wanted to make sure he accurately shared the timeline of events, so he called the one person who lived through every detail alongside him: his wife, Becca. She described the grueling aftermath... almost a dozen surgeries, life-threatening infections, skin grafts, bone removal from his hip, a titanium rod, and even the very real risk of amputation. Throughout it all, she carried the family while Jason was physically unable to provide, working and caring for their daughter Makenzie while remaining a constant source of strength and hope.

Jason speaks of his wife with deep gratitude and admiration. Her unwavering support anchored him during what she described simply as "almost two and a half years of hell." Yet even in the darkest moments, Jason found perspective. He recalls meeting two other patients in the hospital whose

injuries mirrored his own, and with a humility evoked by that shared suffering, he said quietly, "But I made it through." Though the accident left him permanently limited in some ways, it also gave him clarity and a renewed sense of purpose.

A friend suggested real estate as a profession that could accommodate his physical challenges while still allowing him to provide for his family. What Jason discovered was more than just a career path — it was something that truly fit his personality and values. He quickly found fulfillment in meeting new people, hearing their stories, and helping them find properties that matched their lives and goals. His previous careers had unknowingly prepared him well, teaching him organization, attention to detail, and the ability to anticipate potential problems before they arise... skills that translate seamlessly into real estate transactions.

Today, Jason defines success in simple but meaningful terms: being happy in what you do, feeling comfortable in life, and always striving to be better than you were the day before. That mindset shows in how he approaches his clients. He prioritizes clear, prompt



“

**Be prepared for the inconsistencies. Take care of your clients no matter the value of the property.”**





Grove Baptist Church. Though he spent much of his life in Central Texas, returning to East Texas six years ago felt like coming home... a viewpoint that now helps him connect deeply with clients who are drawn to the region's beauty, sense of community, and slower pace of life.

As a fellow agent here in Longview, I can say this with certainty: our industry is full of hardworking professionals, but every so often, someone stands out not just for their accomplishments, but for the journey that created them. Jason Brown is one of those people. His story is a powerful reminder that life's greatest challenges don't just change our direction. Sometimes, they gently guide us exactly where we were meant to go. And in Jason's case, that road led him to a career built on helping others find something he understands deeply: a place to call home.

communication, often answering late-night calls and doing whatever it takes to make sure his clients feel supported and informed. His patience and persistence have already helped him navigate complex situations, including one memorable deal that nearly fell apart over a ten-foot dispute on a property line before he successfully guided both parties to a compromise.

Outside of real estate, Jason's world revolves around family and community. He and Becca have been together nearly 14 years and live on their family farm with their 13-year-old daughter, Makenzie, along with a lively mix of animals. When he's not working, you'll often find him spending time outdoors with his family, enjoying East Texas lakes, or participating in activities at Oak

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# Showing Up Matters

## The Story of Brad Newberry

WRITTEN BY DAWN SIMS • PHOTOS BY CAROLINE STURROCK PHOTO

In a business where so many stories begin with a lifelong dream of selling homes, Brad Newberry's started with something much more practical: a finance degree, a loan officer's license, and a young family he was determined to provide for. Like many of us in real estate, he didn't set out chasing the industry. He stepped into it out of necessity, faith, and a willingness to do whatever it took to make things work.



In 2003, Brad thought his path was clear. With a degree in finance and fresh credentials as a mortgage loan officer, he expected to build a steady career helping people secure home loans. But the first year didn't go as planned. He didn't close a single deal. Meanwhile, he and his high school sweetheart, Kate, were adjusting to life with their first baby, trying to figure out how

to make it all come together. It was his mortgage broker who first suggested something that would change everything: if he earned his real estate license, he could represent buyers and handle their financing too. Brad took the leap. He got licensed in October 2004, closed his first deal that December, and by March of 2005, something remarkable happened. For the first time, their family

made its monthly budget. "I told Kate, 'I guess you're supposed to quit since we made our budget,'" he recalls with a laugh. It was a moment that required mountain-moving faith. They stepped into uncertainty together, trusting that the path would unfold. And it did.

Over the next two decades, Brad and Kate built not just a business, but a purpose-driven partnership centered on serving others. Today, Brad is a broker-owner with more than 21 years in the industry, overseeing nearly 200 annual office transactions while personally closing dozens himself each year. Along the way, they've explored nearly every corner of the real estate world — mortgages, residential sales, investment flips, rental ownership, and even title partnerships. But if you ask Brad what defines success, he won't mention numbers. He'll talk about people. "The people along the way have been the best part about it," he says. "The clients who trusted us, the agents we get to work with every day...that's what makes it worthwhile." That people-centered perspective is part of why his business has earned the community's "Locals Love Us" recognition for 15 consecutive years. It's not something you achieve through transactions alone — it comes from consistency, relationships, and simply doing the right thing.

**"Just do your job and do the best you can."**  
— Brad Newberry

And if you spend even a few minutes talking with Brad, you quickly realize something else: despite decades of experience, he's still deeply humble about his role in it all. He describes himself as an introvert, someone who admits

that the daily people interactions of real estate can be exhausting. But he also sees that tension as part of his motivation. "Some days I get peopled out," he says honestly. "But it's the people that make it worth getting up and doing it again." That honesty extends to another struggle many in our industry explicitly comprehends: work-life balance. Brad openly admits it's one of his greatest challenges. As a self-described "people pleaser," he carries the weight of not wanting to disappoint clients, colleagues, or family. Add to that the unpredictable nature of commission-based income, and the pressure can feel constant. "There are times it comes from a lack of faith," he says candidly. "Not knowing exactly what the next month looks like. But the Lord has always provided."

Faith, in fact, is a steady thread throughout Brad's life. He's not someone who speaks loudly about it, but those closest to him say it shows in everything he does — in his discipline, his consistency, and his unwavering integrity. Kate sees that more clearly than anyone. When I spoke with her, her adoration for her husband was unmistakable. "I don't know many people that have the work ethic he has," she said without hesitation. She described Brad as someone who quite literally cannot sit still. If he isn't physically working on something, he's mentally mapping out the next project, analyzing numbers, or planning for the future. That relentless drive has fueled not only their real estate success but also their entrepreneurial ventures, including a dream that finally came true two years ago: the opening of Starrville RV Resort Park located right outside of Tyler, a vision Brad carried for nearly two decades.

Yet what struck Kate most wasn't his ambition. It was his intentionality. She recalls the early

**"I don't know many people that have the work ethic he has."** — Kate Newberry





**“The people along the way have been the best part about it.” — Brad Newberry**

years when the kids were small and the real estate market was tough. There was a season when Brad went four months without a paycheck. She remembers him falling asleep at his computer from exhaustion. And still, one thing never changed. “We always had dinner together every night,” she said. “No matter what, he showed up.” That phrase, “he showed up” might be the simplest and most accurate way to describe Brad Newberry. He shows up for clients, for agents, and most importantly, for his family.

Together, he and Kate have raised four children, each with their own passions and pursuits. Their oldest son, Preston plays

baseball at University of the Incarnate Word, while their daughter, Lilly Katherine attends Harding University. Anna-Leigh and Georgia are still at home, filling their days with sports, school, and the constant motion of family life. And in the middle of it all, Brad remains fully present. The kids know him as the dad who tosses baseballs in the yard for hours, dances in the kitchen, captains fishing trips, and never misses a game or practice. “He always says yes to them,” Kate shared. “He puts down what he’s doing and meets them where they are.”

It’s that same dependable nature that defines his professional legacy. Brad doesn’t talk about leaving behind a big empire

or chasing recognition. His aspiration is simpler. “Hopefully I did things the right way,” he says. That philosophy echoes in the advice he gives younger agents entering the industry... wisdom that feels especially meaningful coming from someone who’s weathered both booming markets and uncertain seasons. “Focus on the process, not the results. Look to serve people and the best interest of your client,” he says. “The money will take care of itself.” It’s not flashy advice. It’s not trendy. But it’s the kind that stands the test of time, much like Brad himself.

Even his personal mantra reflects that unwavering dedication. According to Kate, he rarely speaks it out loud, but he lives it daily: “Just do your job and do the best you can.” He rises early, reads his Bible, exercises, and approaches each day with a diligent and disciplined focus. No fanfare. No performance. Just faithful obedience. In an industry often driven by noise, branding, and constant motion, there’s something deeply centering and timeless about that.

Brad Newberry’s story isn’t one of overnight success or grand declarations. It’s a story of taking small steps over 21 years that leave deep footprints of faith...showing up day after day, serving people well, and building something meaningful alongside the partner who has stood beside him since the beginning. And perhaps that’s what makes it resonate most with those of us who share this profession. Because at the end of the day, long after the contracts are signed and the numbers fade, what truly defines a real estate career isn’t just how many deals we close. It’s how we live in between them.



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# Final 2025 Cover Celebrations Networking Event

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN TILMON WITH TILMON MEDIA

On January 22, 2026, East Texas Real Producers gathered at The Summit Club in Longview to celebrate the final covers of 2025. The afternoon was filled with laughter, connection, and camaraderie as industry leaders celebrated a year of success and looked ahead to new opportunities in 2026. Here's a glimpse into some of the standout moments that made this celebration truly special.





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# FAQS

ALL ABOUT EAST TEXAS REAL PRODUCERS



**Q: Who Receives This Magazine?**

A: The top 300 agents in East Texas based on volume for the previous year and our Preferred Partners. There are thousands of agents in the region and you, in this elite group, are the cream of the crop. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication, and proficiency.

**Q: Do Real Estate Agents Have To Pay For Magazines Or Events?**

A: NO! The magazine and events are FREE to agents and funded by the partners who advertise.

**Q: What Kind Of Content Will Be Featured?**

A: This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing for a REALTOR® to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about Real Producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention—we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

**Q: Who Are Our Partners?**

A: Anyone listed as a "Preferred Partner" in the front of the magazine is funding and fueling this community and is an essential part of it. They are



the top professionals in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine and attend our events. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area, but the best affiliates as well, so we can grow stronger together.

**Q: Does Real Producers Have Events?**

A: Yes! Along with the magazine, we will host quarterly events exclusive to this community, where you—the best of the best—get together at local venues to socialize, mastermind,

deepen our connections, and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine and on social media.

**Q: How Can I Recommend A Business Or Feature Story?**

A: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® to be featured, know of top-notch affiliate partners who you believe should be a part of our community, or would simply like to network; email or call us. I look forward to hearing from you!

Email: Cherika.Johnson@n2co.com

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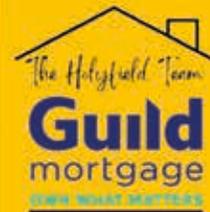
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