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MARCH 2026

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# Meet The Team



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Welcome to another issue of *North Carolina Coast Real Producers!* A community built to connect, elevate, and celebrate the very best in our industry. Each month, I'm reminded how powerful this network is, and I want to make sure you have every tool at your fingertips to fully experience all that Real Producers offers.

That's why I'm excited to highlight a resource created just for you: Your Real Producers online hub

The QR code is linked to your go-to space for everything happening in our local Real Producers community. Here's what you'll find:

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- Update your contact information: Make sure your magazine arrives at the right address every month.
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Thank you for being a part of this elite community. I'm proud to serve you, cheer you on, and continue building something extraordinary together along the North Carolina Coast.



*Lauren Schuster*  
Publisher & Owner

North Carolina Coast Real Producers

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# Diane Castro-Perez

Leading with Heart:  
The Diane Castro-Perez Way

WRITTEN BY LAUREN SCHUSTER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH FREEMAN



**D**iane Castro-Perez's success in real estate is rooted in more than impressive production numbers. As the leader of one of the top-producing teams with Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage, Diane has become a trusted name throughout Onslow County, Pender County, New Hanover County, and Brunswick County, yet she measures impact not only by volume, but by the lives she touches and the people she helps grow. For her, the story has always been about heart, purpose, and people.

At the center of her world is family, especially her grandchildren. "My grandkids are my heart," Diane says. "They keep me grounded and remind me that no matter how busy life gets, what really matters is being present." That perspective carries into every part of her work, shaping how she leads, mentors, and builds opportunities for others.

Diane's approach to real estate is deeply personal. She understands that buying

or selling a home is one of the biggest decisions a person can make, and she treats that responsibility with care. "This business isn't transactional," she says. "People are trusting you with their future, their finances, and their peace of mind. You have to honor that."

That sense of purpose carries into the way she leads her team, intentionally, consistently, and with a level of involvement rarely seen in top-producing groups. Diane is fully invested in her agents' success, beginning every morning at 8:30 a.m. with a team-wide huddle. "We meet every single morning, Monday through Friday," she explains. "It's our way of staying connected, accountable, and energized. Everyone takes turns leading topics, so the entire team has a voice."

These morning calls set the tone for the day, but Diane doesn't stop there. She also hosts two Zoom meetings each week for training, strategy, and problem-solving, plus in-person team meetings twice a month. On top of that, she holds



“Having the right support behind you makes growth sustainable.”

weekly accountability check-ins with agents to ensure they’re staying on track toward goals. “I’m very hands-on,” she says. “If I’m asking them to show up, then I have to show up even more.”

Diane is intentional about building an environment where agents don’t just stay busy, but build sustainable, profitable careers. One of her core goals as a leader is ensuring that every agent on her team has a clear path to earning at least a six-figure income.

“I don’t want agents guessing or struggling year after year,” Diane explains. “We focus on clear goals, strong systems, and consistent habits so they can realistically earn \$100,000 or more and still have a life outside of work.”

Rather than pushing volume for volume’s sake, Diane helps her agents break production down into manageable, achievable steps. She

works closely with them to understand their goals, strengths, and personal priorities. “Everyone’s version of success looks a little different,” she says. “My job is to help them build a business that supports the life they want, not burns them out.”

With 40 agents on her team, Diane led them to an extraordinary \$180.2 million in sales volume in 2025. Her team’s consistent production across multiple counties reflects both market expertise and strong internal support. From military families relocating in Onslow County to lifestyle-driven buyers and sellers throughout New Hanover and Brunswick Counties, Diane’s team adapts to each client’s needs with local insight and personalized service. “You can’t take a one-size-fits-all approach in this market,” she says. “Listening is everything.”

Outside of real estate, Diane’s entrepreneurial spirit shines through her Dry Bar business, a creative venture that

allows her to connect with people in a different way. “I’ve always loved helping people feel confident,” she says. “The Dry Bar gives me that outlet. It’s fun, creative, and still centered around making people feel good about themselves.”

That balance between business and passion is something Diane encourages within her team as well. She believes agents perform better when they’re supported as whole people, not just producers. “You can love your work and still make room for joy,” she says. “It doesn’t have to be one or the other.”

Her partnership with Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage has allowed her to scale while maintaining that personal touch. With strong brokerage support and trusted systems in place, Diane is able to focus on mentoring her agents and elevating the client experience. “Having the right support behind you makes growth sustainable,” she says.

As the North Carolina Coast continues to grow, Diane remains focused on intentional expansion rather than rapid scale. Her priority is longevity for her business, her agents, and herself. “I want what we build to last,” she says. “That means steady growth, strong foundations, and taking care of people along the way.”

Looking ahead, Diane’s goals are simple and deeply rooted: continue helping her agents reach financial stability and success, serve clients with integrity, grow the businesses she loves, and spend meaningful time with her grandchildren. “If my agents are thriving, my clients are happy, and I’m present for my family,” she says, “that’s success to me.”

Diane Castro-Perez shows that in real estate, success doesn’t have to come at the expense of balance. Her approach proves that agents can produce at a high level, earn strong incomes, and still protect the life they love. Across the North Carolina Coast, her influence is seen not only in the homes her team sells, but in the careers she strengthens and the lives she helps shape.



“People are trusting you with their future, their finances, and their peace of mind. You have to honor that.”

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# Jenna Morton

*1,300 and Counting:  
A Career Built  
on Commitment*

WRITTEN BY EMMA  
DOLLENMAYER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
JOSH FREEMAN

**When Jenna Morton talks about numbers, she doesn't talk about them as transactions. She talks about them as people.**

"This year my goal is to help 80 families," she says. "Right now, I have 5 closed and 12 pending. So I have 17 out of my goal of 80. Who are the other 63 people that I get to help this year?" That framing says everything.

Licensed in September 2005, Morton has been a full-time real estate agent for 20 years. She joined Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage in February 2008 and is approaching her 18th anniversary with the firm. Over two decades, she has weathered market crashes, hurricanes, inventory shortages, bidding wars, and dramatic industry shifts, all as an individual agent.

In 2026, she will close her 1,300th transaction. "I'm really excited about that," she says. "When I closed out 2025, I was at 1,272. I've already closed five this year. So 23 more people and we'll hit 1,300. Who's that going to be?" she asks.

Every client matters to her. But milestones still mean something. "One of my investors was my 1,000th deal," she recalls. "I told them, 'You're my thousandth client.' It wasn't a big deal to them, but it was to me!"

That balance between production and purpose has defined her career. In 2006, her first full year in the business, Morton closed 11 transactions. Today, that number represents something very different. "Now it's like I need to have 11 or more pending, or I feel like I'm not doing my job," she says with a laugh.

The growth from 11 deals in a year to surpassing 100 units, twice, didn't happen accidentally. It came from structure, accountability, and a clear understanding of how this business actually works.

**Every client matters to her. But milestones still mean something.**



Jenna's dogs!  
Left: Frank  
Right: Oscar

"Real estate is nothing but a bunch of 90-day cycles all stacked in between each other," she explains. "What you do right now is what's going to feed you in 90 days."

That mindset became foundational early on. In 2009, she hired a coach through the Mike Ferry Organization. She has worked with them ever since. "I will 100 percent give them credit. Not for my success, but for holding me accountable," she says. "Pushing myself with stretch goals and staying mindful of what I need to do to achieve them."

For years, her target was 100 units in a single year. She hit it in 2019 with 109 transactions. She did it again in 2020 with 107. Between 2019 and 2021, she closed nearly 300 deals as a solo agent. "It's a lot," she admits. "You don't realize it's taking a toll on you until you step back."

After an intense stretch through COVID, navigating multiple-offer negotiations and helping nearly 140 buyers in a three-year span, 2023 brought a slower market and a moment of recalibration. She closed 41 units that year.

But for Morton, slower doesn't mean stagnant. It means strategic.

In 2024, she reevaluated. What was working? What needed to evolve? She added new construction relationships to complement her resale business, creating what she calls a hybrid model and helping resale families while also guiding first-time buyers through the build process.

"We get to show the transformation. Here's the dirt, here it is framed, here it is drywalled, here it is finished," she says. "It makes their homeownership experience unique."



**Success isn't measured by transactions. It's measured by how many people she gets to help next.**

The shift also reflects something else she's learned over 20 years: adaptability is survival. When she entered the industry, agents controlled access to listings. Today, buyers have everything at their fingertips. The difference-maker is no longer access, it's expertise.

"There are a lot of order-takers out there," she says. "But I know the market. I can promise you I will find the house." That confidence comes from experience and discipline. Early in her career, she learned the importance of becoming a listing agent rather than solely working buyers.

"When you're working a buyer, that's the only buyer you can work with that day," she explains. "If I have 15 active listings, 15 buyer's

agents could bring me contracts. It puts you in a different position."

It's strategic thinking like that that allowed her to scale without building a team. And yet, despite the production milestones, what keeps her in the business isn't volume, it's variety. "It's never the same," she says. "At no time ever do I have to say, 'Do you want fries with that?' Every day is different."

Originally from Michigan, Morton moved to North Carolina after college and chose to stay, trading snow for surf and building a life in a place people dream of vacationing. "We get to live where other people want to vacation," she says. "What's not to love about that?"

She's sold everything from \$25,000 foreclosures to a \$1.8 million

beachfront home. She's navigated hurricane evacuations, inventory shortages that dropped below 300 homes countywide, and markets with nearly 2,000 active listings.

Through it all, her approach remains the same: know the numbers, know the market, and remember that every transaction represents a family.

After 20 years, 1,300 clients, and multiple 100-unit years, she isn't chasing an exit strategy. "No end date in sight," she says.

The goal now? Get back to 100 families served annually. Keep stacking 90-day cycles. Keep showing up. Because for Jenna Morton, success isn't measured by transactions. It's measured by how many people she gets to help next.



# The Story Behind Spinnaker's Reach Realty

Where Legacy and Community Meet

WRITTEN BY LAUREN SCHUSTER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN WHITT

Spinnaker's Reach Realty has always been a family story, one that began in 1996 when Kyle Lagos's mother, Judy O'Neill, became the original listing agent for the Spinnaker's Reach community in Emerald Isle. As homes rose, so did the demand for vacation rentals, and the property management business grew naturally alongside the neighborhood it served. For years, it remained a small, tightly run operation rooted in loyalty, long-term relationships, and repeat guests who built their family traditions around its cottages and beach houses.

But in 2014, everything changed when Kyle and her husband, Matias, moved back home. At the time they were living in Los Angeles, working in hospitality, design, construction, and real estate. "I told him that my mom was thinking of selling the business," Kyle laughed. "I said, 'We might want to think about moving home.' And he didn't sleep after that, he was convinced this was what we needed to do."

The business was charming, but tired. When Kyle and Matias stepped into the business, they focused on refreshing the systems and bringing everything up to date. Their goal was simply

to help the company grow into its next chapter.

Together, they rebuilt everything from technology, systems, customer service, marketing, and most importantly, momentum. Today Spinnaker's Reach manages nearly 110 rentals, with 60% still in the original community but a growing presence across Emerald Isle, Pine Knoll Shores, and toward Atlantic Beach. They've tripled revenue since taking over, thanks in part to the post-COVID surge in vacation demand, but even more to their intentional operational overhaul and commitment to quality.

Kyle calls their portfolio a curated collection. "What we want is a curated group of homes whose owners care about hospitality as much as we do. Homes with pools, great spaces, thoughtful details, and but, mainly owners who want guests to feel special," she said.

"We know these houses are their investments, but also their happy places. Our job isn't just to rent them, but it's to take care of them."

-Kyle Lagos

And that mindset is exactly what sets them apart.

While most vacation rental companies focus strictly on bookings, the Lagos team goes far deeper. In the off-season, they manage kitchen remodels, bathroom upgrades, painting projects, and full-scale renovations. "We really partner with our homeowners," Kyle explained. "We know these houses are their investments, but also their happy places. Our job isn't just to rent them, but it's to take care of them."

Matias oversees the operations side, coordinating contractors, project





Jill joined the company in June, bringing decades of experience in corporate sales, real estate, home building, and property management. Her arrival accelerated their expansion and helped bring in new communities and higher-quality homes. “I just love working for a small company where the team puts in 100%,” Jill shared. “Kyle and Matias care so deeply. They’re people-pleasers by nature, and they go above and beyond for guests and owners. It’s really a labor of love for them.”

But behind the business is an equally meaningful story of family, balance, and community.

Kyle grew up on Emerald Isle, and now her own children are building their lives in the same tight-knit community. “Our kids are completely ingrained in this community,” she said. “They know the police officers, the lifeguards, the firefighters. They go to the after-school programs, the local camps, the lifeguard camp, they really feel connected.”

As a family, the Lagos crew spends as much time outdoors as possible. Camping at Cape Lookout, hiking in the mountains, adventuring beyond the island. They prioritize unplugged, messy, real childhood moments. “At school it seems the kids are inside with technology

all day,” Matias said. “We want them outside, getting dirty, running wild, and learning by exploring.”

And now, life has taken an even more unexpected turn: in November, Kyle was elected mayor of Emerald Isle.

“It’s been a learning curve,” she admitted with a smile. “But serving on the tourism board for six years really prepared me. I understand how important tourism is for our local economy, and now I get to balance that with the needs of full-time residents. I’ve always cared deeply about this community, but now the picture is bigger.”

The dual roles of mayor and business owner align more naturally than one might expect. Both require listening, long-term thinking, and a genuine love for Emerald Isle’s people and future.

For Kyle and Matias, the work is personal. Their business is rooted in family tradition. Their children are growing up on the same beaches Kyle did. Their company has become a modern reflection of the hospitality they both lived and breathed while developing their careers. And their vision continues to grow, fueled by dedication, innovation, and community pride.

Spinnaker’s Reach Realty isn’t just a rental company, it’s a family-built, community-minded, hospitality-driven legacy. And under Matias and Kyle’s leadership, both the business and the town she now serves are poised for a bright, thoughtfully curated future.

timelines, and upkeep. “A lot of our owners live in New York or California,” he said. “They trust us to make sure the home is cared for, updated, and ready. We map out every house, like where the water shut-off is and how the systems work because those details matter.”

“What we want is a curated group of homes whose owners care about hospitality as much as we do.”

-Kyle Lagos

Last year, the couple moved their office out of the original neighborhood and into a more visible standalone space. An important step in repositioning the company as island-wide experts rather than a community-only team. And with growth came the need for a key hire: someone who could expand their reach, nurture owner relationships, and help them scale with intention. They welcomed Jill Rizzo to the team.



◀ Kyle and Matias’s kids  
Left: Tomas, 11 Right: Pilar, 10





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