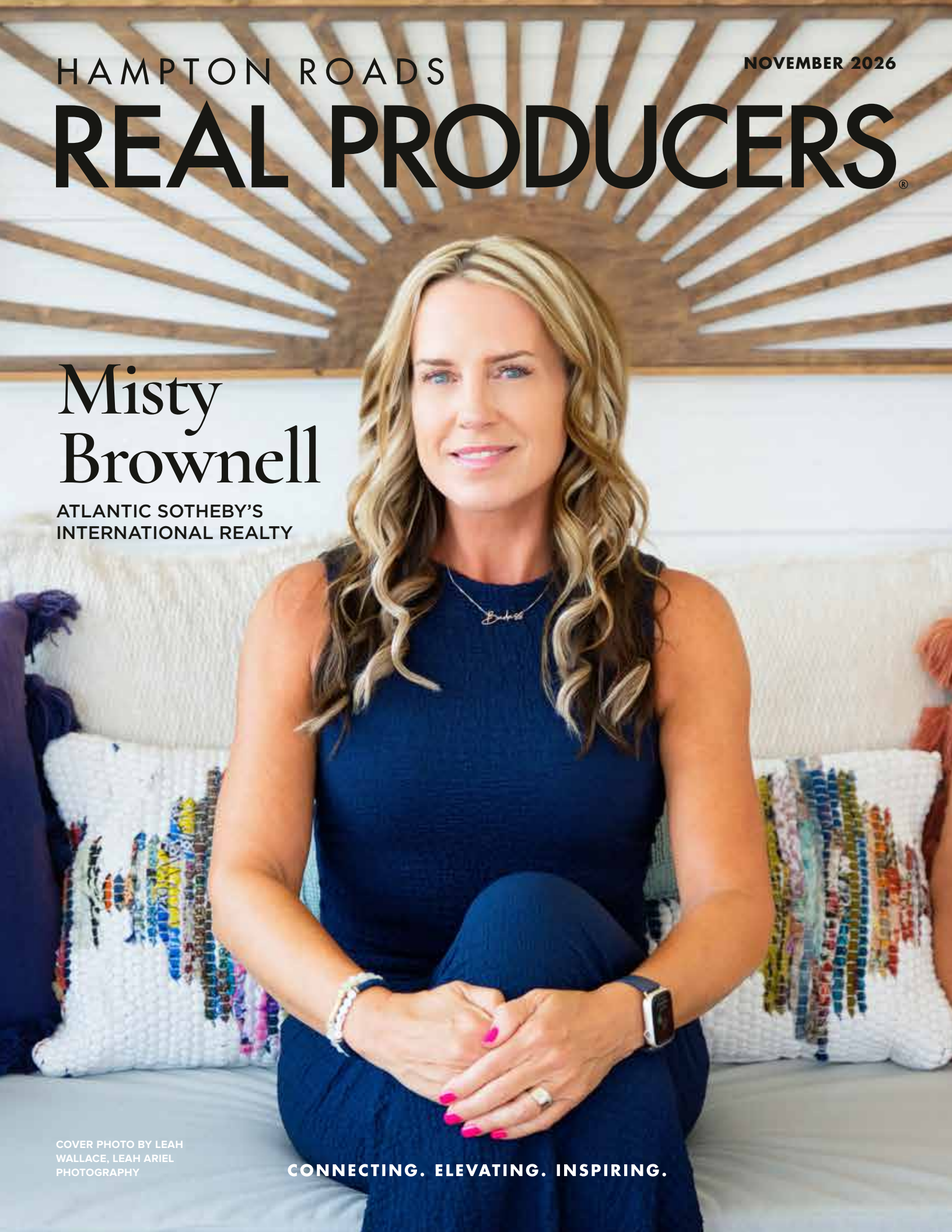
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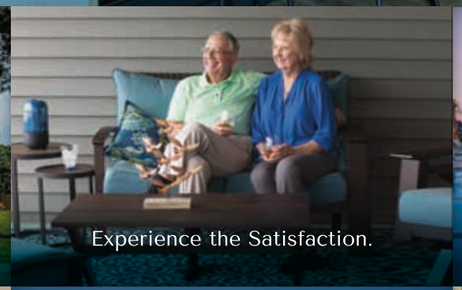
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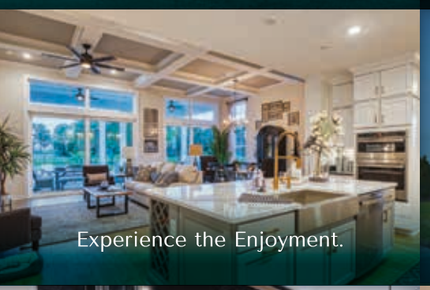
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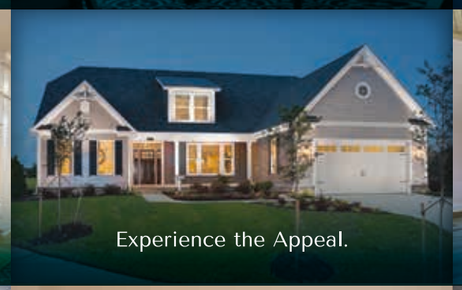
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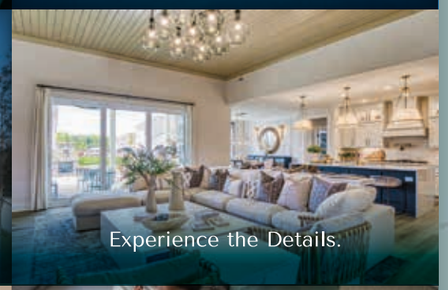

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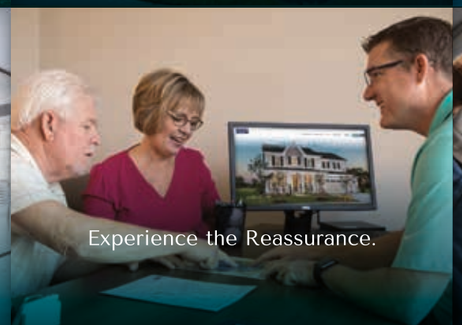

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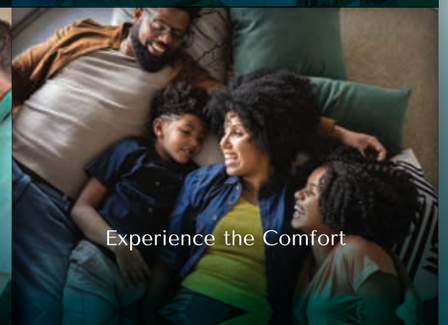

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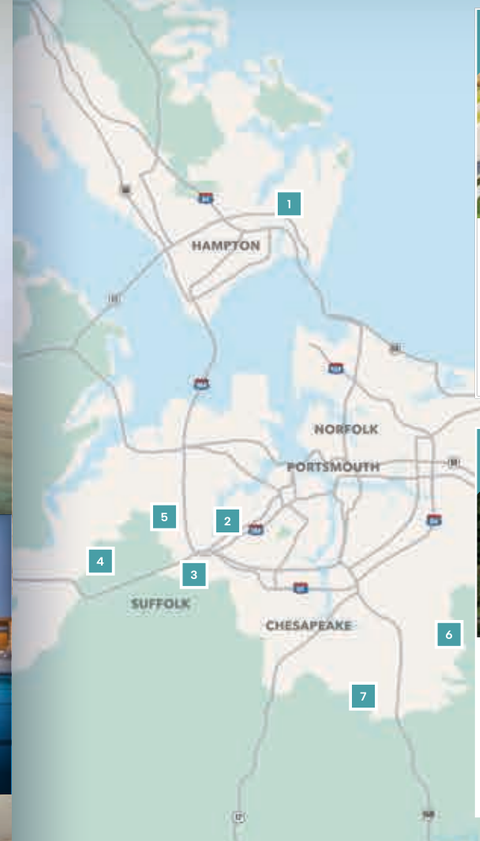

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3

Creekside Reserve

SUFFOLK, VA

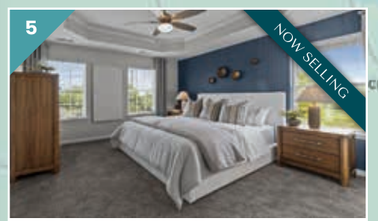
Creekside Reserve is a welcoming community where everyday life feels a little brighter. Located within Suffolk, this thoughtfully designed neighborhood brings together scenic surroundings, southern charm, and everyday convenience.


4

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SUFFOLK, VA

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5

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HERE'S WHAT HAMPTON ROADS TOP 500 REAL ESTATE AGENTS SOLD

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TOTAL UNITS

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$14.3 MILLION

AVERAGE UNITS PER AGENT

30











Misty Brownell

ATLANTIC SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH • PHOTOS BY LEAH WALLACE, LEAH ARIEL PHOTOGRAPHY

At 50 years old and 23 years into her real estate career, Misty Brownell has no interest in slowing down. In fact, the possibilities ahead energize her more than ever. She is having one of the strongest years of her career, expanding a referral network that stretches far beyond Hampton Roads and building a life that finally leaves room for something she admits was missing for a long time: herself. "I'm still learning and growing," she explains, "and I'm still really excited about what's next."

Real estate, however, was never part of some carefully mapped-out plan. After serving in the Army, Misty was primarily a full-time mom when she began doing bookkeeping from home for a custom homebuilder. When she eventually told him she was ready to move on, his response changed her trajectory. "We were in my driveway, and he pulled out his checkbook," she recalls. "He said, 'I think you'd be a really great real estate agent.'" He paid for her real estate classes, and Misty took the chance. But she also entered the industry carrying an experience that would shape the agent she became.

At 22, and six months pregnant with her second daughter, Misty purchased her first home. She remembers feeling rushed, undereducated, and pushed into decisions she didn't fully understand. "I remember saying, 'I will do the absolute opposite,'" she shares. "I never wanted a buyer or a client of mine to feel the way that I felt in that transaction."

Today, Misty slows the process. She conducts comprehensive buyer consultations, walking clients through their goals, expectations, costs, the process ahead, and even the documents they may eventually sign. "Educating people is the key," she states. "I want them to feel extremely comfortable and knowledgeable about what steps they're taking and why."

That same intentionality carries into the relationships behind her business. Misty and her husband, Jeff, have been married for 28 years and have three children: Braedin, 29; Graesin, 27; and Torrin, 19. Early on, her business grew through PTA, youth sports, military relocations, friendships, and her involvement in her children's lives. Today, those relationships stretch around the world. During her approximately 13 years with Atlantic Sotheby's International Realty, Misty has built connections with hundreds of agents throughout the brand, creating a powerful referral network.

Her client relationships have proved just as lasting. She still sends birthday and home anniversary cards, stays connected through social media, and has reached the point where clients she helped years ago are now sending their children to her. "Friendships and relationships don't end at the close of a transaction," she notes with a smile. "They really just begin."

In recent years, social media has given Misty another way to nurture those ties. Rather than filling her feed exclusively with real estate, she shares family, renovations, health, personal growth, humor, and everyday life. "People





"Educating people is the key. I want them to feel extremely comfortable and knowledgeable about what steps they're taking and why."



selling real estate with serving as a managing broker, essentially carrying two full-time careers at once. “I had zero time for Misty,” she reflects. “Misty got nothing.” Three years ago, she decided to step away from management. “I wanted to reclaim my life,” she adds.

Instead of diminishing her ambition, that decision redirected it. Misty poured more energy into her mental, emotional, and physical growth while continuing to build her real estate career. She also created Living #Badass, a Hampton Roads women’s empowerment group that has grown to roughly 100 members. “Even the badass women in the world need a sisterhood,” she stresses. The message has since become part of Misty’s identity. She makes and gives away bracelets bearing the word “Badass,” with two rules for wearing them: wear the word facing yourself as a reminder of who you are, and if you meet someone who needs that reminder more than you do, give it to her.

Now, Misty hopes to take that community beyond Hampton Roads, reaching more women while continuing to grow a real estate career that, even after 23 years, still challenges her. For her, the two are not as different as they might seem. Both are rooted in connection, growth, and helping people feel confident in where they are headed next.

In defining this chapter of her life, Misty shares, “I live every day with the mindset that no matter what, I’m going to do something better today than I did yesterday. I’m going to share love today, and I’m grateful—beyond grateful.”

want to see people who are authentic and real,” she emphasizes. “It all comes down to connection.”

That authenticity became even more important as Misty began reevaluating her own life. For years, she balanced

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Craig Jones

AWEIGH REAL ESTATE

STORY BY DAN CLARK
PHOTOS BY WILL HAWKINS, WILL HAWKINS PHOTOGRAPHY

Craig Jones has a rule he picked up from one of his first commanding officers in the Navy: Always be trying to learn the job of the person above you. Always be qualifying. Always be learning. The rule has shaped nearly everything he's done since. "When I became a real estate agent, my full intention was to get a broker's license," Craig says. "I didn't know if I was going to be a managing broker, an associate broker, or a principal broker. I hadn't really figured out what I wanted to do. But you should always be learning."

Craig retired from the Navy and spent five years as a financial advisor before real estate found him, or more accurately, before his friend Kenny Letner wore him down. Kenny, now the principal broker and founder of Aweigh Real Estate, helped Craig and his wife find their home in Pungo. The two became friends, and Kenny wasn't shy about his pitch. "He kept saying, 'You've got to come to real estate; you've got to come to real estate,'" Craig recalls. Craig was ready to hear it. As he shares, "The frustration of trying to get people to make permanent changes to their financial habits finally







“It has to do with their attitude, their dedication to the craft, knowing the contract, and knowing the rules and regulations so they can properly represent their clients.”

wore me down.” He finally hit his breaking point. He’s been licensed since 2016 and hasn’t looked back.

That same drive to keep climbing eventually led him to his broker’s license and, about six years ago, into his current role as managing broker at Aweigh Real Estate. He holds the same standard for his agents. “It really doesn’t have so much to do with the volume of business they’re doing,” he notes. “It has to do with their attitude, their dedication to the craft, knowing the contract, and knowing the rules and regulations so they can properly represent their clients.”

Craig and Kenny built the office itself around the same idea, building in redundancy on purpose. Kenny handles his set of responsibilities. Craig handles compliance and what he calls “herding cats.” An operations team runs marketing and the day-to-day details. Transaction coordinators handle their piece. “We wanted to set up an office that could function if neither one of us were here for whatever reason,” Craig explains. “We’re well on the way to doing that, and I’m very happy with our progress.”

If he could go back and coach his rookie-agent self, Craig has two answers ready without hesitation. First, bank half of every commission back into the business instead of treating it like a paycheck. “Making a $10,000 commission doesn’t mean you get a $10,000 paycheck to take home,” he says. “You’ve got to bank it for taxes, business expenses, and growing your company.” Second, never sign an agreement that hands your clients over to the company that referred them. He learned that lesson the hard way and lost a good number of relationships because of it.

At home, Craig and his wife, Susan, are coming up on 36 years of marriage. Their two kids are grown, one finishing a PhD in Colorado, the other working locally in the show-horse world, a business Craig jokes will probably make her richer than the rest of the family combined. When he’s not at the office, Craig is usually chasing bass tournaments a couple of weekends a month, or, when he’s not fishing one, getting ready for the next. He and Susan also keep a garden and a small flock of chickens on their acre and a half in Pungo.

His closing gift tradition came from Susan. She puts together a “first dinner in the house” kit for his clients: a good pot, real spaghetti sauce, pasta spoons, and everything they need to cook their first meal in a new home before the boxes are even unpacked. If someone mentions they’re obsessed with a particular sports team, or, in one memorable case, Yeti coolers, then Craig adjusts.

Craig doesn’t have a five-year plan carved in stone. Maybe he stays a managing broker. Maybe he and Kenny grow Aweigh Real Estate into more offices across town. Either way, the answer to how he gets there hasn’t changed since his first ship: Always be learning.

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A Morning of Great Connections at The Broker

PHOTOS BY DARREN MYERS, LEVEL UP VISUAL MEDIA









September's **VIP Magazine Celebration** at **The Broker** was the perfect combination of great people, great coffee, great food, and even better conversations. Huge gratitude to Alvin Lapitan and Greg Bell, along with their team, for all the work that went into making this event so amazing.

As a longtime vetted preferred partner of *Hampton Roads Real Producers,* The Broker created a fun, festive, and productive atmosphere where more than 70 top agents and some of the best real estate-related businesses in Hampton Roads came together to celebrate our featured agents and partners.

And speaking of attendance, we've had quite a few people ask, "Why wasn't I invited?" or tell us they never saw the invitation. So, here's the scoop.

These smaller VIP magazine celebration events are specifically for celebrating the agents and partners we feature in each issue. Currently, we invite the featured agents and preferred partners, other top agents within their brokerage, and the agents who recommended those partners to us. As you can imagine, trying to include everyone can be a bit of a balancing act. Honestly, it's a pretty great problem to have with so many wanting to attend these events.

Want to be at one of these in the future? If you see a friend or colleague being featured in *Hampton Roads Real Producers,* let us know you'd like to attend the VIP event when we present them with a framed copy of the article. We'll do our best to make sure you're on the invitation list for their celebration.

At this event, the main event was the **Mane Event Coffee Truck,** which absolutely delivered. Specialty coffees, smoothies, and plenty of caffeine kept everyone energized, while The Broker's delicious continental breakfast treats rounded out the morning. The result? The food was delicious, the caffeine was abundant, and the incredible people in the room elevated the conversations.

We are so grateful to everyone who joined us and helped make this celebration such a success. In addition to celebrating our magazine features, these events are about bringing the right people together, strengthening relationships, making connections, and creating opportunities.

We can't wait to do it all again in early December. We hope to see you there!

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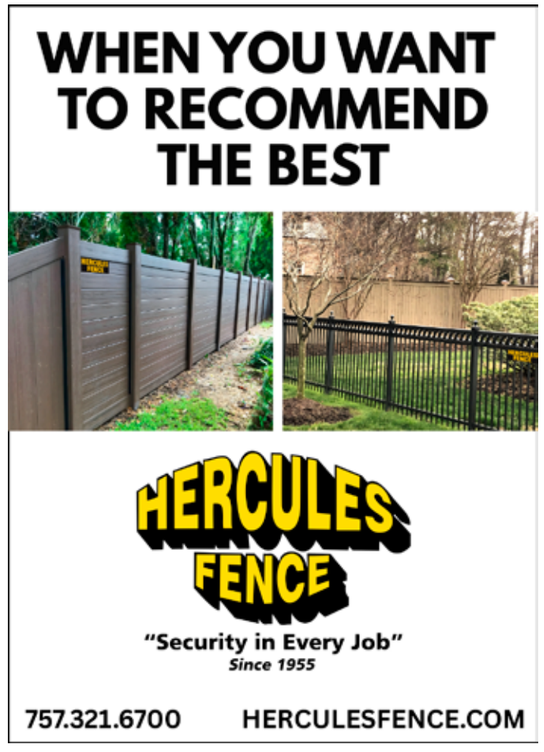

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LEVEL UP VISUAL MEDIA

DARREN MYERS

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH
PHOTOS BY DAWNA ELLIS & DARREN MYERS, LEVEL UP VISUAL MEDIA

For more than four decades, Darren Myers has taught discipline, focus, and precision as a ninth-degree black belt at his dojo, Virginia Martial Arts Center. Today, those same qualities shape the way he approaches real estate media through Level Up Visual Media, helping Hampton Roads real estate agents market homes through elevated photography, cinematic video, and creative storytelling that stands out in a crowded industry.

Creativity has always been part of Darren's life. He picked up his first camera at 14 and later combined his passion with a background in broadcasting and videography. Early work with a television network helped Darren develop an eye for storytelling, composition, and production quality that now influences every project he takes on.

Although Level Up Visual Media officially launched in 2023, Darren spent years building its foundation without fully realizing where it would lead. During COVID, he found himself spending more time behind the camera, capturing nature, architecture, and life around the lake where he lives in Suffolk. The creative outlet quickly grew into something more. As Darren began networking throughout Hampton Roads, connections within the real estate community introduced him to listing photography and videography. The work immediately clicked. "I fell in love with the architecture, which allowed me to focus on the creative side of things," he explains.



Today, Level Up Visual Media focuses on far more than standard listing photography. Darren creates a complete media package for agents, offering photography, cinematic video, drone work, floor plans, 3D tours, virtual staging, decluttering edits, branding content, and social media assets. His goal is to help agents market homes at a higher level while creating a seamless experience for both them and their clients.

One area Darren feels especially passionate about is video. "Video is what sells these days," he states. "People are on their phones watching video constantly. The video and 3D tours give buyers a chance to experience how the home flows and connects." Darren approaches every shoot with a focus on content that feels modern, immersive, and intentional. From cinematic walkthroughs to creative drone fly-throughs, he looks for ways to help listings stand out online.

His background in television production also gives him a different perspective from many photographers entering the real estate space. "I'm a video person who got into photography versus a photographer who tried to learn video on the side," Darren explains.

Innovation plays a major role in the business, as well. Darren uses advanced LiDAR-based floor plan technology that allows buyers to virtually explore the home and the

surrounding property. He also offers instant event photo delivery through QR code technology, allowing guests at networking events and corporate functions to receive professional images directly to their phones in real time.

While creativity and technology help define the business, relationships remain at the center of everything Darren builds. A philosophy he credits to his fiancée, Dawna Ellis, has become one of the biggest influences behind both his business and community involvement: you have to show up. Whether attending networking events, supporting nonprofit organizations, filming local businesses for American Dream TV, or building relationships within the *Real Producers* community, Darren embraces being present and genuinely connecting with people. "I love to meet people," he says with a smile. "I love hearing their stories and finding out what makes them passionate about what they do."

> **"I LOVE MEETING PEOPLE.** I love hearing their stories and finding out what makes them passionate about what they do."





Outside of work, Darren and Dawna spend much of their time outdoors hiking, kayaking, traveling, and chasing new adventures together. Their travels have taken them everywhere from challenging mountain hikes to multiple trips throughout Japan, where Darren's lifelong martial arts journey also continues to take him.

For Darren, both life and business center around the same idea: continue learning, stay creative, and never stop pushing yourself to grow. Through Level Up Visual Media, he helps real estate agents elevate the way they market themselves, their listings, and their brands.

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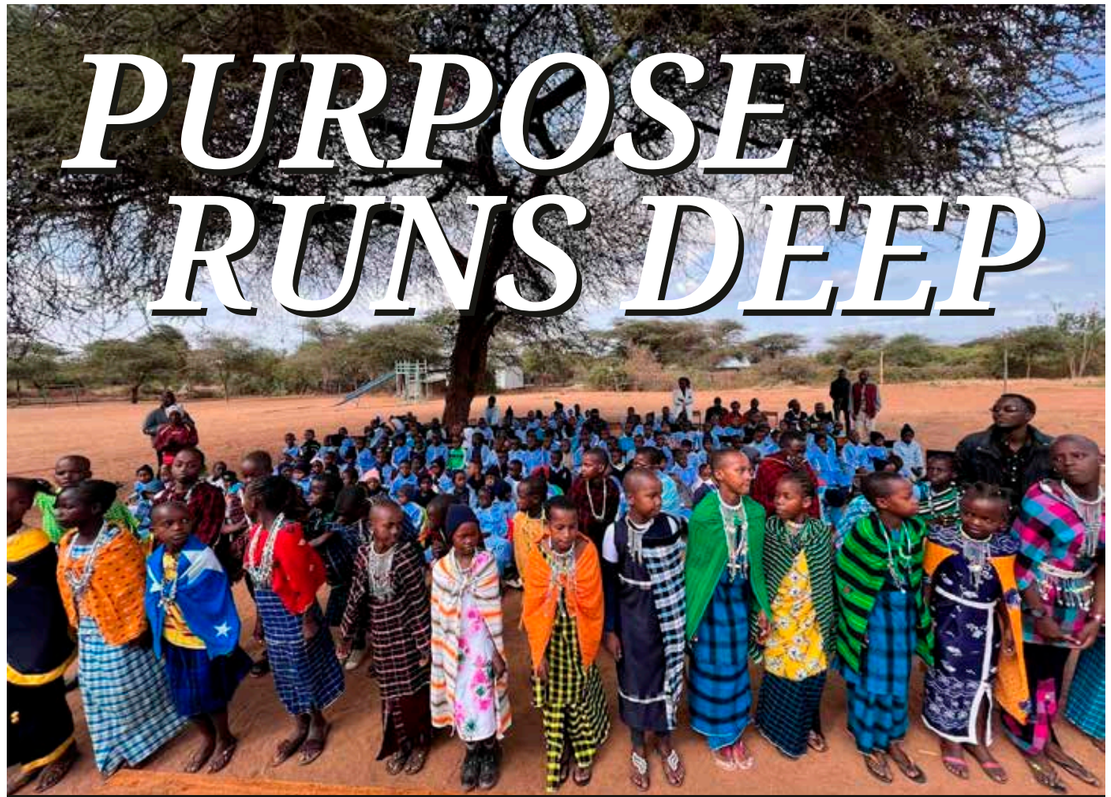
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PURPOSE RUNS DEEP

Matthew & Elaina Kirk Help Bring Clean Water and Opportunity to Tanzania

STORY BY JACKI DONALDSON • PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MATTHEW & ELAINA KIRK



In 2021, Matthew and Elaina Kirk traveled to Tanzania and spent seven days climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, reaching the summit of Africa's highest mountain via the Lemosho Route. The accomplishment was unforgettable. But the view from the top wasn't what stayed with them most.

"What inspired us most was seeing the direct human impact," Matthew shares. "Hearing statistics about lack of water or educational access is one thing. Standing in a remote village and meeting families who walk miles for water or children eager to learn despite having limited resources is another thing entirely."

Matthew, Branch Leader with Movement Mortgage, and Elaina, a REALTOR® with AtCoastal Realty, returned home to Hampton Roads with a new perspective and a commitment to the people they had met.

Today, they carry out that commitment through Friends for African Development (FAD), a Hampton Roads-based nonprofit working alongside Maasai communities in Tanzania's Longido District. Matthew serves on the board, while Elaina actively supports outreach, fundraising, mission efforts, and community engagement.

At the center of FAD's work is one of life's most basic necessities: clean water. In many Maasai communities, women and children walk long distances each day to collect water for their families and livestock. Through partnerships with local communities, FAD helps fund wells, reservoirs, and water systems that bring clean water closer to villages, improving health, increasing educational opportunities, and creating a stronger foundation for future growth.

The organization also supports schools, teachers' housing, and economic development initiatives that help families and young entrepreneurs build opportunities within their own communities.

For the Kirks, however, the mission has always been about the people. Elaina was struck by the warmth of the Maasai people and the way they welcomed visitors despite having few material possessions. "It completely shifted my perspective on happiness and fulfillment," she says. "Coming from a society where we often associate happiness with possessions and having more, it was powerful to witness communities with so little materially, yet so much joy, connection, and gratitude."

Their work with FAD extends far beyond fundraising. They travel on mission trips, maintain relationships with local leaders, advocate for projects, and help connect supporters in Hampton Roads with opportunities to make a meaningful impact. "The Maasai people are incredibly resilient, generous, and community-oriented," Matthew states. "We are not going there to save people. We are working alongside communities that already possess tremendous strength and culture while helping provide tools and resources that create additional opportunity."

That partnership approach has produced visible results throughout Longido. Water systems now serve villages that once had limited access to clean water, schools continue to grow, and projects such as classroom desks and teachers' housing are helping create better educational opportunities for future generations.

The experience has also transformed Matthew and Elaina. "This journey has deeply impacted both of us personally, spiritually, and professionally," Matthew comments. "It has reminded us that leadership and success mean very little if they are not used in service to others."

That passion is leading them back to Tanzania once again. In July 2027, Matthew and Elaina will lead another group to Tanzania, combining a mission experience with an expedition to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. Tentative travel dates are July 10 through July 23, 2027.

Participants will travel together before splitting into two experiences. One group will climb Africa's highest mountain, while the second group will participate in mission work alongside local Maasai communities. At the conclusion of the journey, both groups will reunite and return home together.



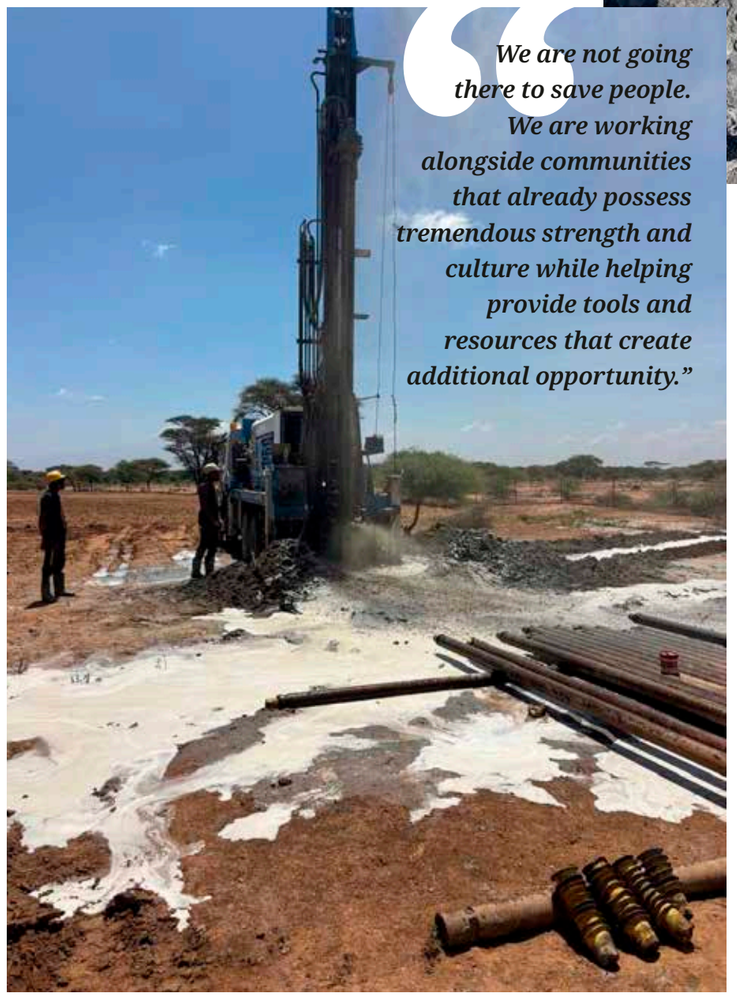


For the Kirks, climbing Kilimanjaro is about far more than reaching 19,341 feet. "Climbing that mountain changes you," Matthew says. "It stretches your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual boundaries. It shows you what you're truly capable of. So many people spend their lives wondering if they can do something extraordinary. Standing on that summit is proof that they can."

Matthew believes the experience often creates a lasting shift in confidence and perspective. "When you accomplish something you once thought was impossible, you start looking at every challenge in life differently," he stresses. "The mountain







"We are not going there to save people. We are working alongside communities that already possess tremendous strength and culture while helping provide tools and resources that create additional opportunity."

has a way of revealing strengths you didn't know you had."

At the same time, those participating in the mission will have the opportunity to serve, build relationships, and witness firsthand the life-changing impact of clean water, education, and community development projects across the region. Whether climbing the mountain or serving alongside Maasai communities, participants will become part of something bigger than themselves.

For Matthew and Elaina, the work in Tanzania may be thousands of miles from Hampton Roads, but the principle behind it remains the same: meaningful change happens when people choose to serve others. Sometimes that change begins with something as simple as clean water. Sometimes it begins with saying yes to a challenge that transforms your own life in the process.

Those interested in learning more about the July 2027 Tanzania mission trip or Mount Kilimanjaro expedition are encouraged to contact Matthew or Elaina Kirk for additional information.

GRATEFUL for the JOURNEY
GRATEFUL for YOU

This month's issue shares Matthew and Elaina Kirk's story of service in Tanzania — a reminder that gratitude isn't just something we feel, it's something we live out. That same spirit shapes how the Kirk Team shows up for Hampton Roads families: walking alongside them, celebrating milestones, and helping turn "someday" into "welcome home."

This Thanksgiving, we're grateful for the clients, agents, support staff, and communities who make that work possible.



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THE BROKER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Leadership, Cooperation, & Protecting Our Profession

Part 1

BY TIMOTHY J. MEYER, 2026 COAVAR BROKER COMMITTEE CHAIR AND ETHICS COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR



I have enjoyed chairing our Broker Committee this year, and it has been an honor to bring you education and information through our newsletter and quarterly broker brunches. In addition to chairing the Broker Committee, I am also the vice chair of our Ethics Committee, and I have presided over multiple ethics and arbitration hearings this year.

As a hearing chair, I see so many issues that most likely could have been resolved through better communication between the client and broker or from broker to broker. **Broker-to-broker communication** holds tremendous power in upholding our ethical standards and strengthening our industry as a whole.

Let's face it: real estate is built on relationships. We often think first about the relationship between a REALTOR® and a client, but **the relationship between real estate brokers** is equally important to the health of our profession.

Every transaction involves different personalities, experiences, expectations, and pressures. Even when everyone is working toward the same goal—a successful closing—disagreements occur. Agents may interpret contract provisions differently. Communication can break down. Deadlines may be misunderstood. Questions may arise involving inspections, repairs, deposits, disclosures, commissions, or other contractual responsibilities.

When these situations arise, the broker should be more than the person whose name appears on the firm's license. The broker should be a **leader, educator, problem-solver, and resource for our agents.** Just as important, brokers from competing companies should be willing to communicate with one another.

Competitors, But Also Colleagues

Real estate companies compete every day for listings, buyers, agents, and market share. Competition is healthy, but it should never prevent cooperation when a transaction or professional issue needs to be resolved.

A broker at one company and a broker at another may compete vigorously for business in the morning and need to work together that afternoon to solve a problem involving their agents.

When agent-to-agent disagreements develop, they can escalate quickly. Emails become longer, text messages become sharper, positions harden, and eventually clients can become caught in the middle.

What began as a misunderstanding can become a significant dispute. Sometimes the solution is simply one broker calling another: "Here is what my agent understands happened. What does your agent understand happened? Let's look at the issue and see whether we can





help everyone move forward." That conversation can change the entire direction of a dispute.

Brokers Should Be the First Line of Resolution

Agents should know they are not alone when difficult situations arise. One of the greatest benefits of working under an experienced broker should be having someone available to provide guidance **before a problem becomes a crisis.**

When an agent brings a concern to the broker, we should first determine the facts. What does the contract say? What communications occurred? What deadlines are involved? What does the client want? Is the disagreement contractual, procedural, ethical, or simply poor communication?

There are almost always two perspectives. Once the facts are understood, the broker can determine whether a conversation with the other firm's broker could help. Not every disagreement needs to immediately become a formal complaint or adversarial situation. Many problems can be resolved through professional communication and early broker involvement.

Of course, some situations appropriately require legal advice, formal reporting, mediation, arbitration, or regulatory involvement. Serious misconduct should never be ignored or concealed. But we should also recognize that **not every disagreement is misconduct. Sometimes it is simply a problem that needs to be solved.**

Contract Problems Require Calm Leadership

Real estate contracts create obligations, deadlines, contingencies, and responsibilities. They can also create disagreements. When significant money and important personal decisions are involved, emotions can rise quickly, which is exactly when brokers need to provide calm leadership.

A broker can help the agent separate three important questions:

1. **What does the contract say?**
2. **What actually happened?**
3. **What are the parties trying to accomplish?**

The answers are not always the same.

The broker should help the agent understand the situation, communicate professionally, document important information, and recognize when the matter requires qualified legal guidance.

Join us next month when we run Part 2 of this article in our December issue.





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