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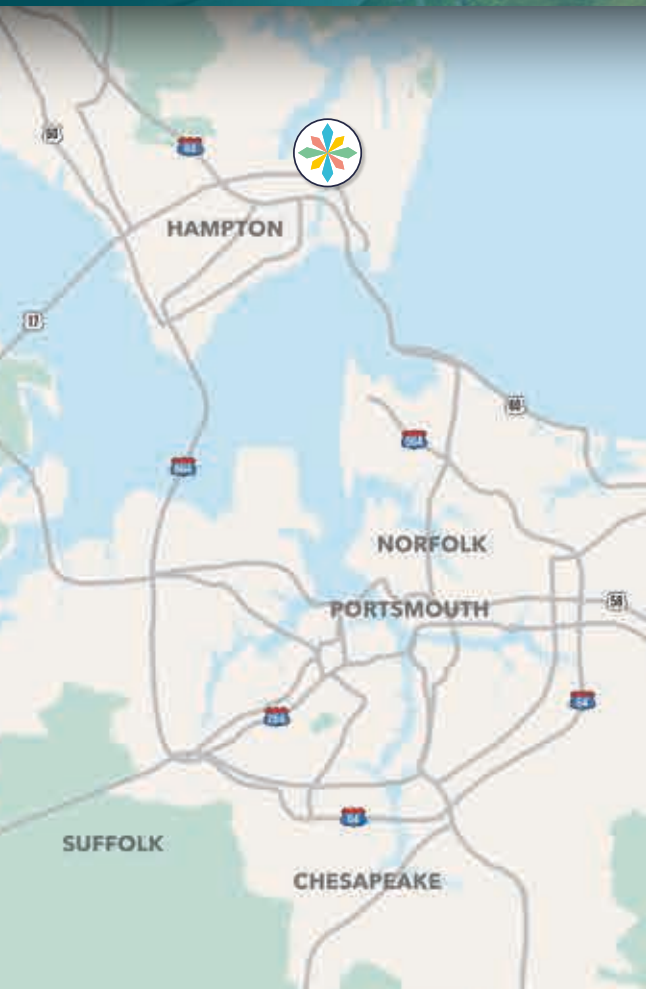
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COVER STORY

Christen Campbell
& Shannon Edwards

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CORRECTION: At Peninsula Real Producers, we strive to accurately recognize the outstanding professionals featured in each issue. In our August 2026 Dog Days of Summer issue, we incorrectly identified the brokerage affiliation of Jason and Amy Kearney and Rebekah Brewster. The articles listed Long & Foster when the correct brokerage is Liz Moore & Associates. We sincerely apologize to Jason and Amy Kearney, Rebekah Brewster, Liz Moore & Associates, Long & Foster, and our readers for this error. We regret the mistake and appreciate the opportunity to correct the record.

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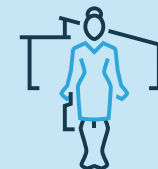


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Christen & Shannon Campbell Edwards

The Coastal VA Real Estate Team

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STORY BY ELIZABETH MCCABE
PHOTOS BY DARREN MYERS, LEVEL UP VISUAL MEDIA
(UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

“We’ve been together our entire lives,” laugh Christen Campbell and Shannon Edwards. “Actually, our entire lives plus nine months.”

Twin sisters and business partners Christen Campbell and Shannon Edwards, who affectionately refer to themselves as “wombmates,” are a force in real estate, leading The Coastal VA Real Estate Team at RE/MAX Connect.

Their lives are completely in sync, even down to going to the same college and driving the same car. “We have identical vehicles, silver Jeep Wagoneers,” says Shannon. “People often ask what it’s like to have a twin, but we don’t know anything else; we’ve always had each other.” Christen chimes in, “Having a

twin is like having a built-in best friend you know you can trust 100 percent. We’re a tag team, the perfect yin and yang. I am more big picture, and she is into the details. If I am bad at something, she’s good at it and vice versa.”

Bring that kind of partnership to real estate, and nothing is left to chance. The sisters joined forces in 2009 and have been soaring ever since. “When Shannon got into real estate in 2004, I worked for a medical marketing firm and was traveling and burning out,” Christen shares. “She got an opportunity to become the managing broker at the firm where she worked.” Eager to start a team, Shannon reached out to Christen, telling her, “It’s now or never.”

They had talked about building a real estate business together for years. After the market crashed in 2009, Christen joined Shannon, initially handling transaction coordination and marketing. Their team has since grown to include two additional agents, Rachel Moore and Pam Christiansen, and has served hundreds of clients in both residential sales and property management. “Looking back, it was the best decision I’ve ever made,” Christen says with a smile.

Service First

Owning their own brokerage is a dream come true. “We used to talk about owning our own brokerage once the kids were older,” Shannon points out. Now that dream has become a reality.

When they opened RE/MAX Connect with their partner, Carlyn Menser, they wanted to create a brokerage culture centered on exceptional client service and professional excellence. This client-first mindset has fueled remarkable growth. Today, nearly all of their business comes through referrals, a reflection of the trust they’ve earned. “I truly love working with people,” Christen shares. “I love being the person who can solve problems and make dreams come true.” This passion has taken on new meaning as they mentor agents within the brokerage and watch them build successful careers of their own. “Seeing our agents succeed is incredibly rewarding,” Shannon notes.

Secrets to Success

When asked about their secrets to success, Christen states, “It comes down to work ethic and being personable.” She recalls the work ethic their parents had instilled in them from a young age. “We worked as soon as we could, paid for our own cars and college, and worked multiple jobs to make that happen,” she explains. “You work hard for what you want.”

In real estate, they put in the office hours they need to succeed. “We take our office hours seriously,” says Christen. “When you’re self-employed, no one is telling you to work, and no one is watching you clock in or out. You have to hold yourself accountable to those things.”

Real Estate Advice

Growing up, Christen and Shannon didn’t realize that real estate was part of their family’s history. “Our grandfather and our aunt owned a real estate company in Florida,” Shannon mentions. “We didn’t even know until we got older.”

Their father spent his career with 3M, where he excelled in sales. Early in Shannon’s real estate career, she



“Having a twin is like having a built-in best friend who you know you can trust 100 percent. We’re a tag team, the perfect yin and yang. I am more big picture, and she is into the details. If I am bad at something, she’s good at it and vice versa.”



Photo by David and Tiffany Photography

remembers calling her dad with doubts nearly every day on the way home in those first few months. She recalls, “I’d tell him, ‘I’m not sure I can do this.’” His advice was always the same: “It’s okay to be nervous. Keep going. Keep learning. Keep growing.”

Perhaps the greatest lesson he taught them was how to connect with people. “He always said you have to be a chameleon,” Shannon comments. “If someone talks slowly, you slow down. If they’re energetic and animated, you match their energy. You need to have emotional intelligence and meet people where they are.”

Christen laughs that real estate runs in the family. “Our brother, J.D. (Justin DuChemin), who’s 13 months older than we are, is also an agent in Minnesota,” she says. “He’s with RE/MAX, too.” The three siblings frequently exchange ideas, and J.D. even joins Shannon’s weekly accountability calls.

Stronger Together

Today, Christen and Shannon lead RE/MAX Connect and The CoVA Real Estate Team while remaining active in production, allowing them to better serve both clients and the agents they mentor. After spending their first nine months together in the womb, they’ve spent the rest of their lives building something remarkable side by side. Twin sisters. Twin careers. One extraordinary partnership.

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TAINA RODRIGUEZ

IRON VALLEY REAL ESTATE HAMPTON ROADS

STORY BY JACKI DONALDSON • PHOTOS BY SUSAN FOWLER, FOWLER STUDIOS PHOTOGRAPHY

At just 20 years old, Taina Rodriguez made a bold decision. She walked away from college, bet on herself, and launched a career in real estate. Three years later, that bet has paid off.

Named Rookie of the Year during her first year in the business, Taina has built a thriving career by combining a relentless work ethic with genuine empathy. At just 23, she has already become a trusted advisor and is continuing to work toward her college degree in business and real estate.

Born and raised in Virginia Beach, Taina graduated from Lansdowne High School a year early with plans to attend Old Dominion University. She enrolled as a criminal justice major but quickly realized it wasn't the right fit.

Real estate had always surrounded her. Her father, Edwin Rodriguez, owns Iron Valley Real Estate Hampton Roads. Other family members work in contracting, construction, and home organization. Yet no one pushed her to follow that path. "My parents never pressured me," she says. "The decision was mine."

Some family members worried about her leaving college for an industry without guarantees. Still, Taina trusted herself. "I knew my effort would determine my success," she stresses.

Before going full time, Taina worked as an administrative assistant in property management at Rose & Womble, where she built relationships she still values today. Once she earned her license, however, she was ready to commit fully. She attended every training available while learning from two of her biggest mentors: her father and her aunt. She also credits the close-knit culture at Iron Valley Real Estate for helping her grow. "It's a family experience," she notes. "Everyone is welcome."

Confidence didn't come overnight. "When I first started, I wasn't confident answering clients' questions or being at showings," Taina comments. "I thought, 'They're just going to see a 20-year-old.'" Eventually, she realized age does not matter. "It's how much you've done while you're licensed," she states.

As her confidence grew, so did her production, and she has built a memorable collection of client stories that warm her heart. One family, in particular, left a lasting impression. When they first met, the couple wasn't financially ready to purchase a home.

Rather than walking away, Taina helped them improve their credit and stayed in touch. Eventually, they called to tell her they were ready. Over time, she learned more about their story. They had experienced trying times before finally qualifying for a mortgage.

Helping them purchase a beautiful five-bedroom home was an emotional experience. “They couldn’t believe they were going to give their kids a life they never had,” Taina shares. “I just love being a part of that stepping stone for people.” Every month, the family continues reaching out. “They text us and say, ‘We can’t believe it. We’re so thankful.’”

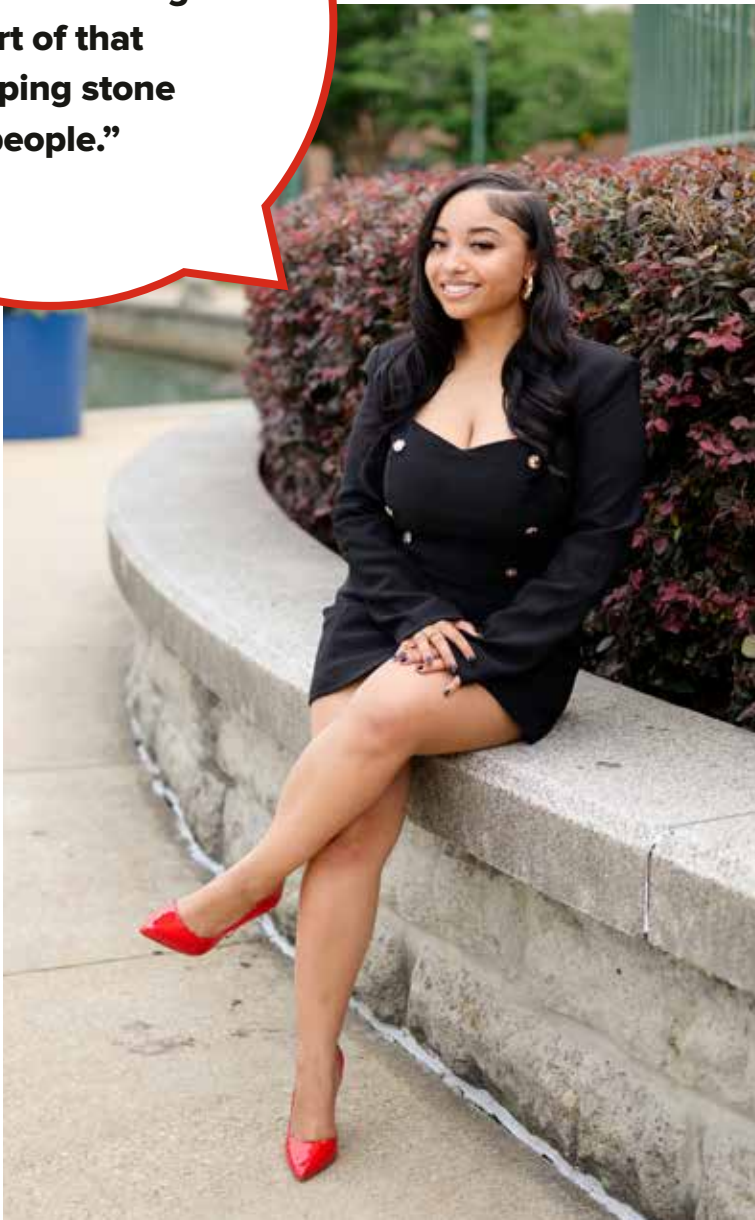
Taina believes buying a home should be enjoyable. During showings, she often helps buyers envision how they’ll live in the space, discussing furniture placement, decorating ideas, and ways to make the house feel like home.

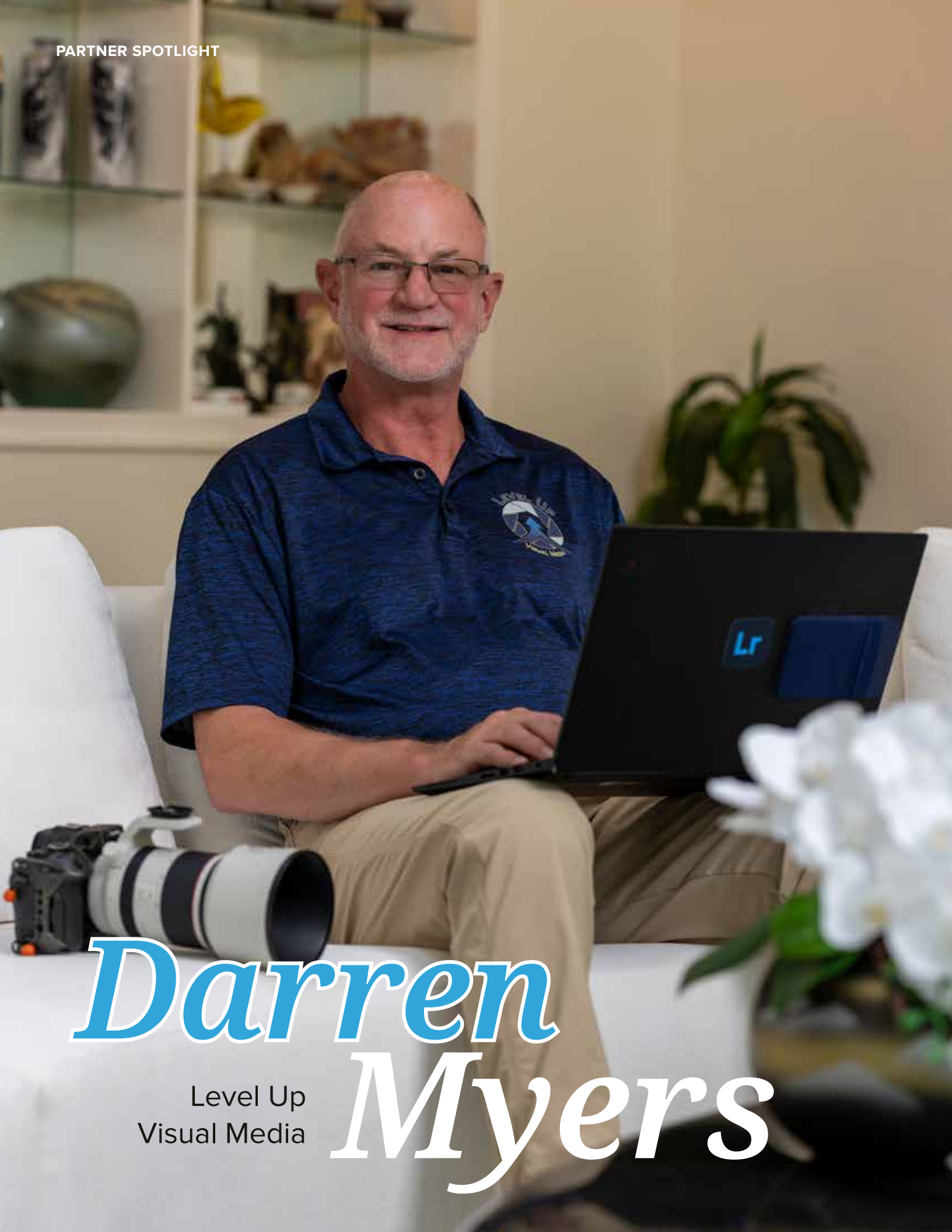
Away from work, Taina enjoys spending time with family, reading books on financial literacy, and dreaming about future investments. She has a particular appreciation for historic homes, vintage architecture, and the design styles of the 1970s, ‘80s, and ‘90s. “I want a conversation pit in my house,” she laughs.

She’s currently working toward earning her broker’s license while exploring investment properties, commercial real estate, and even interior design certification. “I love real estate and every aspect of it,” she says. With her boyfriend currently deployed on active military duty, she’s pouring her energy into what she hopes will become her biggest year yet.

Three years ago, Taina decided to bet on herself. Today, every client she helps is proof she made the right decision. ▀

“
I just love being
a part of that
stepping stone
for people.”





Darren Myers

Level Up Visual Media

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 again, 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 and outdoor spaces. 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

“I love to meet people. I love hearing their stories and finding out what makes them passionate about what they do.”



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.”

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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COLDWELL BANKER PREMIER

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH
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FOWLER, FOWLER
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For more than two decades, Karen Bradley has built a real estate career around one simple philosophy: adapt, keep learning, and never stop showing up.

That mindset has carried her through changing markets, evolving technology, personal challenges, and countless memorable transactions. Along the way, it has earned her a reputation as an agent clients and fellow REALTORS® trust without hesitation.

“This is my dream job,” Karen says with a smile.

Real estate wasn’t Karen’s first career. She began working in her father’s dental office as a teenager before building a successful career in dental sales, traveling throughout the country representing recognizable brand-name dental products. The experience sharpened skills she still relies on today. “There are certain tools I learned back then that still help me today,” she explains. “Even now, when I walk into a house, I’m taking note of everything that I’m seeing.”

After becoming a stay-at-home mom, Karen earned her real estate license in 2003, looking for a career that would allow her to be present for her daughters while building something of her own. The transition wasn’t nearly as seamless as people might assume. “Initially, I didn’t even know how to write an email,” she says with

a laugh. “I had to learn how to take listing photos, upload them, and create presentations. It was all new to me.”

What never changed was Karen’s willingness to embrace whatever came next. From digital photography and online marketing to today’s AI tools, she has watched the industry reinvent itself again and again. “I just shift with the change and work with it,” she shares. “Real estate is always evolving, and I think that’s part of what keeps me loving it.”

That same curiosity extends beyond technology. Whether she’s touring a historic Four Square home in Norfolk, learning the nuances of horse properties, or helping buyers navigate waterfront homes across Hampton Roads, Karen enjoys discovering something new with every transaction.

Karen has helped multiple generations of families buy and sell homes, often becoming more than just their agent. One family she has worked with for years still invites her to their annual Memorial Day celebration. She has helped clients purchase homes after winning the lottery and has celebrated with first-time buyers who later return when they are ready

to move into a larger home. Those relationships remind her that no two days in real estate are ever the same.

Not every memorable transaction has been a happy one. Early in her career, Karen received an offer on a piece of land she had listed, only to learn the seller had been arrested for a violent crime. Following her broker’s advice, she drove to the jail to personally present the contract.

“I’ve had lottery winners and convicts,” she says. “You just never know what you’re going to experience in this business.”

While the stories make for entertaining conversations today, Karen has also faced challenges that reshaped her perspective. In 2010, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Chemotherapy and other treatments forced her to step away from the career she loved for more than six months. Years later, she also faced thyroid cancer, though thankfully with a much shorter recovery.

“The breast cancer stopped me in my tracks,” she reflects. “It was hard emotionally and physically, but as soon as I was able, I came back.” Rather than diminishing her passion for real estate, the experience strengthened it.





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THAT'S WINNING TO ME."

Today, Karen defines success differently than she did when she first entered the business.

"I think success includes every little problem that I'm able to overcome," she says. "Whether helping someone finally find the perfect home, achieving a goal I set for myself, or learning something that gets me outside my comfort zone, that's winning to me."

Perhaps the most rewarding chapter of Karen's career is happening today. A few years ago, her youngest daughter, Chelsea, earned her real estate license, and now, the two work side by side serving clients as a team. "I want to help her get established and make a name for herself," Karen says. "She is doing amazingly well and is already becoming that go-to agent."

Outside of real estate, Karen enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, shopping, spending time at the beach, and making memories with her two young grandchildren. She also has a garage full of staging pieces she's collected over the years, always ready to help clients present their homes in the best possible light. "I hope people remember me as positive, fun, and someone who knows her craft," Karen shares.

After more than 20 years in the business, Karen has built exactly that reputation. She still never knows who the next phone call will be from or what story it might bring, and that's exactly how she likes it. ▀



SAVING LIVES IN YOUR SPARE ROOM

BY REBECCA
CRUTCHER
GARRETT REALTY
PARTNERS

Heritage Humane Society (HHS) is in urgent need of foster families, especially for cats and kittens. The shelter is currently very low on space and is seeking volunteers willing to foster kittens.



Our family fosters a few times each year, which has been one of the most rewarding experiences we’ve shared. We are helping save lives, and our children are learning responsibility, patience, and empathy along the way. They love watching frightened little kittens who once hid in the corner hissing slowly transform into playful, affectionate fuzzballs chasing homemade string toys. They can’t wait to tell me about every little milestone.

One of the best parts of fostering is that HHS provides everything you need, including food, litter, medications, bedding, toys, and supplies. All you provide is a safe, loving space where

these animals can decompress, build trust, and learn that people can be kind.

Each day, we spend time handling, feeding, and playing with our fosters. During longer stays, we sometimes introduce them to our own cats so they can continue building confidence. Just one spare bedroom can make an incredible difference. A quiet home environment gives them the chance to develop the social skills that help them thrive and greatly increases their chances of finding a forever family.

Some of my favorite fosters are the “spicy babies” or “hissy missies,”



as I affectionately call them. Many simply need a little reassurance before they blossom into the loving lap cats some lucky family will cherish for years to come.

The application takes about 15 minutes, but the memories, life lessons, and impact last much longer. And who knows, you may even find

your next best friend or newest family member, just like we did.

About Heritage Humane’s Foster Program
HHS is seeking temporary foster homes throughout Hampton Roads for cats, kittens, dogs, and puppies. Some pets need only two weeks of care, while others may stay in

foster homes for up to three months. Animals enter foster care for many reasons. Some are too young to remain in the shelter, while others are recovering from illness or injury or simply need additional socialization and training. Foster families also help free up valuable kennel space, allowing HHS to rescue even more animals from area shelters. ▼

Every foster home helps save lives. Thank you for considering opening your home and heart to an animal in need. Please scan the QR code on this page to complete a foster application.



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