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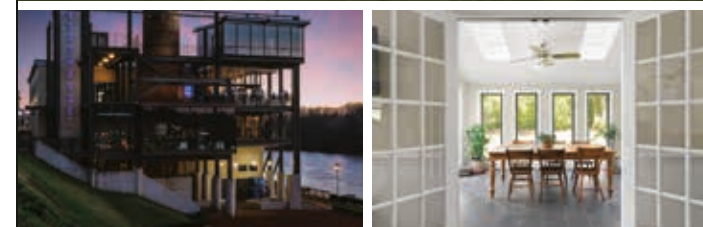
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Zachary Cohen Writer
Philip Andrews Photographer



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» publisher's note

EMBRACING RESILIENCE

Dear Real Producers of Richmond,

As the vibrant colors of autumn paint the world around us, I am reminded of the beauty that comes with change. We all face seasons of transition and growth in our professional and personal lives. This October, let us recognize the power of resilience while embracing change — a quality that defines our top agents and preferred partners.

Resilience is not just a trait; it's a mindset that propels us forward, no matter the challenges we encounter. In real estate, where every day presents new opportunities and hurdles, resilience is our compass. Just as the leaves fall, creating space for renewal, resilience allows us to shed what no longer serves us and embrace new possibilities! With the changing real estate landscape, we rely on our collective resilience to navigate uncertainty and chart new paths to success.

October is also Breast Cancer Awareness Month — a time to honor the resilience of survivors and raise awareness about early detection and prevention. Please join me in supporting this vital cause, fostering unity among those who have battled breast cancer and those who stand by their side.

Speaking of unity, we recently came together for our Midday Soirée event on September 20th. We enjoyed a delightful wine tasting while celebrating camaraderie and connection. Photos from this delightful Real Producers event are now live on our social media accounts! Be sure to tag yourself and your friends, and anticipate these fun photos to be featured in our upcoming November issue.

Lastly, a warm welcome goes out to our newest Richmond Real Producers preferred partner, **Princeton Mortgage**. Your expertise enhances our Real Producers community, and we're excited to collaborate with you!

As October unfolds, let's channel the spirit of resilience in every endeavor as we continue to adapt, grow, and inspire each other!

Best regards,

Kristin Brindley

Owner/Publisher

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▶▶ coaching corner
By Mary Garner DeVoe

CHARGE THE STORM!

Unexpected events happen — life is filled with them. Natural disasters, illnesses, economic changes, you name it. Things often don't go as planned, and we face surprises and challenges over which we have little to no control.

In the face of uncertainty or fear, however, we can control our response; and it is often in our “problems” that opportunity abounds. Deciding our approach ahead of time will determine whether we succumb to our reactions and impulses or whether we respond with decisive action and strategy.

Interest rates, inventory shortages, fearful clients, crashes, bubbles. You cannot control these things, but you can expect and handle them. Problems are opportunities for you to shine!

What can we learn from cows and buffalo on the plains of Colorado? How can they teach us about our business practices and how to persevere through challenges?

Storms come over the mountains in Colorado and sweep across the plains. When the cows see a storm coming, they react by turning and running away from it. While this strategy may seem natural, the reality is that cows aren't very fast and cannot outrun the storm. When the storm catches up with them, they can't escape. In trying to outrun the storm, they are actually subject to it much longer. They are running with the storm, which increases their agony and prolongs their pain.

Buffalo, however, take a completely different tack. When they sense a storm

is coming, they gather. They wait until they see it rolling towards them and then respond by charging directly into the storm — and thus, straight through it! By responding head-on, the buffalo spends less time in the storm. Yes, it takes strength to charge the storm, but it is that extra effort that gets them through it faster and with less damage.

Expect and prepare for the unexpected. Life happens! By knowing who you are and deciding to take action, you will drive into and through any storm that arises. Sitting on the sidelines or running away is not how businesses and careers thrive.

Make the decision to charge the storm! The winners will be on the other side.



Mary Garner (“MG”) DeVoe has been in real estate leadership for over 30 years. She is passionate about adding value to her clients and helping them grow personally and professionally. When she is not training, MG enjoys her family here in Virginia and in Louisiana.

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DREW DEMAREE



Photo by Philip Andrews

▶ partner spotlight

By Dave Danielson

OPENING THE DOOR TO THE FUTURE

In the churn of life and business, it's easy to become immersed in an everyday routine. With all of the requirements, time frames, appointments, and hurdles, one can lose sight of the big picture.

That's where Drew DeMaree and The Freedom Companies can assist with business training, coaching, and nonprofit events that open the door to the future by offering customized sessions to take businesses in the direction — and at the pace — that best suits the owner.

"About 98 percent of our business is with real estate agents, which is a natural connection," explains Drew. "I have had my real estate license for the past 20 years, and my entire family has worked in the industry."

GROWING WITH EXCELLENCE

Drew provides one-on-one coaching in five states, including Virginia, Kentucky, Texas, North Carolina and New Jersey, along with Canada. Founded in 2021, The Freedom Company's growth and success has been impressive over the past two years.

"Prior to starting the company, I was with Keller Williams as their in-house coach and trainer," Drew offers.

During his time with Keller Williams, Drew was among the top 10 percent of coaches within the organization. "I went out on my own during COVID. I was proud of what we had built but felt it was time to go independent," he recalls. "I was passionate and had a good base of clients that I was able to start working with right away."

Drew runs his business like any successful entrepreneur, always exploring opportunities to expand while providing value to his client base. As The Freedom Companies expands, so does its client base, which now includes mortgage companies and other business entities. But it's his passion for helping people find a breakthrough in life and in business that drives Drew in what he does each day.

"I love the lightbulb moment when you see the potential in someone before they do," Drew beams. "I love seeing their potential shine through. That gets me excited."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Thinking back on the start of his business, it's no coincidence that Drew chose the word "freedom" for his company.

"The word 'freedom' really represents the spirit of entrepreneurship — to be free and have flexibility and to be my own boss," Drew notes. "It's a lot of hard work and a lot of effort, money, and time invested. But it's cool to witness that strategic investment, and clients see the fruits of their labor. As their coach and advocate, it keeps me fueled."

Joining Drew's team as the director of operations is Denise Ramon.

"Denise, a former attorney, is tremendous at running the back-end of all of our systems, as well as tracking documents and onboarding our clients," Drew shares.

As director of coaching, Drew's day-to-day duties focus primarily on one-on-one coaching with clients, offering Zoom sessions, and team or group coaching with six to eight people.

"Through the process of what we do, we focus on the 'be, do, have and give' model," Drew explains. "We strive to foster a mindset of abundance for ourselves, our families and our communities. We recognize that our actions today can provide the freedom to pursue our passions in the future. We

encourage ‘doing the work’ to establish financial freedom and celebrate ‘paying it forward.’”

RESILIENCE

Drew and his family have faced difficult chapters as well. Drew’s wife of 25 years, Kimberley, passed away as he was launching The Freedom Companies. “She and I had always talked about having a training company,” Drew shares. “When she was diagnosed with cancer, I was focused on being there as much as I could be for the family. She encouraged me to focus on the new business and to grow it moving forward.”

Today, Drew’s life is fulfilled by hanging out with his daughter, Emma. They enjoy spending time together as she prepares to leave for college.

“Emma and I have always been close,” says Drew. “We started monthly daddy–daughter date nights years ago. She is also very committed to keeping her mother’s memory alive. When Kimberley passed away, we started Project Unicorn. We raised over \$40,000 last year, and we have future plans for two large fundraisers each year. It completes our company culture as we give back to the community.”

LOOKING AHEAD

As Drew looks to the future, he cherishes being able to build a business that is based on genuine bonds.

“I’m a long-term friend; I don’t do transactional relationships. I have coached many of my clients for the last 10 years,” he notes proudly. “Every time I go to an event, my intent is connection.”



“If that turns into business, great. Otherwise, I like being a resource and connector,” he continues. “I want people to know I wasn’t in it for the money, but for the people. I want friends and colleagues to feel that connection and know I am a great resource for them.”

To schedule your training or coaching session, contact The Freedom Companies online at www.thefreedomcompanies.com or call 804-937-0773.

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SARAH HOLTON

THE COMPASSIONATE GUIDE



▶ agent spotlight

By Jess Wellar
Photos by Shannon Mills
Photography



Sarah Holton (left) and Jaimee Fulton (right) are fellow Realtors on the Biringier Real Estate Team with Biringier Builders.

As an associate broker with Providence Hill Real Estate and a member of the esteemed Biringier Real Estate Team, Sarah Holton has established herself as a top performer in the Richmond area. But transactions and volume only tell half her story.

As a former military spouse, Sarah has experienced numerous deployments and the transient nature of military life, relocating 10 different times in 12 years. Needless to say, she certainly understands the emotional side of moving better than most.

“I was an adventurer in my 20s... I wanted to travel and see the world,” Sarah recalls. “I went to college at the University of Nebraska and studied business and marketing. I moved to Denver and worked in marketing for several dot-com businesses until they went bankrupt. After the third layoff, I decided to move to Germany and travel around Europe while working a marketing job at a U.S. Army base. I met my husband, Kevin, a year later in the gym on base and that changed everything!”

HOME SWEET HOME

After packing up in so many different places, Sarah said she was relieved when Kevin finally retired after 26 years of service and they ended up settling down in Richmond to raise their children.

“After we moved back to the States, though, I knew I wanted to get back into the workforce again. My brain was starved for something new, and I knew I loved sales,” she explains. “We had just bought and built our first home and I loved the process. I reached out to our agent, Kristin Krupp, to see how I could be an agent. She guided me through the process, and I then joined her team in 2013 ... and the rest is history.”

Having experienced numerous deployments and relocations, Sarah developed a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those seeking their own “home sweet home” and found quick success. Sarah also credits her former brokerage, Napier ERA, for the wonderful support she received when she was just starting out, as well as her parents for providing her with a strong work ethic.

“I have always admired how my parents ran a successful pizza business franchise while I was growing up,” Sarah shares. “They knew how to treat people and successfully run a business. If I could do what they did, that’s always in the back of my mind. But I also give credit to Jim Napier and Fran Hessler with Napier ERA. They taught me how to handle all different types of personalities and how to stand up for yourself assertively if someone takes advantage of you. I learned so much from them.”

TRUE TO HERSELF

Sarah’s genuine approach and ability to connect with her clients have been instrumental in her success. Despite initially feeling intimidated by not being from the Richmond area, she discovered her niche in relating to military families who had also experienced the challenges of frequent moves. This connection and understanding allowed her to provide a unique level of support and guidance to her clients, regardless of their background or circumstances.

“I could relate to what their lives were like and what they had gone through,”



Sarah explains, “Until you’re married to someone in the military, you just can’t understand the emotional side. I was living overseas with toddlers in Germany with no family living nearby. At one point, Kevin was gone 18 months, and you bond with the other military spouses — you become like family.”

When asked about the most fulfilling aspect of her work, Sarah lights up. “I love when you can help navigate and guide people through the maze and process of finding that dream home for themselves,” she shares. “That moment when the client has the keys to their dream home, and seeing how happy they are, that is the greatest joy I get from this job.”

Sarah’s professional achievements speak volumes about her

expertise. As a consistent Distinguished Achiever/Top Producer since 2015, she has consistently delivered outstanding results. Last year, she reached the esteemed Emerald level, showcasing her commitment to excellence. She has also been recognized as a Five Star Real Estate Agent and a Richmond Magazine Top Referred Agent. Her nine-year tenure in the Cartus Relocation program earned her a Platinum rating, a testament to her professionalism and ability to cater to the unique needs of military and corporate relocations.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Looking ahead, Sarah aims to continue growing as an agent while nurturing her relationship with Biringer Builders, a custom builder in

the RVA area. Her recently acquired broker’s license opens doors for exciting opportunities, and she aspires to make the most of them.

When it comes to advice for up-and-coming top producers, Sarah emphasizes the importance of consistency. “Consistency is key!” she affirms. “But so is honesty. I mess up and make mistakes, and I will admit that when I do,” Sarah concludes. “People are drawn to that authenticity, and I try very hard to always conduct my business and relationships with people this way. But no matter what, treat everybody with respect — don’t let this business go to your head. We all started out somewhere and had our own journeys to get to where we are today.”

FAMILY FOCUS

Beyond her thriving career, Sarah Holton cherishes her role as a wife and mother. She and her husband, Kevin, have two children, Allison and Cayden, and two adorable cats: Chewy, a Himalayan, and Charlie, a Ragdoll. The family enjoys spending quality time together, whether it’s traveling, cooking, going to sporting events, or the movies. Sarah also has a soft spot for adopted animals and is a proud supporter of the Richmond SPCA.



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LAUREN GERARDI

Lauren Gerardi firmly believes that a client's real estate needs go far beyond just a transaction. An exceptional REALTOR® in the Richmond area, Lauren is a friendly and upbeat person who has a sincere concern for others and appreciates the value of building relationships.

"I believe that real estate is not solely about financial transactions; it encompasses creating positive impacts and leaving a lasting impression on people's lives," Lauren offers.

STARTING OUT

Lauren originally hails from Williamsburg and relocated to Richmond in 2010 after transferring from Radford University to Virginia Commonwealth University. After obtaining her degree in mass communications, Lauren embarked on an enriching two years abroad, exploring the captivating landscapes of Australia and New Zealand.

Initially planning to pursue a career as a gap-year specialist, her plans took an unexpected turn when

the global COVID-19 pandemic emerged. Faced with this unforeseen challenge, Lauren swiftly changed course and decided to obtain her real estate license in October 2020, ultimately embracing a full-time role in the industry.

Displaying promise right from the start, Lauren received prestigious accolades within her first year in the industry, including the "Rookie of the Year" and "Top Agent" awards from her brokerage, Liz Moore and Associates, as well as from the State of Virginia.

Drawing from her personal experiences, Lauren navigates the complexities of real estate transactions with a strategic approach, guiding clients through one of their most significant life purchases while compassionately addressing the emotions involved. Honesty, transparency, communication, and kindness have been the foundational pillars she has built her life on.

With a little under three years of experience in the real estate industry, Lauren has taken it upon herself to gain as much knowledge and insight as possible in both the commercial and residential sectors.

"My background in bartending, which I pursued while studying and traveling, significantly prepared me to navigate various aspects of client management. The ability to adapt to diverse personalities, a skill essential in bartending, has proven invaluable in real estate. Just as in bartending, real estate involves wearing multiple



hats, including managing people's emotions and understanding how they perceive and react to feedback, whether it's positive or negative news," she shares.

Lauren's foundation is built on the solid support of her family and faith. Complementing her 12 years of experience in the service industry, she has honed a strong work ethic, unwavering integrity, and relentless motivation that drive her to excel as a Realtor.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

When reflecting on her new career thus far, Lauren emphasized her passion for helping others, the choice to show kindness daily, and keeping a positive mindset as contributing factors that set her apart. She aspires to make a meaningful difference in people's lives and leave a positive legacy.

Lauren acknowledges that her success as a Realtor is attributed to the guidance and support she receives from her faith, crediting God for her achievements. Her deep-rooted belief in Jesus fuels her dedication to serving her clients with unwavering passion.

"My success also would not be possible without the exceptional support and collaboration of individuals like my outstanding managing broker, Jo Lewis, as well as the invaluable contributions of my dedicated transaction coordinator, Nealy Seibel.

"Moreover, the guidance and mentorship of Liz Moore, herself, along with the collective effort of all the agents in my office, have played an instrumental role in my achievements. I am so grateful to be a part of an incredible brokerage," Lauren adds.

A few months ago, Lauren seized the opportunity to collaborate with a colleague in her office, venturing into the realm of commercial real estate sales.

"Engaging in both the commercial and residential sectors allows me to

provide enhanced service to clients as I gain firsthand insights into the dynamics of both markets," Lauren explains. "Recognizing the interconnectedness between the two has made for an exhilarating journey of continuous learning and growth."



Lauren Gerardi and her miniature dachshund, Marshall

Lauren's steadfast dedication centers on her understanding of fulfilling her purpose on this planet, driving her to consistently infuse kindness into every aspect of her life. One of her proudest achievements was co-hosting a fundraiser that raised \$5,000 for the recent Australian wildfires, reflecting her passion for making a positive impact on the world around her.

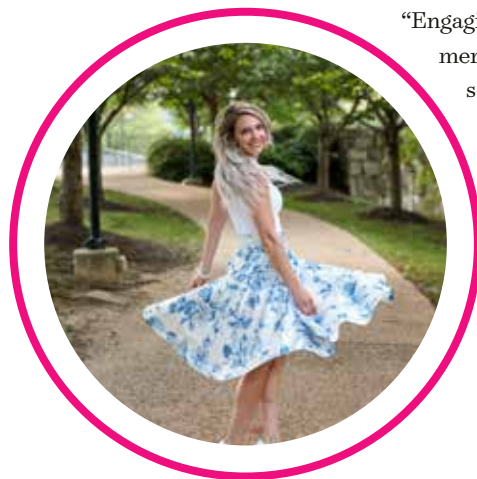
Throughout Lauren's journey, she's drawn deep inspiration from Larry Kendall, the acclaimed author of "Ninja Selling: Subtle Skills, Big Results." His words, highlighting how our energy and mindset shape our reality, resonate powerfully with her:

"Change your vibe, change your world."

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Outside of her professional endeavors, Lauren is passionate about traveling, spin class, reading and quality time with friends and family. Lauren's greatest passion is travel, with Iceland holding a special place in her heart as her favorite destination. When it comes to outdoor adventures, she finds pure joy in snowboarding and taking her miniature dachshund, Marshall, for walks along the river paths. Her go-to spot for relaxation and enjoyment is the Rooftop Bar at the Graduate Hotel.

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By Amelia Sterling

DANIEL KEETON



Navigating Success with Purpose

Daniel Keeton's journey is a remarkable testament to the power of purpose, resilience, and the unwavering pursuit of one's dreams. Starting from humble beginnings, Daniel's story unfolds as a demonstration of his dedication, adaptability, and the transformative impact of his chosen path.



The Keeton & Co Real Estate leadership team. From left to right: Daniel Keeton (owner), David Giles (director of agent success), Amanda Boggs (director of operations), Scott Gibson (managing broker)

A Foundation of Grit

Daniel's entry into the professional world began in a most unexpected way — selling Valpack coupon envelopes. It was a role that would lay the foundation for his future success, teaching him vital lessons about facing rejection and the art of perseverance. As he cold-called business owners and visited their establishments, he braced himself for rejection, experiencing it a staggering 99 times out of 100 attempts.

For nearly a year and a half, Daniel immersed himself in this role, relentlessly reaching out to business owners in Lynchburg. The sheer grit he displayed during this time would eventually shape his mindset for the challenges he would encounter in his journey ahead. His daily encounters with rejection, while tough, cultivated a resilience that would become one of his defining traits.

A Serendipitous Turn

During his time at Valpack, life took an unexpected turn that would set the stage for his future endeavors. The franchise owner of Valpack recognized Daniel's potential and offered him the opportunity to take over the market. However, he lacked the resources and financial backing to take over. This chapter in his life was closing immediately.

In a twist of fate, just as uncertainty loomed, Daniel received a call from a friend embarking on a new journey — starting a church in Goochland. The friend offered him the role of a youth pastor and worship leader, aligning with Daniel's passion and purpose in life. This providential opportunity seemed to arise at the perfect moment, coinciding with the day he lost his job at Valpack. The pieces of his life puzzle were falling into place, forming a path that resonated with his aspirations.

A Fresh Start

Daniel's journey in real estate commenced in 2011, driven by his desire to create a better life for his family. Motivated by his wife Tamara's night shifts as a nurse, he sought to provide his family with a more balanced and fulfilling life. His venture into the world of real estate began as a leap of faith.

The initial years in real estate weren't devoid of challenges. The effort he invested didn't always yield



The Keeton & Co Real Estate team



The Keeton family (from left to right: Spencer, Tamara, Myra, Daniel, Helen, Lydia) with their goldendoodle, Summer (Photos by Phillip Andrews)

the financial rewards he anticipated. Despite these hurdles, Daniel's resolve remained unshaken. Guided by his older brother's marketing expertise, he devised a strategic campaign centered around rural properties in Goochland County. This pivotal decision marked the turning point in his career, significantly altering its trajectory.

Transformation through Purpose

Daniel's approach to real estate distinguished him from his peers. His emphasis on rural properties resonated with clients, and his dedication to understanding their needs and serving them with compassion set him apart. He believed in a philosophy of service

founded on integrity and empathy, viewing real estate as a means to enrich lives.

Daniel's unique approach propelled him to sell 40 to 45 homes yearly as a solo agent. But his journey wasn't defined by transactions; it reflected his steadfast dedication to purposeful service. In 2015, he established a team, driven by a passion to support agents to serve their clients at a high level. Wanting to serve even more agents led Daniel to found his independent brokerage, Keeton & Co Real Estate, in March 2020, a company defined, as he says, by how they care for people. Recently, the firm earned the impressive rank of #531 on the Inc 5000 list of fastest-growing private companies in America.

Daniel's journey has been rooted in a profound mission — helping people discover their purpose and the essence of their existence. Real estate, for him, is a conduit for inspiration and upliftment. This mission radiates through his interactions with clients, as he aims to infuse love and care into every transaction. To Daniel, the true measure of success is the positive impact he imparts on the lives he touches.

Embracing Peace and Passion

Away from the bustling world of real estate, Daniel finds solace in the simple joys of life. With a family of six — including his wife Tamara and their four children — Daniel treasures the





Daniel Keeton and his family treasure their time outdoors, especially being out on their boat in the Chesapeake Bay on weekends. (Photos by Philip Andrews)

outdoors, particularly the serenity of the water.

“Being on our boat in the Chesapeake Bay is where I find peace,” he shares. “It’s a place where I can slow down, connect with my family, and put aside the noise of daily life.”

His love for fishing and outdoor activities reflects his upbringing on a farm. “I grew up immersed in nature — hunting, riding ATVs, and embracing the outdoors,” he recalls. “Those experiences shaped my connection to the world around me.”

Looking Ahead

As he looks toward the future, Daniel envisions a legacy marked by ongoing service, inspiration, and positive change. He aspires to leave a lasting impact, not only in his personal sphere but also in the lives of others.

“I am not actively in production, but my history of selling real estate has shaped our company’s business model and philosophy,” Daniel concludes. “The people I serve now are the agents and other real estate professionals at our company. Ultimately, real estate is a tool to inspire and elevate others. It’s about serving with integrity, empathy, and a genuine love for people.”



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