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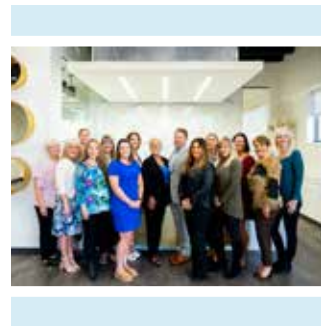
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Kelly Kilmer
Owner/Publisher



William Kilmer
Co-owner



Laley Freeman
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Katherine Fondren
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Zach Cohen
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▶ publisher's note By Kelly Kilmer

NATIONAL INFLUENCE.

Happy Summer fellow Real Producers! I trust you are enjoying some summer activities as the weather is heating up. I also trust that your business is heating up as we soar through 2023.

At the time of this writing, I am in Dallas, TX where I had an awesome opportunity to visit the print facility where the publication you are holding as well as hundreds of others are printed. At the facility, publications from all over the country are quickly printed and assembled, ready for mailing. It's a marvel to see how our designs go from digital to print to homes and offices so quickly. We use state-of-the-art technology to make sure every copy comes out high quality and looks fantastic.

As I'm visiting with the other area directors from around the country makes me realize what a powerful network we have within Real Producers. You probably know agents that have been featured or receive publications in other parts of the country. I've run into people at airports that recognized our logo and said, "hey, I was a cover!". We celebrate the best of the best in over 100 markets nationwide and are growing quickly. I think it's important that you don't forget you are part of a huge network of Real Producers across the country and I hope that in the next few years you have more and more opportunities to network with this group on the national level.

In an effort to begin the cooperation of Real Producers across the country, we have launched the Real Producers Podcast nationwide. This is an amazing channel for you to hear stories from agents in all areas and niches. We were excited to learn that Oklahoma's own Brett Boone has been featured and his podcast released in June. We would love it if you could give it a listen, as well as the many other wonderful stories.



So back here in Oklahoma, keep up the amazing work. We cannot wait to see you at our upcoming events and continue to support you and your businesses.

Kelly



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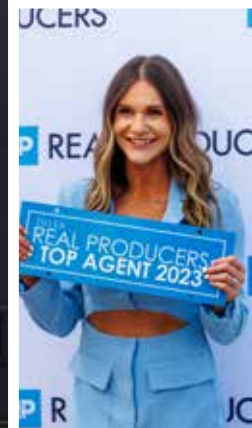
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President/CEO Luke Strawn with FirsTitle enthusiastically shares the many aspects of the company and his team that make him proud.

Tradition of Excellence

FirsTitle was founded in 1987 and handles the title insurance, escrow and abstract needs for home buyers, home sellers, REALTORS®, lenders and law firms.

"The success of our company is 100 percent based on our employees, they are the lifeblood of our company. We aren't just a title company, we also have Smith Brothers Abstract, an abstracting company that has been in business for over 100 years. This gives us the capability to handle all aspects of the title process including abstracting, title work and even underwriting," Luke says.

"We also have attorneys in-house; all of these advantages allow us to have more control over each transaction and the efficiency of the closing process. We have 25 locations across Oklahoma and cover 16 counties."

A Pledge of Excellence

As Luke says, FirsTitle pledges to take care of their Best First.

"The Best First standard is servicing our local REALTORS® and lenders that count on us to seamlessly bridge all parties together and ultimately create a worry-free transaction for our collective client. We pride ourselves in attention to detail, timeliness, and high standards of accountability and our number one priority is taking care of our loyal clients that strive to offer the same first-rate service," Luke says.

"We now have the capability to handle all aspects of the title process from abstracting and title work to underwriting. By putting our Best First, it allows us to create efficiencies and reduce turn times in every aspect of your partnership with FirsTitle."

Gaining Ground

Before his current tenure as CEO/President of FirsTitle, Luke was President of McGraw Realtors. Before that, he gained valuable experience in the mortgage industry.

Luke can trace his interest in real estate back to college.

"When I was a sophomore in college, I took a real estate class as an elective. I had a great professor named Dr. Baen. Two weeks into the class, I changed my major and never looked back," he says.

"I actually started on the mortgage side during my junior year in college. I moved to Tulsa from Dallas in 2010, and it has become home for my family.

"Our group acquired FirsTitle and Smith Brothers in 2014 and we felt that it was a



“We pride ourselves in attention to detail, timeliness, and high standards of accountability and our number one priority is taking care of our loyal clients that strive to offer the same first-rate service”

business that we could grow," Luke says. "We also saw the possibilities in helping modernize the industry."

Passion for the Profession

The passion Luke has for serving the needs of others never gets old.

"I like seeing the reactions on customers' faces when they have closed on a property. Whether it's their first home, their last home, or even an investment property," he explains.

"I know that we did everything possible to ensure that they are secure in the title of what they are buying. I am also proud of the careers we create at our companies, and how they can change the course of a family."

Wonderful Life

Family time is something Luke always treasures with his wife and four children.

As he says, "I try to be very intentional about being a dad first. I am very active in coaching them in sports. We also spend a lot of time at the lake together as a family."

In his free time, Luke also likes to hunt and fish. He also takes great pride in being a good husband, father, a leader, and a warrior for people with developmental disabilities.

The future promises more opportunities to maximize results.

"As I think about the future, one of the goals I have is to do whatever I can to better the lives of our employees and people with developmental disabilities."

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SHO THAO

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SHOUA THAO DIDN'T WANT TO CLEAN TEETH FOREVER.

She started working in dental hygiene shortly after graduating from Tulsa Community College, and though she thoroughly enjoyed her coworkers while running operations — including training, acquisitions, purchasing new offices and working with contractors — for Lumio Dental, the second-fastest growing dental platform in the country, she had aspirations to pursue entrepreneurial interests.

Thao was ready for a change and to do something for herself, but she was initially hesitant about leaving a stable job and pursuing something new.

“Always telling myself that this is something that I want to do for myself and being able to control my own hours and work with people and just manage my own time really helped me continuously gear myself towards helping me move forward,” said Thao, a mother of four.

Luckily, those values correlated perfectly with real estate.

MAKING THE LEAP

Thao didn't leave the dental industry right away, of course.

When exploring the feasibility of becoming a REALTOR®, she maintained her full-time job during her first six months of practicing real estate. She already had an interest in the field thanks to her growing portfolio of investment properties, so it didn't take long for her to fully transition into being her own entrepreneurial boss.

Thao officially became a full-time real estate agent by late 2021 and is now a multimillion-dollar producer with RISE HOME Keller Williams in Tulsa.

“Now that I've gotten into real estate, I actually learned I love and enjoy doing it as a real estate agent,” Thao said. “I got into investment properties, and I just kind of started marketing myself and then went from there. I said I'd never go back (to a 9-to-5 workday), and there's no Plan B. I gotta keep on moving forward — this is it or nothing.”

She didn't even have to learn a litany of new skills to seamlessly complete the career change.

Her expertise and prowess from her previous occupation translated well to the real estate scene, helping her thrive in a short period of time. In fact, Thao was recently named the Keller Williams Oklahoma Region 2022 Rookie of the Year.

“What's carried on over to my real estate is that I naturally train people without really even thinking about it,” Thao said. “I always come from a perspective of a lot of people are either first time homebuyers or they don't know what they're doing, so you always have to kind of teach them and educate them. My brain is wired like that, so I don't forget to educate people. I think that's how I get a lot of people coming back to me or referrals because they're like, 'Oh my God, we learned so much' or 'It was a breeze working with her.’”

MAKING MONEY

Thao's production numbers speak for themselves. “In my first year, I produced over \$4.7 million in sales and in my second year, over \$6.7 million in sales,” Thao said. “A lot of agents are like, 'You were one of the top producers', but I'm like, 'Are you sure? I don't know. I feel like you guys are producing way more.’”

“
I gotta
keep on
moving
forward
— **this
is it or
nothing.**
”



“
Being a part of the RISE HOME team has really helped me advance my real estate career goals.
”



Buyers came in droves for low-interest rates at the time Thao started, which she said forced her to learn quickly in order to keep up with demand. Luckily she had an attentive mentor in Debbie Dennis, who helped Thao through the entire process in her first year.

Dennis' guidance catapulted Thao into a real estate career of quick success and big money.

“The biggest thing was joining a broker that was big enough that had the processes in place and the steps in place to where I didn't have to reinvent the wheel myself,” Thao said. “Debbie just helped me through every single contract — to sentences, to paragraphs and understanding every single word. That really helped me a lot. I also grasp things pretty quickly, so I learned very quickly. It only took a short period of time, and I kind of just took the wheel myself.”

“My second year of real estate, I joined RISE HOME of Keller Williams, and it was the best decision I've made thus far,” she added. RISE HOME of Keller Williams closed over \$65 million in sales in 2022 and earned the Triple-Platinum award, making it one of the top Keller Williams producing teams in the Oklahoma region. Being a part of the RISE HOME team has really helped me advance my real estate career goals. Real estate is a different animal every day, and I am so lucky to be part of such a smart and supportive team.”

FARM LIFESTYLE

The lifestyle change real estate provided is another key motivator that keeps Thao moving forward in her career.

When she isn't selling homes, Thao enjoys her 20-acre farm in Kellyville with her husband Kao and her four children, Roman (8), Karina (6), Jaron (2) and Nayla (4 months).

“To be able to be home with my kids was a big deal, too, given that they're so young,” Thao said. “They're all under 10 ... I know that I could not go back to a 9-to-5 with four kids.”

On the farm, the family raises chickens and breed American Bully puppies. The breeding is a hobby for Thao and her husband, while the chicken-raising aspect is a tradition carried on from her parents.

Of course, farm animals are also a helpful tool in getting the kids outside and off their electronic devices. That is the lifestyle she and her husband want the youngsters to live, and the daily feedings and cleaning of the water troughs have gone a long way in teaching them responsibility.

“After school, the kids go outside with Dad to feed the chickens,” Thao said. “They're very easy to maintain, and we've got a good system out there, so it's not like it's really hard. We try to give them their own pets or their own chickens, too, so they feel a sense of responsibility.”

So, just how many chickens does the family own?

Thao said she doesn't know the exact number, but they certainly live a luxurious lifestyle.

HERITAGE PRIDE

Thao was born and raised in Spokane, Wash., as the oldest of five siblings, and her nationality is Hmong — her parents immigrating to the United States from Laos.

She takes great pride in her heritage and is fluent in speaking and writing the native language. According to Thao, the Hmong are an ethnic group in Southeast Asia.

During the Vietnam War, the Hmong worked with American CIA during the “Secret War” in Laos. Many families fled the country after the communists' victory, settling in refugee camps and immigrating to the U.S. to escape the war-torn country.

“My parents spoke very little English, so being the oldest sibling really forced me to mature and learn at a very young age,” Thao said. “From becoming a young English translator for my parents, learning to read and write in both Hmong and English, being the first to learn the ropes as the eldest sibling and then guiding my siblings along the way as we grew up — I believe that has contributed tremendously to who I am today.”



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A L L I S O N

SHEFFIELD

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WHEN DREAMS BECOME REALITY

Even from a young age, Allison Sheffield had a mind for real estate.

She didn't quite know it at that time, but she remembers marveling at the fancy homes around her area of Tulsa. They seemed more elaborate and desirable than her living arrangements, and she often wondered how people afforded such lavish amenities.

Homeownership seemed like an elusive dream to Sheffield, whose single-parent household jumped from home to home chasing cheaper rent. She estimates they moved up to 12 times during her childhood.

Sheffield's father was present in her life but lived in Texas, while her mother struggled to make ends meet as a hairstylist.

At least staying within in the Union Public Schools district provided some sort of consistency in her life.

"To me, we were making it when we were living in two-bedroom apartments or we got to go to a duplex instead of an apartment."

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Wanting to create a better life for herself, Sheffield took action.

She began developing her work ethic by immersing herself in the restaurant industry as a 15-year-old high schooler, starting as a hostess at Pepper's Grill — a Tex-Mex eatery once located at 61st and Sheridan in Tulsa — before moving on to help open Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que at 71st and



Memorial and work at Full Moon Cafe on East 15th Street between Peoria and Utica.

Although all three locations have since closed their doors, Sheffield retains fond memories from her time in that line of work.

"I wore a wooden pig name tag (from Famous Dave's) that said 'Famous Allison' on it, and I still have that one," Sheffield said. "It was a great experience, and that was mostly just a job — the way to make income."

She continued working in the food-service industry while taking classes for two years at Tulsa Community College, and not even a move to Norman to attend the University of Oklahoma could slow her desire to work.

In addition to working toward a degree in Letters — which OU.edu describes as a major focusing on history, literature, philosophy and language, both ancient and modern — Sheffield juggled three jobs simultaneously.

Regardless of whether she was serving customers at Charleston's, setting tables at La Baguette Bakery & Cafe or preparing cinnamon rolls at a local coffee shop, she was always working. She'd often work shifts as early as 4:30 a.m. before heading off to class later in the morning.

"I found those three because I could kind of stagger the shifts around my school schedule, and it worked really well," Sheffield said. "It was enough income to get by. There were occasional times where I'd schedule a day off here and there, but for the most part, I worked. That was what I did. Classes I tried to do in the mornings and early afternoons and then stagger (work shifts) in. Fortunately, a couple of those places you could kind of pick your shifts, so it wasn't like I worked all three of them every day. Some of them were a couple of days a week, and then the others filled in the gaps. I was not a part of a sorority, I was not part of anything. I went to school, and I worked."

According to Sheffield, most people pursued a Letter degree in hopes of advancing to a graduate program of some sort, and for a while, that is what she wanted to do as well.

However, working three jobs while being a student was starting to take its toll.

By the time she earned her bachelor's degree, she wanted to focus on building a career rather than continuing the endless cycle of work and school.

That is when real estate came into the picture.

MAKING THE MOVE

After graduating from OU, Sheffield moved back to Tulsa and immediately started looking for new opportunities.

She narrowed her options to a sales and administration job at DHL Shipping and an administrator role at a local real estate company, ultimately choosing the latter. She is glad she did.

During the first 10 years of her real estate career, Sheffield worked an average of 50 weekends per year doing open

houses, putting in 12-13-hour days. She described putting in massive amounts of focus and effort, paired with an extraordinary amount of time sacrificed away from friends and family.

Sheffield has always valued telling the truth, learning to know as much as possible about the industry and homes she's selling and working to have great relationships with others in the industry. Her work ethic and reputation has opened doors for Sheffield to help hundreds of local families buy and sell existing and new construction homes.

"I've seen extraordinary success," Sheffield said. "I've gotten to personally sell over \$400 million in real estate in my time, and that's crazy. Over 800 houses I've gotten to sell."

There is a lot of heart and hard work behind those numbers.

Success in real estate is not easy. Through nearly 15 years of marriage, having babies and raising young children, it has taken an unusual work ethic for Sheffield to get to where she is today.

Even the first house she bought back in 2007, which was worth \$70,000 at the time and has since multiplied to around \$200,000 since she started renting it out, was a dream come true. She and her husband J.J. have now built a handful of homes and own several investment properties.

Now, Sheffield is among the top real estate professionals in the Tulsa area, representing home builders while also dealing with existing homes through her own real estate company, Sheffield Realty, which began operations in July 2022.

"It's a brand-new brokerage, and I'm excited to see how it evolves and grows," Sheffield said. "It's been extremely energizing and a little bit terrifying, but it's thrilling to have something new to work on. Every client is different, every property is different and this brokerage is different. We are partnering with agents of high character and ethics who utilize a concierge level approach to serving their clients in real estate transactions."

As a leader in the industry, Sheffield is also serving for a third year on the Board of Directors at the Greater Tulsa Association of Realtors, as well as for the Oklahoma Association of Realtors.

IN HINDSIGHT

Sheffield is a spiritual woman, and she said she believes none of her success happened by accident.

When she was working at restaurants, she thought it was just a means to an end. She never wanted to be broke again and never wanted to return home to a notice on the door that the electricity was going to be turned off.

For her, that was the driving factor in establishing a relentless work ethic. Going backward wasn't an option.

Looking back on everything she endured, from the childhood struggles to her strenuous work-life balance in college and beyond, Sheffield realized it was God using those situations to shape her into a successful businesswoman.

Her childhood lifestyle motivated her to become a hard worker, and the skills she learned from the labor in her young-adult years have yielded fruit in her current career. They prepared her for life after the service industry in ways she never would've expected back then.

“““

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**EVERY CLIENT IS DIFFERENT, EVERY PROPERTY IS DIFFERENT
AND THIS BROKERAGE IS DIFFERENT.**



“The way that God uses everything that we do to set us up for what we do in the future is so remarkable,” Sheffield said. “There are so many lessons I learned in the food service business dealing with people ... In good ways — having to put yourself aside, no matter what you’re dealing with ... you have to show up there with a smile on your face and be ready to serve people and act like they’re the first person you’ve seen today.”

The same translates to Sheffield’s philosophy of working with clients now.

“Serve them with joy and gladness,” she added.

“GRIT.”

GRIT.

EXPERTISE.

HARD WORK.

GRATITUDE.

REPEAT.

A DREAM COME TRUE

If Sheffield’s adolescent self could have seen her life now — living in a 4,000-square foot new construction home with an amazing husband, two flourishing children and an award-winning career — she would’ve been in awe, proud and grateful.

“My kids have a totally different life,” Sheffield said. “Not that there’s anything wrong with the way I grew up, it was more of a I didn’t understand how actually possible it was to do more. It seemed so completely impossible and unattainable to me as a kid, but it’s pretty simple. Not easy, but simple.

“GRIT. EXPERTISE. HARD WORK. GRATITUDE. REPEAT.”



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Joanna Ford

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Right at Home

After graduating from Broken Arrow High School in YEAR, Joanna Ford set off to pursue her dream of becoming a pharmacist. But, as is so often the case, God had different plans for her. She got married, gave birth to her daughter, Shelby, and stayed at home to raise Shelby for the next five years. In the meantime, Joanna purchased her first home and, in the process, became fascinated with the real estate industry.

In 2005, personal circumstances changed in Joanna's life; an impending divorce meant she needed to return to work to provide for her family.

"I became a single mom and hadn't worked in five years by that time. I prayed about it, and real estate kept coming up," Joanna reflects.

Joanna began her real estate career with a strong start, closing \$3.4 million in her first six months on the job and nearly \$7 million in her first year. By then, she was sure she had discovered a career she was passionate about.

Two Decades Strong

Joana has now been thriving in real estate for nearly twenty years.

"It's so rewarding, and not just financially," she smiles. "The people I meet, my clients, become best friends. People often don't know what their options are, so to help people out when they are making a big life change — it's a good feeling to help people make the right choices and decisions."

Joanna has been a solo agent with Coldwell Banker Select in Broken Arrow for her entire

18-year real estate career. She's been the office's top-selling agent for 16 years running, capped by a monumental 2022 when she closed 141 homes for \$38.3 million — a considerable number for any team, never mind an individual agent.

So how does Joanna do it?

"There's no secret," she says. "I'm very driven. I am a high-energy person and always have been. I can multitask like nobody's business. I get up at 5:00 am and work until I crash at night. I put in the time. I am always available for my clients, even on vacation. People are trusting me with the largest investment of their entire lives, and I need to be accessible to them when it's convenient for them."

After so many years in the business, Joanna continues to feel joy and fulfillment. Every transaction is unique, which helps her keep her mind sharp, her attention focused, and her passion for the industry vital.

Right at Home

Joanna was born on Long Island, New York; her family moved to Broken Arrow when she was just five. Having visited places all over the country, she's proud to call Tulsa home; she couldn't imagine growing up or raising her family anywhere else.

Outside real estate, Joanna enjoys playing tennis (she used to play competitively but now plays more casually), going to the gym, and hanging out with her family. She and her husband, Josh, have a blended family with two kids, Shelby (23) and Ryan (19). Joanna adores her four dogs, who go just about everywhere with her.



“

I'm very driven. I am a high-energy person and always have been. I can multitask like nobody's business. I get up at 5:00 am and work until I crash at night. I put in the time.

”

Joanna has seen a lot in her 18 years in real estate, and she continues to learn something new daily. While real estate has been a tremendously rewarding career, she also experiences it as a challenging one. Building a business isn't easy, and while real estate has been fulfilling for her, it's not a simple path to success.

"I want people to not have any surprises. Some people have a false sense of reality that REALTORS® have a glamorous job and bring in a bunch of money. In order to be a top-producing agent, you're going to put in the time. We're self-employed, which brings challenges. You have to know that getting into it," Joanna advises. "I learned that the hard way being a single mom. It all worked out for me because I put in the time and had some savings to help with signs, key boxes, and photography, but I think newer agents need to understand that."

With the boom in the market over the past three-plus years, there are more active REALTORS® in Tulsa than ever before. That has coincided with historically low inventory, creating a unique crunch in the market for REALTORS® and homebuyers. Despite the challenges, Joanna is confident in her ability to remain successful, as well as the overall health of the Tulsa area real estate market. There's nowhere else she would rather be.

"We're lucky here. The market is stable and consistent. We're an oil and gas state, so people are always moving in and out. That keeps it busy all year long. Looking ahead, I think we'll stay consistent, stable, and steady," she says. "As for me, I have a good life. I'm healthy. I'm happy, my kids are healthy and happy, and my career is a big part of that joy."



“

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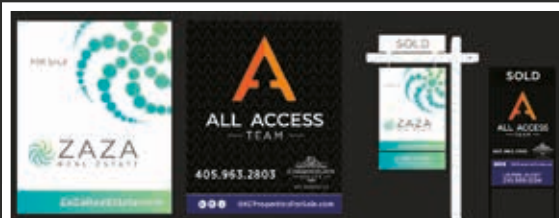
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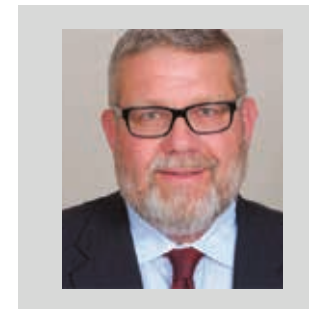


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