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► publisher's note

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER



HOW HOT CAN IT GET?

I want to remind the readers that I'm able to feature REALTORS® and tell more stories because of our partners. Thank you to the ones that have been there from the beginning. We would like to welcome a few new partners to this month.

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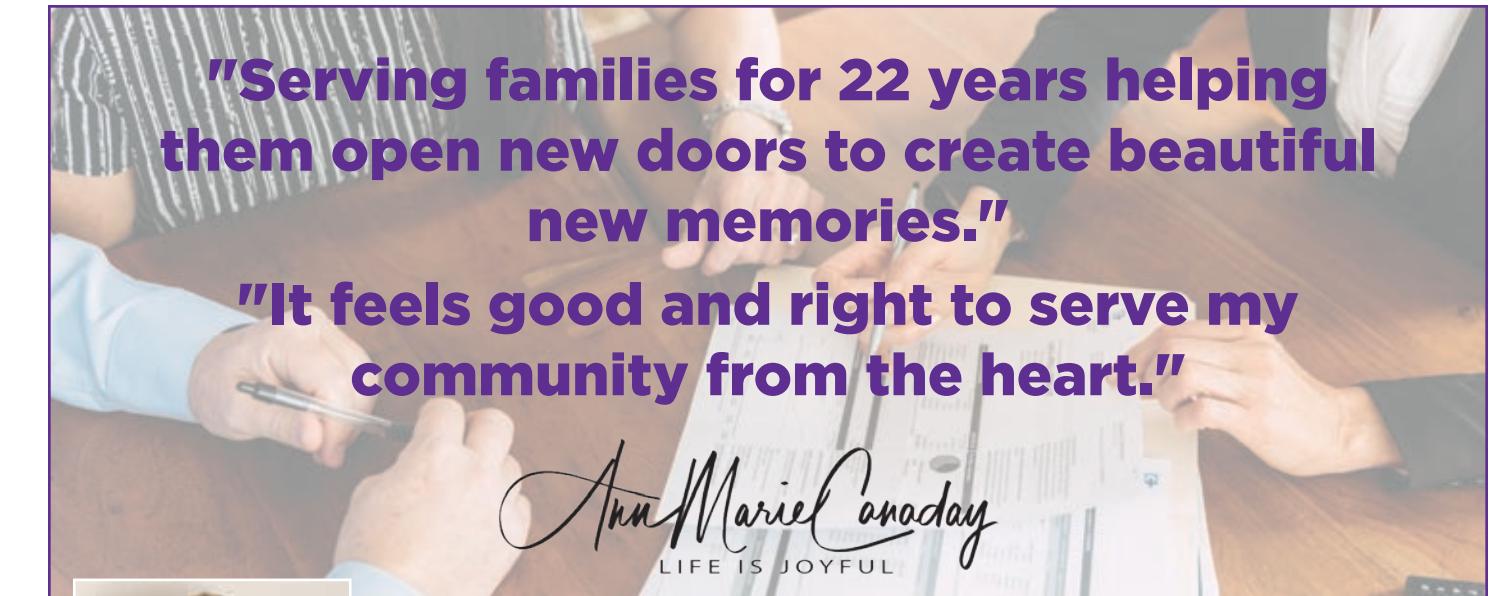


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top producer

Writing by: Zachary Cohen

Photos by: Elevated Coastal Productions

SHELLY LAMONICA

THE HEART OF A TEACHER

In 2014, Shelly LaMonica stepped back from a career in teaching to reassess her professional path. By then, she had been teaching middle and high school for over a decade, but a series of changes in her life left her seeking a new direction. Shelly was born and raised in the Savannah area, but she spent the first ten years of her teaching life in Loganville, Georgia. Upon returning home to Savannah, she faced multiple coinciding shifts: she was going through a divorce, her two middle school-aged kids were adjusting to a new school, and Shelly herself had transitioned from teaching middle school to high school. Repeating challenges with students at her new school was the straw that eventually broke the camel's back. "I left the classroom one afternoon and took off the next day for a mental health day, and I didn't go back. I was on the edge of a mental breakdown. It got to a point

where I couldn't do it anymore," Shelly reflects humbly.

Finding Her Way

For the next three years, Shelly floundered, trying to find her way. She worked as a server, a substitute teacher, and cut hair. She returned to the classroom full-time for one year but once again realized that she no longer wanted to be a teacher. That's when she turned toward real estate. "I knew I wasn't going back to teaching. As I dove into real estate, I knew I had to make it or die trying." Five years later, Shelly is thriving in real estate. It's safe to say she "made it."

The Heart of a Teacher

Although Shelly stepped back from the classroom environment, she continues to have a passion for education. Now, she applies that passion to the real estate industry. "I have a passion for sharing knowledge," Shelly says. "I am a lifelong learner. I've always sought to better myself." Over the past five years, Shelly has built a strong reputation in the real estate industry. She spent the first four years of her career as a buyer's agent on various teams. In 2021, she had her best year yet, closing 36

transactions for over \$13 million. She also moved to Realty One Group Inclusion and became a solo agent for the first time in her career. This leap of faith wasn't easy, but Shelly hopes it'll offer her a better work/life balance and more time to build stronger relationships with her clients. "It's been a big change for me," she says. As a REALTOR®, Shelly prides herself on integrity and authenticity. She won't sugarcoat anything, preferring to tell people "what they need to hear, not what they want to hear." She's a relationship-builder by nature.



“

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...



A Bright Future Ahead

As Shelly looks ahead, she plans to continue growing her individual book of business through strengthening relationships and perfecting her craft. True to her love of education, she also hopes to become an instructor. “I feel that’s pulling me, that desire to educate.... Just not teens,” Shelly says with a laugh. Shelly realizes that she wouldn’t have achieved the success she has without the support of her family, friends, and clients. She considers herself fortunate to have had so many

referrals and repeat clients, and believes this has been one of the keys to her success as a solo agent. “That to me is really what its about... working with people who know, like, and trust me enough to use me again or refer me to their friends and family. I am extremely grateful for the trust placed in me and I want to continue to build my business through relationships,” Shelly explains.

Perhaps Shelly’s most important goal is to achieve a better work/life balance. Her children, Joley (21) and Brody (20), are now entering

adulthood. Shelly loves her home in coastal Georgia, but over the last five years, she hasn’t had much time to enjoy her surroundings. She hopes that will change in the coming year.

“Up until coming to Realty One Group, I would say I failed exponentially at having a work/life balance, but my current brokerage pushes and supports me-time and family time. So my big focus for 2022 is trying to get back to things I enjoy: time with family, nature, photography, and animal rescue.”

“

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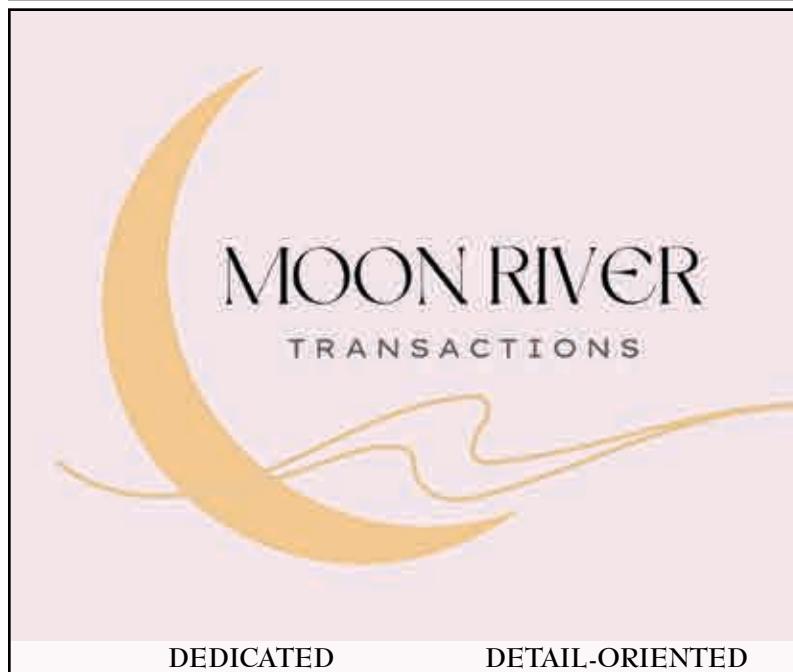
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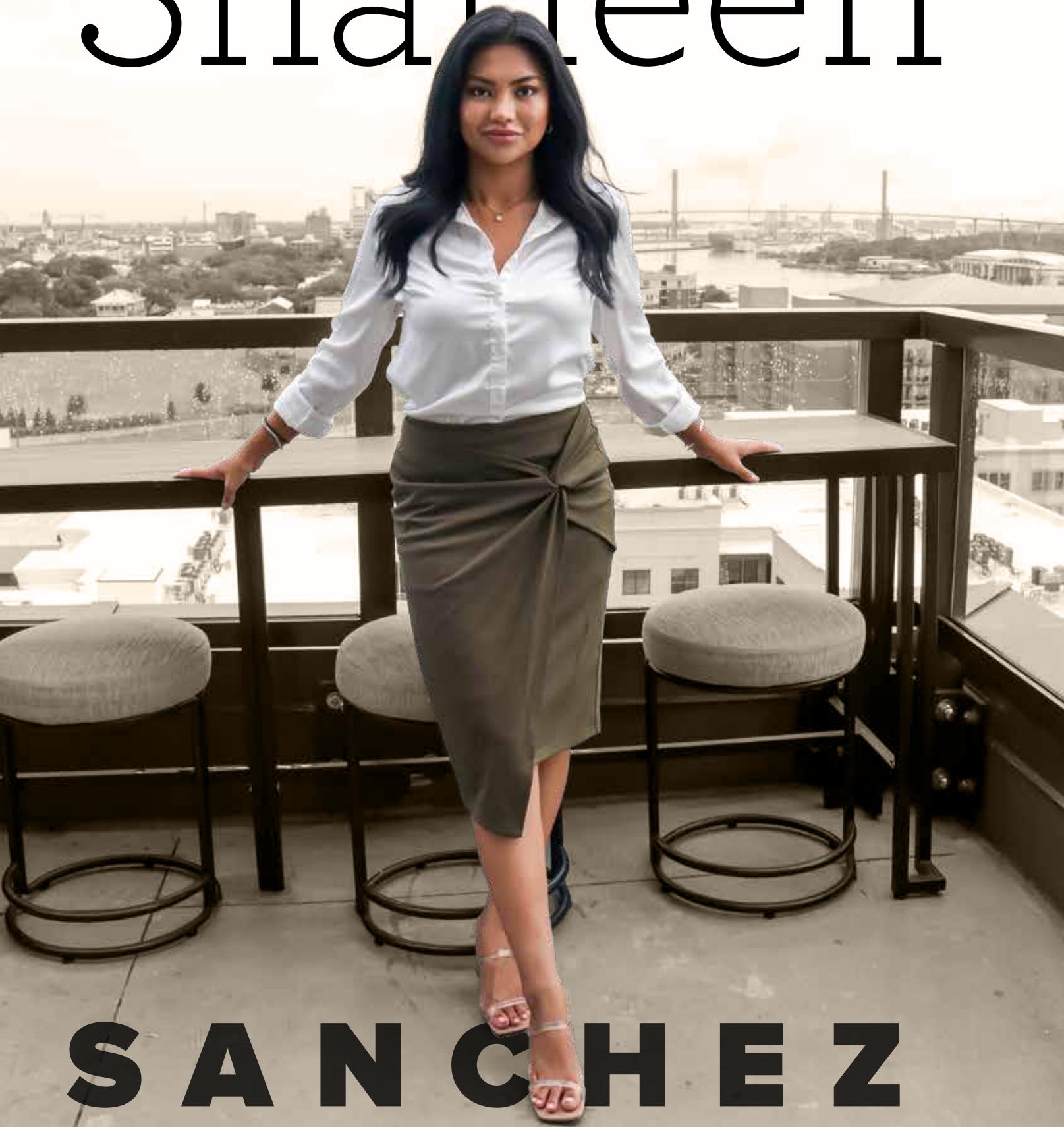
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Sharleen

► rising star



S A N C H E Z

STARTING FRESH

Writing by: Zachary Cohen
Photos by: Elevated Coastal Productions

Sharleen Sanchez was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, where she grew up fishing, hiking, camping, and enjoying the wonders of living close to the natural world. By 2019, Sharleen was four years into her tenure as manager of Fitspresso, a drive-thru coffee shop. Her work at the coffee shop was sometimes exciting, sometimes menial. And yet, Sharleen discovered true meaning in her work.



"In Alaska, they have these cute little huts, maybe 10-by-6, drive-thru coffee shops. I managed one for five years. We were a health-oriented smoothie shop, too, so a lot of people would come [to] visit us regularly, maybe three times a day, just to talk. They'd come just to see me and talk about their day. It was almost like a therapeutic time for people," Sharleen reflects.

The conversations Sharleen held and the relationships she built helped her realize her passion for service. "For me, it was always about, 'How can I serve them on a deeper level? How can I help and make a more meaningful impact in their life?'"

Eventually, Sharleen's love of service led her to real estate.

A Fresh Start
In early 2019, Fitspresso's owner got her real estate license, and she began encouraging Sharleen to follow her into the industry. "She said I'd crush it in real estate. Every other week, she would do what we call 'prospect' and bring it up," Sharleen reflects.

Sharleen began considering a real estate career, so she decided to do her homework. She began researching the profession and then attended an eight-week course with Keller Williams called Bold. By December 2019, she was licensed.

Sharleen's partner, Billy Ryan, relocated to Savannah, GA, in January 2020, coinciding with the start of Sharleen's real estate career. Billy grew up in the

...



South and attended graduate school at Georgia Southern University, so moving from Anchorage to Savannah represented a return to his roots. On the other hand, Sharleen still lived in her home state, but she desired a new adventure.

"I would have never in my life expected to land in Georgia. I was born and raised in Alaska. I absolutely love where my roots are, but I got curious about the next chapter while growing with my partner, too. I didn't have an experience living out of state yet, and I was planning on moving anyways," Sharleen explains. "So when Billy moved, I wondered, 'Do I just up and move with him?' However, just getting licensed, I wanted to build my foundation in real estate."

Over the ensuing months, Sharleen visited Savannah multiple times, ultimately deciding to take a leap of faith. She landed in Savannah in October 2020.

Starting from Scratch

Sharleen's move to Savannah was both a risk and an adventure. She knew one person in Savannah

— her partner, Billy. As a real estate agent, she began with no database.

"Moving to the most opposite side of the country, I had to start from scratch. Everything I'd built, all the people I knew, and [the] connections I made were left in Alaska, but I believed in it. I knew that if I worked hard, I would see results."

In April 2021, Sharleen was licensed in Georgia and joined Barela & Associates. Sharleen has always been a goal setter, and she set high standards for herself, but she could never have envisioned how much success she would have. In her first year (June 2021 to June 2022), she closed an impressive 71 homes. She is now a proud member of the Savannah's Women's Council of REALTORS®.

"We have clients on tight timelines, and I hustle to make it happen. I work 12- to 14-hour days at times. There's no pause in real estate. We work as an absolute unit ... systematic, knowledgeable, and [we] know the process through and through," Sharleen explains.

Sharleen has also begun investing in real estate. She recently purchased her first investment property and

...

...

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY IS
TRULY A THING.
I'VE LEARNED TO LOVE IT.

“ ”



turned her former home into a short-term rental. She intends to build a strong portfolio in the coming years.

Settling In

Sharleen has now been in Savannah for nearly two years, but she feels like she's still settling into life in her new home city. She spends much of her time outside work exploring new restaurants, visiting different islands, and supporting small businesses around the city. She also enjoys fishing, hiking, and working out. She took a leap of faith to arrive in Savannah, and she's ever-grateful she did.

“It's been a life-changing journey. I took a chance on Savannah and absolutely love being here. The greenery and scenic views ... yet it's so different from Alaska. You have the infamous, mature oak trees with Spanish moss swaying down; it's absolutely beautiful. Savannah is both historic and modern, which creates both diverse and alluring real estate in the area. You have coastal cottage beach houses, Victorian, new construction, farm style, and colonial [houses]. And people here have character — so much of it. Southern hospitality is truly a thing. I've learned to love it.”

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dusk

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► a REALTOR®'S Interlude

Writing by: Ze' Santa-Rita

The few last months have been particularly busy at work. I am a believer in balancing work and personal time, and, no matter how busy I am, I always take the opportunity to break away, even if just for a couple of hours here and there. I think it keeps me focused on whatever I am doing and makes my life infinitely more pleasant. One late afternoon last week, after a long day, I left behind the listings I was working on and drove to Tybee for a walk on the beach.

The wind brushed the trees as I approached the dunes and sang in tune with the few birds crossing the blueish greying sky. The sun was slowly and steadily moving west behind me. I walked the short distance from the car to the beach, stopping momentarily along the way to

attempt to capture the magnificence of the amber light against the clouds. It is often at that time of the day that the intensity of colors is most evident in its contrast with the slow rolling of lazy waves as they approach the shore or recede towards the mysterious darkness of the ocean. There was hardly anyone out, a few people here and there, and occasionally a few children that defied the fading sunlight to run through the shallow waters.

I find the ocean comforting and cherish the opportunity to be near it. As I walked towards the water's edge, the sand still warm under my bare feet, I felt a lightness of being, a peace, I cannot accurately translate into words. With every grain of sand, every whisper of the waves, and every particle of salty air, I fell in absolute awe of the majestic beauty of the great ocean before my eyes. Sometimes, my breaks are shorter, but I always feel the need to step out of my work day momentarily in whatever form time allows. It can be a few minutes in the garden, a walk around the neighborhood, a walk with my dog, or sipping a glass of wine on the porch. I feel grateful that my work affords me these small escapades that allow me to look back at a long day of work, smile, and look forward to the new day ahead.



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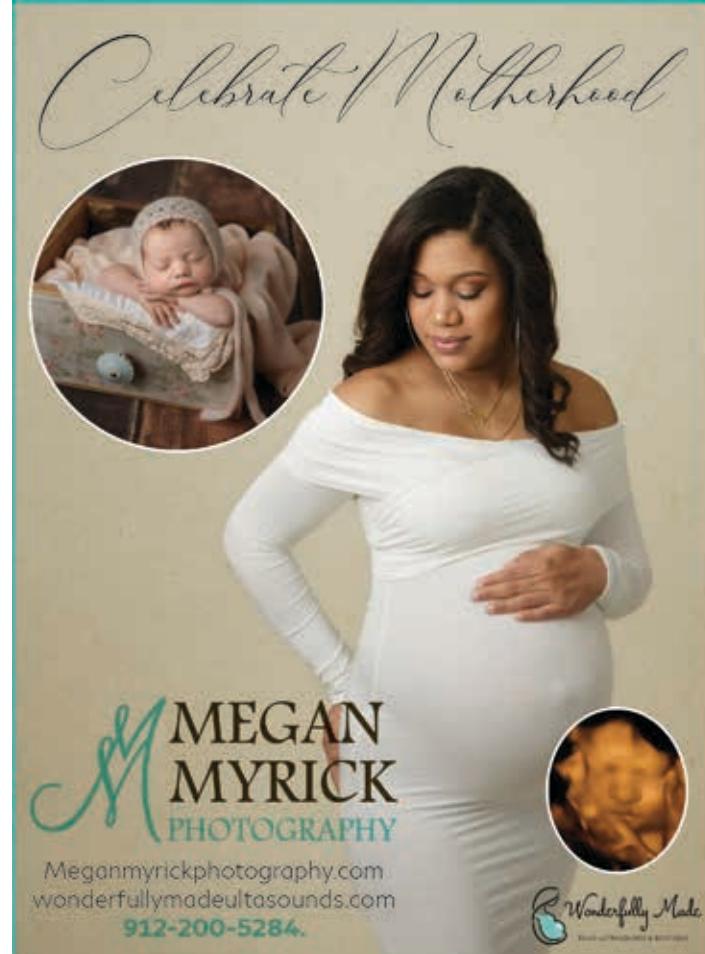
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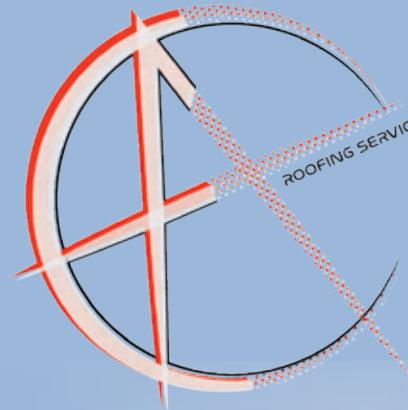
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