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Emily Mattson

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SPRING INTO ACTION

Dear Real Producers and Preferred Partners,

As spring arrives, I'm reminded of the timeless expression "Carpe diem" — seize the day! A season of growth and plenty of opportunities is waiting to be seized. Here in beautiful Milwaukee, we are truly blessed with an incredible place to live and work, brimming with chances to seize success.

Across the country, many regions are gearing up for what's known as the "spring market," a season marked by a flurry of activity which often lasts just a few short months. However, as we all know, our market operates on its own unique cycle... Gone are the days when winter/spring signaled our only busy season!

Speaking of taking action, this is the season to lean into your community. Real estate success isn't built alone, it is built in the rooms where relationships are

strengthened and opportunities are created. That's why our Real Producers' events matter. The agents and businesses who stay connected, visible, and engaged are the ones who thrive in every market.

March gave us a powerful example of what that looks like at **Milwaukee Real Producers' Build a Moat Around Your Business** event. It was a terrific gathering, and especially fun to see so many new faces!



I hope this month's issue inspires you to "carpe diem" in your own lives and businesses this spring, and here's to seizing opportunities!

Very respectfully yours,

Dianne Collins
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Built the Moat. Now Join Us in Racine.

From Strengthening Your Business
to Elevating Your Network

Our *Milwaukee Real Producers* community gathered on March 5th at **Coakley Brothers & Brothers Interiors** for *Build a Moat Around Your Business* with business coach and RP Preferred Partner, **Dawn Baumgartner**. Attendees gained practical strategies to strengthen their networks and protect their businesses in 2026. Special thanks to event sponsors Varitay Studios, Element Mortgage, and Rudy's Painting for supporting the event.

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For more information on all Milwaukee Real Producers events, email dianne.collins@n2co.com.



WHAT'S NEXT?
Join Us for the **Hotel Verdant Experience** with Real Producers in Racine!

Friday, May 8th
4:30 pm to 7 pm
Hotel Verdant

500 Main Street Racine, WI 53403

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SCAN QR TO RSVP



UPDATE TO EPA MANDATE EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2025:

WHAT IT MEANS FOR HOMEOWNERS — AND HOW A (CHOICE) HOME WARRANTY CAN HELP
BY DEBBIE SCHREIBER AND BRITAIN LENZ, CHOICE HOME WARRANTY

As you may or may not be aware, on January 1, 2025, a sweeping new federal mandate from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) changed the way Americans maintain and upgrade their homes. Designed to combat climate change and reduce harmful emissions, the 2025 EPA regulations placed new requirements on refrigerants used in home cooling systems and raised energy efficiency standards for several household appliances. While the changes aim to benefit the environment and public health, they have also brought unexpected costs for millions of homeowners nationwide.

The heart of the 2025 EPA Mandate lies in the continued phase-out of high-global-warming-potential (GWP) refrigerants. Under this regulation, homeowners installing new HVAC systems would no longer be permitted to use units that rely on R-410A, a widely used refrigerant that has now been phased out (effective January 2026) due to its environmental impact. Now, new systems must use next-generation refrigerants like R-32 or R-454B, which are considered far safer for the atmosphere but often come with a higher price tag. In addition to the refrigerant changes, the EPA has also

raised the bar on energy efficiency standards across the board. New HVAC systems must meet updated SEER2 ratings, which means they must operate more efficiently to comply with federal guidelines. Water heaters, refrigerators, and other household appliances are also required to meet stricter energy performance standards under the mandate.

For homeowners in 2026, these regulations present a double-edged sword. On one hand, upgrading to newer systems can reduce long-term energy bills and carbon footprints. On the other hand, the initial investment required to bring a home up to current EPA standards can be substantial. Replacing an older air conditioning system, for example, could cost significantly more than in previous years—not only due to higher equipment prices, but also due to installation requirements for the new refrigerants and more efficient systems.

Moreover, those with aging HVAC units may find it increasingly difficult and costly to perform even basic repairs. As the supply of R-410A component parts and refrigerant dwindles, homeowners may be forced to replace their systems entirely, rather than simply repairing them. This situation is further complicated by the fact that not all service technicians are certified to handle the newer refrigerants, which could lead to longer wait times and higher labor costs.

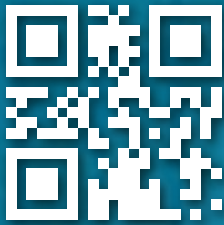
In the face of these changes, many homeowners are looking for ways to protect themselves from the financial fallout. One increasingly popular option is to invest in a home warranty—specifically, plans that offer comprehensive coverage for HVAC systems and other critical appliances affected by the new regulations.

Companies like **Choice Home Warranty** have stepped up to meet that need. With Choice Home Warranty's Ultimate Plan, homeowners can receive coverage for the repair or replacement of major home systems and appliances that fail due to normal wear and tear. In the context of the EPA Mandate, this can be a game changer. If a covered air conditioning system breaks down and needs to be replaced with a compliant unit, a home warranty can offset thousands of dollars in unexpected costs.

In addition to financial protection, traditional home warranty providers offer access to a network of licensed and certified technicians, which ensures that any work done meets current EPA standards. This not only saves time and stress but also reduces the risk of non-compliant repairs that could later impact a home's resale value or insurance coverage.

Ultimately, while the EPA Mandate reflects a necessary step forward in the fight against climate change, it also introduces a range of challenges for today's homeowners. For those hoping to navigate the transition smoothly, investing in a home warranty may be one of the smartest and most practical decisions they can make.

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Jake Barr

Building It the Right Way

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Jake Barr grew up in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, a town about an hour north of Milwaukee, where family and familiarity shaped his early years. Raised in a household with both parents and two younger sisters, Jake's upbringing balanced a small town lifestyle with a growing curiosity about the world beyond his hometown. While he now enjoys city living, his roots are firmly outdoors. "I do enjoy living in Milwaukee, but love my outdoors past times like hunting and fishing above all else," he says.

From an early age, Jake knew he was a people person. He describes himself as "someone who enjoys meeting with new people, hearing about their experiences, and forming long lasting friendships and relationships." That

instinct for connection would later become central to his professional life. Jake attended the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, graduating in 2023 with a degree in finance and a certificate in real estate—credentials that marked the end of his student years and the beginning of a career built largely on instinct.

Before real estate, Jake's professional experience was vast. Each role and experience would contribute to his eventual career. "I worked a lot of unique jobs growing up, many of which I worked by myself, and was my own boss." His final role before entering the field was a finance internship at Johnson Controls, where he gained firsthand insight into a corporate environment. Jake found that he worked best in a role with more dynamicity and autonomy, and that he missed the chance to build connections with people. "I didn't get to move around, or be my own boss," he explains. "And I didn't get to meet as many amazing people, like I get to today."

Family, Foundations, and Motivation

Jake remains deeply connected to his family and hometown, returning often to Fond du Lac to spend weekends with family and longtime friends. "My family and I are very close," he says. Time together usually means good food, drinks, cribbage, and cheering on Wisconsin sports teams. Fishing is another constant, particularly with his dad. "My Dad and I are big Walleye fisherman," Jake notes.

Jake lives on Milwaukee's East Side with his girlfriend, Erica, whom he's been with

for six years. "She is amazing, my partner in crime, and biggest supporter," he says simply. Their time together mirrors his values: staying active, cooking at home, and unwinding after busy weeks. "Carbonara is probably our favorite," Jake says of their go-to meals, though they're just as happy grabbing a burger and cheese curds when eating out.

Looking back, Jake says his past continues to fuel his drive. "The small places in which I know I could've tried harder or given more effort growing up still leave me with that feeling that I could have done more," he admits. That feeling now pushes him forward. "This feeling has motivated me to really give my all into who I am now, and push myself as hard as I can in my real estate business, and everything that I do."

Finding His Fit in Real Estate

Jake began his real estate career in the fall of 2023 with Compass and is part of the Horizon Homes team. He also serves as treasurer of Compass' Young Professional Network. His path into real estate felt inevitable. "I always knew in my gut that I did want to be a real estate agent," he says. The corporate internship only sharpened that certainty. "When I had the structure placed on me, I just knew that this lifestyle wasn't for me."

Even his former boss saw it coming. Jake recalls being told he wasn't offered a full-time job after the completion of the internship because he lacked passion for the role. "It was pretty funny because I told them they were

right," he says. That moment became the push he needed to take a risk, encouraged by his future team leads Nick Harrington and Ty Ash, as well as future lending partner Bo Belmer. "They were able

time buyers, he explains, "is such a cool feeling... knowing they will raise their kids here, and live here and have many memories here for many years."



to motivate me to take the risk and jump in with 2 feet."

Now, just over two years in, Jake's momentum is clear. His goal for the year 2025 was \$6 million in sales volume; he ended up helping 44 clients for a total of \$10.5 million in sales volume, vastly surpassing his goal. "Next year, I would like to do 12 million," he says, while focusing just as much on becoming "a better Agent."

For Jake, fulfillment comes from building something real. "I built my business from the ground up," he says. Even more meaningful is the impact. Helping first-

Doing Things the Right Way Jake believes his commitment and personality set him apart. "I really strive to prep my clients for the process as much as I can," he says. "I am a hyper explainer, so there are no surprises through the transaction."

The phrase guiding him is simple: "Do the right things the right way." Introduced by his team, it's become a personal standard. "In all of those tough situations, the right answer will always be clear if you have this mindset," Jake says. For a young agent building a career from scratch, that mindset has made all the difference.

The Architecture of Sustainable Momentum

For the high-achieving real estate professional, the “start-stop” cycle is a familiar foe. It is the experience of a wildly productive month of closings followed by a sudden, jarring stall in the pipeline. Many agents attribute these plateaus to market shifts or simple exhaustion, but the root cause is often less about effort and more about the underlying architecture of their business.

To move from a cycle of “hustle and stall” to one of sustainable growth, top producers must shift their focus from high-pressure force to grounded structure. Here are three pro tips for building a business that maintains momentum without the burnout.

Prioritize Alignment Over Ambition
Ambition drives many agents into the top tier of production, but without alignment, that same ambition leads to decision fatigue and “firefighting.” Proactive agents begin by defining their “Miraculous” goals—the outcomes that aren’t just about the numbers, but about the life they actually want to live. When the daily “what” is clearly aligned with the long-term “why,” the path forward becomes significantly simpler. Before

adding a new lead-gen tool or expanding a team, the expert advice is to pause and ask: Is this taking ground in the direction I actually want to go?

Manage Leading Indicators, Not Just Results
Most agents live and die by their lagging indicators: the number of closed units or the total volume at the end of the quarter. While these numbers tell a story, they cannot be directly managed. Pro producers focus their energy on leading indicators—the controllable, input-based actions that predict future success. Whether it is having three meaningful conversations a day or honoring a specific morning routine, managing the “input” measures ensures that momentum is being built even when the closing table is quiet.

Build Systems for “White Space”
There is a common myth that more productivity requires more hours. In reality, the most successful business owners are those who have built systems that allow for “white space”—intentional buffers for reflection and planning. By utilizing time-blocking for strategic work and protecting “buffer blocks” for



BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER, CORNERSTONE COACHING & CONSULTING

real life, an agent creates a “Momentum Reset” within their own calendar. This prevents the mental overload that leads to procrastination and allows the agent to show up with the clarity and calm necessary to lead their clients effectively. In the end, momentum isn’t something that is found; it is something that is built, one intentional choice at a time.

Author Bio
Dawn Baumgartner is a seasoned coach and strategic consultant who helps high-performing leaders move from overwhelm into clarity and sustainable action. Through her AIM framework, she empowers professionals to align their daily habits with their biggest visions, ensuring they don’t just achieve more, but live better. As the founder of Cornerstone Coaching & Consulting, she is dedicated to the belief that progress happens best when we “link arms” and refuse to do life alone.

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HOTEL VERDANT

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PHOTOS BY VARITAY STUDIOS

In downtown Racine, just steps from Monument Square and overlooking Lake Michigan, Hotel Verdant stands as something the city has long been waiting for.

Not just a place to stay, but a signal of what Racine is becoming.

The vision began with Dominion Properties owners Christopher Adams and Michael Godfrey, who saw potential where others may have overlooked it. The building itself, once the Zahn’s Department Store, sat vacant for decades after closing in the 1980s. Where some saw an empty structure, they saw an opportunity to create something meaningful for the city.

Christopher, inspired by his travels through Europe with his wife, where vibrant town squares are often anchored by a defining hotel, recognized that Racine’s historic downtown had all the ingredients. It was simply missing that central gathering place.

“In many of those cities, the hotel at the center of the square is also the best hotel in the city,” Adams says. “We felt Racine deserved that.”

Construction began in January of 2022, and by August of 2023, Hotel Verdant opened its doors.

From the beginning, the intention was clear. This would not be just another hotel. It would be rooted in place, connected to the community, and designed with purpose.

That vision was brought to life in collaboration with TKWA, The Kubala Washatko Architects, and The Gettys Group, an internationally recognized design firm with a deeply personal connection to this project. Its owner, Roger Hill, grew up in nearby Wind Point. When he learned of the development, he reached out with a desire to be part of something in his hometown.

The result is a design that quietly pays tribute to Racine’s Danish heritage through clean Scandinavian influences, modern materials, and a sense of warmth that feels both elevated and inviting.

Inside, the hotel reflects a thoughtful balance of past and future. It is anchored in history while clearly moving the city forward. That connection is reflected in the artwork throughout the hotel, curated in collaboration with the Racine Art Museum and ArtRoot, featuring historic artifacts and memorabilia from Racine alongside work by local artists, sculptors, and 3D creatives.



From left to right:
Christopher Adams,
Michael Godfrey, Chris
Kosor and Adam Fuller

At the operational level, General Manager Chris Kosor and Director of Sales Adam Fuller lead a team that is deeply engaged with the community. Their approach is collaborative, open, and constantly evolving, positioning Hotel Verdant not as a standalone destination, but as part of the larger rhythm of downtown Racine.

“We have received such a warm welcome from Racine,” says Godfrey. “It is refreshing working with a community that is as excited about a project as we are. Racine is Wisconsin’s best kept secret and we are looking forward to sharing it with everyone.”

While the design is elevated, there is an intentional warmth and coziness felt

throughout the hotel. Nowhere is that more evident than at EAVE, the fifth-floor rooftop lounge, where surrounding windows frame nearly 360-degree views of downtown Racine, the city skyline, Lake Michigan, and far west into the county. It is an especially beautiful place to take in the western sky at sunset. Inside, guests are grounded by an inviting rectangular bar and a cozy fireplace, creating a space that feels both expansive and intimate.

Designed as a hub for gathering, EAVE is encircled by a sky garden, where herbs and botanicals are grown and used by the kitchen and bar.

The experience continues throughout the property. Marguerite, the hotel’s signature restaurant, offers

elevated, home-style Italian cuisine centered around a hearth-fired oven. It is open for lunch and dinner, with brunch served on Saturdays and Sundays. Chef Kevin Coulter, a Racine native, also curates special dining experiences throughout the year, including wine and whiskey pairings with thoughtfully prepared menus.

And the community has responded. While there may have been early hesitation, something new, something elevated, something different, the reception has been overwhelmingly supportive. Visitors from outside the city often arrive with limited expectations, only to leave surprised by what Racine has to offer. The lakefront, the marina, the beaches, the art, the people.

Those who spend time here begin to understand. Hotel Verdant is helping tell that story.

Sustainability is also central to the project. The building achieved LEED Gold certification, reflecting a shared commitment between the developers and the city to build responsibly and with long-term impact in mind.

“Building community through sustainability has always been a core principle that we’ve built our company around,” says Godfrey.

And this is only the beginning. Currently under construction is Phase Two, a 6,500 square foot Scandinavian-inspired spa designed in the spirit of hygge, extending the hotel’s focus on comfort, wellness, and intentional living. The same team of architects and designers has returned to collaborate once again, carrying the vision forward with consistency and care.

From curated art to thoughtfully designed spaces, every detail has been considered. But beyond the design and the experience, Hotel Verdant represents something bigger. It reflects a belief in Racine.

“We are in it to win it,” says Christopher Adams. “Racine has so much potential. The people, the energy, the



collaboration. We want to continue investing our time, our vision, and our resources here, like it’s our hometown.”

And increasingly, it is beginning to feel that way. Hotel Verdant is not just a destination. It is a gathering place. A statement. A catalyst.

On Friday, May 8th, Hotel Verdant will host a *Milwaukee Real Producers* event at EAVE. We invite you to be part of it, bringing your teams, partners, and your networks to experience firsthand what makes this space, and this city, so special.

Because in the end, Hotel Verdant is not just opening its doors. It is opening a window into what Racine can be.

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For more information, visit www.hotelverdant.com.




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EMILY

Raising Expectations

Mattson

Photo by
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Photography.

Emily Mattson has always carried herself with a perspective beyond her years. Growing up in Wisconsin surrounded by a large extended family, summers meant long days with cousins in Lake Geneva and a rhythm of life rooted in togetherness. Even then, people noticed something different about her.

“Everyone always said I was an ‘old soul’ growing up,” Emily recalls. “I think it was because I was just more responsible, calmer, and seemed to understand things many kids my age didn’t.”

That maturity was shaped in part by hardship. When Emily was in high school, her father’s health took a turn. She became one of his primary caregivers until he passed away in 2008, when she was just 22.

“I think that changed my perspective on life and made me realize how fleeting it really is,” she says.

Today, that perspective informs both her life and her work. Emily and her husband, whom she met at Homestead High School in Mequon when they were just 15 and 16, are now raising five children of their own: Elizabeth (13), Will (11), Teddy (8), James (5), and Anna (20 months). Their home in Mequon is lively, full, and unapologetically busy.

“My hobbies and social life revolve much around our kids’ activities — dance competitions, basketball and baseball tournaments, soccer games, etc.,” she says. “We have a busy and chaotic household but we know that this time is fleeting and truly goes so fast!”

When they do find a spare weekend, the Mattsons head north or south.

“We love going to Door County or Lake Geneva any chance we get,” Emily shares. “It’s amazing how even 24 hours on the lake or up in Door can refresh your soul. We have many amazing memories with our kids there.” The family is also devoted to Disney Cruises, five and counting, with a goal of experiencing every ship at least once.

The Road to Real Estate

Emily’s path into real estate began almost by accident. While a sophomore in college studying Architecture and Urban planning, she met a developer who made an unexpected offer.

“My mom was building a new condo and the developer was intrigued by my knowledge and interest in the process and asked if he could pay for me to get my license, so I could host open houses at his model on weekends” she explains. “It was the perfect job for me!”

Licensed since 2007, Emily graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee with a degree in finance and real estate after moving home from UW-Madison when her father became ill. Following graduation, a top producer in real estate hired her as an assistant. Over four years, she worked her way up the team before stepping out to build something of her own.

Today, she leads Mattson Real Estate Group, a small team she describes as “an amazing, small but mighty team of incredible ladies.” After spending the first 16 years of her career at First Weber, she and her team recently transitioned to Keller Williams MKE, a move she views as a defining moment.

“2026 is a pivotal year for us professionally as we transition brokerages,” she says. “It’s a year of growth and new challenges, and we’re truly excited about what’s ahead. This spring, Keller Williams MKE is opening an office in Mequon, which is a wonderful opportunity to further serve our community. We look forward to becoming even more deeply rooted in Ozaukee County, a community I grew up in and know and love.”

Balancing It All

For Emily, real estate has never been just about transactions. It has been a vehicle for balance and intention.



From left to right: Amelia Zastava, Emily Mattson, Lorraine Rooney, and Alyssa Albers Withrow. Photo by Kyleen Dzploch Photography.



Photo by Kyleen Dzploch Photography.



“Real estate has been an amazing career as a working mom,” she says. “It allows us to focus on our clients’ needs & expectations while not sacrificing being at all of my kid’s events and activities. Having a team has been crucial in managing my work and life balance.”



“
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”



Elizabeth (13), Will (11), Teddy (8), James (5), and Anna (20 months)

That growth has come with challenges. As her business has flourished, so too have the demands.

“As you become more successful, the business flourishes, which forces you to be even more organized, prioritize communication with clients and learn to delegate the very necessary but less personal side of the business” she says. I truly believe comparison is the thief of joy. That’s been one of the harder lessons to learn as a Realtor, because it’s so easy to measure yourself against others in this industry. It’s incredibly competitive, yet also very collaborative, and that’s what I love about it.”

Her approach is rooted in systems, authenticity, and service.

“I always tell our potential clients that our primary goal is to exceed their expectations,” Emily explains. “We have created and refined systems and procedures for everything that we do, and that is how we do business at such a high level and with such expertise.”

Just as important, she says, is staying grounded.

“Our clients also appreciate that we are ‘real.’ It’s not a bunch of fluff or nonsense that doesn’t focus on the client and their needs. We are real people who care about the relationships we build with our clients. Many of them have become lifelong friends and repeat clients, which gives me a great sense of pride and joy. We aren’t always perfect. But we strive to be exceptional at everything that we do from communication, to negotiations, to our processes and client care during and beyond closing.”

That commitment is captured in her team’s tagline: “We raise your expectations of how great home buying or selling should be.”

For Emily Mattson, those aren’t just words. They represent a philosophy shaped by a deep commitment to caring for people, working hard and continually striving to do what’s in the best interest of each client and their family.

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