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» a note from the publisher

INSPIRED

“In life, you need either inspiration or desperation.”

— TONY ROBBINS

When you act from a place of inspiration, you are fueled to go the extra mile and have the energy to do so. Inspiration is the spark that creates visions, which when followed up by action can transform lives and result in breakthrough years. We can choose to act from what inspires us and elevate ourselves to new levels. As we hit the stride of 2022, there is a lot to be inspired about everywhere.

Thank you to everyone who came to our first event at **Loggerhead Marinelife Center** in Juno Beach. Our holiday event was a chance for old friends to catch up, new friendships to be made, and to raise money for the center’s important conservation and rescue work with the sea turtles. The night ended with a raffle of some fantastic items. Special thanks to our premier sponsor **Property Transfer Services** as well as underwriter **Old Republic Title** and **Waypoint East**. I’d also like to thank Erb & Young, Supreme Lending, Two Men and a Truck, Waypoint East, Loggerhead Marinelife Center, and Property Transfer Services whose donated some great specialty items for our raffle.

This month, we are featuring local legend and luxury leader, **Christina Zecca** of Illustrated Properties, who makes being a top-performing luxury market agent look easy. Through her well-developed network, she connects buyers and sellers with great finesse, and her relaxed unassuming nature makes everyone feel at ease. Under her leadership, The **Zecca Group** is consistently one of Illustrated Properties’ top-performing teams year after year. We are also featuring rising star and emerging heavy hitter, **Sean Mooney** and **James Lopez of Sutter & Nugent**, as well as industry leader, **David Serle** of **RE/MAX Services**.

I am always interested in hearing feedback and content ideas, please email me with your nominations, suggestions, and content ideas.



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Written By **Anthony R. Maradin**
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SEAN
MOONEY &



JAMES
LOPEZ...



PEDAL TO THE MEDAL

Knowing someone since childhood has its advantages when it comes to partnering later in life. Such is the case with James Lopez and Sean Mooney, of the James & Sean Group at Sutter & Nugent, LLC.

James and Sean have known each other since they were 10 years old. Today, they live next door to each other. Their long-standing friendship affords them a unique working relationship, marked by an incredible amount of mutual trust.

Rapid Rise

The James & Sean Group was formed at Sutter & Nugent in 2017, and their growth at the brokerage has been exponential.

“The first year,” Sean recalls, “we did four deals. And the next year, we did 45 deals. The following year, 53 deals, then 67 deals, and this past year, we closed just over 80.” In their first two years in the business, James and Sean sold over \$100 million, and in 2021 alone, just over \$54 million. They have been the top producing team and the brokerage’s top individual producers three years in a row.

James and Sean attribute their success, in large part, to the dynamics of their relationship, and feel their strong work ethic sets them apart.

“We hold each other extremely accountable,” says James. “We’re always bouncing things off each other, brainstorming, and running scenarios and

their outcomes from each of our perspectives. We have unique skill sets that serve us in real estate very well.”

“A motto we go by,” says Sean, “is ‘Do the work first, and the rest will follow.’ If you provide your client with the best possible service, everything else, including money and reputation, will follow.”

James P. Lopez

James, or “JLo” as he is called at the office, grew up in a military family. His father was in the U.S. Navy for 22 years. His mother, though, a first-generation Hispanic American from Panama, is the one who James says taught him the value of discipline. “She is very structured,” he explains, “and would manage any money I earned and put it directly in the bank.” While in college at FAU, James had several mobile device repair and accessory kiosks at the Galleria Mall in Fort Lauderdale, and worked long hours every day. Upon graduation, he wanted a change and obtained his real estate license.

James starts and ends his days with rigorous workouts and loves to stay active with his goldendoodle, Josie. His goals for the future are to optimize his mental and physical well-being and continue growing his business, with a focus on building his investment portfolio.

Sean R. Mooney

Sean was also inspired to work hard by his parents. His mother and father have owned Moon’s Tavern, in Boca Raton, for over 20 years now. Throughout his father’s tenure as owner of Moon’s Tavern, he has never hired a cleaning crew. “I used to help in the mornings, cleaning, sweeping, and mopping the floors. As a result, I’ve always enjoyed putting sweat equity into whatever I do,” Sean says.

Sean attended college at Florida State. While he was in school, he worked for Weingarten Realty, doing retail and office leasing. He “fell in love with the idea of selling real estate,” obtained his license in 2016, and joined Sutter & Nugent in 2017. When he’s not working, Sean enjoys

sports, working out, and going boating with friends either to the Bahamas or just cruising on the weekends.

Shared Goals and Plans

Together, James and Sean own three duplexes and one six-unit multifamily building. They are both highly focused on expanding their streams of passive income. When asked, separately, what their short-term goals are, James quipped, “I hope Sean said to sell \$100 million together this year” (which he did).

Long term, they’re focused on scaling their real estate investment portfolio. “Right now, we own 10 doors together, and hopefully over the next five to 10 years, we can turn that into over 100 doors, depending on how aggressively we invest,” Sean says.

“Over time, we want to build a really successful team and own thousands of apartments in our area,” James adds.

To pull it off, James and Sean will continue doing what they do best.

“Every phone call, every appointment, every interaction

... we always make sure we leave people and places better than we found them,” James emphasizes. “We want to help as many people as possible. Whether they’re spending \$200,000 or \$2 million, we’ll bring the same resources, procedures, photographers, etc. You never know where referrals will come from.”

The two both say they’re working on finding an optimal work-life balance, but, for now, real estate is 24/7. “Keeping our pedal to the metal the way Sean and I operate,” says James, “we’re never not working.”

“Friends and family say James and I work too much,” Sean agrees. “But the way I look at it, if you’re not doing it, somebody else is.”

It seems clear that the James & Sean Group is going to keep doing it — continuing to drive hard toward their goals and dreams, all while providing their special brand of top-shelf client service.

“But the way
I look at it, if
you’re not doing
it, somebody
else is.”

►► celebrating leaders

Written By **Ellen Buchanan**
Photography By **Barion McQueen**



DAVID *Serle*

ELEVATING THE INDUSTRY

Most real estate agents have so much on their plates they don't have much time left over for working on matters outside of their own businesses. Thankfully, there are some intrepid souls who have a passion for the big picture and give of themselves to improve the business of real estate as a whole. One such leader is David Serle, of RE/MAX Services in Boca Raton.

...



...

HARD WORK AND NO HANDOUTS

Although he grew up in a real estate family (his mother was an agent for 30-plus years and his father, Steven Serle, has owned a title company since the mid-1990s and now co-owns the RE/MAX Services office with him), David says he never intended to be a REALTOR®. He briefly attended the University of Alabama, but came back and entered the restaurant business. When he eventually asked his father if he could join him at the title company, his father said no. “It wasn’t that he didn’t want me,” David explains. “It was that he wanted me to earn my way, not just enable me or give this to me. It was a very good lesson. I absolutely had to fight for everything that I got.”

In 1998, David was brought in on the bottom rung of Corporate Title, “as a grunt,” he says, making very little money and working 50 hours a week as a post closer, processor, and, ultimately, a closing agent. He obtained his real estate license in 2002, and also became a certified SEO trainer, helping other agents at his office. In 2007, his father asked David to join him as broker/co-owner at RE/MAX Services. “And I told him no,” David laughs. “I said I’m perfectly fine right where I am. And he said, ‘Okay ... well, I’m not really asking.’”

By all accounts, it has been a great partnership. David is the managing broker, while his father runs the title company and law firm. RE/MAX Services currently has 62 high-producing agents and broker associates whose average GCI in 2021 was \$162,000.

David is a top producer himself. His 2021 sales volume was \$16 million, with 38 closed transactions. He was Broker of the Year for RE/MAX for all of Florida in 2016, is a RE/MAX Lifetime Achievement Award winner, and has been named an RISMedia Newsmaker-Trendsetter for the last three years for his podcast and FB Live show, *Breakfast with the Broker*.

A PASSION FOR THE INDUSTRY

David is heavily involved in the Realtor associations at the local, state, and national levels. He is the current treasurer of Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors®, is on five committees with the Florida Realtors® association, and is on the board of directors and the Public Policy Coordinating Committee at the National Association of REALTORS®. His greatest hope is to be able to make a meaningful impact on the future direction of the industry.

“I believe, in the next five years, we have some serious questions we need to answer and serious issues coming down the pike,” he says. “And I want a seat at the table.” Some of the major issues David sees are high turnover and divisiveness. With 87 percent of licensees out of business within five years, he says new agents aren’t being provided enough support and guidance. David also feels strongly that the real estate industry needs to have more of a team mindset and “stop competing, collaborate more, and create value together.”

“
Success
should be about
something bigger
than ourselves.”

FAMILY, PHILANTHROPY, AND THE FUTURE

When he’s not out selling or running the brokerage, David enjoys playing gin a couple of times a week at a local cigar bar, attending sporting events, and coaching his daughters’ youth soccer. He and his wife, Samantha, who just celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary,

have three daughters: Emma (16), Romy (12), and Molly (9). David and Samantha enjoy attending events and dining out, and the family prefers going on intentional, “experience” vacations — where lifelong memories are made. When their daughter, Emma, was bat mitzvahed, the entire family went to Israel to hold the ceremony there, something the girls will always remember.

In line with his own commitment to giving back, David and the brokerage are actively involved in philanthropy and support a variety of charities. They are a designated “Miracle Office,” donating regularly to the Children’s Miracle Network, which supports children’s hospitals around the country.

In the coming years, David wants to grow the brokerage another 30 percent. He doesn’t have specific production goals for himself; rather, his concept of personal success includes continuing to build meaningful relationships and increasing his involvement with the boards, looking to actively give back and make a difference in the industry.

“The fulfilling thing about real estate is basically finding our replacements so that real estate is a much better industry when we leave it than it was when we got into it,” David says. “Success should be about something bigger than ourselves.”

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE

Right now, around the globe, there are approximately 40 million trapped in forced labor or sexual exploitation. The N2 Company – the company behind this publication and 900+ others like it – is proud to help fund the life-saving efforts of nonprofits fighting this injustice. Through N2's giving program, N2GIVES, we've donated more than \$13 million to the cause. This was made possible by the hard work of our Area Directors, the partnership of our local advertisers, and engaged readers like you.

Through the years of giving to many nonprofits with big hearts and dreams to end human trafficking, it became clear we needed to focus our giving on organizations that provide a web of support in the anti-human trafficking realm: nonprofits who work together, creating an effective force and network where their impact is greatest. Love Justice International, Rescue:Freedom International, and International Justice Mission, are our 2021 N2GIVES nonprofit partners. All three organizations pour their heart and soul into their work, each serving as a separate but vital player in the anti-trafficking movement by employing their own unique strengths and working with those who have specific expertise in combatting slavery. Here are their stories.

Love Justice International

There are many tactics used by traffickers to trick vulnerable people into slavery. In an all-too-common scenario, victims are lured away from their homes and escorted into bordering countries by the promise of a much-needed work opportunity. It's only when the victim arrives as a complete outsider, with no one to turn to for help, that he or she realizes the true nature of the "work."

This is just one of the tactics Love Justice International (www.lovejustice.ngo) is on a mission to disrupt. The nonprofit currently operates 56 transit monitoring stations at prime border crossings in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and South Africa that are known for their unassuming role in a victim's journey into slavery. By crowd-watching for any suspicious behavior and questioning potential traffickers and victims, Love Justice has successfully intercepted more than 22,000 people from exploitation.

Rescue:Freedom International

We've supported Rescue:Freedom's (rescuefreedom.org) mission in the past, yet one of our biggest changes in giving

this year is supporting their Local Partner Network (made up of smaller nonprofits fighting sexual slavery). This model shares best practices, consults in helpful areas, and financially supports a part of each local partner's budget for the year. We are excited to give to RFI's network and to connect smaller local groups we've supported in the past so they can receive more than just financial help along their way to making a greater impact.

International Justice Mission

IJM (ijm.org) believes every person deserves to be free, and they partner with local justice systems to end violence against those living in poverty. Restoring victims from slavery and then bringing the criminals who committed this crime to justice – ensuring traffickers cannot exploit anyone else – is how they work toward ending slavery in our lifetime. IJM works with local authorities in 13 countries to restore victims of violence, forced labor, and sex trafficking, fight in courtrooms until slave owners are put behind bars, and provide training and support for local law enforcement to end the cycle of violence and injustice.

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When I think of February, I think of Valentine's Day on February 14, a day we men should always remember. In addition, and most importantly, I think of Presidents' Day.

Presidents' Day is a day that celebrates all U.S. presidents (past and present). Initially, Presidents' Day was called Washington's Birthday in honor of George Washington, the first President of the United States. His birthday on February 22 became a significant day of remembrance following his death in 1799. Presidents' Day, now a federal holiday, is observed on the third Monday of February and combines the celebration of Washington's Birthday with Abraham Lincoln's, which both fell in February.

When the colonies eventually went to war with the British, Washington brought tremendous resolve that came from the backing of all the founding fathers of our nation. This strong determination and commitment came from these 56 men who signed their name on the Declaration of Independence...knowing that if the war with the British was lost, they would all be hanging from the gallows in Great Britain. This resolve for freedom from British rule would trickle down to the men he commanded during and through to the end of the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783).

Let's take a look at our original founding father, President George Washington.

George Washington served as the commander and chief of both the Colonial Army as well as our country. He was known for being a man of great character, words spoken on

Washington were integrity, self-discipline, courage, absolute honesty, resolve, and decision. Because of these traits, Washington became our original founding father and is often referred to as the "Father of his Country."

George Washington was a raw and ambitious 21-year-old major who served the British army in the French and Indian War. Because of the character he displayed he became highly respected by his peers. During this experience of serving, Washington observed the tactics, culture, discipline, strengths and few weaknesses as the British army at the time was the strongest force in the world. This observation would serve him well as the eventual commander in the American Revolutionary War.

After, Washington led his country to victory. He became the first American president under the United States Constitution and was elected in 1789 and again in 1792. President Washington remains the only president to be unanimously elected, which has become another strong point in his legacy.

In October 1941, Washington's massive portrait was carved into Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills region of South Dakota, a true testament to the man he was and how his legacy will live forever.

On this Presidents' Day, let's not look at others of how they may need to shine up their character traits. However, take a look at ourselves of how we can become more while remembering the resolve for freedom in our original founding father.

Remember, any successful endeavor always starts with "attitude"; Washington brought his attitude of resolve and patriotism, which dripped down to all who fought for our freedom. This energy in turn gave all the ability to take the "action" to persevere through the eight hard years of war that eventually produce the "results" of declaring the colonies a free nation.

►► coaching corner
By Michael Dill

HAPPY February!



Coach Michael Dill is an award-winning certified business coach, global speaker, and published author. He is a proud Action Coach franchise partner as well as the president of Power & Ice Wealth Creation, a strategic leadership company that works with business owners, leaders, teams, and entrepreneurs to both develop a systematized and structured organization while accelerating their mindset, efficiencies, and effectiveness to grow both personally and professionally to achieve extraordinary results. He brings more than 40 years of business and entrepreneurial experience in his leadership, team training, and mentoring practice. Businesscoachmichaeldill.com

Have a great Valentine's Day, a happy Presidents' Day, and a successful February!

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PALM BEACH HOUSING MARKET HEATS UP AS MEDIAN SALE PRICE INCREASES

Just in! Newly released market reports from Florida REALTORS® detailing recent real estate activity in Palm Beach County. The reports compare year-over-year data for November. Here are statistics on single-family homes.

“The November reports are out, and they did not disappoint! The holiday season certainly isn’t slowing down the red-hot housing market in Palm Beach County. We saw a 22 percent year-over-year increase in median sale price to \$510,000 as well as the average days on market dropping 45.8 percent to 13 days. It’s impressive to see the consistency in growth for median sale price and the days on market decreasing with regularity in 2021. Houses are being scooped up almost as quickly as they are listed and homeowners are seeing an increasingly great return on investment,”

said Karen Johnson, president of Broward, Palm Beaches, and St. Lucie REALTORS®.

Days on market is a measure of the length of the home-selling process calculated for sales that closed during the month. Time to contract measures the number of days between the initial listing for a property and the signing of the contract which eventually led to the closing of the sale.

“As snowbirds and northerners continue to make the move to Florida, the market shows no signs of slowing down as we inch closer to 2022. My advice to people who are contemplating buying or selling is to contact a local REALTOR® today and ask for their expertise. A REALTOR® can help you

with all your real estate needs and negotiate the right price for you in this competitive market,” continues Johnson.

Median sale price is our preferred summary statistic for price activity because unlike average sale price, median sale price is not sensitive to high sale prices for small numbers of homes that may not be characteristic of the market area.

Broward, Palm Beaches, and St. Lucie REALTORS® is the third-largest local REALTOR® association in the nation, representing over 38,000 REALTORS®, 41,000 MLS subscribers, and five regional boards across South Florida and the Treasure Coast. For more info, visit RWorld.com or contact Communications@RWorld.com.

PALM BEACH COUNTY

NOVEMBER SNAPSHOT

Single Family Homes	2021	2020	% Change
Closed Sales	1,491	1,533	-2.7%
Median Sale Price	\$510,000	\$418,000	22.0%
Original List Price Received	99.2%	96.7%	2.6%
Median Days to Contract	13	24	-45.8%
Inventory (Active Listings)	2,027	3,940	-48.6%
Months Supply of Inventory	1.2	2.7	-55.6%

Townhouses/Condos	2021	2020	% Change
Closed Sales	1,302	1,277	2.0%
Median Sale Price	\$262,750	\$220,000	19.4%
Original List Price Received	97.9%	95.2%	2.8%
Median Days to Contract	15	42	-64.3%
Inventory (Active Listings)	1,846	5,403	-65.8%
Months Supply of Inventory	1.2	4.9	-75.5%



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CHRISTINA ZECCA

SOLD ON THE WATER

Written By **Ellen Buchanan** • Photography By **Magda Hernandez**

Christina Zecca has been in real estate for almost 25 years, doing what she loves most — helping clients find their dream home.

As a local, Christina is uniquely positioned to sell the Florida lifestyle. “I’m a native and grew up here in the Jupiter area,” she says. “I’ve been selling the Florida lifestyle in Palm Beach and Martin Counties since 1997, and my main focus and specialty is luxury waterfront homes.”

CHRISTINA AND THE ZECCA GROUP

Christina joined Illustrated Properties in 2018 and has been a Platinum Producer at the brokerage each year since. She is a member of the Presidential Council, a group of the top 25 producers who meet to discuss ways to help other agents in the company succeed.

Christina formed The Zecca Group within her first six months at Illustrated Properties. “It just got to a point,” she says, “where I couldn’t do it all.” Together with The Zecca Group, Christina just had her best year ever, with over 43 closed transactions and over \$63 million pending/closed in 2021. Her team includes Theresa Tecson, Samantha Marzke, and Rodes Robinson, and Operations and Marketing Manager Kimberly Strohm.

“We really are very close, like family,” Christina shares. “We’re blessed with our dynamic and spend lots of time together both inside and outside of the office, whether at charity events or just socially.”

Kimberly adds, “I’ve been in the business for over 24 years and I’ve never seen any office with such positivity and that’s as happy as ours. We literally laugh every day.”

Christina, as team leader, has a lot to do with creating a positive environment for her team, and her results are telling. She has been featured as “The Expert in Waterfront and Seaside Homes” in *Jupiter Magazine* and *The Palm Beacher* and has also been featured in *Palm Beach Illustrated*, *Luxury Home Magazine*, and *HAVEN Lifestyles*.

But Christina isn’t known for her real estate prowess alone. In addition to being a waterfront and seaside homes expert, she has gained acclaim for her talent *on* the water as well.

...

THE ZECCA GROUP

Location courtesy
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“

**IN MY OPINION, THE MOST
SUCCESSFUL AGENTS ARE THE
ONES THAT ACTUALLY GO TO
THE OFFICE ON A DAILY BASIS.**

”

REELING IN THE WINS

When she’s not selling waterfront property, Christina Zecca can be found doing what she loves most outside of real estate — sport fishing — which she has done all over the world.

In 2009, Christina landed a 64.3-pound kingfish, just shy of the women’s world record. She was the top female angler in the 2009 Jupiter Billfish Tournament and has numerous other fishing accomplishments. And the fishing, she says, helps her real estate business.

“Being a native, I know the local waterways. I can help buyers when it comes to finding a perfect place for any type of boat they have. Outside of fishing, a lot of people are into just boating so my knowledge of the area really helps.”

Christina still fishes tournaments when time permits. “But my real estate business is my main focus now,” she says.

REWIND: STARTING OUT

Christina grew up in Jupiter, where, before real estate, she owned a successful nail salon. She married custom

home builder Christopher Zecca, owner of Zecca Builders Inc., and eventually sold the salon and obtained her real estate license in 1997. “Christopher was buying properties up and down the Intracoastal, and I could represent both the purchase and sale sides, so it just made sense,” she explains. Although she and Christopher later divorced, Christina still lists and sells Zecca Builders custom homes.

Today, Christina is thriving at Illustrated Properties and derives a great deal of satisfaction from her work. “What’s most fulfilling about it is just helping buyers find

their dream homes. I love meeting people and networking. No single day is the same in this business,” she says with enthusiasm.

COMPETITIVE EDGE

The main things Christina feels set her apart are authenticity, strong work ethic, and availability. “I get up before the sun comes up, work on emails, and make myself available. One of the things I hear from clients is that I always answer my phone,” she says. Her website also allows her to respond to clients in real time, with a built-in chat app she can access from her phone.

In addition to her extensive local knowledge and longevity in the business, Christina feels that her passion for what she does is integral to the success she enjoys today. “I love what I do,” she says. “Whether it’s work-related or recreational, I’m very driven.”

Her best advice to up-and-coming top producers is to love what you do, maintain balance, and stay humble. “And if you’re going to expand into a team,” she says, do it gradually, and make sure you get the right people.” Christina also feels it’s vital for agents to come into the office. “I really think it’s key,” she emphasizes. “In my opinion, the most successful agents are the ones that actually go to the office on a daily basis.”

FAMILY AND PERSONAL TIME

Christina has two sons: Colton, her oldest, who is graduating soon from RPI with a degree in computer engineering, and Casey, who is a freshman at Florida Gulf Coast University, studying entrepreneurship. Both boys have inherited their mother’s love of fishing.

At home, Christina has a “fantastic, comical, 2-year-old Pomeranian named Goose” who loves to come to the office with her. Christina enjoys working out, sport clay shooting, taking walks with Goose, and being out on the water on weekends.

“
BEING A NATIVE, I KNOW THE LOCAL WATERWAYS.
”

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...
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Christina is passionate about giving back to the community and donates a portion of every commission check to Illustrated Properties charities. She and her team are proud supporters and sponsors of several of a large number of local charities as well.

A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

As for the future, Christina envisions doing more of the same and maybe growing the team just a little. She also sees bringing her boys, or at least Casey, into real estate. In time, she feels, he may very well take over both of his parents' businesses.

Colton, on the other hand, "does coding and all that ... He will invent something, some app or program where we can all retire," she says laughing.



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