

## AVENUE REALTY: REAL ESTATE DONE DIFFERENTLY

**W**hen Amy and Darian Cochran bought their first home in 2004, their experience was, well, mediocre. Their real estate agent was going through the motions, but the couple didn't feel they got the support they needed while making one of life's most important purchases. It prompted Darian to educate himself on the process and he got his real estate license that same year. It would set the couple on a course of becoming the owners of one of the area's most respected real estate firms; Avenue Realty. In November of this year, they will celebrate their 10-year business anniversary.

"I felt that I would be able to do a better job than our agent at the time," Darian looked back on that experience 18 years ago. "I had no intention of going into real estate, but I missed guidance and a personal connection."

In the years that followed, Darian would find employment at larger, nationally operated real estate firms in the Washington, DC, area. And although he learned a lot, and was able to hone his craft, he never could shake the nagging feeling that what he was involved in were mere business transactions, as opposed to a true desire to help families make their next important step in life.

They couple had the desire to practice real estate differently.

And so, with a newborn in tow, Amy and Darian moved to Charlottesville with big dreams; to start their own real estate company. By then, Amy was also a licensed agent, and in November of 2012, their dream became a reality when they opened the doors to Avenue Realty.

Ten years later, it's the couple's leadership style that perhaps sets them

apart from other companies like them.

"We understand that we are in the people business," Amy said. "On different levels. We are here to make sure that our agents have all the tools they need to succeed, and we are in business to make sure our clients get what they deserve; a real estate agent who truly cares, and the purchase of the home they want. And in the process, we make sure we have fun doing that job."

Don't expect long sales meetings in the offices of Avenue Realty on Garden Boulevard. Amy and Darian don't care

about targets, and quota's and mandated sales goals. It's simply not how they operate.

"We do meet weekly with our agents, and we discuss what we are seeing in the market, and how we can improve ourselves," Amy said. "We also use that time for team building activities. What we don't do is create an atmosphere of competition. We want our realtors to think of other Avenue realtors as members of their team."

Before they opened their own firm, the couple made it their mission to really get to know this community.

"We would be out there, at farmers markets and events just to talk to people,

to get to know them, and to get our name out there. That was a slow process, but a necessary one. And in doing so, we really started to love our now home."

Darian agrees wholeheartedly. "We could've just opened up and got to work," he said. "But that's not how this works. In this business, you really have to get to know the community you are a part of. That's how you get to serve your clients. And now we are a part of this community, and we are involved, and volunteer as well."

Just 5 years ago, Avenue Realty had just 8 agents. That number has grown to over 30.

When on-boarding new agents, the

### SPOTLIGHT

#### AVENUE REALTY

CATEGORY: REAL ESTATE COMPANY

CATEGORY: ENTREPRENEUR

(AMY AND DARIAN COCHRAN)



connection to the community Amy and Darian value so much, is perhaps more important to them than a ton of real estate experience. By hiring the right people, who care about the community and its people, Avenue Realty is able to put their clients' needs first, *always*.

That same community has noticed; for the second year in a row, Avenue Realty was voted Best Real Estate Company in the Daily Progress Readers' Choice contest. The year before, the real estate company was voted runner-up, and Avenue Realty won the category for the first time in 2018. On top of that, individual realtors have finished in the top two in the category Residential Realtor three years in a row.

Just how deeply Amy, Darian and

their agents care about Charlottesville, became apparent during the pandemic.

"One of our kids had a birthday just when everything shut down," Amy said. "That was in March of 2020. And so there was no party. That was just sad. So, we and our kids asked ourselves if there was something we could do to help kids celebrate their birthdays during the pandemic."

They came up with 'Avenue to Happiness'. Helped by the cover of darkness, the Cochran family would go out at night, decorating front yards of children who were having a birthday. It was a fun project, that got a little out of hand, according to Amy.

"We did about 300 of these surprise visits," Amy said. "And once our agents

got wind of it, they were lining up to help out. It was our way to spread a little happiness during difficult times."

That is to say that 'community' is not a hollow word to all those at Avenue Realty; it is a philosophy for real estate professionals who work, live and play in the community they serve.

More recently, Avenue Realty opened a second location in Waynesboro. The geographical area they now cover extends from Harrisonburg to Louisa County.

"And we are also working on getting a mortgage and title company started," Darian said. "That means we have all the expertise in-house to complete any real estate transaction. They goal is to become a one-stop shop to make the

process more efficient for our clients. Not everyone has to use these resources, but we want to be able to offer them."

Looking back, Amy and Darian are proud of what they have accomplished, but are humble in putting that success in context.

"This was never about us," Darian concluded. "It's not about our achievements, or our accolades. We are protective of our brand, because we believe in what it stands for. And by making this leap on our own, everything we do feels personal. It's all personal."

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