

Renee Neuman
Coldwell Banker Kappel Gateway Realty

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Renee Neuman has worked more than 28 years selling real estate in Solano and Yolo counties and serves as co-manager for the Mason Street in Vacaville and Dixon offices of Coldwell Banker Kappel Gateway Realty.

Neuman's services extend far beyond typical Realtor offerings. Her extensive network provides comprehensive home preparation and consultation, along with a variety of services associated with the home selling process, including staging assistance if required.

Her inspiration each day remains constant.
"There is nothing like the feeling when you find the perfect home for a family, it is infectious," she says. "This industry is always shifting, changing and can be challenging at times. This is what makes each day exciting. I love what I do for a living and wouldn't change it for a minute."

The choices you make about who and where you work matter, she says.

"Surround yourself with people who want you to succeed," she says. This career revolves around the client, whose unique needs can differ with each transaction. As an agent, it's crucial to recognize and adapt to both client and industry demands. She excels in challenging situations and genuinely thrives when confronted with obstacles. She starts each day with persistence, optimism and enthusiasm.

Neuman is passionate about being part of the solution to the area's homeless crisis.

"This crisis is near and dear to my heart," she says. "Mental illness and self-medication for these people can be overlooked as just drug and alcohol addiction when the problems are much deeper than the eye can see."

Neuman has achieved numerous awards throughout her career and has been acknowledged as one of the Top 5 Realtors in the county. These accomplishments are made possible by the continued support of her clients and their ongoing referrals. She is sincerely thankful!



Ramona Thomas
Ramona's Children's Books

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Author Ramona Thomas, growing up, thought the color brown was viewed as less desirable. She wondered if other children thought the same way.

"My journey to becoming a children's book author began with a personal realization. Growing up brown in America, I noticed how the color brown, despite its natural beauty, often carries negative connotations in the English language," said Thomas, who has been a self-published author since 2011.

"This observation resonated deeply when I learned about the impactful 'doll test' conducted by Dr. and Mrs. Clark in the 1940s. This landmark study demonstrated how children of color can internalize negative self-perceptions," Thomas said. "I even recalled a time when, as a child, I thought brown eggs were somehow less desirable than white eggs. That seemingly small memory sparked a big question: Were other children still grappling with similar subconscious biases?"

She said "this question fueled my desire to create a positive narrative around the color brown. I wanted to write a story that would empower children, especially those with brown eyes, skin and hair, to celebrate their inherent worth and beauty."

"My first book, 'Grandma's Brown Cookies,' uses the relatable imagery of healthy, organic brown foods to subtly teach children that brown can be synonymous with good, strong and beautiful. It was designed to build self-esteem, counter feelings of inferiority, and even subtly encourage healthier food choices."

"The positive response to 'Grandma's Brown Cookies' validated my belief that this message was needed. It gave me the confidence to write more educational children's books and ultimately inspired me to establish Ramona's Children's Books."

Thomas said the mission is to create stories that "empower children, promote self-love, and celebrate the beauty of diversity."

On a daily basis, Thomas said her goal is to prioritize her health and well-being.

"I achieve this by planning ahead, carefully selecting exercise classes at the gym, deciding whether a long walk or hike is in order, and consciously choosing healthy greens over less nutritious options. Why? Because as a mother, wife and new grandmother, my health is paramount. I want to be there for my family, not just now, but for years to come. I also believe that leading a healthy lifestyle sets a positive example for those around me. How I eat and how I move are things I can control and strive for daily."

Longer term, she said her "goals center around volunteerism and giving back to my community. I currently serve on the executive board of the Solano County Library Foundation, an organization I'm deeply passionate about."

"We work tirelessly to increase literacy rates in Solano County, a cause I believe in wholeheartedly. I also tutor an adult learner who is working to improve her English speaking and writing skills. My personal motto is, 'I aspire to inspire!' I truly believe that education is like preventative medicine – the earlier you receive it, the better your chances are for a fulfilling life," Thomas said.



Diana Troche
Programs director, Solano Family & Children's Services

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Diana Troche was a teenage mother with two children when she went to work for the Solano Family & Children's Services.

Thirty-eight years later, she is in her fourth year as programs director.

"While it was fate that brought me to SFCS, it has been my own life experiences and my two greatest strengths – my passion for helping others and my innate ability (and) desire to solve problems – that has kept me here for over 38 years," Troche said.

"I was raised in the inner-city limits of Chicago, in very underserved neighborhoods. My mom had to take advantage of public assistance to survive. Although I was the youngest of nine children, I had to take on a leading role at a very young age, serving as my mom's interpreter, as she only spoke Spanish," she added. "I had my first child at the age of 16, so college was not an immediate option for me. Fortunately, my first executive director at SFCS allowed me to take college courses during work hours (I also went at night), and the agency paid for my first set of books because they were more expensive than tuition."

She said, "I love my job; I love the people I work with; I learn something new almost every day; there isn't a day where I dread coming to work, not even audit days."

Even when she isn't working, Troche said, she still does.

"Even when I play, I'm still working. On vacations, I'm the planner (and) organizer, making sure everyone is entertained, fed and accounted for. On weekends, I'm making sure my mom gets what she needs. During tax season, I volunteer at a (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) site, helping low-income and senior citizens file their tax returns at no cost to them. I just can't help myself," Troche said.

She carries that same attitude into her work. "I feel a great sense of responsibility to our clients (families and child care providers), our employees, and our funders. The child care industry has many facets, and it has a huge impact on our children and our economy. Being able to help thousands of parents on a daily basis take their children to safe, healthy, nurturing child care homes/facilities while they work, go to school, or look for work, is fulfilling beyond measure," Troche said.

"Ensuring that our subsidized child care providers are paid for their services is a vital daily goal, as well as ensuring that all providers in Solano have the necessary resources/training they need. Being able to help families in our community find the basic resources they need is also extremely gratifying. The need absolutely outweighs the resources, but we work every day to bridge that gap."

She added, "My years of dedication to SFCS has always been driven by my desire to be part of a great

team that raises the floor for our financially disadvantaged clients and keeping the programs that support their path to success going strong."

Troche expects to be retired in 15 years, and while she plans to do some traveling to see "this wonderful world we live in," she also knows she will still be filling out tax forms and volunteering in other areas of the community.

Her best advice those who follow her into the field, take care of yourself, too.

"As with any human services position, the realization that we cannot meet the needs of every community member hits you almost immediately. When you see this day in and day out, it is important to be mindful of potential burnout and find ways to mitigate it. As people who love to help others, we oftentimes forget to take care of ourselves. Make it a point not to forget that," she said.

Troche said what she would like to be known for is her "thoughtful process when it comes to making decisions that affect the employees of SFCS, as well as our clients. I highly regard our employees, as we cannot provide our great services without them. Every single one of them plays a vital role in what we do on a daily basis, whether they are client-facing or they work behind the scenes. Our child care providers (whether they are a licensed facility or a family member, friend, or neighbor) are the backbone of our agency. Without them, we would not be in business."

The builds into a legacy in which she has helped shape Solano Family & Children's Services "into the solid nonprofit that it has been and will continue to be, having served tens of thousands of families and children, creating a thriving community."

