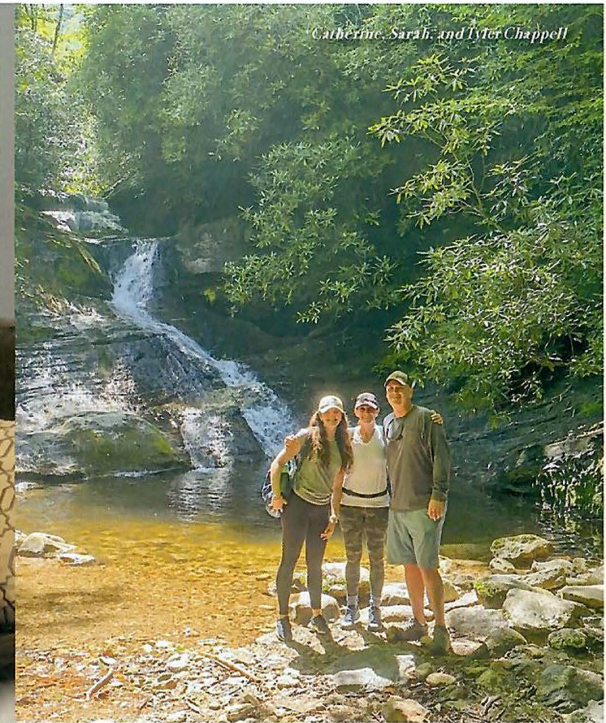


Families as Clients

Due to the Covid Shutdown, The Chappells have found a whole new life in the mountains, far from the stresses of life in urban areas.



Kathy Balistreri and Tyler Chappell



Catherine, Sarah, and Tyler Chappell

As Covid-19 finally, finally, slips into the rear-view mirror, we'd do well to reflect upon the many lessons that it imparted.

Arguably, the most important was the relevance of family. We were reminded of how precious those deep connections were as we navigated the challenges of quarantine and the trip-wire sensitivities we developed to random coughs or sudden listlessness.

And now, three years after the entire world shut down, those familial ties have led to a seismic shift in the demographic of the Plateau's communities. Families from across the country are rushing to establish homes and set up lives in towns that have in the past drawn wealthy retirees and those looking to escape the cares of the world.

"The emergence of younger families as buyers has totally changed the market," says Kathy Balistreri, whose Balistreri Real Estate is one of the top producers in Toxaway, Sapphire, and Cashiers.

Balistreri cites the case of Sarah and Tyler Chappell of Lighthouse Point, Florida – clients who've become friends after she found a getaway home for them in Lake Toxaway.

"During the Fall of 2020, after many months of school and work on Zoom, several family illnesses, a death of the patriarch of the

family (all while trying to run a small business), we decided we wanted to escape South Florida for a few weeks," says Sarah.

"In November of 2020 we rented a cabin in Sapphire. We loaded up the truck with the two dogs and our teenage daughter to drive the 12 hours to our Covid escape. We immediately fell in love with the area and spent our time hiking and exploring the entire surrounding neighborhoods. The natural beauty and peacefulness of the area was the biggest selling point.

"On a trip down Highway 64, we saw the Balistreri Real Estate sign. It was truly a moment of divine intervention! The Balistreri family is the local real estate company in our area in South Florida and Kathy's niece helped us buy our home in Lighthouse Point. (Editor's Note: See, it's all about family!) I texted her and asked who in your family is in this remote place in the mountains – she immediately texted me Kathy's number and I called her. At that time there was nothing on the market that met our needs.

"In January 2021, the phone rang and it was Kathy. She had 'the home' for us. This 'just-listed' property checked all of the boxes – it had the woods, the space, the views and the proximity to the Lake Toxaway Country Club and Panthertown. We bought it sight-unseen and were thrilled when we got to see it.

"The summer of 2022 was the first summer we were able

to spend a few months here and work remotely. On the 12-hour drive north to the mountains, our daughter cried and was upset that she wouldn't have any friends or have any fun – that she would be trapped with her parents in the woods all summer. It only took a few weeks and she connected with some wonderful teens in the neighborhood. She had such an amazing summer that on the 12-hour ride back to Florida in August she cried because she didn't want to leave.

"We hope one day to be able to spend a majority of the year in the mountains.

"The story of the Chappells would have been unusual a few years ago," says Balistreri. "Now we're seeing more and more young families discovering all that this Plateau portion of the mountains has to offer."

by Luke Osteen



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