



Team Spirit

Husband and wife real estate agents Ron and Stephanie Evans want to take you over the threshold

by [Harry Kollatz Jr.](#)
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The following is an online extra from our June Insider's Guide to Real Estate issue, heading to newsstands soon.

Ron and Stephanie Evans sit as poised silhouettes before a picture window filled by the brilliant afternoon light. They bend over a small curved-leg table and speak in hushed and respectful tones.

“We don’t have to decide this today,” counsels Stephanie to her weary client, the daughter of aged parents who are selling the house on Charnwood Road in the West End. The experience is fraught for everyone. Upstairs, workmen grind away on tacks exposed by carpet removal, and the team from Brilliant Transitions, a senior moving company, sorts and categorizes left-behind materials for a sale. The large, elegant living room features hardwood floors, Georgian Revival paneling and a handsome fireplace containing two huge logs that the client says haven’t moved since 1967.

This is but one sensitive discussion the Evanses engage in today. The **husband-and-wife duo** are agents with Long & Foster’s Grove Avenue office. Last year, they sold close to \$16 million in real estate spread across 36 houses, putting them in the top 1 percent of Richmond real estate agents. These small but important talks are how they’ve built their business.

“Zillow isn’t going to replace real estate agents,” Stephanie says. “It can’t. Because this is a people business that involves housing.”

Travels With Ron and Stephanie

Ron drives a Chevy Tahoe that requires a foot step and a handhold for a backseat passenger to enter. The vehicle allows comfort for ferrying clients — and for carrying yard signs in the back.

Stephanie lists targets. “We need to put up ‘Under Contract’ signs for Westmoreland and Paris Ridge,” she says. “We’ll do Paris Ridge, go to Charnwood; we may have to split up at that point, so we can measure Ralston and those things.”

Ron is superstitious about “Under Contract” signs. When selling a house, the hurdles are three: getting it under contract, inspections that can derail everything and appraisals.

“Inventory low, prices going up,” Ron chants.

Stephanie fills in, “For those buyers getting mortgages, banks don’t want to loan on a house that they think is inflated in price.” Which is also why the Evanses work with local banks and appraisers who know the lay of the land.

Here they are, Ron and Stephanie aboard the Tahoe, gliding down Westmoreland on a perfect Richmond spring day when every blossoming tree and gorgeous flower in the Near West End yearns for fructification. This is a great day to buy a house in Richmond, V-A.

Stephanie makes a short video of Ron sliding the possibly cursed “Under Contract” sign in front of a solid brick house with dormers set up like a cat’s eager ears hearing the whispered potential of its purchase. They will post it to their social media accounts.

Stephanie’s cheery narration, “Another pretty home under contract. The Richmond spring market is hopping! Call us if you have any questions, *EvansRVAHomes.com*.”

Back in the Tahoe, Stephanie tells Ron his voicemail is full. “Should I delete at least one or two?” he asks. This from a man who has more than 10,000 emails in his inbox.

Besides the genuine joy for their chosen profession, there is also financial motivation. Team Evans is an entrepreneurial operation on which all expenses fall. They take occasional breaks, such as during the Fourth of July. There is a 21-foot Sea Hunt berthed in Charles City County “that Ron Evans take meticulous care of,” Stephanie says. Ron enjoys going to music festivals and hunting.

Now, though, the Tahoe idles before a 4,000-square-foot house in Paris Ridge. The residence gets a blue “For Sale” sign because this is a Christie’s luxury properties listing that starts at \$750,000. The designation gives it greater exposure, including advertisements in the New York Times and the Washington Post. Stephanie slides in the plaque. Her sensible flats mash the grass. Ron videos the effusion. “The market’s great, guys. If you need some help, call us!”

“Bam!” Ron exclaims. “One take!”

Team Evans

Ron moved in 1980 with his parents — his father in sales, his mother a teacher’s aide — from Turnersville, New Jersey, to Midlothian. His mother loved to attend open houses, and he and his siblings, piled in the back of a Gran Torino station wagon, pleaded with her, “Not another house!” he recalls, laughing.

He attended Longwood College but did not graduate, eventually going back to VCU’s School of Business to earn a degree in Real Estate & Urban Land Development.

He joined what was then Bowers, Nelms and Fonville as an assistant and observed the techniques of successful agents. It looked fun — and lucrative.

In 1997, he became a licensed full-time residential agent and was recognized as Rookie of the Year. He shakes his head. “Hard to believe this is my 23rd year in the business,” he says. “It’s flown by.”

Stephanie is from Williamsburg, which gives her a wonderful though slightly smoothed out Upper Tidewater accent. A friend attending VCU encouraged Stephanie to come on up to *Ruhtch’mun*. She studied early childhood education at VCU from 1985 to 1989, but went to work as a legal assistant for McGuire Woods, then for BrownGreer.

She and Ron met through friends in 1992, and though they were dating others at the time, they soon became a couple and were married in 1994.

They have two children, Will and Sarah, both students at James Madison University. Around 2005, Stephanie started staging houses, amassing an arsenal of furniture. The pieces are stored in the walkup attic in their River Road Hills home and receive constant use.

“Most houses require some kind of sprucing and polishing to make them market-ready,” she says. “Deferred maintenance can pile up, especially where older people may have lived for a long while.”

As Ron’s business grew, it became a natural fit for Stephanie to join him. She was licensed as a real estate agent in 2017.

She sold her first property, a condo, while Ron was away at the Lockn’ music festival in Arrington. Her lack of experience caused her to take particular care in showing the house and examining it for flaws.

“Our contracts are pretty intense,” she says, “and without a lot of experience myself, I was thrown into the fire, and I figured it all out. ... My client had no idea it was my first contract.”

Since forming Team Evans two years ago, they’ve posted higher earnings than Ron did alone. While Ron brings 23 years of business relationships — with past clients, referrals and contractors who assist buyers and sellers before and after sales — Stephanie lends her staging and marketing expertise.

Both spend a lot of time listening to their clients. “We want to be sure they buy the house that’s right for them,” Stephanie says, then turns to Ron, adding, “ You spend a lot of time talking people out of them, too.”

When the couple went out together with clients on their inaugural run as Team Evans, Ron immediately understood the advantages of working together. Their clients, a couple, each had a person to speak with. Nobody felt left out.

Their many clients don’t allow the Evanses to conduct business together all of the time. They attend the first client meeting together, speaking along with a get-acquainted presentation on Stephanie’s laptop, then divide and conquer as necessary.

Morning Rituals

The Evanses’ typical day starts with a wake-up call from Dixon, a red fox Lab, or from Berkeley, described by Stephanie as “a very bad sweet white Lab.” Stephanie’s often up first, around 6

a.m., and the two begin the day with pods of Starbucks Pikes Peak Medium Roast. Then, it's off to the hot sheets (MLS descriptions); the emails and texts from clients, colleagues and contractors; and organizing their to-do list in order of importance, using colors and symbols. "Yellers are sellers, bluers are buyers," Stephanie explains.

For the past few months their office work has been conducted at their well-tended triplex off River Road as their Long & Foster offices undergo extensive remodeling and expansion. How busy they've been is indicated by the pictures on their business cards: Ron's is a few years old ("I haven't aged," he says, laughing), and Stephanie is Photoshopped in next to him.

They meet with a client in a conference room where a wall is adorned with a blazing sunset image of the iconic concrete railroad bridge arching across the James River by Virginia real estate photographer Rene Scott.

The Evanses hire Scott to take all of their listing photos. They and Scott share them on Facebook, tagging each other to enhance visibility. Social media is a big part of the business, and it also affects how they communicate with clients. The Evanses deal with clients using everything from flip phones to those who primarily text. This morning, one of the first tasks is to speak with the client preparing her parents' Charnwood house for sale.

Stephanie greets her, "Hi, good morning!" using her best big-smile voice. "This is Stephanie Evans. We'll be over shortly, 30 to 40 minutes."

'Ready to Present Itself'

Back at the Charnwood house, the trio move on to choosing paint colors, examining shades of grey on a sample strip. After carefully debating the merits of various hues with the client — Alaskan Sky, Wickham Gray, Edgecomb Gray and what is more beige than grey — "Greige," says Stephanie, searching for a proper description — their conference concludes without a definitive paint choice. But other details are sorted, and the house is scheduled to hit the market in mid-May. A friend of a neighbor has already expressed interest, and the Evanses are going to make contact and determine if they are serious.

They end the meeting with smiles. Stephanie embraces the client, announcing, "I'm a hugger." She commends the client on how steady she's been.

"Oh, I'm rattled," the client admits. "But we'll get it done. The house is ready to present itself to another family to love it."

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