

►► top producer

Written by Heather Pluard
Photography by Lucent Creations

Collette McDonald

PAYING IT FORWARD



“Failure is the path to success,” but only for the persistent, and REALTOR® Collette McDonald isn’t one to give up! After the owners of her former brokerage went bankrupt, she lost \$60,000 in commission but learned a valuable lesson: Successful agents need to understand and engage in the business of brokerage models. Today, with a career volume of \$375,000,000, Collette is paying it forward and pulling up the next generation of top producers.

“I’ve had a lot of success,” Collette says. “Now it’s about significance. I’m focused on elevating our collective brand as REALTORS®. Our value to the public will resonate if we work together to do everything we can for our clients while treating each other with respect as ethical, professional, and productive agents.”

Collette grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and attended the University of Wisconsin for an undergraduate degree in Radio/TV/Film and Speech. Then she earned a Master’s Degree in Marketing from Johns Hopkins. “I was planning on becoming a TV reporter but discovered they made pennies and exiled you into the most remote markets, so I decided to go into business,” Collette says. “I went into technology and was an executive with a company out of California that delivered high-speed internet over cable lines, and I traveled three weeks out of the month.”

Then 9/11 hit the same day Collette dropped her son off at daycare for the first time. That terrible event

made Collette long for a career where she could spend more time with her family while helping people in an impactful way. Her dad was a broker, and he recommended real estate. So, in 2002, Collette obtained her license and launched her career at Coldwell Banker under the gran dame of Atlanta Real Estate, Nancy Carl.

“Nancy was a fantastic broker and had the best reputation for running her office like a business,” Collette says. “When she left, I joined RE/MAX Greater Atlanta, which was the biggest Remax office in Atlanta at the time. My new broker, Lynn Lecraw, was amazing, and I was very happy there until the owners of that franchise went bankrupt. When a broker



Photo by Anne McGrath

producer for her family, Collette also appreciates eXp Realty's generous compensation model. "When my marriage ended ten years ago, I had two boys to raise and support on my own," she says. "Thankfully, real estate allowed me to provide, but it was not easy. My boys know what it means to work and sacrifice, and I'm very proud of the men they are becoming because of the struggles we endured together. I've built back what I lost 1000x over financially, and my boys grew up with love, safety, and security."

They also watched their mom rise to the top of the market and win numerous awards, starting with Rookie of the Year Coldwell Banker in 2003. Collette earned Remax Chairman's Club in 2013, 2014, 2016, Remax Platinum Club 2011, and Remax Titan Club Team 2015. In addition, she won the Atlanta Board of REALTORS® Phoenix Award; Multi-Million Dollar Sales Club Life Member in 2014, Atlanta Board of REALTORS® Top 10 Team Volume and Units Category 2019, and Atlanta Board of REALTORS® Top 5% Producer Volume and Units Category 2020, 2021. Collette was also the Official REALTOR® of the Atlanta Falcons Football Franchise 2013-2016. Now she's continuing her record of success at EXP Realty, earning their ICON Agent Award in 2019, 2020, and 2021.



“ALIGN YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT AGENT WHO CAN SET YOU UP FOR SUCCESS IN YOUR FUTURE. THEN, BE PERSISTENT!”

goes bankrupt, your commissions are not yours and are subject to the court's distribution. The agents lost millions! It was a difficult time. After that debacle, I went to Remax Around Atlanta and loved it. I never thought I would leave, but then a new model was presented to me...eXp Realty. Yes, eXp Realty!"

Calling it the best business decision of her real estate career, Collette joined eXp Realty in 2019. Then she grew a

team of over 140 agents worldwide. They sold more than \$75,000,000 last year, with Collette individually selling \$28-million. "eXp Realty has not only made me a kinder agent but a better person," she says. "We are all agent owners, so the collaboration is mind-blowing. Agents throughout the world share the secrets of their success with everyone because we are no longer competition. My only regret is that I didn't come the year before when I was first introduced to eXp Realty.

"Running a business that is all about others," she says. "And I love being able to impact so many people positively. I'm a big silly person who loves to make others laugh, but I also want 'Urgency = Abundance' engraved on my tombstone! So I tell my agents to be aggressive and learn everything they can about contracts and inspections so they can drop knowledge bombs on their SOI and establish credibility. You can't fake it in this business."

With a deep desire to give back to the community, Collette helped start the City of Brookhaven and now serves on the Brookhaven Police Scholarship Foundation Board. In addition, she sponsors local schools, girl/boy scouts, sports teams, and charities. But Collette's favorite thing to do is spend time with her family, including her partner, Thomas Eldridge, and their four sons, Declan McDonald (20), Pierce McDonald (18), Barrett

Eldridge (18), and Coleman Eldridge (14). The family loves to ski in Colorado in the winter and vacation at the beach in the summer. They also enjoy attending the boys' high school sporting events.

"Success is when you don't have to work because your money is working for you, and you can enjoy security for yourself and those you love," Collette says. "To do that, look for

hands-on instruction, learn from the best, and make yourself valuable to clients. Also, focus on building your brand, not your broker's. Remember that the top 20% of agents are doing the bulk of the business, and we will eventually retire. We can't sell our book of business, but we can give it away, so align yourself with the right agent who can set you up for success in your future. Then, be persistent!"