Cover/Feature photography by Mark De Hanes

MEET MICHELLE PAIS!

AN INSPIRATIONAL CLIMB!

> Communication, transparency and honesty is what we live by!

Your Name: Michelle Pais
Your Position: CEO
Company Name: Signature Realty NJ and Michelle Pais Group
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Business Address: 233 North Ave. E., Westfield, NJ 07090
Industry: Real Estate Brokerage

Tell us about your family; where did you grow up? Both my parents are extremely hard working and were both born in Portugal. They raised me to be independent and to have a strong work ethic, and always instilled in me the value of having a good education. Having been raised in Portugal during my adolescence allowed me to have a worldly view. To this day, the morals, values and ethics that my family instilled in me show up in my personal life and in my business.

And now you are married; how do you juggle family and business? Yes, we just celebrated our first year anniversary. I love being married! I am blessed to have found my equal who is extremely supportive and who shares a similar passion for his career as well. I think it's important to have a healthy work/life balance.

What prompted you to start your own business? How long have you been in business? Thanks to my parents who always taught me to pursue my dreams and ambitions, after college I decided to look for a career that rewarded me for the effort that I put out versus just a regular job. After learning about real estate, I applied for a secretarial position and learned every aspect of the real estate transaction. I started at the bottom but quickly realized that my true passion was in working with homeowners. So, while attending college and while working a full-time job as a secretary for a local real estate office, I signed up for evening real estate classes. While sitting in real estate school I quickly realized that real estate was my passion. For years I learned the ropes of every type of real estate transaction from different managers and agents. I noticed that most real estate agents weren't marketers, they were just salespeople. The organizations I found myself in didn't want to innovate, so in the midst of the financial crisis, Signature Realty NJ was born. Fast forward to today – we just celebrated our eighth year anniversary at Signature Realty NJ which employs over 100 agents and has facilitated over $200,000,000 in real estate transactions per year. We are currently the number-one independently owed real estate brokerage in all of northern and central Jersey. What sets us apart goes back to my roots: diligence, treating people right, empathy, and innovative marketing strategies. We don't think of ourselves as a real estate brokerage, we are a marketing company that specializes in real estate with a concierge-like service.

What challenges did you overcome? It is the same challenge that I have been overcoming for the last 20 years. It is the same challenge that everyone of us face every day. It is the story we tell ourselves. It is our mindset and what we chose to focus on every day.

How can business owners learn from your path and be inspired? Fear is the number-one factor that keeps people from reaching their max potential. With that being said, my advice to all business owners is to invest in your business and not allow fear to get in the way. You need to put yourself/ your product out there. Find your niche or your unique selling proposition. What makes you different? Then market to your ideal client. Investing in GREAT people and leveraging technology is key. Once you have built a solid foundation, you multiply.

How many people does the company employ? We employ 110 people.

Tell us about your team? What is your goal? I am very blessed to have the most amazing team. There is a saying: "Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people." I spent years finding the "right" talent and each member of my team adds value in different ways. They are all very unique but all share a similar passion for real estate. Our goal is not be the largest brokerage but to be the best!

What is unique about your company; what sets you apart from the rest? We are very different from the "traditional" brokerage firm. Think of us more as a full-service marketing/media firm who specializes in real estate while offering a concierge-like service to every client. Sellers are blown away when we show them exactly what we do to market their property for sale, which often results in record-breaking numbers. I hire the best-in-class talent when it comes to marketing because I believe that in order to generate a sale for top dollar, it is imperative that we reach as many potential buyers as possible and we know exactly how to do this. Most realtors aren't marketers, and in today's real estate world, homes are being sold online. Sellers are leaving money on the table if their agent isn't exposing their home to the masses. And I am not talking about a newspaper ad. The traditional way of selling real estate is a thing of the past. Buyers are finding homes on social media for example, Digital marketing, cinematic-type video and interactive virtual walkthroughs are a MUST! And the list goes on... As innovative and as tech-savvy as we are, this doesn't replace the human element. This is where the concierge-like service comes in. One of our biggest strengths is keeping in constant contact with our clients. We want our clients to know exactly what we are doing and providing immediate feedback after every buyer visit is just as important to us as is to the client. Communication, transparency and honesty is what we live by. We want all our clients to be raving fans.

Sherry Cronin, executive director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation, welcomes Michelle Pais, owner of Signature Realty NJ.

Tell us more about your accomplishments. How long have you been in the business and any recent accolades? I have been in the real estate business for 17 years now. We sell hundreds of homes per year, and I currently rank number one in all Union County for total sales volume and units. I also rank number one in the Garden State Multiple listing system for total units. I have been recently named "one of the most powerful people in NJ real estate" and a 40-under-40 award-winner by NJBIZ, acknowledged as a "Leading Woman Entrepreneur and Business Owner" by New Jersey's State Senator and rank within the top 1 percent of all agents nationwide. My firm, Signature Realty NJ, is also the number-one independently owned/boutique brokerage in all of northern and central Jersey, and we recently received the "TOP 50" award by NJBIZ for being one of the fastest-growing companies in 2018.

What interested you in opening an office in Westfield? We are selling so many homes in Westfield that the natural progression was to open a physical location where our clients can visit. Our recently remodeled, state-of-the-art facility is conveniently located on the corner of North Avenue and Elmer, across from Xocolatz restaurant and the Westfield Diner.

What do you think of the town and the current market? I love Westfield! What is there not to love? The fabulous downtown, the great people, and the exquisite homes are what attracted me to this town. We have been very active in selling homes in Westfield, but the marketing is changing, so it is more important than ever to be very aggressive with marketing and for homeowners to be well-educated on pricing strategies.

What advice can you offer to the residents? You would want to have a savvy realtor walk through your home and educate you on what the highest return on investment is before renovating.

How do you give back? Are you a part of any charities? I like giving back to the community any chance I can, especially to schools, local charities and organizations. I am actively involved with 'Be the Change," a charitable organization that helps feed the homeless. This is something that is very dear to me. A portion of our proceeds from all our sales goes to feeding the homeless. We are actively planning a fund-raising event with the goal of feeding 5,000 homeless people through "Be the change NJ."

Mayor Shelley Brindle and Michelle Pais discuss the the opening of Signature Realty NJ's new office.

Shoreline East is a local, father/son team that has been in Westfield for more than 25 years.

As a homeowner with a growing family in Westfield, Owner Thomas Nastasi wants to make sure his neighbors get the best quality and reliability the community deserves.

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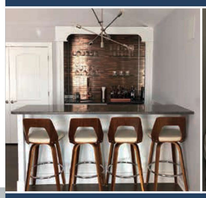

- Shoreline East Construction has been Westfield's go to contractor for additions and renovations for over 25 years.
- Tom Sr and Tom Jr bring years of experience, knowledge, and professionalism to each and every project.
- Personalized service and accessibility are what sets us apart.
- Each project is very important to us with the end goal being a solid referral from our client to everyone they know.
- Solid customer base of repeat clients due to trust and work ethic

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