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**ANTHONY  
PAYNE**

*AGAINST THE GRAIN*

▶ rising star!

# anthony

# PAYNE



## Against the Grain

By **Kylea Bitoka** • Photography by **Haus Photo Co.**

In Arizona's ruthless rental market, many renters were swept away in the rapids of unrestricted rent increases. Renters unable to afford a down payment had little hope of staying afloat. In this hot market, transactions with a high-dollar price tag promised a tangible reward. Those in real estate were faced with a question—were they willing to swim against the current of the market to advocate for those who could not?

Regardless of the industry, Anthony Payne has approached his career with the same mentality—people first. In his 21-year career in grocery store management, he often told his employees, "You are in the people business; we just happen to sell groceries." It holds true for Anthony in real estate, "The properties sell themselves; I am here to deliver a service. If you are listening, it will all come together."

The day Anthony's ex-coworker called with a dilemma; Anthony was listening. "A single-income family, their apartment complex had just raised the rent from \$980 a month to \$1,300. As long as they were renting, they would always be at the mercy of a landlord. Their five-year-old son had special needs and a move would mean a change in schools. I talked with my broker so I could assist them pro-bono." Anthony helped the family secure down payment assistance, but an even bigger challenge lay ahead. "We needed to find a house in the same area, so their son could still have access to the care he needed. With down payment assistance, it would be hard to get our offer considered in a competitive market."

When the right house popped up on the market, Anthony did not waste time. "The listing had only been on the market for a few hours when I called the seller's agent," Anthony explained the situation. "The seller's REALTOR® was a well-respected agent with a good heart. She took the offer to her clients." The seller accepted the offer; it was a life-changing moment for the family. "Now they are creating their own equity, and they can provide stability for their son." For Anthony, the reward was greater than any commission check.

At first glance, Anthony may not appear to be a REALTOR® with a big heart. But all of those tattoos are actually Anthony wearing his heart on his sleeve. The memories and the people that mean the most to him, he carries with him every day. "My tattoos are like a security blanket or superhero outfit, a visible reminder that gives me strength and motivation."

His ribs bear a picture of his mother. "My mom was a single mom and we never owned a house. She worked hard and sacrificed a lot to afford a higher rent, so we could live in a good area. There were times when we lived in a one-bedroom apartment. She gave me the bedroom and slept on the couch."

"Even with my mom working two jobs, we still needed government assistance. We moved around a lot, so I never really had a set group of friends." From his grandparents, uncles, and mom, Anthony learned kindness and respect as well as the art of cooking. "We are Italian, so I grew up in the kitchen. My grandfather immigrated to New York from Sicily. Every Sunday, he made focaccia bread after church. We made handmade pasta and my grandfather cured his own olives." Anthony smiles as he shares, "My grandfather got permission to collect olives from the trees around the University of Arizona campus. He would go up into the tree and shake the olives down. I would collect the olives in a bag." The good memories continue as Anthony shares about his uncle taking him to sporting events. "When I was 12 years old, my uncle took me to a game at Dodgers stadium. It meant the world to me; I'll never forget it."

Anthony started in the grocery business as a bagger and worked his way up from there. As a store manager, his career would move him to different states. "Working in a grocery store,

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there are a lot of opportunities for problem-solving and interactions with different walks of life, whether that's with employees or customers. The experience cultured me and opened my mind to a variety of perspectives."

Anthony moved back to Tucson to be closer to his mom. "My mom passed away a year after I moved here. I decided to do a portrait of her on my ribs." In the '70s, Anthony's mom had done some modeling. "She had saved the dress from one of her modeling shoots. The dress had a cool pattern on it, and I wanted it to be the focal point of the tattoo." Anthony took the dress and the photograph to a tattoo artist in Albuquerque who helped him pay tribute to his mom.

Six years ago, Anthony's son Lincoln Justus was born. "In the last five years, I've learned you can always make more money but you can't make more time—how you spend your time matters. I've had to ask myself, 'What do I want to be known for?'"

Across his hands, Anthony wears his son's name with burning hearts. "It's a big commitment to get one below the cuff line. However, I realized that if someone won't work with me because of it, then it would be a bad business transaction in general. You should hire me because of my heart, work ethic, knowledge, and experience."

From his first tattoo at 17 to the one he got two weeks ago; each image of ink tells a story. Anthony admits he's slowing down because he is running out of room. Tattoo space may be limited, but his legacy continues in his son and his community. "I'm teaching my son to treat everybody with respect and kindness. Before I was a REALTOR®, I was awarded a Ben's Bell. It was an incredible experience. Now, I volunteer with Ben's Bells. I believe that acts of kindness can help cure a lot of what's happening in the world." Anthony also volunteers with the Tucson Association

of REALTORS®. As Anthony reflects on his real estate journey, he's grateful to his mentor, Calvin Case. "I was on his team before I went solo. He is the only one who will force you off the team when the time is right. He is very people-focused and he made me the agent I am today."

When Anthony left the corporate world in 2019 to become a full-time REALTOR®, it was a huge risk; but Anthony has never had a problem going against the grain. He has thrived in the freedom that real estate offers, "There is no concrete way to do real estate. Each agent gets to be professional in their own way." Due to his bad experiences as a real estate client, Anthony built his real estate career on a commitment to providing each client the quality experience they deserve.

During COVID-19, Anthony and Lincoln had the opportunity to team up. "He couldn't go to daycare because of the closures. He shadowed me at work and got a crash course in real estate. I've dubbed Lincoln my property assistant. He even has a name tag! We've learned a lot from each other in the last couple of years."

In fact, the biggest factor in Anthony's success may be what he's learned from his son, "When you have children, it allows you to use a part of your heart that you never knew you had. I have more understanding. Lincoln has taught me how to slow down and listen."



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