

Toni Gibbons finds her niche in real estate law

Toni Gibbons, a Raleigh native, earned a bachelor's degree in political science from N.C. State University with the full intention of entering the legal field. "I wasn't sure if that meant as an attorney or a paralegal, so I decided to enroll in the Meredith College paralegal program, attending classes in the evenings and working as a paralegal during the day," she said.

She landed her first job as a real estate paralegal in June 2001 at a small firm in Raleigh where she was so inexperienced that she didn't know what a mortgage was. She quickly found her way and learned to love the practical application. She realized that by learning more about real estate, her newfound knowledge would help her achieve her own real estate goals.

Today she is a paralegal with Ragsdale Liggett in Raleigh.

What do you love most about your job? What are the challenges?

I love playing quarterback. As a real estate paralegal, I guide buyers, sellers, and agents to the finish line while also working closely with banks to meet deadlines for submitting documents. All parties in a real estate transaction are working to accomplish the same goal—closing. As a paralegal, I encourage clients to remember that by doing their part, everyone wins. Every real estate closing file has a story. Whether it's a first-time homebuyer, a savvy investor, a seller closing a door to a chapter in their life, or families passing property to their heirs, real estate is full of emotion, and we learn to take the good with the bad. While title work can be a puzzle sometimes, I never knew how much information one can learn about others from a title search.

COVID presented the greatest challenges I've ever faced in my career. Not only did interest rates plummet, causing large numbers of homeowners to choose to refinance and make new purchases, but our firm closed loans outside in our parking lot. The logistics of outside closings took some time to work out. The strong bond already established between

paralegals and attorneys in my department at Ragsdale Liggett became unbreakable. We relied on each other to handle the record-breaking number of closings. We even made a sign, calling ourselves the R.L. Residential Village.

You have been described as hardworking and willing to take on additional duties and responsibilities at your firm. What inspires you to go the extra mile?

I appreciate being described as hard working and willing to take on additional duties. I know my performance has a direct impact on our clients achieving their financial and real estate goals.

What motivates you to get up and go to work each morning?

Being an example for my kids motivates everything I do, from working hard at the office to staying organized at home. I am always aware that my kids are watching and learning, so I want to be the best example possible for them.

What is your favorite activity outside of work?

Outside of work, I've taken up an interest in gardening. My favorite season is spring because I love when everything outside comes to life, from the gorgeous colors of the flowers to the green grass and trees. I love the warm weather and evening showers. The birds begin nesting and bring new life to the earth. I enjoy spending time with my family too. My son Nathan is 12 and is in the 6th grade, and my daughter Lacy is 6 and is in kindergarten. Nathan enjoys obstacle course readiness and participates in Ninja Warrior competitions. Lacy enjoys gardening with me and has taken an interest in both basketball and cheerleading. My husband Matt is a Raleigh native. He travels regionally, working as a sales manager for a carpet manufacturer and hard surface distributor. Our family has two cats named Judy and Leo. They bring so much joy to our lives.



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Who is your favorite character in a book or movie and why?

My favorite movie is "The Pursuit of Happyness." Will Smith's character, Chris Gardner, works hard, keeping his son's best interest as his "why" at all times. Against all odds, he strives for the top. He sacrifices and never gives up, even when he continually meets dead ends. His story is an inspiration.

What is the first thing you do when you get home from work (or log off if you work at home)?

Every day when I get home, I change into comfy clothes and talk with my kids about their day. We discuss all the ups and downs. My favorite question to ask them is "did anything exciting happen today?"