



Blossom Homes can create homes for any budget whether its \$200,000 or \$1 million.

Building a Community

Six local builders are contributing a home to this year's Homearama at Avery Walden in Strongsville.

by Tori Woods

BLOSSOM HOMES LLC

Brian Bickerton and Tony Kucia are both from the Cleveland area, but they went their separate ways for college. They came back together, working for various national building companies, and about four years ago began dreaming up what would become Blossom Homes. In February 2006, their vision became a reality with three main objectives: custom building on lots, having a hand in the Cleveland in-fill and redevelopment plan and focusing on small subdivision work.

"We want to keep it personal. Our number one emphasis through the construction process is relationships and trust," Bickerton says. "We're not just building a home, we're building a relationship."

The Willoughby-based builders build 25 to 35 homes each year, and they think this is the perfect number for them to maintain a close involvement with their clients' individual projects and needs.

"In the custom market, you have to have that intimate contact to ensure that we're delivering the product, and meeting or exceeding all of that customer's expectations," Bickerton says. "We want to ensure that we're developing, creating, designing and ultimately delivering the dream home that buyer has in mind."

Blossom Homes has developed an eight-staged plan that they use to ensure every home is their buyer's dream home:

planning and development, pre-construction process, mechanical walk, pre-drywall orientation, pre-paint walk, homeowner pre-walk, homeowner orientation and homeowner closing. They walk buyers through every step of the process by almost-daily conversations and frequent meetings — keeping the homeowners informed and knowledgeable about their new home.

Blossom's houses — built in diverse areas such as Perry, Medina, Strongsville, Cleveland, Independence, Brecksville, Brooklyn Heights and Old Brooklyn — include general, foundation and no-leak warranties.

Their Homearama house is crafted in true French country style, with a stone-and-brick front. The house includes a two-story foyer and two-story great room as well as barrel ceilings in the master bedroom and bathroom. It also features trademarks from Blossom Homes, such as unique painted trim and elegant columns and arches.

Creating custom homes for any budget from \$200,000 to \$1 million, Blossom Homes is committed to individual clients' needs, and they're excited to show what they can do at this year's Homearama.

"The excitement and the energy and the feedback from the public is going to be pretty strong," Bickerton says. "We think Avery Walden is a great subdivision that's going to be a great community."

LATINA & LATINA BUILDERS

Latina & Latina Builders was founded more than 75 years ago when they began building homes in Northeast Ohio, concentrating on Cleveland's East Side and moving to the Western suburbs. As the third generation forges ahead their mission was and continues to be to offer and create the best in residential home construction. The hard-work ethic, derived from their humble beginnings in the masonry and plastering trades, has been instilled in their family home building company. This family business was developed on the importance of family values and maintaining those values in their commitment to their business of making the American dream of home ownership a reality to their customers.

The late Tony Latina started with his grandfather in the family plastering business. Together, Tony and Lois (who grew up in the home building business as well) combined their inborn building talents and hands-on experience to create innovative and outstanding design concepts that have put them in the forefront of the building industry.

Lois M. Latina, as the first woman president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Cleveland, has "spoon fed" her children Anthony and Lanée the construction business. Anthony, while overseeing the company's diverse building communities, has served as a past president of the Homebuilders Association and is the current president of the State of Ohio Homebuilders Association. Lanée, who is the current president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Cleveland, manages to help the company design, decorate and sell the properties at the Legends at Sterling Lakes in Pepper Pike. The company's extended

family includes Joseph Balsamo, who has been with the company since 1984. His past experience and knowledge of the building industry has been a great contribution to the family team of Latina & Latina Builders.

To meet the needs of today's sophisticated and quality-conscious homebuyer, Latina & Latina Builders consistently stands at the building industry's forefront as an established trendsetter and innovator in providing award-winning style, quality, leadership and lasting value. Their hands-on approach and attention to detail are hallmarks of their company. With an illustrious portfolio of building-industry achievements, experience and recognition, Latina & Latina Builders is poised to assist you in achieving your ultimate dream of home ownership.

LEGACY HOMES OF MEDINA

John Sumodi started in the construction business when he was 15 years old. Working his way up through the ranks for important Cleveland companies, he learned the trade inside and out. But he always had a goal in mind — to start and own his own business by the time he was 30. The year of his 30th birthday, Legacy Homes of Medina was born — in the same month as his first baby.

"I decided to take a leap of faith and see what happens," Sumodi says.

Thirty houses happened in three years. His business has been continually growing, and he hopes to remain at the 20-home-a-year level, to ensure his custom-home clients get the attention they deserve.

"First, we sit down at dinner, it's [as if we're] friends going out to dinner. I ask them what they want in their

house. I say 'walk me through the house' before I even start designing," Sumodi says.

After consultation to ensure that the design of the home gives the clients precisely what they want, construction begins with Sumodi choreographing every step. Sumodi has a hand in every choice — down to the paint — offering clients his expertise in what works well in homes and helping clients stay within their budget.

"I'm involved in every little decision. I don't have a superintendent, there's nobody in between. Everybody has my home number and my cell phone number," Sumodi says.

Six to eight months later, Sumodi meets at the house to do a final walk through, with a bottle of champagne to celebrate the close. But that isn't the last clients see of him — he'll personally be back for the one-year walk through and any service work.

Sumodi-built homes throughout Medina County and in Berea, Strongsville, Cuyahoga Falls and Richfield all share the Legacy signatures, such as natural stone, custom cabinetry and custom-built mahogany front doors. These will be on display at Avery Walden, where Legacy's English Country-style house features a real stone-and-brick exterior, rustic knotty pine doors, wrought iron spindles, a paneled den with built-ins, a first-floor master suite, hand-scraped black walnut floors, Travertine kitchen floors and custom cabinets with granite countertops. It also boasts four fireplaces and a finished basement with wine-tast-

ing room and walk-in wine cellar, full sports bar with four plasma TVs and a 12-seat theater.

"Homearama will be a home run," Sumodi says.

PEPPERWOOD SIGNATURE HOMES

In 1983, Larry Tsonton founded Pepperwood Signature Homes in Strongsville to create single-family custom homes. In 1996 his son Chris took the leadership role, and now the company does custom remodeling and land development, in addition to custom home building in Strongsville, Brunswick, North Royalton, Broadview Heights and Medina.

Pepperwood has built more than 250 homes since its founding. They build custom and semi-custom homes, on clients' home sites or lots in Medina and Strongsville that Pepperwood owns. Pepperwood offers design services, or clients can choose from one of 500 plans. During the six- to 12-month course of construction, Chris Tsonton regularly meets with homeowners.

"My clients work with me directly throughout the whole process to make sure they get the home they expect," Tsonton says. "They see me throughout the whole process."

This accessibility is key to Tsonton's philosophy. He enjoys the journey of building a home with his clients, and he says it is essential that he be involved, along with his clients, every step of the way.

"They're going to have access to me. They're going to have my cell number and my e-mail. We turn their piece of



Pepperwood Signature Homes offers 500 different floor plans to its customers.

ground into a dream. It's a neat process; I love doing it," he says.

Pepperwood homes feature lots of natural building materials, like stone and brick. In addition to their beauty, these materials are user-friendly. "We try to give our clients the most maintenance-free home we can," Tsonton says. "People want to move in and not have to worry about a lot of maintenance, and we try to deliver that."

This year's Homearama house, a 3,800-square-foot Craftsman style, reflects the skill with which Pepperwood builds all of its homes. Featuring stone, brick and custom archways, the open floor plan includes a first-floor bedroom, hearth room off of the kitchen, dinette, deck, great room and entertainment room, all situated on a beautiful lot.

Larry Tsonton participated in the 1988 Homearama, so Chris is excited to do the same show almost 20 years later.

"It's a strong show; it can show the public the type of work we can do," Tsonton says. "They're going to see six different types of builders, six diverse plans, six attitudes about construction. For people to be able to walk through and see it all together, it's all first-class. Homearama is the quintessential home show."

RUGGIERO CUSTOM HOMES

Home construction and remodeling run in the Ruggiero family. When Mario Ruggiero was a teenager he came to the U.S. from Italy with his father, and the two brought the family stonemason skills with them

across the ocean. Mario eventually taught the business to his own son, Joe, and Joe says he started helping his dad with projects as soon as he could walk. It was only natural that this father-son team of Mario and Joe founded Ruggiero Custom Homes together in 1987, after decades of experience.

"We specialize in residential development — development work and residential building and custom homes," Joe Ruggiero says. "We custom design to fit the homeowners' needs."

The Middleburg Heights-based company builds extensively in the Middleburg Heights and Strongsville neighborhoods. They build around 10 custom homes a year, with each home taking about five to six months from start to finish. Instead of using a designer or an architect, the Ruggieros personally design their homes.

"We keep as much as we can in-house; we do a lot of hands-on work ourselves," Ruggiero says. Ruggiero Construction prides itself on how involved they are on every step of the home-building process. Their idea of customer service is giving their customers the best, every step of the journey. They take time day-in, day-out to ensure that the project is going smoothly and that their client is happy.

"We're hands-on with the customer, we build a friendship with them from day one. We're a small, family-owned business, and we treat every house like it's our own, as if we were going to move into it," he says.

For this year's Homearama, Ruggiero Custom Homes created a 2,600-square-foot Southern-style ranch home, with a walk-out finished basement totaling 4,100-square-

feet. The home features an open floor plan, 12-foot ceilings and arched doorways. Amenities include lots of natural products, such as natural stone counter tops. Higher-performance insulation and premium Anderson Windows are used to increase the energy efficiency of the home. Also featured in the home are many advanced technological components, such as audiovisual equipment, television systems, alarm systems and sensed lighting.

The Homearama house, which has already been sold, is indicative of Ruggiero Custom Homes' quality work. "Homearama is the opportunity for us to show the customer what we can do," Ruggiero says.

UNMISTAKABLY PREMIER HOMES

For more than 40 years, the Kovack family has helped families throughout Northeast Ohio realize their homeownership dreams, through land development, realty and new construction. Twenty years ago, Stephen Kovack continued the tradition by founding Unmistakably Premier Homes to build one-of-a-kind houses.

"Stephen Kovack has enriched the architectural landscape of Medina County with his range of award-winning home designs," says Michele Slaght, director of marketing for Unmistakably Premier. "When building a custom home, he sits down with our customers to discuss their vision of a dream home, and then creates the design from there."

Unmistakably Premier Homes was founded in 1987 when Kovack began building up to six custom homes a year on a grand scale. Since that time, Unmistakably Premier has evolved into a company that still builds an average of 10 custom homes annually, in addition to more than 150



Unmistakably Premier Home builds more than 150 homes a year.

production homes. Unmistakably Premier builds in 13 communities throughout Strongsville and Medina County, and they also build on customers' personal lots all over the region. Kovack's award-winning designs are available in a variety of price points to suit many different families — and all come equipped with impeccable customer service and great warranty programs.

The Wadsworth headquarters of Unmistakably Premier also features a 6,000-square-foot Design Center, showcasing full-sized displays where customers can choose everything for their home, including appliances, cabinets, countertops, flooring, lighting fixtures, plumbing fixtures, paint colors and more.

"The ultimate goal of the Design Center is to build a home, on the inside and the outside, that you're going to be happy with for years to come. There's no guesswork, because you can see everything," Slaght says.

This year's Homearama model is 4,600-square-foot and built in the French Country style. Located on a wooded cul-de-sac, this 4-bedroom boasts many architectural enhancements, including 10-foot ceilings, 8-foot doors, a two-story great room with coffered ceiling, a backlit ceiling with double-tray in the owners' suite, and a formal dining room with custom pillars and a Queen Anne ceiling. The owners' suite walks out onto the deck, and features a bathroom with a two-headed, tiled shower.

"The signature style of any Premier Home is the custom woodwork that goes into it," Slaght says. "The home in Avery Walden has custom woodwork throughout, and it's just magnificent."

Unmistakably Premier is excited for the opportunity to showcase all of its building talents in this year's Homearama.

"Homearama has not been done since 2001, and Cleveland is ready for a show like this," Slaght says. "People are interested in seeing spectacular homes." ■