

Outdoor Designers makes outdoor living beautiful and easy

BY STEPHANY WILLIAMS

The hurriedness of our lives is causing people to value the time they spend at home more than ever before. Our homes are more than the place we eat and sleep—they are our sanctuary. For many families, home is also regarded as the family recreation area. Once, enjoying our yards consisted of grilling outside and sharing a meal at the picnic table. Now, families are carrying their living space outside and bringing the backyard into their living space in more creative ways than ever before. John Bowes, owner of Outdoor Designers turns those ideas into a reality in people's lives every day.

Outdoor Designers specializes in creating custom sunrooms, screened porches, patio enclosures and decks as well as expanding the uses of an existing deck. John believes that outdoor living should be maintenance free and therefore uses only the finest maintenance free building materials. "Your deck is supposed to be a place for leisure. You should spend more time enjoying it than taking care of it," John says enthusiastically. Outdoor Designers uses only durable, low maintenance EverGrain decking by Epoch, which is composed of a balanced mix of plastic and wood fiber and is available in four colors.

Their expertise has given Outdoor Designers the notable distinction of being selected to create outdoor living spaces for Homerama for the last six years and to receive the Homerama Gold Award. The company is also the exclusive choice of 20 to 30 area builders to create outdoor living spaces for newly constructed homes. John has created a showroom on Battlefield Boulevard which displays the materials used for these spaces, such as the baked enamel aluminum materials used for porches, sunrooms and patios. There are photographs of many projects completed using these materials, which have a lifetime warranty. Although Outdoor Designers specializes in outdoor living spaces, it is also a comprehensive contracting company.

John has 20 years in the industry; however in 1998 he and his wife Beth decided to start their own business. "I wanted to have the authority to do things the

way I would have wanted them done," John explains. "I still feel that way, and we will always try to do a little bit better than all the others."

John supervises Outdoor Designers while Beth handles the administrative side of things. The business operates most days from 9 am until 8 pm year 'round. They operate with two work crews and two secretaries who staff the office. "Yeah," John says with a chuckle. "We're one of the few places you can call and actually talk to a human being most of the time."

Outdoor Designers is a family owned company, not a franchise and therefore when a customer deals with John they are dealing with the company. They depend almost totally on referrals for their business, so customer relations is a top priority to John. First time visits to homeowners are casual and low key, focusing primarily on educating the customer about the products available. Customers are provided several photograph albums of completed projects to help them envision what their finished product could look like; customers are also invited to visit any of these completed projects. Outdoor Designers takes pride in never pressuring a prospective customer to sign a contract immediately. "I guarantee our work and our products are the best value for the dollar-period," John says. "But I don't rush people."

John knows that honesty and reputation are Outdoor Designers' most valuable assets because he and his family are part of the community. John and Beth both graduated from local high schools and live in the Great Bridge area with six-year-old Andrew, three-year-old Hannah and six-month-old Olivia. The couple will be married eight years this month. They take pride in their company and work hard to make sure that Outdoor Designers is a good corporate neighbor.

As a result, Outdoor Designers has a rapidly growing clientele in Virginia Beach and Suffolk as well as Chesapeake. Many homeowners are remodeling their homes instead of buying higher priced ones, and are adding the accessories and trimmings that are so popular with designers of newer homes. John has seen a big increase in the market



This sunroom and deck with pergola over a hot tub area are among the many successful projects that Outdoor Designers has undertaken to help clients enjoy their outdoor spaces.



This beautiful sunroom brings the outdoors in, providing a light and airy space for this family's relaxation.



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