

# 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.*

for pergola shade covers in new homes as well as remodels. True to form, Outdoor Designers has a high quality maintenance free product that has the beauty of rough-cut cedar planks but the endurance and durability of aluminum. The lattices can provide combinations of 30% to 60% total shade and may be supported by specially designed columns and beautifully contoured beams for striking looks.

"The unique designs and combinations of the pergola products allow homeowners to be more creative with their outdoor living spaces than ever," John says.

Outdoor Designers is always on the cutting edge of exterior décor, and John is proud to utilize only local suppliers. In addition to its excellent workmanship and superior products, the Company's commitment to ethical business practices is demonstrated by its continued involvement with associations of distinction such as The Tidewater Builders Association, The Better Business Bureau, The National Association of Home Builders, The National Sunroom Association and others.

While John is prepared for Outdoor Designers to experience tremendous growth, he feels the size of the Company is just right for now. The desire to control the quality of the work is more important to him than becoming a gigantic business, and no matter how large the company becomes, John wants Outdoor Designers to continue to go the extra mile to ensure their customers friendly and responsive service.

"Our slogan is 'Building Our Reputation One Job At A Time', which means every job and every customer are equally important to us," John says sincerely. "I want it to stay that way."



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