“We pride ourselves on high integrity and honesty.”

DENNY YODER, OWNER AND PRESIDENT

Building on Values

The background of Yoder Homes’ owner heavily influences his work with clients and others.

BY JIM HARRIS

Yoder Homes has 34 employees and performs more than $8 million worth of custom home and renovation projects each year in Florida’s Gulf region, including Sarasota.

Denny Yoder learned the value of hard work at a young age. As the son of a contractor in Fort Wayne, Ind., he spent much of his youth and high school years performing various duties on home construction sites. “I did pretty much everything from pouring concrete to framing and finish carpentry,” he says.

Yoder’s desire to expand on his hands-on knowledge led him to attend college at the University of Arizona Tucson, which he chose to attend after working outside through one Indiana winter on a framing crew. After earning a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, he entered the workforce through GE’s manufacturing management program, which sent him on assignments in Virginia, New Mexico and Ohio.

After five years working for GE, Yoder returned to Fort Wayne and went into business with his father Dan building production starter and first move-up homes.

During Denny Yoder’s 17 years with the company, it grew to the point where it built 200 homes annually and cumulatively com-
In 2005, Yoder moved to Florida to allow his daughter, a tennis player, to further pursue the sport. The collapse of the housing market during the Great Recession led Yoder away from developing and building homes and into remodeling, which proved successful for the company.

"I started physically working on our jobs, which I hadn’t done for 20 years," he says.

Yoder’s willingness to chip in ensured that the quality of his company’s remodels met with his high standards. Today, his company – Yoder Homes – has 34 employees and performs more than $8 million worth of projects each year in Florida’s Gulf region, including Sarasota.

Yoder Homes’ positive reputation in the market has helped it grow significantly. "A lot of our business is word of mouth," Yoder says. "When someone that has experience with us says we’re very trustworthy, honest and fair, that’s probably the best compliment we can receive.”

The company has a positive reputation in the market because of the honesty and fairness exhibited by its owner and employees.

completed more than 1,000 homes while developing over 500 building sites, he says.

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RANGE OF SERVICES
The company’s remodeling projects include kitchens and baths as well as larger renovations priced from $300,000 to $1 million. The company also builds several homes a year valued at $1 million and up.

In addition to its construction business, Yoder Homes six years ago started its own cabinetry company, Kitchens and More by Yoder, which supplies cabinets, closets, window treatments and flooring. The cabinetry company operates a showroom in Sarasota, where it displays a wide variety of products. To add value, it also offers design assistance to clients.

“Ninety-five percent of our customers for that business are people using our company for their home or remodel project, but we are starting to expand to where we are getting walk-ins from people looking to buy our cabinets,” Yoder says, noting the company has sold cabinets to several area builders within the past few years.

Yoder Homes keeps track of the cabinets and other fixtures in the homes it builds through its use of Buildertrend software. The platform allows it to share pictures and updates with its clients, many of whom do not live in Florida full-time, he says.

Many of the company’s projects feature modern and contemporary architecture and finishes, including the use of straight lines, lots of glass and Level 5 smooth drywall. Popular interior design elements in its custom homes include outdoor/indoor living spaces and polished concrete floors, Yoder notes.

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STRONG ETHICS

A strong work ethic is not the only value Yoder learned from his childhood. Raised in a conservative Mennonite community, Yoder also developed a strong faith and ethical core that he applies to his work. “We pride ourselves on high integrity and honesty,” he says, noting this includes barring the use of profanity by employees on its jobsites.

The Sarasota area includes a large Mennonite population. “My last name is very popular in this area,” he says. “I get a lot of name recognition in the community.”

Yoder and his family also live out their values through their work in the community and with charities. Yoder’s wife Kay is the director of RIPPLE Africa, USA, an international nonprofit organization that works in Malawi, Africa, one of the poorest countries in the world. The organization’s projects range from education to healthcare to preserving the environment, with the primary focus being to provide multiple opportunities for people “to lift themselves out of poverty by providing a hand up and not a hand out,” he says.

RIPPLE Africa, USA’s recent projects include building high efficient adobe cook stoves, educational scholarships and fishing conservation programs, he says.

Established in 2003, the organization today has more than 2,000 people working on projects. “However, despite our significant achievements and ambitious scope, RIPPLE Africa is still small enough that we remain home-grown and grassroots based, and it is our intention to keep it that way,” the charity says.

Yoder Homes’ owner and employees live out their values through their work with charities.