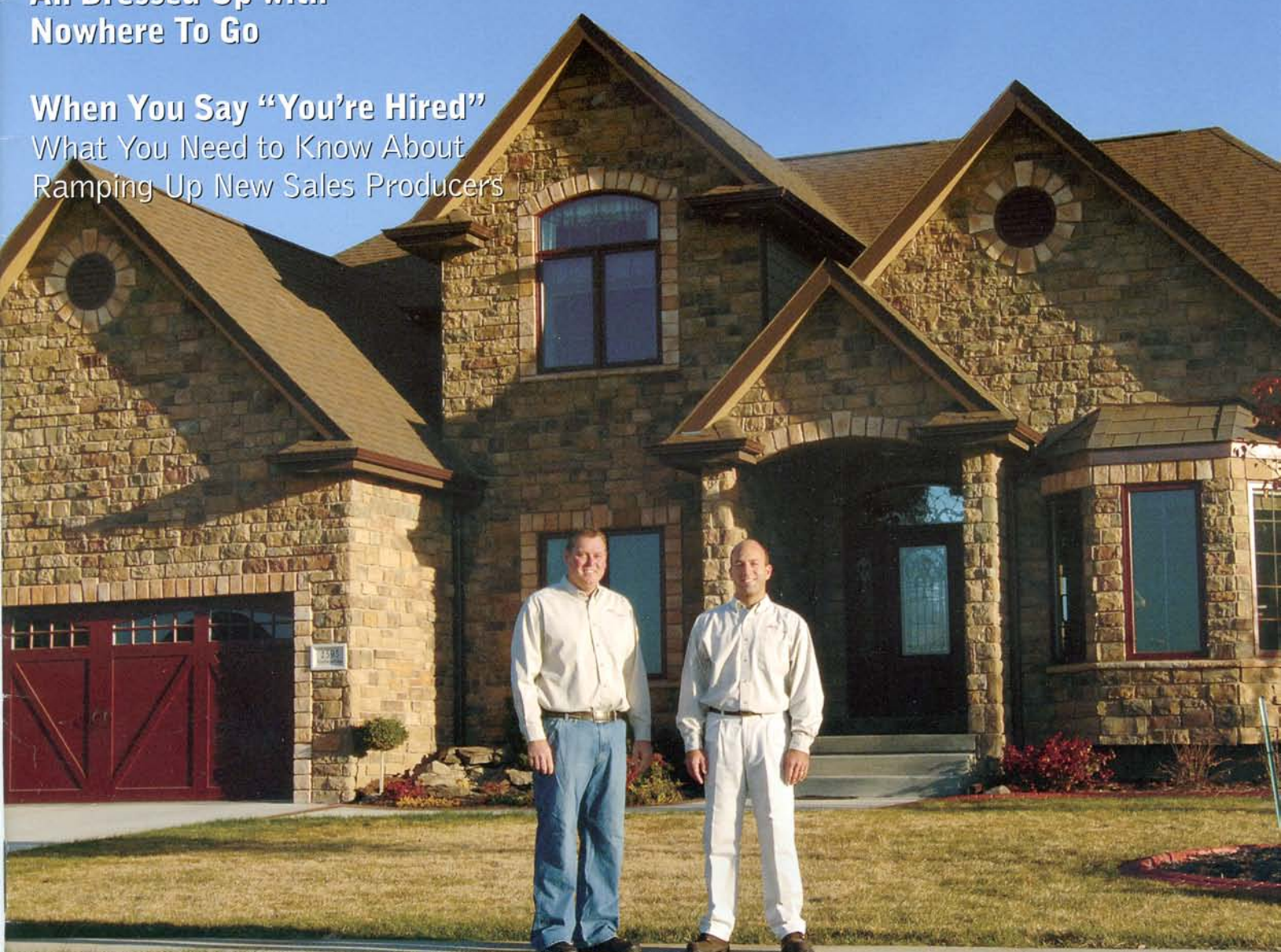


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What You Need to Know About
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**K & V Homes Builds
Business One Satisfied
Customer at a Time**



K & V Homes will customize plans to meet customer needs.

K & V Homes Builds Business One Satisfied Customer at a Time

By Margaret Ludington

K & V Homes is building its reputation one satisfied customer at a time. Since 1997, Colin King and Dean Vogel, the owners of K & V, have walked side by side with the buyers of the homes they build to create houses the new homeowners will love right down to the smallest details. In a recent survey of 29 K & V home buyers, 28 of the respondents said they would definitely choose K & V again. One respondent said their K & V home is the last home they plan to build. Many of the respondents said they had already recommended K & V to family and friends.

“What sets us apart is that we run the job. We don’t hand it over to a project supervisor. People like to talk to us directly so we stay in touch with both the subcontractors and the buyers,” Vogel said.

He said that kind of communication is important because the builders and home buyers need to deal with each other often over the course of the approximately six-month relationship while the home is being completed. Customers have expressed their appreciation for direct communication in letters and e-mails. Chris Parker wrote, “We were impressed with the accessibility of the builder and their willingness to listen to our ideas throughout the process. Building a home can be stressful, but that wasn’t the case for us. It went very smoothly and was even completed ahead of schedule.”

Because they supervise each project themselves, King and Vogel have chosen to keep the company small. Instead of hundreds of homes, they started 25 in 2005 and will close on 17 – 20 of those in a year. They maintain a 70-to-30 ratio of custom homes to spec homes. King and Vogel divide project supervisory duties so that buyers know exactly which partner to call when they have a question. Because they’ve built their own homes, King and Vogel understand just how overwhelming the building process can seem and that many questions are likely to arise throughout construction.

“The only time we don’t answer our phones is when we’re meeting with a customer,” King said.

Their personal experience in home building goes beyond their own houses. King and Vogel were friends growing up in Storm Lake where each worked construction jobs in high school and college to pay for their educations. Before starting their own company, they worked as framers, learning the business from the inside out. Together they have 25 years of construction experience. Those college degrees help too. King graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in civil engineering. Vogel attended the University of Northern Iowa and received a finance degree. They say they have the perfect combination for success in the home building industry. King understands the ins and outs of construction materials and the load bearing required

to put together top-quality homes that are safe, energy efficient and well built. Vogel understands the financial side and how to do a job that will give the buyers the most for their money while earning a profit for K & V.

Most of K & V Homes’ projects have been in the western suburbs of Des Moines, but because they are custom builders, they will go anywhere a customer owns land. They’ve built a number of homes in rural areas near Des Moines. They are currently building several homes in Waukee, one of the fastest growing spots in the metro area, in the Legacy Pointe development as well as the Walnut Creek Hills developments in Urbandale. Homes in Legacy Pointe are adjacent to a community greenbelt and park. While K & V Homes generally build houses in the \$350,000 – \$400,000 price range, their projects have ranged from \$130,000 to \$1 million.

K & V Homes’ award-winning 2005 HomeShowExpo entry.



PHOTO COURTESY OF K & V HOMES

Top quality standard features drive the price of K & V homes. That starts with the basics such as I joist construction and three-point sub-floor adhesive. Gluing, nailing and screwing down the sub-floor eliminate squeaks. Even before the 2005 energy crunch, energy efficiency came standard, including high efficiency heating and cooling systems, programmable thermostats, Pella windows, walls with R-15 and attics with R-46 spray insulation, insulated garage doors and walls. K & V homes are 30 percent more efficient than code standards and qualify for Mid-American Energy's Advantage New Home Program.

Low-maintenance features also come standard such as Hardi-



Plank siding with a 50-year warranty, 30-year contractor grade shingles and mold-resistant drywall on the outer walls and in bathrooms. K & V packages good looks with Aristokraft cabinetry, 9-foot first-floor walls, eggshell paint and three-quarter-inch hardwood floors all standard.

King and Vogel say building in the quality such as energy efficiency and low-maintenance materials pays for itself in the long run. Buyers and professionals alike notice the difference in quality. "I had two different contractors tell me that we were getting one of the best built homes in Des Moines. I couldn't agree more," Joel Hasenwinkel commented in a letter to K & V following the completion of his home.

Beyond the basics, King and Vogel work with customers to help them plan the home they want, whether the buyer has a plan in hand when they come to K & V or want King and Vogel to design the project. King and Vogel say they're happy to modify plans to meet a buyer's expectations and their budget. Because they are experienced, they can help buyers pare away non-essentials that will save on costs. With his background in engineering, King knows what can and can't be done when it comes to modifying wall placements and changing room configurations. Creating the home a buyer wants starts with a consultation and learning about the family's lifestyle. While an eat-in kitchen may be important to

a family with young children, empty-nesters might want a more formal setting for entertaining guests. King and Vogel say they can customize right down to taking the dimensions of the buyer's furniture and designing the room to fit. Even the buyers of their spec homes can enjoy the feel of a one-of-a-kind house.

"We don't reuse the same plan in the same development," King said. Even homes that look similar on the outside may be very different on the inside.

K & V Homes is a member of the Home Builders Association. They built two award-winning houses for the annual HomeShowExpo. They're already constructing their 2006 HomeShowExpo house in Bent Creek Estates in Urbandale. They'll be customizing a 1-1/2-story Cotswold plan on a 200-foot walkout lot. Vogel and King said the event provides the opportunity to showcase their design talents. It's also a place to try products and custom touches not used in spec homes. Many of the people visiting the home show come just to gather ideas and to see products in use instead of the samples they find at home improvement stores. Home shows and open houses also provide public feedback.

Michelle Renken of 1st Realty markets K & V Homes. She listens to comments as potential buyers visit the houses and passes those comments on to King and Vogel. The builders take all the feedback they receive, along with their experiences with products, and put it to good use improving each home they build. "We want to be proactive," they explained.

King and Vogel say they have plans to grow K & V Homes, but they want to remain small enough to continue to work directly with each buyer. As their business has grown, they've learned there are some jobs they can delegate. They hire trades people and subcontractors that they trust. Some have worked with K & V since they started. Choosing trustworthy trade partners means those companies and individuals will have products that fit K & V's standards. They'll do the job to specifications and King and Vogel won't have to "baby-sit" them. That in turn leaves the builders free to spend their time meeting their buyers' needs, answering questions and staying on top of the building schedule.

They don't mind the long working hours that leave them little time for outside activities because they are proud of what they build — the houses and the relationships with the home buyers. Their greatest satisfaction comes from helping families create the biggest investment they'll make. They enjoy the rewards of providing customer satisfaction as expressed by Jeffrey Dunn and Julie McDanel, owners of 1st Interiors, Inc., in Ankeny. "Please accept my invitation to show our home to prospective customers at our mutual convenience or use my name as a reference."

"The best thing about the job is the appreciation you get," King said, "and hearing what they love about their new house." ■