

Builder leader is certified green

Michael Herndon, president of the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association for 2011, co-owns a construction company in Kingston, near Lake Texoma.

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As a homebuilder, Michael Herndon has several firsts under his tool belt:

First builder certified by the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association in his neck of the woods, as well as the first one to build to federal Energy Star standards — and one of the first to go “green.”

And this year he's the first president of the state builders association from rural Oklahoma. He is the owner of Herndon Construction Inc. in Kingston, about 30 miles southeast of Ardmore and 130 miles southeast of Oklahoma City, and builds in the Lake Texoma area.

Herndon, 55, talked business and building recently with *The Oklahoman*.

Q: Home building is still in recovery across the country as a whole and in Oklahoma City. The bottom — which was not as drastic here — seems to be behind us. What was and what is the situation in the Lake Texoma area?

A: The Lake Texoma area saw a decline in new home building but we're still building new homes. Size and price range of the homes has reduced some but we have seen an increase in the remodeling sector. Overall, money seems to be tighter but I feel very lucky to live where I do and am still optimistic about the future of the building industry.

Q: You were the first builder in south-central Oklahoma to go into green building. Why? To what extent? What will sustain green building in the future?

A: Before the slowdown, we were getting some requests for ultra energy-efficient home designs and we were also concerned about the impact our homes had on the environment. We saw and still do see a large benefit in building homes with a reduction of energy consumption and in the use of products that will get a short return on your investment. Additional costs that do not have a short-term payback have been mostly set aside. Now, most of our homes are Energy Star-rated and seem to be an easy sell since they actually make you money for many years.

Education of the owner is critical to help them understand the benefits of spending a little extra now to reap the rewards in the future.

Q: Everybody has a specialty, or favorite aspect, of their career. What's

yours? Why?

A: Taking an idea/dream from a customer and making it become reality — whether it be developing a plan from scratch or taking the existing plan and helping them create their dream. We use the latest 3-D photo realistic CAD system and are able to develop their ideas and show them right in front of their eyes. Technology has come a long way and we try to utilize it to the fullest. I've always enjoyed technology and being able to develop the plan in-house allows us also to provide each subcontractor with exact dimensions for the quality and perfection we require.

Q: You were involved in the creation of the Certified Professional Builder program phased in almost 10 years ago. How were you involved? What difference has it made?

A: This program is designed for those builders that want to be on the cutting edge. The main benefit is the continuing education requirements. Any professional organization requires continuing education. Through many years of experience, I've seen how education improves the end product so many times without any additional costs. Being able to help Oklahoma builders increase the quality of their homes through this educational process has been very rewarding and a great improvement to our industry. It also provides the consumer with a level of assurance that their builder really knows the business and builds a quality product.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up? What happened?

A: From the time I can remember, I've always enjoyed building. In high school, I was lucky to be a part of one of the best industrial arts programs I believe in the state. We built furniture of all sizes and were able to compete with other students at what is now Southeastern State University. Through the four years of high school, we were able to take all places in the competition including grand champion. I learned the painstaking attention to detail and the study of finishes necessary to provide our clients with a quality final product that will last for generations to come. I still enjoy helping improve our subcontractors and so many times we are able to learn from each other.

Q: You live and work in lake country. Are you a lake person? How so? If not, what do you do to relax?

A: Mostly I spend my time with my grandkids. My grandson enjoys fishing and hunting, which is still one of my favorite past times. Second would be flying. I enjoy making a normal all-day trip into a short jump and being able to enjoy the rest of the day enjoying time with my son and daughter-in-law in Hot Springs, (Ark.), fishing or just enjoying the sights with my wife. We have a short grass strip in our backyard and it becomes very handy on some of these trips we enjoy.

Q: Why is it important for builders to be involved with their local and state homebuilders associations?

A: There are so many advantages it would be impossible to mention even a small percentage. Probably top of all would be the availability of the enormous knowledge of our builders. We're able to share problems with products, subs and just a general privilege to be able to lean on others with experience. Second would be keeping up-to-date with the legislative issues and having the privilege of being notified of issues that may affect our industry and homeowners negatively.



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