



H ME IS WHERE the Heart Is

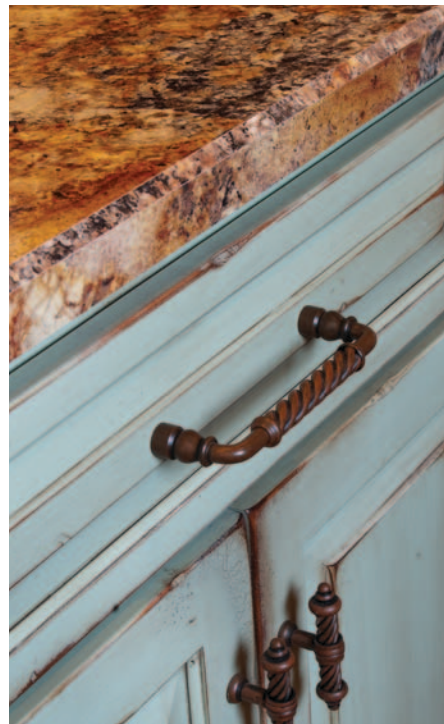
When the economic slump hit, Rusty Smarr of Smarr Custom Homes felt it. Yet, instead of complaining he looked for ways to bring the buzz back into new housing — and for a way to give back to the community.

By Dianna Borsi O'Brien
Photos by Deanna Dikeman

His answer to both challenges is the Home of Possibilities, a 3,750-square-foot model home at 2304 Redmond Court in the Cascades. The house, outfitted with many of the newest, most buzzed about HGTV features, will also be used as a venue for Ronald McDonald House fundraisers.

Unveiled in May, the house features a long list of energy-saving features, from a tank-less hot water heater installed by Air and Water Solutions to landscaping with native plants installed by Pleasant View Landscaping.

In addition to housing Ronald McDonald House fundraisers, Smarr is opening the home to vendors of the home's featured products for classes on various Saturdays.



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE BENEFITS

For Smarr, a third-generation homebuilder, deciding to give back to the Ronald McDonald House came naturally. His father, a commercial and residential builder, constructed the first Ronald McDonald House in Columbia in 1983.

But now that building is slated for replacement with a larger, more up-to-date facility, which will be handicap-accessible and larger, with 18 bedrooms instead of 14, all with private bathrooms. The new house will be located behind Columbia Regional Hospital and near the future University of Missouri Women's and Children's hospital.

Each year, the Ronald McDonald House provides free or low-cost lodging for about 450 out-of-town families who have a child undergoing treatment at one of Columbia's hospitals. The house never turns anyone away, and Melody Bezenek, executive director of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mid-Missouri, says it stays full.

The Ronald McDonald House plans to break ground later this year on the \$2.6 million facility.

UNIQUELY WONDERFUL

"This is a new undertaking for builders," says Bev Curtis of House of Brokers, who handles all of Smarr's home sales.

"It's a very cool thing to do," Curtis adds, but she's not surprised. "Both Kristen and Rusty are just those kind of people."

Kristen Smarr, Rusty's wife, isn't on the payroll, but she plays a major role in this project in terms of bouncing around ideas and keeping the buzz going. The director of communications at the University of Missouri's College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Kristen has been involved since Rusty broke ground; she orchestrates advertising and marketing for the house, which includes a Facebook page with regular updates on the progress of the house.

A TANKLESS JOB

Tankless hot water heaters have proven track records in Canada, Europe and Asia, says Rodney Stephens of Air and Water Solutions; his firm is busy installing them throughout Columbia. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, water heating accounts for about a quarter of a home's energy bills, and tankless water heaters can reduce that by roughly one-third.

The Navien model installed in the Home of Possibilities is 98-percent efficient versus the 50-percent efficiency of typical water heaters, Stephens says. Tankless heaters, he says, ensure you'll never run out of hot water no matter how many showers you — or your teenagers — take. Tankless devices

ABOVE:

Homebuilder Rusty Smarr and his wife, Kristen.

RIGHT: A tankless hot water heater heats water for the entire 3,750-square-foot home.



heat water as it flows through, which eliminates the need for keeping a tank of water hot at all times.

Now tankless hot water heaters are eligible for federal tax credits of 30 percent, a rebate from AmerenUE and a Department of Natural Resources rebate, which makes the cost of \$2,900 to \$3,500 more affordable.

NOW HEAR THIS

Life — or at least music, radio and television — really can be as easy as pushing a button with the NuVo “Grand Concerto” system installed by Pure Audio. You can access your iPod, music library on your computer, FM radio or SIRIUS satellite radio anywhere in the Home of Possibilities; everything is controlled with small, discrete keypads.

“It is multi-source, multi-zone audio throughout the house,” says Travis Huff, co-owner of Pure Audio. “It’s simple and easy to use.” The system also allows you to use the television like a radio, so you can tune in to the Cardinals game or a Food Network program anywhere in the house, the deck or the kitchen.

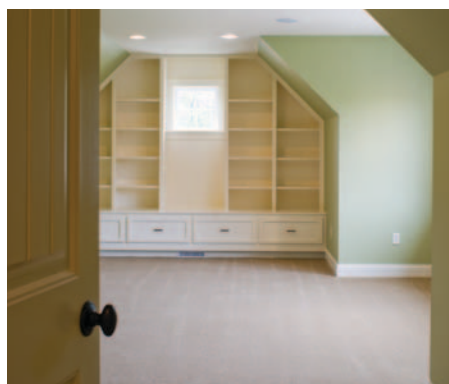
SHOW AND TELL

Interior designer Melissa Murphy of Johnston Paint and Decorating says some of the green features in the Home of Possibilities you’ll have to feel to appreciate. The padding under the carpet is “Triple Touch” padding, which is thicker and softer, and it’s made from natural oils. “It feels good; it is not dependent on petroleum,” Murphy says. “People will feel a difference when they walk on it.”



HOME OF POSSIBILITIES VENDORS

Air and Water Solutions
Brunner Peters Heating and Air
Randy Elliott Painting
Character Graphic Design
Designer Kitchens and Baths
DJ Roofing
GP Construction
Johnston Paint and Decorating
KA Carpentry
Keeping Good Company
Midway Electric Inc.
Mid-City Lumber
Nemow Insulation
Pleasant View Landscaping
Pure Audio
Show-Me Cabinets
Songbird Station



Built-in shelving creates an ideal home office space.

The Anderson Colonial Manor solid, handcrafted hickory flooring is more durable than oak or maple, so it could last a lifetime. Window coverings were selected for energy efficiency as well as to ensure views could be obscured (into the house) or accessed, such as a view into the wooded area around the home.

FEEL AT HOME

And finally, if you wonder what it would be like to truly live there, you’ll get some ideas from Keeping Good Company. The local home furnishings store will showcase accessories and some furnishings for several of the rooms. Visitors will be able to see the house as a home and get ideas about what they can do in their own home, says Cindy Scott, who owns the locals home furnishings store with her mother, Terri Mitchell. **CHL**

For a complete schedule of events at the Home of Possibilities, visit smarrcustomhomes.com/calendar/

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