



## Woman-Centric Raising the Bar

*Heritage Homes has emerged* as the Fargo, North Dakota, area's leading home builder through a relentless focus on the customer. Everything – from the home plans to the products and processes – has been thoughtfully designed based on keen insight and customer feedback to deliver remarkable new homes and customer experiences.

Putting the customer first, coupled with a love for construction, led company owner and President Tyrone Leslie to envision a new kind of homebuilding company. But he knew he couldn't do it alone. According to Leslie, this could only work in a team environment where customer satisfaction is a core value held by all, "With the magnitude of the purchase, a brand-new home, we're honored by the trust customers place in us. Our team is not about personal agendas. Our team is passionate about what they do and they enjoy collaborating. As soon as you want to collaborate, communication improves and good things come from great communication."

Great communication is at the center of Heritage Homes' customer journey. Heritage Homes knows you can't have a great home without having had a great homebuilding experience. Following visits to the company's website, their journey typically begins in one of Heritage Homes' furnished model homes, where visitors can come to appreciate amenities they just won't see in other new homes. They are greeted by one of Heritage Homes' New Home Specialists who take great pride in educating prospective home buyers, so that the buyers are empowered to make the best decisions. Steve Larson, Sales Manager for Heritage Homes, reiterated the importance of communication, "We listen. Our New Home Specialists know what can and can't be done, which is a tremendous benefit for our customers."

The Journey continues in the design process, where customers are delighted to realize Heritage Homes will modify its home plans, customizing them for how each buyer wants the home to "live." Then, with plans in hand, buyers proceed to Heritage Homes' Design Center, where Project Coordinator Nicole Schaffer works with them on product selections for their home. "The Design Center is a revolving door of innovation," Schaffer said. "And it is very hands-on. My role is to educate our customers; what they should know regarding product choices when building a home. Customers also tell me they really appreciate my assistance in helping them make selections that are complementary and go well together. In addition, as their Project Coordinator, I'm their go-to point of contact throughout the building process." Knowing that ambiguity is no one's friend, customers can contact Nicole any time with any questions they have regarding their new home.





Photos by Jesse Hoorelbeke

## the *Aspens*

Heritage Homes' HomeCare® program enters into the picture about two weeks prior to closing, helping buyers understand what to expect with their new home orientation/walk through and at closing. Leslie is particularly pleased knowing that typically no more than three items remain to be addressed at time of closing (often related to weather), and many times Heritage Homes residences are delivered 100% complete with no items that still need to be taken care of at closing! HomeCare continues through the first year of homeownership, with Heritage Homes' dedicated warranty team performing scheduled visits, and is available 24/7 in case of emergencies.

Part of Leslie's goal of focusing on the customer was to look outside Heritage Homes' internal strengths and the local market. In 2009, the company aligned with Design Basics, LLC, and in particular with Design Basics' Woman-Centric Matters!® program to help builders better understand and embrace women's preferences in the home. Research showed that women have the sole or primary influence in the vast majority of new home decisions, which had been Design Basics' primary focus since 2003. "Marrying who Heritage Homes is with Woman-Centric Matters! was a perfect fit," Leslie said. Design Basics helped Heritage Homes redesign many of the company's existing floor plans to make them both be more functional and attractive as well as helping Heritage Homes develop new, Woman-Centric designs. "It's all about livability," Leslie said.

Design Basics also shared insights gleaned from years of research with female home buyers regarding their preferences and concerns in all aspects of buying and building a new home, helping shape Heritage Homes' Customer Journey.

### *A Profound Impact on Area Housing*

Heritage Homes' new plans were a hit with home buyers and the company actually grew while other home builders struggled or even closed their doors during the recent housing recession. The company is proud of being the design leader, having introduced so many amenities that have caught on, like rear foyer entries from the garage complete with benches, lockers, and drop zones to de-clutter the kitchen. Pet Centers, Travel Centers, and work-in (not merely walk-in) pantries have all received rave reviews. Design Basics' research pointed to the fact that 78% of American adults don't take baths, ushering in a new level of showering experiences in the company's homes. Leslie said, "The secret is that so many thoughtful Woman-Centric amenities are available to the average buyer." Woman-Centric home design and construction was brought into the multi-family arena at Heritage Homes' exclusive community, The Aspens At Timber Creek, which consisted of six quad-plex homes and one duplex home. Buyers were expected to be downsizing and looking for maintenance-provided-living in homes offering today's most-wanted features along with tremendous flexibility. With two bedroom suites, open entertaining, and – surprise – tremendous storage, buyers





**Open areas for entertaining:** warm and inviting space for family and friends

were not disappointed. A third bedroom or office, bathroom, and expansive entertaining area graced the second floor. This ambitious 26-home neighborhood was expected to sell-out in three years, but the high demand led to just a two-year build out!

During the recent Parade of Homes event, one Heritage Homes' entry was toured by more than 3,000 Parade-goers. Visitors were treated to the latest in technology such as remote control window coverings, mood lighting, entertainment, security, heating/cooling, and more, all controlled from a smart phone! Yet for all of the technology, it was obvious the home was designed to be comfortable. Entertaining was easily accommodated inside and outside; the owner's retreat and hot tub were ideal for de-stressing; and storage was a hallmark evident throughout the home.

## *The Future Has Arrived*

Though the recipient of the "Best Home Builder in the Red River Valley" award for six consecutive years (2011-2016), Leslie is not content with simply resting on Heritage Homes' past successes. A record 60.6 million Americans live in multi-generational households, according to a Pew Research Center, August 2016 report. Heritage Homes quietly began designing and building multi-generational homes and in 2017 introduced a new group of designs for these households (defined as two or more adult generations along with children present in the home). One such home was recently completed in Barnesville, Minnesota. Heritage Homes had already contracted with a family to build Heritage's Georgetown II plan, a two-story design with all four bedrooms upstairs, when a loss in the family meant the need for a



**Craftsmanship:** unsurpassed quality and attention to detail



**De-Stress:** unwind in a sunken hot tub after a long day



**Modern conveniences:** movie nights in the home theatre





# Georgetown

Photos by Ockhardt Photography

first-floor in-law suite. Lead Designer Eric Smith modified the standard Georgetown II to meet the new needs of these customers, tucking a nice bedroom and full bath behind the third stall garage and rearranging the rear foyer area.

“With the reality that one in five Americans live in multi-generational households, Heritage Homes is excited to be designing and building homes around these buyers’ needs and preferences, rather than forcing the buyer to adapt to the house,” Leslie said. And it’s not just aging parents moving in with their adult children. Sometimes, it’s the adult children moving back in with their parents. It can be a widowed sibling moving in, or maybe there’s a need to accommodate a live-in caretaker. And, there are friends who want to purchase a home together rather than settling for apartments or an independent living community.

Heritage Homes’ customer commitment is evident outside of the company. Leslie said, “50% of our business comes from an outside REALTOR®. We strive to make it easy for agents to work with us, and they can be as involved as they want to be, knowing we will take great care of their clients. In fact, 98.3% of our home buyers would recommend Heritage Homes to their friends. Mortgage lenders tell us they love working with Heritage Homes because all of the paperwork is in order, the homes are complete, and there are never economic ‘surprises’ at closing. Individually and corporately, with both time and money, we also are very involved in giving back to our local community.” Heritage Homes even built three homes in conjunction with the Extreme Home Makeover TV show (2006 in Minot ND, 2007 in New Orleans, LA, and 2010 in Fargo, ND.)



**Warm and inviting: feel right at home the minute you enter**



**Contemporary styles and choices: no two homes are ever alike!**

“We started building new homes in 1998, and have built over 1,000 homes in our market,” Leslie said. “And, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Premier Properties, our sister company, is right under the same roof. With 85 agents and growing, we can offer a seamless process to sell an existing home, so homeowners can truly focus on building their dream home. We are so blessed to be doing what we’re doing and having fun! People here are having a good time and it shows in the quality of their work, the comradery, and commitment to our customers. In fact, we hold a celebration event for each one of our customers at closing.”

Isn’t it uncanny how simply looking at homebuilding through the eyes of the customer can create such a unique company?

*Tyrone Leslie, president*  
**Heritage Homes**

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