

BUILDING WITH A PURPOSE



CARE award-winner Beach Life



Falcon Heights Contracting project

SPOTLIGHT

Local builder inspired by humanitarian cause

Victoria-based Falcon Heights Contracting Ltd. recently garnered seven Construction Achievements and Renovations of Excellence (CARE) awards from the Victoria Home Builders Association. CARE award winners represent the best in the city and area's construction industry.

"The company won two gold awards – one for the best master suite under 500 square feet and one for the best interior-residential under 3,500 square feet in its Beach Life project," said Joelle Bienvenue, office manager and wife of company owner, Dave MacKenzie.

Other CARE awards earned by the company include:

- five silver awards, also for the Beach Life project;
- best single-family detached custom home, 2,600 to 3,500 square feet;
- best contemporary kitchen under 225 square feet; and
- best custom millwork under 2,500 square feet.

Silver awards for its Madrona project included best traditional



Dave MacKenzie, founder and owner of Falcon Heights Contracting

kitchen, 225 to 300 square feet, and best interior-residential over 5,000 square feet.

For MacKenzie, the road to CARE began in 1992 when he worked as a carpenter's apprentice for a company in Whistler. Seven years later and at the request of a private donor, MacKenzie was approached and asked if he would consider managing a construction project at Casa Guatemala, an orphanage for abandoned, abused and orphaned children.

After obtaining diplomatic papers from the Guatemalan

"We were building for kids who have had their entire worlds devastated, in more than one way, by civil war, abandonment and then the major earthquake"

DAVE MACKENZIE
OWNER, FALCON HEIGHTS CONTRACTING.

government granting permission to conduct humanitarian work in the country, MacKenzie packed his bags, including 800 pounds of tools, and, together with a friend who had recently graduated with a building-technologies degree, left for the orphanage.

Over the next nine months, approximately 120 volunteers from abroad (most of them not carpenters) worked at repairing damage to the buildings and constructing over 15,000 square feet of much-needed space. Together with volunteers from the area, repairs, renovations and new construction were completed.

"It was a great lesson in patience but everyone had their hearts in it and it was remarkably



The master suite at Beach Life, winner of several CARE awards

easy," he said. "Some volunteers stayed six weeks, some stayed for the whole nine months. One of our main helpers was a 12-year-old boy who learned skills and now is lead carpenter and chief of building projects for the orphanage."

The experience changed MacKenzie's perspective in a profound way, and continues to inspire him.

"It opened my eyes. I'd been building in Whistler where everything was costly and where clients didn't utilize it all. Down [in Guatemala], every thing ... every nail, every board, was accounted for. We were building for kids who have had their entire worlds devastated, in more than one way, by civil war, abandonment and then the major earthquake."

Following his return to Victoria, MacKenzie launched Falcon Heights Contracting in 2009. Bienvenue, who'd moved to Victoria from Quebec, took a business administration certificate from UVic and became office manager for the company.

When asked to name a major challenge in the industry, Bienvenue said it can be difficult to find "qualified and experienced employees."

"As of this week we're advertising for new staff because of a new project we're beginning," she said, adding that the project, launched in October, is the

construction of a 7,800-square-foot home in the Uplands with anticipated completion in early 2015. Also in process is a custom home located on a Christmas tree farm in the Highlands area.

Falcon Heights Contracting is a member of Built Green Canada – a commitment the company takes seriously. Together with an energy consultant, a mechanical contractor and a designer, MacKenzie works with the client from the earliest stages of the project in order to ensure adherence to budget and Built Green specifications.

Specialties offered by MacKenzie and his team range from architectural landscaping to structural concrete work, timber frames, interior and exterior finishing, wood and steel framing and the installation of insulated concrete forms and structurally insulated panels.

In all his success in Victoria, though, he has not forgotten the children of Casa Guatemala. While remembering them, MacKenzie supports his own employees by hiring apprentices with the commitment to pass along his knowledge and skills. It is, he says, his way of helping them get started in their careers.

Falcon Heights Contracting is at 1725 Falcon Heights Road in Victoria. Visit www.falconheights.ca.

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