

So You Want To Build A Home?

by Dave Taylor



Home Builder
Rick Bivins

Rick Bivins followed an unconventional path into custom home building, but the Catholic faith that forms the foundation of his life has helped his company, JMJ Custom Homes, develop a reputation for quality and transparency that brings peace to the often stressful process of building a new home.

Bivins and JMJ have built more than 200 custom homes in the area, but it all started when he was looking for ways to stay busy during the wintertime at his job working for a lawn service company and he decided to try his hand building houses.

"In the summer time I'd mow grass and in winter I'd build my own house," Bivins said. "Then the next year I'd build my house again. I'd sell that house and I'd build another house."

He had no formal training, but he had a faith in God and a helpful boss at the lawn service, John Hauser, who'd stop by sometimes to give him pointers. Soon though, when Bivins was doing things beyond what Hauser knew how to teach, he asked him how he knew what he was doing.

"I'm like, I don't know," Bivins said. "I just ask the man upstairs and I do it... It was a very strange way of getting started because I didn't work for another builder and I didn't have the experience, but hands-on experience works pretty good."

In 1994 Bivins started JMJ Custom Homes. His two daughters named it, with JMJ standing for Jesus, Mary and Joseph, a symbol of his family's Catholic faith. Now it's become a family business, with three of his six children working for the company. John &

Luke Bivins work and manage the job sites and Kristin Aull, serves as his director of sales and marketing. The company aims to treat customers like family too, and do things right the first time.

"I'm going to do it right," Bivins said. "I mean that's what I made my reputation on..."

and I've jumped through a lot of hoops to keep my reputation what it is, because in this town if you lose your reputation you're in trouble."

Maintaining a reputation for doing things right means controlling the building process, including who's doing the work and whether the materials are quality.

"If (customers) want to use a cheaper

product or a different product, if I know I'm going to have trouble out of it I will not use it because I'm going to have problems with it," he said.

"My goal is for you never to have a problem with your house, because if you've got a problem with your house, guess who else has got a problem? I do," he said. "So I don't

