

ACADIANA BUILDER

A man and a woman are standing in a rustic kitchen. The man is wearing a pink short-sleeved shirt and glasses, leaning on a wooden kitchen island. The woman is wearing a blue sleeveless top and black pants. The kitchen features wooden cabinetry, a large white range hood, and a tiled backsplash. There are decorative items on the island, including a large vase and a bowl. The ceiling has exposed wooden beams and a chandelier.

**Mike Thompson Homes
Finds Success by Following Trends**



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Publisher's Note

It is my pleasure to feature Mike and Cheryl Thompson in this issue. Mike Thompson Homes has been building in Acadiana for more than 35 years. Now as a custom builder he builds for the way people live today; comfortable, "casual living."

Our Inside Story is a must read. St. Martin Parish has some wonderful development opportunities! Two of the developments are on the banks of the Atchafalaya River and one is located in Breaux Bridge. Looking

for land, talk to Sue Dupont, she can assist you.

Are you taking advantage of your membership in the Acadian Home Builders Association? Builders, there are so many reasons for you to be a member. Are you taking advantage of AHBA insurance options? Need Workman's Comp, General Liability or Builder's Risk? You can earn needed educational accreditations through the AHBA and participate in a rebate program to get money back from your purchases. Possibly the biggest reason to be a member is at all levels of government, AHBA can communicate to elected officials the economic impact of home building. AHBA actively follows legislation and ordinances that can both positively and negatively affect your livelihood. Members also enjoy networking opportunities General

Membership Meetings, Crawfish Boil, Golf Tournament and Membership Mixers. Let's commit to getting the most out of our membership. And if you aren't a member, call me and we'll discuss why your membership is vital to this industry!

Enjoy!
April Becquet

*Please pass me around the office.
Acadiana Builder makes great reading material for anyone interested in the building market.*

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FOR THE ACADIANA BUILDER'S MARKET JULY/AUGUST 2014

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Mike Thompson Homes

Finds Success by Following Trends

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Custom home builder Mike Thompson is sold on the Village of River Ranch in Lafayette. Not only does he build in the planned neighborhood, but he lives there too!

He loves walking to work in five to ten minutes. He loves having a grocery, pharmacy, health club and restaurant nearby. He loves having parks and retail shopping easily accessible to all 2,500 residents.

But most of all he loves the variety

of architectural styles that combine to make River Ranch the top traditional neighborhood development in Louisiana.

According to the development's web site, www.riverranchdev.com, "the diversity in Louisiana's culture and customs is clearly reflected in the architectural styles that flourish throughout the village. These seven major architectural influences are Caribbean, French, American Colonial, Creole, Acadian,

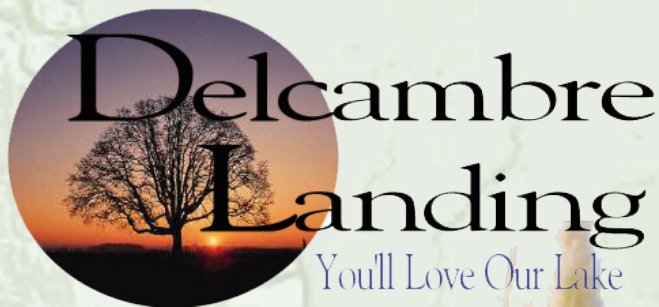
Spanish and Neoclassical Revival. Each style has its own distinct character and personality, yet all work together to provide variety and interest throughout the many neighborhoods."

Mike Thompson contributes to River Ranch's character with the five or so custom homes he builds in the development each year; he has built 45 homes in the development so far. Although he also builds on an owner's property anywhere in Lafayette, he

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ED COURTNEY
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ST. MARTIN'S PARISH
Where the Livin' is Easy | Inside Story



St. Martin's Parish Where the Livin' is Easy

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

You know the place. It's full of friendly folks who play as hard as they work – folks who enjoy great food, great shops, great music and the great outdoors. Yes, it's nearby St. Martin's Parish "where Cajun began."

With lots growing scarce in Lafayette itself, builders and homebuyers are looking beyond Lafayette Parish to surrounding areas. And St. Martin's Parish has plenty of open land available to satisfy those needs!

Thanks to the I-10 corridor running through the parish, St. Martin's is easily accessible to those commuting from Lafayette to the west or to those coming from Baton Rouge and New Orleans in the east. The parish is just a hop, skip and a short car ride away

from these major economic, social and cultural centers but offers life at a slower pace. Did you realize Breaux Bridge is only ten minutes from Lafayette and only 20 minutes from the Baton Rouge Bridge?

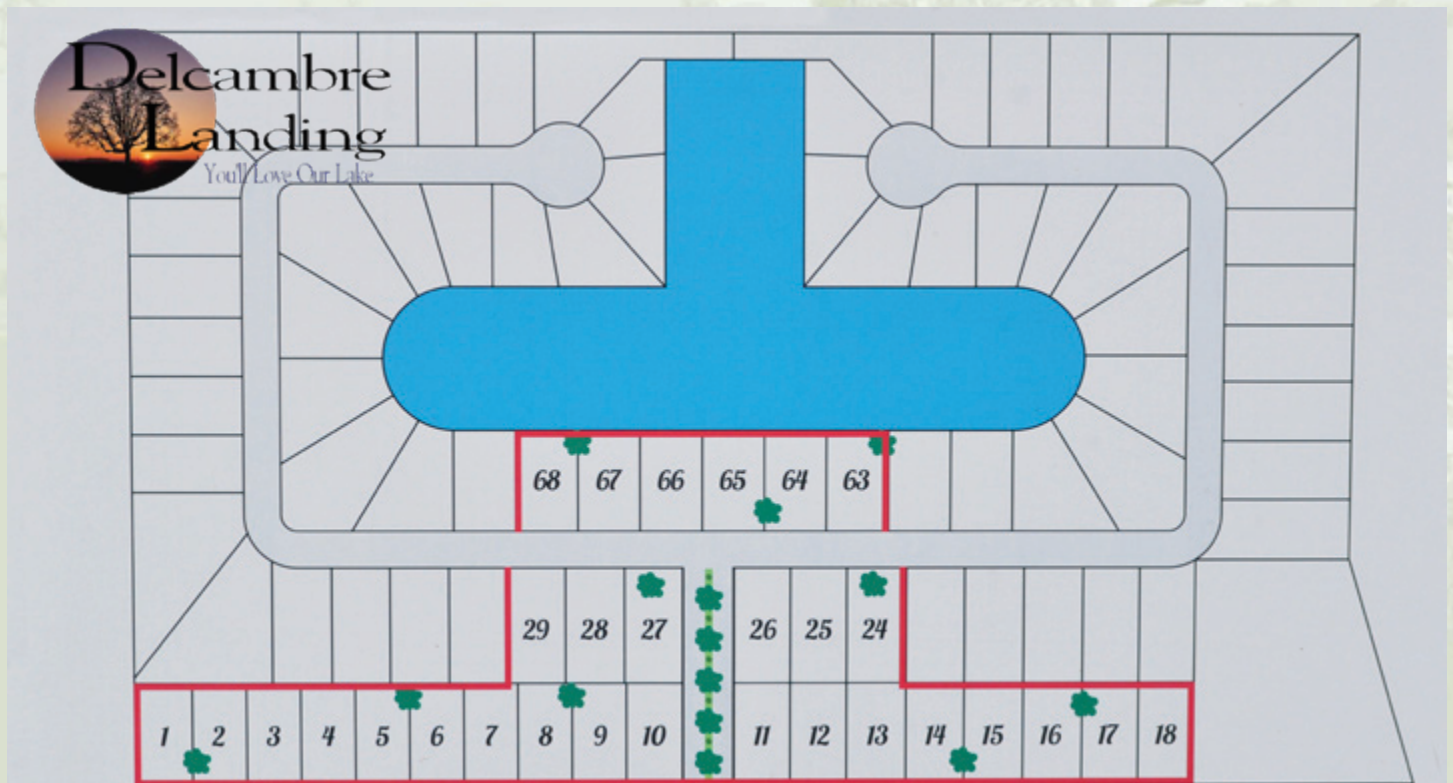
You now have the opportunity to take your pick of lots at three subdivisions in the bedroom communities of St. Martin's Parish that Realtor® Sue Dupont of Coldwell-Bank Pelican Real Estate is marketing.

Delcambre Landing

Although the community is located less than two miles from I-10, Delcambre Landing is in a quiet area where you'll never encounter a traffic jam. It's a place where you can

step onto your back porch, settle on the swing and watch the sun set in a dazzling palette of yellow, orange and red hues. You'll feel your pulse slow and your stress ease as the brilliance of the sunset melts into the muted blues and grays of night.

This planned residential community features a four-acre stocked pond, with your choice of road frontage lots, interior lots and lake lots. Lot sizes range from 80 x 160 ft. to 90 x 150 ft. with prices starting at \$25,000. New construction homes begin at 1,600 sq. ft. with an expected selling price of \$225,000-\$300,000. The subdivision is in the Breaux Bridge High School District and is within 10 miles of hunting, fishing, camping and water sports.



Delcambre Landing offers water, Slemco electrical power and cable TV. Developer Jim Broussard is recruiting retail businesses to a neighborhood service center, which will allow residents the convenience of walking to the store for daily items.

Riverview Estates and Ed Courtney Estates

Are you a sportsman? Two newly developed small subdivisions, Riverview Estates and Ed Courtney Estates, are located directly across from the Indian Bayou Wildlife Management Refuge. Until recently, land in this area could not be purchased, only leased for dwellings used as camps or homes. At last you can buy your very own piece of Sportsman's Paradise!

Both subdivisions are situated on the Atchafalaya Basin Swamp,

the largest fresh water river basin the world, containing nearly a half million acres of swamp, lakes and bayous. If you enjoy fishing and water sports, you can dock your boat at the I-10 or Butte LaRose boat launches. If you enjoy hunting, you can walk across the levee to bag a big deer or fill your limit of ducks.

Ed Courtney Estates and River Estates both offer riverfront lots and interior levee lots from a half-acre to two acres in size. Roads are already in place to make it easier to pick out your preferred lot.

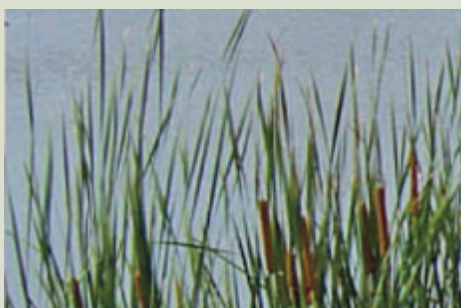
The minimum size for new



construction homes is 1,200 sq. ft., and new modular homes are welcome. Entergy Electrical Service will provide electricity, but builders/homebuyers will be responsible for water wells and septic systems. Homebuyers will receive a credit at closing to help pay for connection of utilities. Builders may qualify for incentives for lots purchased in either subdivision.

St. Martin's Parish is just waiting for builders and homebuyers to discover its charms. Won't you be one of them?

For more information about Delcambre Landing, Ed Courtney Estates or Riverview Estates, contact Sue Dupont, Coldwell Banker – Pelican Real Estate, by phone at 337-519-2220 (cell) or 337-332-5952 (office) or by e-mail at sdupont@pelicanrealestate.com.



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purchased several lots in the Village of River Ranch and is building them out.

He most enjoys the design elements of building. “It’s exciting to come up with a concept. I use a lot of historical materials, such as antique pine flooring and beams, depending on the type of design.” He also uses a lot of natural materials, such as stone and travertine marble. “People want character in a home.”

He’s found success by following trends and anticipating what people will want. “We’ve been blessed. Our ideas have been accepted by the market. People like our design ideas, and they like the quality of the product we produce.

“We build for the way people live. They want a comfortable home. The trend is now away from formal,

old traditional to transitional, which is between formal and ultra-contemporary, better described as ‘casual living.’ The man always says ‘I want a nice shower,’ while the woman wants a free-standing soaking tub in the master bath.”

He builds in all styles but noted

that the Caribbean style – with its use of bright colors, porches and verandas – is quite popular now. The trend is away from early American to transitional between ultra-contemporary, he said.

Mike’s wife Cheryl handles the interiors. “We have our areas of



Photos by Chimaera Photography



Photos by Chimaera Photography



responsibility, which works very well for us. Cheryl does an excellent job on the interiors. I don't personally know what light fixtures, plumbing fixtures or colors will be on the wall until I see them. Our customers are very comfortable with her selections if they're too busy to make their own."

Mike and Cheryl act as their own construction managers. They closely supervise each home, both stopping by each project site several times each day.

The Thompsons test their ideas against the market by participating in the Parade of Homes each year. "The Parade of Homes has been a very good marketing tool for us. Every year two or three of our custom home customers can be traced to the Parade of Homes, which has a long shelf life because a customer may not emerge for several years."

Typically Thompson has two projects, with one of them being a spec home, underway at any given time. The price range on those projects is \$500,000 to \$1 million, which includes the price of the lot. It takes six or seven months to complete construction after the slab is poured, he said.

Although his company has the capacity to handle more projects, he and Cheryl like to space their projects out so their subcontractors can dedicate themselves to doing top quality work.

Thompson said the quality of his subcontractors' work sets him apart from other builders. "I find good quality people that stand behind their work. I don't use the lowest priced workers but rather people proven to be reliable and have good track record [of doing a good job]." He

has used some of his subcontractors since he started his company in 1978 and now, 36 years later, uses some of those subs' children as subcontractors.

"I'm always looking to build a better house. I've learned something every year since I've been in the business."

When Thompson started Mike Thompson Homes, he was a volume builder putting up tract homes. But he transitioned to building larger homes and fewer of them. Nowadays he never builds the same house plan twice. "I've built over 350 homes in my career. Everything now is custom; even my spec houses are semi-custom."

Because of his company's reputation, Thompson doesn't do much marketing. He usually puts a sign in front of a home during construction, and he welcomes

realtors to bring clients by Mike Thompson Homes' building sites.

Mike and Cheryl Thompson plan to continue building custom homes, just as they've done for years. "The homebuilding business is very rewarding. We love seeing people enjoy their homes, sharing them with their family and friends, while building their future wealth. A home is often the biggest and best investment most people ever make. Many of our clients are our neighbors and friends. We love being part of our clients' future, and they part of ours."

Mike Thompson Homes can be reached by mailing 514 Princeton Woods Loop, Lafayette, LA 70508 or by calling 337-984-0687 or by e-mailing mikethompson6@gmail.com.



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The SIF Difference

Builders and contractors have unique needs when it comes to their workers' comp coverage. The HomeBuilders Self Insurers Fund understands this, as the SIF began in response to the turmoil of the commercial insurance marketplace back in the late 70's. Insurance carriers were exiting Louisiana, and builders and contractors were faced with rising insurance costs, poor service and mounting problems. The answer was the HomeBuilders Self Insurers Fund (HomeBuilders SIF), a workers' compensation program built specifically for the construction industry.

The program was built by builders and contractors with an eye toward longevity, affordability and financial strength, all of which remain as our sound foundation today. While literally hundreds of insurance companies have come and gone over the years in Louisiana, this program has held firm to its original mission of always being available for the construction industry.

Our participants know the HomeBuilders SIF is one of the very few programs that has consistently offered workers' compensation coverage to businesses in Louisiana for more than thirty years. Workers' comp rates may change over time,

but contractors need to know they will not experience wild fluctuations in their overall insurance pricing from year to year. While the Fund has implemented modest rate increases over the years, we have also reduced overall rates on a number of occasions. Our goal is to offer consistently competitive rates to our fund participants, year in and year out. Additionally, since 1994 alone, nearly \$75 Million in dividends has been returned to active, qualifying fund participants.

Over the years, our program has adapted to include more than just residential homebuilders. The original mission of the Fund may have been to serve homebuilders, but today our program helps so

many more. Not only are residential and commercial builders enjoying the success of the program, but we also now provide workers' comp to many trade contractors, suppliers and a host of related industry businesses. While much has changed over the years, we have stayed true to our original mission.

For more information about the HomeBuilders SIF or to get a quote, please contact us with the info below

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Building a Personal Brand

By Darylene Dennon, Solid Energy, Inc.



Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, once said, “Your brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.” No matter what media you use to market and advertise your business you need to develop a professional brand online and off.

Branding is delivering something of value to a client and delivering it in such a way that it creates an emotional connection with that customer. Effective branding consists of managing how others – potential customers as well as current ones – perceive you as well as what they think of your products and services.

Having a strong and unique personal brand is an especially important asset in today’s online business environment. The Internet has had among others two notable effects on how you conduct business: First, you’re able to reach many more people, much more quickly. That means there are that many more people who can potentially say good things or bad things about you.

Second, the price of entry into the

online advertising world is cheap, so most everybody’s doing it. As result, you need to stand out and have something to back up your claims of being better than the other guy. Today there are many online outlets sharing so many messages that a consumer can easily and quickly be overwhelmed. The public’s power to make their dissatisfaction or pleasure known about your business has also made it more critical that you develop and maintain a sold brand.

Solid Energy, Inc. began developing a personal and professional brand in 1997. We hired two business coaches: a marketing consultant and a financial coach. Together we analyzed our business, developed a Business & Marketing Plan and found out why our clients buy our service. This was done through our Marketing Consultant who called 50 of our past clients and gave us a summarized report card with comments. This information provided us insights into what they like about our business. It wasn’t just the tangible reasons, but mostly the intangible reasons. We listened

to their needs, we responded to their requests, we respected their property, we hired friendly professional painters, we were great at communication, answered their questions, solved their problems and addressed all their concerns. We were clean, organized, met or exceeded all their expectations and did it with a smile.

This information was priceless and identified our own personal/professional brand, defined our target market and helped us implement a personal brand marketing plan incorporating those results. We created a company culture that stills stands the test today.

Solid Energy, Inc.-Painting & Carpentry & Darylene Dennon are one in the same, and our culture is defined by our professionalism, friendliness, flexibility, industry knowledge, approachability and trustworthiness.

We monitor our performance by asking clients to rate us through a third-party survey. As well, we constantly monitor online comments and stay involved in our industry through activities sponsored by our local and state HBAs. Another critical aspect of our operations is a yearly review and update to our business plan to keep up with the current marketplace and our clients’ comments.

Because the Internet is such a powerful tool for customer research, creating a powerful presence online is

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more about what you should be doing and less about what you need to stop doing. As you develop your Internet presence bear in mind:

- Don't over share; keep your information focused on your business and products.

- On again off again? If you have a blog and you don't continue to feed it or aren't committed to writing something real on it on a regular basis, then consider taking it down.

- No company website = no online credibility. Don't be one of the 75% in the U.S. that don't have a website (source: U.S. Census Bureau). Remember that 78% of adults in the U.S. think it's very important to look up information about companies before deciding to do business with them. (source: Harris Interactive).

- Be consistent across your marketing. Make sure your brand is mentioned on every piece, in every communication the same way so there's no mistake or confusion about who you are.

- Comments good or bad! If someone posts something in anger on say Facebook or puts an irate review on yelp, pay attention; it's your reputation at stake. Listen and learn what is being said and take that opportunity to make a difference for your business. Avoid trying to defend. NAHB offers additional insights into the thorny issue of online reputation here.

- Check your brand behavior on a regular basis to learn what to change. Who's coming to your site? What questions are they asking? What comments are they making? Periodically Google your company's name and see how it comes up.



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•Communicate your brand with a real life stories. Get and post testimonials from satisfied customers and if appropriate satisfied business partners.

Your brand is more than a nifty, memorable logo or catchy tagline. It's as much an intrinsic part of your reputation, and as such needs to be developed in a way that reflects your company's values and commitment to service. As Bezo's quote makes clear, your brand will stick in people's minds and will remind them of either a so-so company or a great one.

Darylene Dennon is owner of Solid Energy, Inc. a handy-man and painting

services provider in Woodinville, WA.

For more information about this item, please contact Agustin Cruz at 800-368-5242 x8472 or via email at acruz@nahb.org.

"For more great business management resources visit NAHB's BizTools at www.nahb.org/biztools."



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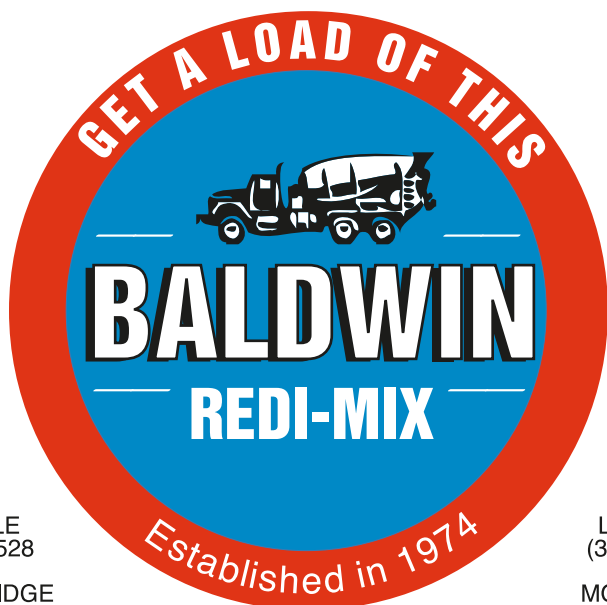
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