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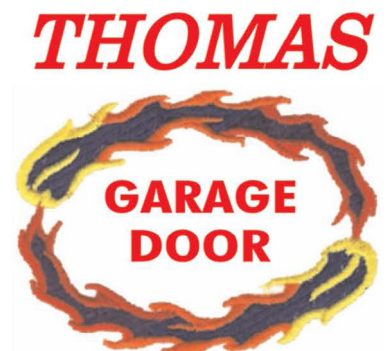
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# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

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**By Kathy Bowen Stolz**



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For Local Information Contact:  
themetropolitanbuilder@yahoo.com  
832-317-4505  
www.themetropolitanbuilder.com

5161 San Felipe St. #320  
Houston, Texas 77056  
832-317-4505

Owner/Publisher  
Giselle Bernard

Editor  
Kathy Stolz

Magazine Layout & Design  
Pamela Larson

Website  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

**Giselle Bernard**  
*Publisher*

*"Nothing is more intolerable than to have to admit to yourself your own errors." – Ludwig van Beethoven*

We apologize to Leslie King of Greymark Construction, her staff and to you the readers for mistakenly printing a draft rather than the final version of the story about Greymark in our June 2019 issue. The story certainly does not befit Leslie King's standards of excellence, which have resulted in her many awards from the Greater Houston Builders Association, the Texas Association of Builders, Remodeling Magazine, Professional Remodeler Magazine and the Better Business Bureau.

As a way of apologizing to Leslie and to you the readers, we are featuring Greymark Construction again this month

Leslie King and  
her daughter Kelly

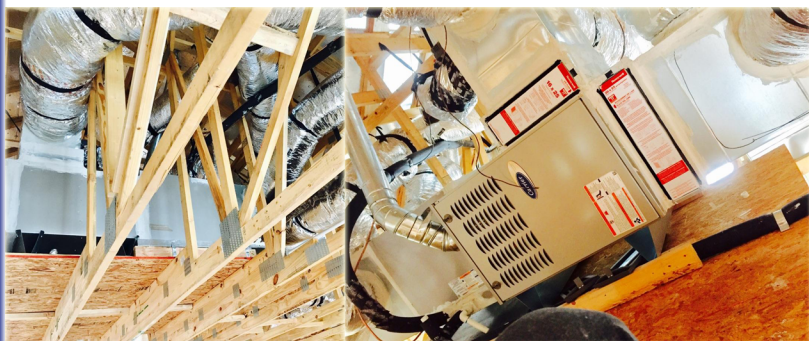


but with a focus on the transition of leadership at Greymark from Leslie to her daughter Kelly. We hope you enjoy learning more about this award-winning, family-owned business.

**Giselle Bernard,**  
*Publisher*



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# Greymark Construction Transitioning from Mother to Daughter

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

When Leslie King chose her company name back in 1994, she was already thinking ahead to succession. She thought Greymark Construction would lend itself to a second generation ownership better than a self-named business. She had envisioned that one of her two daughters might continue the business while she had them cleaning up job sites.

Now, 25 years later, her older daughter, Kelly Kirk, has left her career as a certified public accountant to join Greymark as a vice president, learning the business while she prepares to succeed King as president. Kelly admits that she isn't sure how much help she was cleaning up those job sites as a kid, but the exposure to the business got under her skin.

"I've always really been involved, even when I had other summer jobs. A lot of our trades have seen me grow up. As a CPA I was involved in the financial side of the business, of course, but now I'm coming back as an adult with real developed skills."

As she considered retirement, King had been talking about transferring ownership or shutting down the company because selling an owner-centric remodeling company doesn't seem to work in the Houston market. Although her younger daughter, Casey Bemis, who is an architectural intern in Dallas, decided that she was not ready to join the business, Kelly realized that "Greymark has always had my heart" and joined the company full-time in April 2018, almost a year after she told her mother that she was interested.

"When I came on board, everyone on staff had the opportunity to interview me, to make sure I was a good fit, as they do with all new hires. My mom has built a fantastic team of very strong, independent personalities around her. They love being here. They welcomed me with open arms and have been extremely supportive," Kelly said.

"We really are a family here," she proclaimed. "We set everyone up for success. We believe that if you find a good person, you should keep him or her. In fact, our longest





serving employee has been here 10 years.”

Also proving that Greymark Construction is a family business, Taylor Kirk, Kelly’s husband, joined the design/build firm in September 2017 to help meet the construction demand caused by Hurricane Harvey after working as a cellarman for a brewery. It was all hands on deck for Greymark, and the company needed a field superintendent. But Taylor too had to be interviewed by the team. He now handles the sales and marketing for the company.

Currently Greymark’s staff includes 11 employees, although in Kelly’s five-year plan for growth, she will have to hire more staffers to reach her goals of becoming the largest remodeling business in Houston and almost doubling the company’s revenues. “We won’t be able to get there on current staffing. All of our projects are custom. The design portion is especially time consuming” as the designer meets multiple times with each client.

Both mother and daughter believe in cross training employees. “Everyone has had different roles in the company. Everyone does a little bit of everything. Everyone is fluid here,” Kelly said. Using her background in finance, Kelly formally documented the design process with flow charts when she joined the company to make sure the company could still function in times of crisis. They have a

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# Calidad Means Quality – Literally and Figuratively

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

When Sergio Salazar was starting his building business as a fresh-faced college graduate, he asked himself, “What do I want to do?” His answer? “Build quality homes.” And so he named his company Calidad, or “quality” in Spanish.

Now, 16 years later, the name Calidad continues to be a good fit for this custom builder who currently concentrates on the Oak Forest, The Heights and Richmond areas of greater Houston.

“If you’re going to do something, do it well” is Salazar’s motto. “My goal is always to create a quality product, one that people will value.” He said he is always focused on improving as he strives to be among the most elite of Houston-area builders.

“I am always accepting new challenges, always looking to grow while learning new processes.” In fact, he just completed his last class to become certified as a Graduate Master Builder by the Greater Houston Builders Association.

Although his company also does interior and exterior remodeling, additions, damage restoration and commercial projects, he noted that he loves new construction. “My greatest reward is creating something from nothing. I like seeing a project come to life from the ground up. In two months you can see the foundation, then the framing and the structure taking life.”

“I love driving around Houston, saying, I built that; I built that; I built that. New construction leaves something behind that carries your name with it.”

About 50 percent of Calidad Builders’ business comes from the custom home building, about 25 percent from remodeling and about 25 percent from commercial projects.

Calidad builds on the “low end of the high end,” according to Salazar. Its custom homes are in the \$600,000-\$900,000 range with square footage ranging between 4,000 and 8,000. The company usually builds 10 custom homes a year.





Sergio said he relies on word-of-mouth advertising to generate most of his business. He noted, “We don’t do a lot of marketing. Most of my clients – people building custom homes – tend to be business owners. The commercial side of my business – offices, nail salons – comes from the home-building side. When we work in offices, then the employees notice our work, and we end up doing a lot of work for those employees.”

As the president of Calidad Builders, Salazar supervises all elements of building, does estimates and meets with clients. Juan Ortiz, who is a project manager, and Luis Briagas who is a field supervisor, oversee the construction itself.

Although Sergio toyed with the idea of being an architect, he realized early on that he didn’t have the creativity to pursue architecture as a career. Because he was always good at math and science, he chose civil engineering instead, graduating from Texas A & M in 2003. He said having a degree in civil engineering helped him to establish credibility with subcontractors and inspectors when he was getting started in building.

However, he confesses to making changes to an architect’s carefully crafted designs after he walks through a framed house with clients, even though he knows those changes may make the architect crazy. Salazar said he values

*Continued on page 14*





# Add An Unexpected Splash Of Color In The Bath

**By Linda Jennings**

Current trends lean towards a monotone design palette with the addition of one fabulous fixture or hardware element that makes the space memorable. Top builders and designers have a knack for creating a simplified design, then adding a pop of color to make the space truly exceptional.

Isenberg elevates the art of bathroom design with their Infinity Wall Mount Faucet. This spectacular faucet frames the side of the mirror before angling away from the wall to create a beautiful waterfall effect. Measuring 34" in total height, the Infinity Wall Mount Faucet may be installed to the left or right of the mirror, making it a perfect choice for symmetrical dual vanities. The look is chic and sophisticated with sleek geometric lines and an array of exquisite finishes to choose from. In addition to traditional metallic finishes like chrome and brushed nickel, Isenberg uses advanced resin technology to offer 16 ceramic-based finishes that include glossy white and black as well as soft shades of gray, brown and green and bolder options such as crimson and navy blue.

MTI Baths offers an elegant addition of color to the bathroom with six organic hues inspired by the earth, sea and sky. Available on a select number of MTI's Boutique SculptureStone® line of tubs and vessel or semi-recessed sinks, these elegant exterior colors open exciting new design possibilities in bathrooms. Choose from gorgeous colors with names that capture the essence of the outdoors, including Blue Lagoon, Nightfall, Onyx, Stormgray, Moonstone and Terracotta. Available in a Matte or Gloss finish, these stunning colors are solid, sensuous to the touch and most assuredly works of art.

Nostalgic Warehouse makes it easy to create a memorable entrance to any bathroom with their extraordinary crystal doorknobs and heirloom-quality hardware. Available in brilliant shades of emerald green, cobalt, pink and black, these authentic crystal knobs add a bit of sparkle and drama to any décor. The colorful crystal knobs are available in two of the company's most popular styles – the Crystal and the Waldorf – and may be mixed and matched with 12 different plates in designs ranging from elaborate scrolls to simple rosettes. The hardware is meticulously crafted from hot-forged brass, providing a strong, durable surface for intricate design work.



*For more information on these colorful products for the bath visit their respective websites at:*  
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*Continued from page 5*

succession plan for all employees because “you never know what’s going to happen.”

Kelly also uses her background in finance and accounting to deal with the numbers in the business – cash flow projections, spreadsheets, financial statements and such.

Watching the boom and bust of construction during her childhood, she chose the “safe” career of accounting and, while she loved the safety of accounting, it became too safe, even boring, for her after a half-dozen years. The controlled risks of remodeling are more appealing to her these days. Greymark has no minimum threshold price or size for its projects, which lends itself to surviving



bust periods. “Bathroom remodels got us through the last recession,” she said.

The flexibility of working for a small company is also appealing to her at age 30. If she has to leave work for a doctor’s appointment, she can make up the time at the end of the day, for example. With the birth of her first child looming, she is happy the company has a generous maternity policy for both primary and secondary caregivers among its benefits.

Like most builders, she loves having something tangible to look at for her efforts. She said she gets a thrill when she turns over a completed project to the homeowners and they say, “Oh, my goodness, this is amazing!”

As for the future of the company, “there are so many different avenues we could go down,” but Kelly does not anticipate moving the company into new construction. “New construction would require a largely different structure than what we have now. We have set up a company that is extremely good at what we do.”

And Greymark has the crystal on the wall to prove it! Greymark Construction won the Greater Houston Builders Association Grand Remodeler prize in 2010, 2011 and 2012, in addition to the 2012 Chrysalis Award for the nation’s Best Universal Design in 2012. Greymark won the Best Whole House Remodel, Best Remodeled Kitchen over \$100,000, Best Remodeled Kitchen \$50,000-\$100,000, and Best Addition Under \$150,000, all in 2018. Greymark also received a Texas Lone Star award for Best Historic Renovation.

The Better Business Bureau recognized Greymark with its award for excellence in 2009 through 2019 in recognition of its A+ rating. Texas Association of Builders gave Greymark its Texas Lone Star Award for Best Historic Renovation over \$500,000 and Best Historically Sensitive Renovation between \$100,000 and \$250,000, both in 2017. Other national recognitions are being named one of Remodeling Magazine’s Big 50 and Best Whole House Remodel from Professional Remodeler Magazine.

After 25 years in business Leslie King is now recognized as a leader in the construction industry. Her daughter Kelly Kirk admits, “For such a small person, she has some big shoes to fill. I’m never going to be her, but I will take the best parts of her forward.”



**For more information contact  
Greymark Construction Company  
1207 Bingham St  
Houston, TX 77007  
713-722-7226  
[info@greymarkconstruction.com](mailto:info@greymarkconstruction.com)  
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# Inspiring Boundless Creation

“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see,” said Henry David Thoreau. Lunada Bay Tile, a California-based tile maker, is unveiling new collections in glass, ceramic and concrete tile with an emphasis on artistic simplicity, texture, and color that are intended to spark the imagination and transform surfaces into works of art.

Inspired by the aura of Southern California coastal living, Lunada Bay Tile takes a distinct approach to designing products with a philosophy that blends traditional craftsmanship and modern influences. Their artisans use specialized techniques to create unique effects that capture the imagination and reflect the way people want to live.



## **New Tommy Bahama® Blends Collection**

Four new exotic glass blends join the Tommy Bahama® by Lunada Bay Tile collection.

- Twillingate is a sea of blue, white and grays inspired by the islands and the majestic icebergs passing by its shores.
- Skyros channels the beauty of Greece with a blend of blues, shades of green, white and grays, named after the wonderfully remote island in the Aegean Sea.
- San Blas—featuring whites, grays, creams and teal—mirrors the beauty of the San Blas Islands, an archipelago off of Panama.
- Cayo Coco is a wash of neutrals in white, creams, greens and grays reminiscent of the tropical island for which it was named.



## **Tommy Bahama® Kapa Collection**

The world of Tommy Bahama® is a place without deadlines or demands, an opportunity to breathe freely and live spontaneously. Tommy Bahama® by Lunada Bay Tile channels the beauty and abandon of vacation and exploration through a premier collection of handcrafted concrete tiles with a mid-century modern feel. The

brand’s most iconic prints, tranquil wallpaper-like patterns, and soft, supple fabric textures are reinterpreted into



transformative tile surfaces. The embossed relief surfaces have a three-dimensional quality in eight colors that coordinate effortlessly with Tommy Bahama® by Lunada Bay Tile glass blends.



## **New Shapes Added to Shinju Collection**

The popular ocean-inspired Shinju ceramic collections gain new shapes:

- Cambric Hex is a 2 x 2 hexagon mosaic that features a blend of smooth and ridged surfaces.
- Silhouette Mosaic are small squares that feature negative space to allow grout to play a part in the design.
- Shinju Mirai adds the Elon Hex, an elongated hexagon, in both smooth and reef options.
- Another Shinju Mirai addition, Pianola, is named for the perforated player piano sheets that tell a piano what keys to play.

## **Graphite Collection**

A new ceramic tile series, Graphite, features Black Iron with an Aggregate finish that emulates the look of charcoal pencil. Designed to be the perfect foil to high-shine collections, Graphite adds a sense of grounding to a space. Choose a dark grout for subtlety or a light-colored grout to help the pattern stand out.

*Continued on page 15*



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*Continued from page 7*

function over aesthetics because clients need to be happy with their homes for many years.

Family is important to Sergio. He learned a lot about family commitments during his own childhood when his father worked as a drywall contractor for large apartment construction companies, a job which took him out of town much of the time. He marvels at the sacrifices that both his father and mother made for the sake of their family.

Nowadays he works daily with his wife, Angela Varela Salazar, the company office manager, whom he met when he built a house for her. When he's away from work, Sergio focuses on his three children, ages 3, 4 and 20, acknowledging that if he doesn't spend time with his

children when they are young, they won't want to spend time with him when they are older.

After all, he wants his children to say proudly, "Dad built that" when they drive around Houston in the future.

**To contact Calidad Builders**

**Phone: 713-201-8626**

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*Continued from page 12*

### **New Shapes and Colors Added to Agate Collection**

New shapes join the Agate collection: 1 x 1 Offset, 1 x 3, 1 1/4 x 5 Brick, Zing (a wave shape), and Dash (a parallelogram shape). All new sizes will be available in the standard Agate colors in addition to four new colors: Amalfi, shades of blues, grays and greens; Alassio, a blend of icy green-blues; Matera,

a blend of greige, white and cream; and Torino, a blend of brown, black, gray and white.

### **Sonaré Collection**

The beauty of cast glass is captured in Sonaré, handmade glass tiles that have the look of liquid glass. Gaze into the tiles to see wafts of color within the depths of transparent and opaque glass. The larger format of Sonaré makes it a wonderful complement.

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