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## Gulledge Homes Adapts to Market Changes

Gulledge Homes | Houston, Texas



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**By Kathy Bowen Stolz**

As every experienced builder knows, the housing market constantly changes. Steve Gulledge, president and owner of Gulledge Homes since 2006, is listening to the market and adapting to meet its current demands.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down much of the economy, Gulledge decided to offer a lower price-point home to expand his portfolio of speculative homes. That decision turned out to be a blessing, he said, as the national economy downsized many families' income.

While continuing to build high-end custom homes, Gulledge is also focusing on smaller homes in less expensive neighborhoods because "that's what people can afford." He's also expanding his product line to include townhomes of 1,800 sq. ft., which he's building in the Houston area.

Steve said he enjoys building in a variety of price ranges and that Gulledge Homes strives to meet the individual needs of each client. "Some clients want the best while

others are more cost-conscious. We offer the same level of customer service, whether we are accommodating those who want more extravagant homes or those who prefer simple and efficient living spaces. Our goal is to make the building process as smooth as possible for our clients and to create an end product that meets our high standards of quality.

"Building smaller homes is a lot different with new challenges. We're adjusting to a lower price point for tile and cabinets, for example, while we're also adjusting to different building codes due to the floodplain issues in Houston. But with this smaller scope of work, we can build faster and sell quicker," he stated.

At the same time Gulledge noted that continuing in the specialty custom homes business allows him to build something very different with each home because he does not limit himself to one architectural style.

The pandemic has impacted Gulledge Homes in another



way. Some of Steve's clients want to stay in place but desire a larger home, he said, because they're now working from their homes. Those clients are requesting major remodeling projects, such as additions, to give them the necessary space for home offices and home classrooms to live comfortably during these pandemic times. In some instances clients are able to stay in their homes during remodels and additions.

However, Gulledge is coping with the changes that COVID-19 has brought to his company. "My outlook of the future is very positive. I have less stress. I don't have the overhead I did because I have fewer employees, while being able to help my long-time employees find employment elsewhere when I downsized. I'm now able to give my clients more attention."

Now focused on value engineering, which starts with the foundation and framing for the smaller homes, Steve relies on his dad Jack's expertise in those areas. A retired civil

engineer, Jack has been a welcome part of the construction team, working side by side with his son. Jack is instrumental in reviewing engineering plans and inspecting site work and safety at job sites.

According to Jack, "We give the homeowners what they want, no matter what the project," noting that foundations and framing on the smaller houses are less complicated than on the larger ones.

Gulledge Homes is very much focused on its clients. "Being a small company, word-of-mouth referrals have been the foundation of the company since we started. We maintain a relationship with our clients even after the build is complete."

Even his 13-year-old son Kade agrees. "My dad cares about his customers. He's real nice, and he doesn't mess up." Their other son is 19-year-old Cole, who helps out part-time in the family business.

Nowadays Steve's schedule is a bit more flexible since he's



not building as many homes, a schedule that allows him to match his time to his clients' schedules. "Being a smaller custom home builder has enabled me to meet with clients while staying on schedule."

Serving as the company's project manager, Steve is hands-on throughout the building process, including preparing a detailed weekly schedule for each project to keep subcontractors on task. "Over the years we've vetted a lot of contractors and trained them on how we do things. We use the same crews whether it's new construction or remodeling projects. We trust them, and they trust us," he explained.

He also spends half of his days on the job sites to monitor work, quality and safety and to update plans to keep projects running smoothly.

Steve has also cultivated a good relationship with his vendors, which leads to good service from them, such as receiving detailed specification sheets from his plumbing vendor quickly, and referrals of potential clients. He cited a recent client who came to Gullidge Homes upon a vendor's referral after the client's previous builder ignored the production schedule and overcharged for work.



Lorenzo Solari, who has a background in IT and is a long-time family friend, joined the team as its operations manager in mid-2020. Calling him a "great addition" to the family business, Steve said Lorenzo assists him by handling estimating and accounting, working with Buildertrend and Quick Books software and managing the business. Danielle Gullidge also helps her husband by reviewing accounts and keeping him on track with appointments and emails while maintaining her personal training business, Body by D, her private fitness studio that is adjacent to the Gullidge Homes office.

Obviously Gullidge Homes is a family-owned and family-oriented business with a focus on the future. No matter



what the housing market brings, there's no doubt Steve Gulledge will roll with the punches and adapt to meet his clients' needs.

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