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RobRyan Construction Grows from
Backyards to Developments

RobRyan Construction | Houston, Texas



Kathleen O. Ryan

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard

Publisher

I've found that many professionals confuse the terms marketing and advertising. Do you know what the difference is between the two?

Marketing is the process used to define your company brand, which is used to attract a goal set for the share of market you wish to attain. It involves understanding exactly who your target market is and what attracts that market to your product and/or services. Marketing involves company branding which includes elements like logos and all other design elements that will help align the image of your products and services with the interests of the market you have chosen to target.

Advertising, on the other hand, is the method used in making your company's products and services known to your target market. It is the way your marketing efforts are communicated to the market place. It is the consideration of how you spread the word about what your company has to offer and what differentiates your business, products and services from that of your competitor.

That being said, we are approaching the time of year when businesses start to think about new marketing and advertising strategies. The goal of both marketing and advertising should be to generate interest, to generate new leads.

Some things for you to consider when thinking about investing in advertising is whether you want to grow business and if you have the sales team and work force to handle new leads. A company should only invest in marketing if it has insufficient leads and has a work team in place to handle additional business. If you don't have a work team in place to handle additional leads, your business's hard-earned reputation could falter in the mishandling of new leads. If you wish to grow business, make sure you have the workforce in place to handle the growth.

If business is good and you are not interested in growing your company, then you may want to think about

investing in the marketing aspect of the business. If your interest is in targeting the millennials, do you have marketing material in place in which may be used for social media? The main method of communication for the millennials is via the internet. Is your website up to date? How are you differentiating your company's products and services from that of your competitor? Keep in mind that technology is always evolving; therefore, the marketing material used to communicate to your target market needs to evolve also.

Giselle Bernard- Publisher

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RobRyan Construction Grows from Backyards to Developments

By Kathy Bowen Stolz | Photography by Trevor Gerland Photography - www.trevorgerland.com

After 17 years in construction, Ryan Harris, a partner in RobRyan Construction, sees his work all over the greater Houston area. “It’s cool to see your work. It’s very gratifying to see something you’ve built. You get a great sense of accomplishment.”

But as a young man, Harris expected to pursue a career in business or sales. Starting college at the Air Force Academy, he completed his degree at Houston Baptist University, majoring in economics. Awarded an athletic scholarship, sports were a focal point of his college years. As a senior he was very busy playing ball, going to school and working as the outside sales manager at American One Wheel & Tire, expecting to continue working there. Then his uncle, who was like a brother to Ryan, died unexpectedly in an accident. The death made Ryan reevaluate what he wanted to be doing. “I decided I had to do something I was passionate about.”

During summers and on weekends he had worked in construction and liked being outdoors. Immediately after graduating he started Best Buildings, a company which focused on backyard amenities, such as basketball courts, swimming pools and small buildings. He met his partner of 14 years, Louis “Bob” Newsome, on a job site. Newsome worked for Continental Homes at one time and consequently had experience in large construction. They combined their first names to create the company’s name of RobRyan.

At customers’ requests, Best Buildings graduated to doing small interior projects, such as bathroom remodels. Within six months of partnering, the two were building their first house. Now RobRyan Construction is predominantly a custom home builder that will build 25 homes this year. Its projects range from \$400,000 to \$2 million and from 2,000 to 6,000 sq ft.

Its primary focus is completing a 26-home development in Oak Forest called Landon’s Place in honor of Harris’ son. One of its streets is Madeleine Leigh Lane in honor of Harris’ daughter. Landon’s Place is physically half-way done, Ryan said. “It kind of grew without a plan as land became available. We even put in a street in this little enclave. I really am proud of this development, but I’m

always most proud of what I’m doing at the time.”

Newsome usually oversees the office work while Harris oversees the field work, but each does a little of both. Harris said he uses his economics background to “count the pennies around here.”

To aid the company’s growth, RobRyan has added three new partners: Brent Harris with 18 years of sales, logistics and design experience; Brandon Kimes with seven years of supply management experience coupled

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KBIS Introduces the All-New KBISNeXT™ Experience



The 2017 Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS), the destination for kitchen and bath design professionals, today introduced the all-new KBISNeXT™ Experience, a grouping of new, select locations within the North/South Building of KBIS, each with its own unique programs and events that together provide 2017 attendees with the ultimate KBIS show experience. KBISNeXT™ experiences will educate, inspire and connect our industry in a way that only KBIS can.

KBISNeXT™ Experience Locations:

- NKBA Presents the KBISNeXT™ Stage Sponsored by HomeAdvisor
- The Backyard, an extension of the Outdoor Products Area
- Design Milk® X Modenus® Social Lounge
- Virginia Tech FutureHAUS; Bedroom of the Future

NKBA Presents the KBISNeXT™ Stage Sponsored by HomeAdvisor. In 2017, the two former stages will join to create one destination – the KBISNeXT Stage. The stage will offer thought-provoking and inspiring programming, and showcase the industry's latest trends and insights shared by leading kitchen and bath experts. Stage programs are scheduled throughout all three days of KBIS, taking place January 10-12 in Orlando.

The KBISNeXT Stage will host several programs throughout the show, including the NKBA's 30 Under 30 presentation, and the highly anticipated Design Bites™ sessions hosted by HGTV's Jeff Devlin and This Old House's Kevin O'Connor. The stage area will also feature portfolio reviews, showroom critiques, awards ceremonies, and a series of panel discussions and speakers sharing the latest trends for the kitchen and bath, including such topics as Airbnb design, outdoor living, designing for downsizing, color trends, and more.

"The NKBA is proud to present the KBISNeXT stage, where important topics like industry research, home technology and design trends make the stage a "must

see" for all our attendees," said NKBA V.P. of Industry Relations Suzie Williford. "Additionally, the 2017 class of "30 Under 30" industry professionals will take the stage for their presentations and showcase the future leaders of the Kitchen & Bath Industry. Our sincere thanks to HomeAdvisor for their support in bringing this stage to our show."

"The programs and sessions being developed for KBIS 2017 will tackle those questions we hear our industry members asking most often, with new topics that challenge industry members to think about their business and customers in new ways," said Brian Pagel, VP Kitchen and Bath Group, Emerald Expositions. "We're honored by the partnership we've developed with HomeAdvisor and their commitment to support such a high level of valuable content for our KBIS attendees."



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The Backyard™ and Outdoor Products Area
The Backyard is a new destination for KBIS 2017; an outdoor space for attendees to relax, grab a bite to eat and discover some of the hottest new products in outdoor living. The space will host cooking demonstrations throughout the three day event, cocktail events, entertainment and other outdoor living programs that are sure to make this spot a favorite for 2017. The Backyard is an extension of the Outdoor Products Area located inside on the show floor that will once again bring attendees a collection of new products for grilling, entertaining and living well in a home's outdoor spaces.

Design Milk® X Modenus® Social Lounge
New for 2017, Design Milk and Modenus are co-launching the first ever Social Lounge for bloggers, social influencers and design VIPs to connect, chat and (re)charge. The Social Lounge is located in the North/South Building and will feature a series of talks and discussions on topics around blogging, social media, trends and the business of design. Entrance into the social lounge is by invitation only.

Virginia Tech FutureHAUS; Bedroom of the Future
Returning to KBIS 2017 is the Virginia Tech

FutureHAUS; this year debuting the Bedroom of the Future. The two room prototypes will be exhibited in January 2017 at the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show in Orlando and demonstrate the future in integrated home technology. This exhibit will be part IV of the Virginia Tech FutureHAUS master plan model which will be ultimately installed on campus at the Corporate Research Center. Current sponsors include DUPONT and California Closets. The prototypes will exhibit the following features: the "Closet of the Future" with California Closets, the Home Office Smart Wall, and Bedroom and Office Interiors.

To learn more about any of the programs or events occurring as part of the KBISNeXT™ Experience at KBIS 2017, visit <https://www.kbis.com/>.

Connect with us via our social channels; on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/KitchenBathIndustryShow>, Twitter at @KBIS2017 and on Instagram @KBIS_2017.

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DIALOGUE WITH A DESIGNER

BARB MUELLER, Allied ASID, CAPS

Morrison knows that dreams, reality and inspiration make a house a home. They also know that an interior designer or interior design firm often become an intricate part of this process. Design professionals should be committed to creating individualized and functional designs to meet the lifestyles of their clients' families. Morrison Showrooms work to inspire these ideas and is conveniently located in the heart of Houston. Morrison offers many brands and designs, all exhibited in unique settings with interactive displays. Whether it's appliances, plumbing, hardware or lighting, they have brand to fit every budget and a style to fit every design. Contact Showroom Manager for more details at 713-861-2343.

This month Morrison speaks with Barb Mueller, president and owner of Designs Anew Houston, LLC (DAH), an interior design firm specializing in kitchen and bath design for remodeling and new construction projects. DAH's main focus is universal design and aging in place design for all ages, abilities and sizes to live independently and safely.

Barb worked in the new construction industry for 13 years as a senior designer before starting her own firm

five years ago. She is active in the Greater Houston Builders Association and the Remodelers Council. She also is the vice president for professional development for the National Kitchen and Bath Association's (NKBA) Texas chapter; in addition, she earned its AKBD accreditation. She is a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) through the National Association of Home Builders and is an allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). Last year she won first place in the American Institute of Building Designers (AIBD) contest in the accessibility category.

She is a regular attendee at national and international conferences where she has taught many classes on universal design. She has also given a live webinar through the NKBA University program on universal design and bathroom safety. In addition, she holds an MFA in interior design and is an adjunct professor teaching space planning and kitchen and bath design classes at Lone Star College Kingwood.

Morrison: *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

Barb Mueller: *I have always worked in art and design, but I decided to go into a different side of the industry*

and returned to school to earn my master's degree in interior design. Originally intending to go into hospitality design, I found after working in new construction that kitchen and bath design is my passion.

Morrison: *How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?*

Barb Mueller: My main field of interest has immensely changed with the ever-evolving technology of appliances, plumbing and lighting. The emphasis was more on functionality and aesthetics when I started and has since embraced universal design and accessible design, with the health and well-being of the user of much greater

import.

Morrison: *How can an experienced interior designer help custom home builders or remodeling contractors with their building or remodeling projects?*

Barb Mueller: The designer plays an important role by guiding the client through the process of space planning of the kitchen and bath work zones, storage, clearances, traffic flows, quality and safety of products and features and by setting priorities for budgeting. The designer also is well-equipped to responsively "hold the client's hand" throughout the emotional roller-coaster of the remodeling or building process, as well as to handle the "traditional" responsibilities for color scheme, finish selections and style/theme choices, and also to include other finishes for fireplace, flooring, stairway and windows.

Morrison: *What sets you apart from other designers?*

Barb Mueller: My expertise is in the area of universal design and accessible design for clients of all ages, sizes and abilities. With the advent of the Baby Boomer generation turning 65, these areas have become of prime concern for a much larger percentage of our population. There will be a greater need for homes that the elderly can easily navigate.

Morrison: *How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers'?*

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with a construction management degree; and Patrick Cochran with 14 years of commercial and residential construction experience plus a construction management degree.

RobRyan Construction also employs two full-time superintendents and two office assistants and a “slew of subcontractors,” some of whom RobRyan has used for more than 10 years.

In the past the company went all over Texas – Austin, Cleveland, and Galveston – to build. Now the partners

treated. We respect that a home is the biggest purchase of someone’s life.

“We also think that we build a quality product, and we stand behind our work, which leads to referrals. As a builder we go above and beyond, honoring warranties even if they’re expired or we think the product should have lasted longer.” Harris considers it a testament that RobRyan has built multiple homes for multiple clients.

“We put a lot of effort into the front end/design phase. People will bring in parts of multiple building plans that they like. We try to meld things together. We’re willing



are trying to be much more focused, building only in the Houston areas of The Heights, Oak Forest, Garden Oaks, Memorial, Spring Branch and Westview. Harris said the company’s productivity has increased by 30 percent by decreasing its travel time. “It was a good decision to stay more focused.”

Harris and Newsome have never advertised RobRyan Construction, relying only on referrals. “Right now things are really good for us. We have a full work load,” Harris commented. “Part of our character as owners is to treat people in a way that we would want to be





to spend a lot of time with the customers so they have a sense of comfort. Sometimes it's a month or two of back-and-forth meetings before the job starts," Harris said this attention to the customer's needs pays off because 98 percent of the customers build a house with RobRyan.

Ryan said he uses his economics knowledge to do a lot of market analysis when the company considers building spec homes. For example, the elementary school in Oak Forest attracts many families. He thinks about the needs of a family with elementary-age children and their price point. Then he matches those concepts to a building plan. "The very strong market allows us to build some custom specs." He often works with realtor Mel Reyna of the Reyna Group to analyze market needs.

The recent economic downturn did have an impact but did not slow down RobRyan Construction. "We went back to our roots. No job was too small or too big when we started, and we returned to that philosophy. We took on remodels and different kinds of work. Right now we're fortunate to be able to focus on custom homes," Harris said.

The company also does commercial work, but usually only one or two projects a year. This year it did one large industrial building, a 25,000-sq-ft project with a commercial crane and a 5,000-sq-ft office area. Another recent commercial project was a 45,000-sq-ft basketball facility.

The future looks bright for Rob Ryan Construction. Harris would like to develop more housing additions. "I'm always learning. Our team is always getting better. Every day is exciting."

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clients?

Barb Mueller: I always start with looking at the kitchen cabinetry and countertop ideas. I think of them as building blocks; once these main choices are made, then the other choices flow easily – appliances, flooring, backsplash, plumbing and lighting.

Morrison: What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?

Barb Mueller: I have found that sometimes builders have given the clients only a limited selection of product or finish choices. I feel that letting the clients have more of a choice will help them feel that their home is more personalized to their style and will give them the “warm and fuzzies” right from the beginning of the process.

Morrison: What would be your recommendation for “what to do first” in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?

Barb Mueller: Sit down with them and decide what the style of the home will be first and work your way from the exterior features to the interior, so that there is a flow between the two. Then working on the space planning of the kitchen and baths is the next step because, unfortunately, many architects and builders do not understand the dynamics of kitchen and bath design. Then the selections process can begin.

Morrison: How do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?

Barb Mueller: I try to attend conferences whenever possible and have spoken and given classes at them over the last four years. I find that conferences afford the chance to not only learn about the latest trends and advances, but they also offer CEUs for keeping my accreditations up to date for NKBA, ASID and NAHB. I am able to view and talk to manufacturer’s reps about the newest products on the showroom floors.

Besides attending conference classes and showrooms, I read a lot of the industry magazines and have written articles for some of them. I am also a member and past board member of the National Kitchen and Bath Association, Greater Houston Builders Association, the Remodeler’s Council, ASID, and I network with vendors, remodelers and other designers.

Morrison: What is your favorite design style?

Barb Mueller: I love the transitional style – it can



maintain the contemporary look and feel of the modern movement, but also not stray into the cold, sparse look that some contemporary spaces can take on. I like the warmth and comfortable feel of slightly edgy spaces that are more interested in the human needs of the client than the overdone “staged” type of traditional spaces so often seen.

Morrison: How would you characterize your personal style?

Barb Mueller: My style is more transitional to eclectic: more contemporary tile finishes and patterns, sleek stone countertops and lots of natural light are notable.

Morrison: Any last thoughts, comments?

Barb Mueller: I believe so deeply that universal design should just be considered “good design” that it motivated me to start teaching, so that the up-and-coming designers will appreciate the importance of incorporating design that is easy, convenient, safe and beautiful!

.....

You may contact Barb Mueller by calling 281-546-1089 or emailing bmueller@designsanewhouston.com or visiting www.designsanewhouston.com.



BARB MUELLER,
Allied ASID, CAPS



Nova Insulation Wraps Customers in Service

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

In the “very tight competition” of the Houston insulation market, Nova Insulation has made its mark by providing excellent service.

Nova Insulation provides next-day service for its installations and same day service for its repair jobs. The company installs insulation and pre-fabricated fireboxes all over Texas from the company’s office and warehouse location on Tidwell Road.

“We’re available for any builder who needs our help. Residential installation is our main thing – about 80 percent of our work – but we also do commercial projects. We do both new construction and remodeling projects,” said Pamela Toledo, the company’s office manager and sales representative for her family’s business.

“Our guys are good. In a week we can do 30, 40, 50 homes, although we’re doing 25-30 homes a week right now.” Service to its customers is so important to Nova Insulation, “we’ll run into Sundays to get a job done,” Toledo said. “We want Nova to grow as long as we can maintain the same standards of being reliable and competitive,” she added.



Nova's crews also take pride in doing their work well. "We're good about making sure the home is properly sealed. We're good about passing inspections, whether by the city or a third party. Everybody leaves happy," Pamela noted.

Choosing the company name from the PBS television show, "Nova," Pamela and her husband formed the company in 2003. It began installing fireboxes in 2006, a function which has grown into 30 percent of Nova's overall business. The two-man crew installs the firebox during the framing process of a home, then returns a week or so later to add the insulation. The company uses Napoleon and Majestic products.



Nova employs 14 people and runs 10 trucks. Many of the employees have been with the company from its early days. “I love our crews. They’re good guys,” Pamela said.

The company installers get their training in the field from building inspectors, typically. Builders set up meetings with inspectors to keep subcontractors abreast of changes in building codes, she said.

Pamela said she rotates the crew members a lot to keep the workers from getting complacent or sloppy. Three of them work as estimators, basing the price on cubic board feet for spray foam and square feet for all other work.

Nova Insulation primarily uses Johns Manville brand products for fiber glass batting, blow in, open and closed cell spray foam, cellulose and vinyl insulation. Toledo said that most builders choose their insulation product based on cost, but a builder may choose a more expensive product to gain a higher R value. “But we also sell products, too, without installation,” Pamela said.

While many companies struggled to survive the economic downturn of 2008, it didn’t effect Nova Insulation, according to Pamela Toledo. “The builders stayed with us. We’re loyal to our clients, and they’re loyal to us.”

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You may contact Nova Insulation at 1905 W. Tidwell Road, Houston, TX 77091 or at 713-682-5067 or at nova_insulation@sbcglobal.net.





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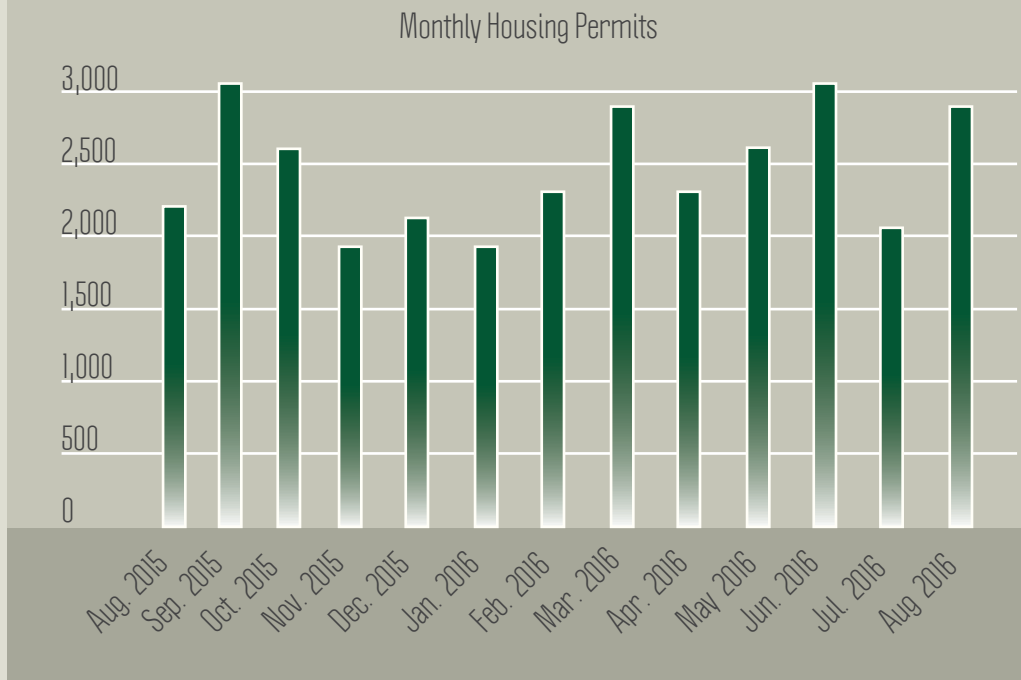


Houston Housing Picture

Bohlke Consulting Group, LLC

Monthly housing permits filed by builders in the Houston Area.

Aug 2015	2,347
Sep 2015	3,139
Oct 2015	2,252
Nov 2015	1,925
Dec 2015	2,105
Jan 2016	1,928
Feb 2016	2,424
Mar 2016	2,912
Apr 2016	2,351
May 2016	2,577
June 2016	3,010
July 2016	2,123
Aug 2016	2,735
Aug 15 v. Aug 16	16.5%



MARKET	Sep 14-Sep 15	Sep 15 - Aug 16	ANNUAL % CHANGE	-	-
Grand Total	33,151	29,481	-11.1%		
Lennar Homes	1,838	1,660	-9.7%	-	-
DR Horton Homes	1,655	1,591	-3.9%	-	-
Perry Homes	1,443	1,309	-9.3%	-	-
Postwood/Long Lk	1,229	1,187	-3.4%	-	-
KB Homes	1,019	924	-9.3%	-	-
Express Homes	741	827	11.6%	-	-
Meritage Homes	925	785	-15.1%	-	-
Beazer Homes	830	766	-7.7%	-	-
Taylor Morrison	828	763	-7.9%	-	-
David Weekley	650	703	8.2%	-	-
	-	-		-	-

Monthly permit activity shows a 16.5% increase between August 2015 and August 2016, while annual permit numbers continue to soften, reporting a 11.1% decrease for the Houston market area for the twelve month period ending August, 2016. The top ten builders account for 35.67% of permit activity in the Houston market area, issuing 10,515 permits for the twelve month permit ending August, 2016.

Congress Reinstates Health Reimbursement Arrangements



In a major victory for home building firms and other small businesses across the land, the Senate recently passed the 21st Century Cures Act, a comprehensive health care package which includes a provision to allow employers to provide Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRAs) to help their employees pay for health insurance.

The House approved the bill last week and President Obama is expected to sign the measure into law shortly.

“NAHB has been spearheading efforts to reinstate the use of HRAs since the IRS issued guidance prohibiting their use,” said NAHB Chairman Ed Brady. “This bipartisan legislation is an important step forward to allow small business owners to help their workers with rising health care costs and to ensure more Americans receive affordable health coverage. At the same time, it will protect employers against outrageous fines for providing this cost-sharing option to their workers.”

HRAs allow small businesses to offer pre-tax dollars to insured employees to help pay premiums and/or other out-of-pocket costs associated with medical care and services. Most small companies do not have human resource departments or benefits specialists. HRAs offer these businesses a simpler, easier way to help their employees to obtain health coverage.

The Internal Revenue Service issued guidance in 2013 stating that employers are no longer able to use HRAs because they don't meet the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Not only did the IRS make HRAs illegal, the agency decreed that all employers can face fines of \$100 per day per employee if they offer this benefit to their workers. That can add up to \$36,500 per employee over the course of a year and up to \$500,000 per company. This \$100 per day penalty went into effect on July 1, 2015.

NAHB has led the charge working independently and with a coalition of other business organizations to

remedy this injustice by calling on the IRS to revoke its ruling on the use of HRAs and pushing for a congressional solution.

At NAHB's urging, a section was added to the 21st Century Cures Act that would reinstate the use of HRAs and rescind the punitive IRS penalties associated with them.

“NAHB commends Congress for bringing choice and affordability to the health care marketplace by allowing small employers to once again use HRAs,” said Brady.

For more information, contact Suzanne Beall at 800-368-5242 x8407.



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Gerber® Adds Hinsdale Suite of Decorative Products



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WOODRIDGE, Ill. — Gerber®, an industry leader in high performing plumbing fixtures, has added a beautiful collection of decorative products to its vitreous china product mix.

The Hinsdale suite, which will debut at Orlando's Design & Construction Week in January, features a modern traditional styling. With its blend of contemporary design elements, the products within the family bring a more updated and relevant look to today's market who still prefer traditional aspects to their décor.

Hinsdale styling is offered in several products: a two-piece high efficiency toilet operating at 1.28 gallons per flush/4.8 liters, a 25" pedestal sink and a 21" petite pedestal sink. The sink basins are also available with a shroud if users prefer a wall hung, space saving option to the pedestal. All products are available in White.

The WaterSense®-certified Hinsdale toilet is the first Gerber product to feature the brand's proprietary QuietClean™ flushing system. QuietClean combines the best tank components in the industry with dual-siphon jet technology that pushes water down through the top of the bowl instead of up from the bottom — offering a powerful swirl effect for superior cleaning and unparalleled performance.

"Hinsdale is one of our most beautiful decorative suites to date," says Lovin Saini, senior product manager for Gerber. "We're excited about the new QuietClean technology in the toilet because it delivers the highest of performance that Gerber is known for, yet provides a discreet quiet flush. It's perfect for powder rooms where guests might be the number one user. It allows greater privacy when using the bathroom and leaves a clean bowl."

For more information on the Hinsdale suite product line, visit www.gerberonline.com or call (866) 538-5536.





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