

Builders' Showcase



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Pete Scholl of Scholl Construction in Crystal Lake has 12 building projects underway. This ranch home in Huntley's Henning Estates subdivision should be ready for occupancy for the new owner in September.

Home builders stay busy in tough times

Not all is doom and gloom for every builder in the new-home market.

Construction is underway, for example, on homes for three customers at Henning Estates in Huntley.

In St. Charles, John Hall Jr., president of John Hall Homes, said his company had eight sales in the past year at The Reserve subdivision. "The Reserve is attached to River's Edge North where we built 28 homes in past years and just sold the last lot. That means we are sold out in River's Edge."

In Crystal Lake, Peter



REVIEWS

Jerry Kuyper

Scholl Construction office manager Barb Merkel reported equally positive news.

"We are busy and we are doing well in bad times," she said. "In fact, we are busier than usual with 12 projects on the books and 23 carpenters staying busy."

The work for Scholl Construction is on big and small projects, such as a sunroom, pole barn or finishing a base-

ment. But several projects are bigger, such as a house in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood and another project at Delavan, WI. "That one is at Camp Delavan where Pete (Scholl) is building an indoor tennis house with suites above it. When completed, that will be pretty neat."

The three new ranches at Henning Estates are for empty-nesters from Huntley, Lakewood and Hoffman Estates. Ryan VanLue, president of Rock Creek Homes, Elgin, credited price and design as factors in the sales.

"We see this as a validation that even in these tough economic times, the right home at the right price point with the right mix of luxury amenities like granite countertops or hardwood flooring is all that is necessary to convince families to sign on the dotted line," VanLue said.

Construction is progressing on the South Haven plan, a 2,260 square-foot, ranch home with optional three-car side-load garage. With a base price of \$396,900, the semi-custom home will feature a brick and stone exterior, two bedrooms, two baths, family

room with volume ceiling, dining room, living room or den, kitchen with hardwood cabinets, and a full basement.

The South Haven model, which will be delivered to the Huntley customer in September, will feature a custom fireplace in a family room, site-finished hardwood flooring, a formal dining room, 9-foot first-floor ceilings, central air conditioning, master bedroom with custom ceiling, and master bathroom with dual bowl vanity and ceramic floor tile.

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The other two homes should be completed and ready for occupancy before year's end. The Lakewood buyer will get a 2,023-square-foot Brunswick model with three bedrooms and two baths, and the Hoffman Estates customer a 1,803-square-foot New Castle with two bedrooms and two baths.

The recently opened, second phase of development at Henning Estates stretches over 110 acres and will accommodate 103 homesites. Each home will contain a basement, hardwood floors, stainless steel appliances, vaulted ceilings, energy efficient furnace and air conditioning, insulated windows, finished insulated garages, staggered maple cabinets, ceramic floor tile in baths, luxury master baths, and landscaped front yards.

Options include stone hearth fireplaces, walk-out basements, skylights, stamped concrete patios, and additional bedrooms.

Homes are base priced from the \$360,000's (including home site) and provide 1,800 to 2,260 square-feet of stair-free living space. The ranches are set on one-third acre sites and none of them will back another home. Each owner has private views of woods, tall grass prairies, and ponds or wetlands.

"We are thrilled to death to be building three of our luxury ranch homes for lucky home owners over the next few months," VanLue said.

Hall's company, based in St. Charles, builds custom homes at upscale subdivisions in that city and in Elgin. "In west Elgin, we have three lots in Tall Oaks and only two lots left in Highland Woods," he said. "We have compelling price points as each of the three wooded lots are priced at \$50,000 apiece and they range from one-half to three-quarters of an acre. You can have a beautiful lot and home package in a neighborhood of \$1 million custom homes for \$450,000 and up from us.

"One of our incentives in Highland Woods, where lots are more like a third of an acre, is a free walk-out lower level. The price range in Highland Woods for house and lot is in the upper



Photo provided

Hardwood floors and an open design are features in ranch homes at Henning Estates in Huntley.

\$400,000s to upper \$900,000s.

"We have been offering some really strong incentives on price points and, out of all the areas I track on our Web site, Elgin is one of the strongest areas that gets researched. We could use more activity out there. In the two custom areas of Tall Oaks and Highland Woods, there just are not enough homes built for people to get comfortable yet. We need to get rooftops. Activity breeds activity and we have that in St. Charles but we do not have it yet in Elgin."

While his custom home company is busy, other smaller builders in the Fox River Valley are not.

As president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Fox Valley, Hall keeps tabs on the membership. "Overall my builder members, guys like me, are reporting slow

traffic at building sites. Sometimes it is not even slow. It is nonexistent. But the few people who do show up are real buyers. Our associate members, which includes the guys who do closets, the plumbers, electricians and other tradespeople, report that things are picking up slightly," Hall said. "These guys service a wide variety of builders, from the big ones like Pulte to the smaller ones like us."

Buyers at The Reserve of St. Charles can bring in their own floor plan, start from scratch on a one-of-a-kind residence with a John Hall architect, or choose from 17 customizable ranch and two-story designs, each providing three to five bedrooms, three to five baths, formal living and dining rooms, family room, kitchen, basement and 2,800 to 4,500 square feet of

living space.

Prices on lot-plus-home packages, including landscaping, range from the \$490,000s to \$875,000.

For information, call 630-377-1515, visit www.johnhall-homes.com or email johnjr@johnhallhomes.com.

Henning Estates is on Church Road, one-quarter mile east of Route 20 and two miles north of Interstate 90. To set up an appointment to view the community or meet with a Rock Creek Homes representative, call 847-338-3821, 815-923 2717 or visit www.rockcreekhomesil.com or www.Henningestates.com. Two sales models built in the past year are open to the public.

To talk to Merkel or Peter Scholl, call 815-479-0910 (office) or 815-271-1832 (cell) or visit www.schollconstruction.net or www.facebook.com/

schollconstructioncompany.com.

"I do not know why we are so busy, but word of mouth really helps," Merkel said. "We get a lot of customer referrals and just great references. Recently, we moved from rural Woodstock to 5908 Edgewood Road in Crystal Lake and I do not know if that has helped or not," Merkel added. "I don't think the move hurt though as we were in a pretty remote location before."

"Pete is a young and honest guy and people can see that. We spend a lot of time breaking down the pricing, showing just what the customer is paying for plumbing, electrical, carpentry, etc. Pete spends a lot of time showing just what the customer is getting for his or her money. When you do business like that, you develop a pretty good reputation pretty fast."