

Business of the Week

Bickell Built Homes Ltd.



By Dan Rankin

Our Business of the Week is your local high-quality custom home builder, Bickell Built Homes Ltd., co-owned by Marie and Dan Bickell and their son, general manager Brett Bickell.

The business was started in 1987 under the name Bickell Construction Ltd. "That was run by dad and his brother, and some of his other brothers worked for them," Brett said, from the kitchen of one of the semi-detached homes the company has built in the Diamondridge Park Subdivision on St. Maria Street just off Church Street in St. Marys. "They didn't do new homes, but they did renovations and stuff like that. Then, in the early

2000s, we started doing almost exclusively new homes. We changed the name at that point in time to Bickell Built Homes." Brett jokes that he grew up on job sites, "voluntarily and involuntarily."

"I got into construction that way," he said. "Right after high school, in 2002, I went and worked for a contractor who wasn't my dad, so it was a little bit different. That's when I started working full-time in construction, doing roofs and things like that."

After graduating from Fanshawe, he returned to St. Marys and has been building houses ever since. He estimates Bickell Built Homes has built over 70 homes in St. Marys and area in that span.

Today, his mother looks after the office, his dad takes care of production and Brett oversees it all, while Jonathan Bickell works as site supervisor. Energy efficiency and accessibility are major focuses for Bickell Built Homes, he said.

"All of our homes are tested and modeled for the Energuide Program," he said. "Accessibility and what's called universal design is another big thing we're looking at more. If somebody comes into this house in a wheelchair, can they get into a bathroom? Can they turn their wheelchair around in the bathroom?"

With regulations always changing, he said those are areas they are trying to be "out in front of."

"A whole package is really what we're trying to sell," he said. "The outside and inside comes

together in a whole package. We have designers that work with our customers and we find that works really, really well."

Someone interested in building a home in town can reach out to Bickell Built Homes right from the lot selection process. "If they need a lot, we would look at where they want to build," Brett said. When the buyers have decided on a lot and put down a deposit, the design process can start and house plans begin to be drafted. When the plans are done, "we put together a contract to build the house and build it," he said. "In a rural setting, you put a deposit down to start drawings and it's the same kind of process."

Look ahead to the spring, Bickell Built Homes will be working on putting up two custom homes in Meadowsridge, he said.

As for Diamondridge Park where some semi-detached buildings are still for sale, Brett said the bungalow and two-floor "bungalow" homes are ideal for people looking to downsize, but still live somewhere with a custom home feel. "These have the same specs that we do in a high-end custom home, but just in a smaller envelope," he said. "The idea behind a 'bungalow' is that you can live on one floor, with your master bedroom and laundry room and bathroom. Then, when you have guests, they can live upstairs. That way, you've got the best of both worlds."

Find Bickell Built Homes, Ltd. on Facebook, on their website BickellBuiltHomes.com, or by calling 519-284-1749.

Independent Shorts

- The Town of St. Marys web site, TownofStMarys.com, has undergone a recent facelift. At a recent Committee of the Whole meeting, Coun. Pope said she thought it looked "phenomenal" and commended staff on the changes.
- Every Tuesday night from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm beginning Feb. 23, things are going to get a little groovy at the St. Marys Bowling Lanes. That will be the first installment of the establishment's newly added "Glow in the Dark Night." In addition to the new Tuesday night bowling, the lanes will also be open Wednesday nights from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm for good old-fashioned five-pin bowling beginning Wednesday, Feb. 24. They remain open Fridays, 6:30 pm to 11:00 pm, Saturdays 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm to 11:00 pm, and Sundays 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. For more information, call the St. Marys Bowling Lanes at 226-661-0204.
- Three films coming to theatres this weekend include the new R-rated Marvel comics film Deadpool, starring Ryan Reynolds (which currently has an 81 percent rating on the movie ratings site RottenTomatoes.com), Ben Stiller's male model comedy sequel Zoolander 2 which also stars Will Ferrell, Owen Wilson and Kristen Wiig (rated rotten at 30 percent), and the raunchy rom com How To Be Single, starring Rebel Wilson, Dakota Johnson and Leslie Mann (rated a marginally better 48 percent).

Jennies



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