

High-tech Erie house brings home award for local company

A go-go gadget house is putting Erie on the national map, and it's a winner on many levels. TecHome Builder Magazine recognized Whitetail Electronics as the top system integrator in the Mid-Atlantic region with an Innovative Housing Technology Award (IHTA) that recognizes significant advances in the housing industry. The company beat some major national powerhouses in competition. Whitetail Electronics President Gregg Butalia and installation supervisor Tony Berarducci teamed up with builder Tim Colvin to bring the national award home to Erie for their part in designing and installing optimum electronic controls in a new Erie home, and the system just gets better with age because homeowners can, and did, expand beyond the original concept.

"We started off with a sophisticated installation for music, security and more, and then the homeowner wanted to add real 'wow' factors to it," Butalia said. "Now, it encompasses the entire house and recently-finished pool area. It was a great collaboration with the homeowners, Tim Colvin and us. This is the kind of house you'll only see once every five or 10 years."

It all started a year or so ago when Colvin had a client who wanted to build a new home full of bells and whistles. It includes marble and granite, a five-car garage and fabulous décor. But, it's a functioning wonder as well with 15 zones — areas of the house that offer complete control for everything electronic.

"I can't take any of the credit for this," Colvin said. "This is all Whitetail. We just made the holes in the right places for them to run all the wires."

So what is it this system? At a touch of a button, homeowners easily access and control all the lighting, heating and air conditioning, security cameras, fire system, phone/cable, two home theater systems, 14 recessed speakers, outdoor rock speakers, Sirius/XM-DirecTV, I-pod and Internet distributed in the 15 zones.

Homeowners can control everything from any of the 7-inch LCD touch screen keypads and music/intercom keypads located around the house. As an example of security, the homeowners have audio and visual communication with the outdoors, including the pool area. They can view the grounds from any of the LCD touch screens and televisions in the house.

This top-to-the-line installation features a Digilinx system — an IP-based whole-house entertainment and control system that homeowners can operate from touch screens, remotes, PDAs, computers and other Web-enabled devices.

Home File

Pam Parker



Whitetail's accomplishment will be featured on several Web sites and in articles that appear in magazines associated with www.techhomebuilder.com, www.cepro.com and www.electronichouse.com.

This kind of installation is nothing new to Butalia. Back in 1993, he started his business in Pennsylvania's Pocono area working on electronic houses. By 1995, he was already certified to handle installations on homes that rivaled the "Smart Houses" which debuted at the National Association of Home Builders' Awards. The Smart House was one of those early developments that allowed lights to come on with movement in a room and a host of other electronic gadgets, but Butalia pointed out one big flaw in the old systems.

"If it went down, your lighting, heating and everything else went with it," he said.

Now, Butalia said newer systems have kicked the problems of early installations. "We never hear 'my house doesn't work,'" he said. "Our system integrates everything, but homeowners can easily override it and go to the thermostat, TV, music or intercom and manually use them."

Since opening the Erie office six years ago, Whitetail Electronics has handled both residential and commercial applications in this region, and the company won three local residential awards for design and installation. Bay Harbor Marina is one of the company's commercial success stories. The company still operates its Pocono office.

Butalia said the biggest benefit his company offers to builders and homeowners is the "one call" concept. Butalia explained that his company designs and installs all of the systems a homeowner might want with one call. His company does everything from hanging a wall-sized TV to installing a fully integrated system like Digilinx.

Another big advantage of this newer, upscale system is the continued expandability. If homeowners want to add more later, Butalia can make the addition.

Contact Pam Parker at eckertparker@roadrunner.com.



Beyond BBQ basics

By **CHUCK ROSS**
CTW Features

Today's gas barbeque grills offer more features than ever. In fact, manufacturers are incorporating so many bells and whistles that it can be difficult to understand what all those added conveniences actually do. Here's a short list of some of the options you're likely to find burning up the showroom floors this season.

Infrared Burners

These burners just entered the mid-priced grill market in the last year or so, when a key patent on their technology expired. Propane (or natural gas) heats a ceramic tile designed to emit infrared heat—the same kind of heat the sun emits. These burners can reach 900 degrees to sear meat on contact. Watch that timer, though—those steaks will be done in half the time it takes a standard gas grill to do the job.

Rotisserie Units

These gadgets let you make your own rotisserie-style chicken or duck outdoors, without smoking up your kitchen. Higher-

end models may offer baskets instead of forks, so you don't have to worry about fragile foods falling off the tines. Smaller models may be powered by a battery, but larger units will require an electrical connection, so you'll need to have access to a nearby outdoor plug if you're keen on creating your own outdoor deli.

Smoker Boxes

Sometimes removable, these stainless steel containers can hold wood chips or chunks to add that delicious smoky flavor that comes from cooking over an open fire. Removable models can be taken off the grill to create more room for quantity cooking.

Side Burners

With side burners, your grill is transformed into a complete outdoor appliance, eliminating the hassle of minding both indoor and outdoor cooking devices at the same time. One space-planning tip to think about, however, is that these burners often take the place of one or both side shelves, so you may need to consider other options for resting food and utensils when creating your own outdoor kitchen.

COMBATING PREDATORY LENDING WITH FAIR HOUSING AND FAIR LENDING LAWS

Thursday, July 24, 2008
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

FREE SEMINAR

Blasco Memorial Library
H.G. Hirt Auditorium
160 East Front Street
Erie, Pennsylvania

Presented by:
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and
Erie County Human Relations Commission

To Register please contact Charlotte Scalise at 814.451.7021
or cscalise@eriecountygov.org



www.RockErie.com
Stay TUNED IN to the local music scene.