The Ladera Post

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Million-dollar baby

Self-made man realizes family dream

BY JOHN DUNCAN
THE LADERA POST

Jeff Norman is a self-made man. A self-made man who is grateful to all the people who helped him realize his family's dream home currently being built in Ladera Ranch.

Jeff and his wife Michelle have three children; Trent, 8, and twin girls, Carissa and Nicolette (Nikki), 6.

Norman owns two financial planning companies, American Family Pre-Paid Legal Corporation and Heritage Marketing and Insurance Company.

His Covenant Hill's property was the first home to close escrow in the village, closing at $4 million. The Normans will be moving into their new home in July.

"It was a challenge to be the first to close. Greg Burke (his realtor) did a lot to make (closing) a pleasurable experience," Norman said.

Burke, Realtor and vice president of South Shore Financial Services, took to the challenge easily. There were no comparable prices for Covenant Hills so Burke went to similar developments to develop a loan package.

$4 MILLION WALK-THRU

Currently the house is under con-

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Find out what challenges Ladera Ranch realtors face when selling high-end homes, and what obstacles buyers may face when they want to purchase their dream home. It doesn't have to be a nightmare when you want to purchase your dream home.

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Find out what challenges an architect faces in designing homes in Ladera. Architect Samir Hannouche discusses the difference between high end and low end homes. He talks about how every room should evoke an emotion when you enter it.

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Reporter John Duncan looks at techniques that keep children from being spoiled by their parents. A study from the Center on Wealth and Prosperity of Boston College estimates that $41 trillion will be inherited by baby boomers and their families over the next 50 years.

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Find out what kind of challenges a designer and a landscaper face when doing a high priced job. Interior designer Beth Whitlinger and landscaper Amy Belt answer questions about their professions in Ladera.

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Home tour offers design tips

Front Street Realty and Mortgage shows residents how to live high class, with low costs.

BY DIONA CARILLO
THE LADERA POST

Ron Luna feela he's found a way to show residents that you can have high class without high cost.

For an entrance fee of $5 for adults and $2 for children under 12, Ladera Ranch residents, or any potential home buyers, can visit the first annual Ladera Ranch House of Design showing at 11 Patina, Terramor Village on Saturday and Sunday up to March 5 from 11-4 pm.

Luna, of Front Street Realty and Mortgage, and owns the home, collaborated with Bombay home furnishings, located in the Mercantile East Shopping Center in Ladera Ranch, to show that buyers can actually afford to buy homes ranging from $1 million and above.

"You can buy a $1 million home, furnish it, and have it look like a $4 million home without the extra cost," Luna said.

Gina McGinnis, manager at Bombay, said Bombay accepted the offer to fully furnish Luna's house to become more involved with the community.

JORGE MEDINA/THE LADERA POST
Ron Luna, of Front Street Realty and Mortgage, sits inside the living room of the design home.

Bombay hopes to have all furniture in the home be given their own home once everything in the house is priced for sale on March 4 and 5, the last weekend the house will be available for viewing.

McGinnis explained that their accessories (lotions, towels, soaps, etc.) range from $20 and their furniture (beds, chairs, tables, etc.) range from $100 to $1500.

In addition, Bombay is also offering viewers of Luna's home coupons for the store and a chance to win a $500 Bombay gift card.

"It (an unfurnished home) doesn't look the same as being in your home, so by showing people our accessories and furniture in a home, they can see how all our products can be used for their home," McGinnis said.

Sunset magazine team has also featured an "idea home,"

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HOW TO SEE HOME

WHAT: First annual Ladera Ranch House of Design showing.
WHERE: 11 Patina, Terramor Village in Ladera Ranch
WHEN: On Saturday and Sunday up to March 5 from 11-4 pm
HOW MUCH: Entrance fee of $5 for adults and $2 for children under 12

Coco's looks for summer reopening

BY RITA FREEMAN
STAFF WRITER

Three weeks after a fire damaged a popular Coco's Bakery Restaurant in Mission Viejo, officials are hopeful the restaurant, known for its community meeting grounds and regular customers, could reopen by the summer.

The Catalina Restaurant Group, owner of Coco's and Carrows restaurants, is working with Mission Viejo city officials, engineers and its insurance company to determine the damage and what's needed to repair the 20-year-old restaurant at 27750 Crown Valley Parkway, said Sam Borgese, president of Catalina Restaurant Group.

The Crown Valley location is one of the larger Coco's in the Orange County area, Borgese said. The 7,000-square-foot restaurant is near the San Diego (I-5) Freeway, across the street from the Kaleidoscope Courtyard and adjacent to Mission Hospital and other shopping centers and medical offices.

Several business groups or organizations gathered at least four times a week in the private banquet room for seminars, workshops or networking meetings.

"The Crown Valley location brings a lot of people from the east side of the 5 to the west," Borgese said. "We're very anxious to have it rebuilt. We're anxious to see our guests again."

The fire was reported at 3:09 a.m. on Jan. 5, causing about $700,000 damage, mostly to the restaurant's kitchen and attic area. The restaurant was unoccupied at the time, and there were no reports of injuries, said Orange County Fire Authority officials.

The cause was determined to have been some cooking equipment that had been accidentally left on, said OCFA Capt. Stephen Miller.

About 200 calls or inquiries have been received since the fire.

The restaurant's 40-50 employees have been relocated to other Coco's restaurants in the

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struction but walking through the house one can envision how the house will look. The view from the property, especially at dusk, sold Jeff and Michelle on the house.

"As we were going through the obstacles, a couple of times, I said to the Normans, 'Are you sure you want to buy here?' Burke said. "They told me, 'We went (to the home site) at sunset and that's just our house.'"

The house has a panoramic view of the Saddleback Valley into Newport Beach and, on a clear day, the ocean.

Mike Kerr, owner of Terra Bella Development, Inc. of Laguna Hills, is building the home.

"I know what it's like to not have money, (Michelle and I) started in a single-bedroom apartment with $700 in the bank."

JEFF NORMAN
OWNER

"I design homes for families as if I were going to live in them myself," Kerr said, "As the father of five boys I understand the need for both shared and private space. (The Norman's Home) is highlighted by separate adult and children's wings, with separate staircases that lead to the heart of the home – the kitchen, family room and game room."

Kerr also said that the home was designed to promote entertaining, which is something important to the Normans.

For entertaining the house will host a state-of-the-art theater room, with drop-down screen and electronic shades; a swimming pool with a swim-up bar; A U-shaped barbecue pit and four outdoor plasma TVs.

Michelle enjoys cooking and the kitchen will contain marble countertops, warming ovens, a 12 ft by 5 ft center-island and a 48-inch sub-zero refrigerator.

"She's really a gourmet cook. We'll go out to eat a great meal and then a few days later she'll prepare that exact meal at home," Jeff said.

Michelle also does crafts for parties. She has designed holiday-themed items and party favors for years. There is a craft room built into the plans for one of the garages.

Inside the house is a game room with a wet-bar and a climate-controlled wine room. The game room will also hold the Norman's English-style Pool table.

SPANISH FEEL

The exterior of the house will be in the Spanish Mission style.

Kerr uses Samir Hannouche of Dawson Hannouche Partners (DHP) in Newport Beach, as his architect. Hannouche is a world-renowned architect. He first designed buildings in

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FOUR MILLION DOLLAR HOME

Interior design enhances resale value

BY JOHN DUNCAN
THE LADERA POST

The interior design of one's home can enhance the livability of a residence as well as increase the resale value of a home.

Beth Whitlinger an award-winning interior designer says that designers can also work within your budget to create a home design.

"We can make your interior dreams come true within your budget and time frame," Whitlinger said.

Whitlinger has been working in interior design since the early 1980s. She has been in California since 1990 and has had her own design firm, Beth Whitlinger Interior Design (in Rancho Santa Margarita), since 1994.

She says of her service, "I take a more architectural approach to an interior space, not adding decoration unless the structure of the item calls for it. I believe in the adage 'form follows function' and think that excessive decoration can not only clutter a space but render an item difficult or uncomfortable to use."

What does an interior designer offer that an Interior decorator cannot?

An Interior Designer can execute a project from start to finish. He or she becomes your agent, dealing with local building codes, building departments, and licensed contractors. Designers handle all types of projects from new construction design/build and remodeling to a "fluff and puff" or re-freshening or your interior.

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They are educated, experienced, and have industry affiliations and state recognition of their status if Certified. Their fees are typically based on the services they are providing for you, as opposed to a mark up on items they may be selling to you.

A designer will always provide you with a professional letter of agreement or contract itemizing the exact nature of the services they will be providing for your project.

There are so many stores out there; I have good taste, can't I do this myself?

Certain options could certainly be done on your own if you choose. However, your designer has the access and ability to work with specialty or trade workrooms and showrooms not open to the public. Many of these workrooms and trade showrooms offer pricing much lower than retail furniture stores for a much higher quality product. A designer also has the ability to make a product unique, unlike furniture stores. The options for customizing items are endless.

What do I do before meeting with a designer?

Preparing for your initial meeting with your designer will help get the project flowing in the right direction. Communication is the key to both a successful relationship with your designer, and a beautiful usable space.

Do some homework. Go through magazines and start an idea file. Pull out anything that catches you eye. It may be just a sofa leg or a drapery style that you like, but this visual media can communicate to your designer the style and feeling you're looking for.

Give some series thought to you budget. Remember you need to include furniture, accessories, labor and materials, and your designer's fee. Communicate this total to your designer. Don't be afraid to discuss this amount. Trusting that your designer will not spend more than you specify is an important part of the relationship. A budget of all items should be given to you in writing before anything is ordered.

Above all, relax and enjoy the process. Having your home disrupted is stressful, but if your designers has communicated his or her vision for your space, that will carry you through the process. When the project is completed, clients always say that it was worth the disruption to get to the end result..

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his native Lebanon before coming to America.

Norman said that the architecture is amazing.

"If you stand at one end of the house and look down the hallway, it is arched doorways all the way down." Hannouche said. "Every area you walk into (in a house) you want to have an emotion or a feeling."

The interior of the house will also be in the Spanish Mission style incorporating, however, the many modern qualities of a digital home.

Beth Whitlinger, of Beth Whitlinger Interior Designs, is the interior designer. She is an award winning designer and was a winning designer on HDTV's "Designer Challenge."

"The designer's job is to satisfy the client while keeping them on track with the style (In this case Spanish Mission)," Whitlinger said.

SMART HOME

The Norman property will be a truly digital home.

Ken Hoffman, owner of Digital Home Design, and Cesar Guererro, A/V Manager, have the task of making the Norman home into a technological marvel.

Jeff is a football fan and won't have any trouble keeping

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Exterior design can be cost effective

BY JOHN DUNCAN
THE LADERA POST

The exterior landscape design of a home doesn't have to be a back or bank-breaking experience.

Landscape designers help to add elements that will complement the style of a home. Amy Belt, owner of Amy Belt Landscape Design in Mission Viejo works exclusively in Ladera Ranch.

She is used to working with LARMAC to get their approval for the plans she designs using Computer-aided design to scale and plot the design elements. Her work has been seen on HDTV's "Landscaper's Challenge" and "Outer Spaces."

Her designs incorporate hardscape (patio, walls, barbecues, fireplaces) and softscape (trees, shrubs, turf, etc) elements. She is helpful in choosing materials and styles within a budget.

There are examples of her work on her Web site, www.AmyBelt.com. She can also be contacted by phone at (949) 367-4522.

What is the difference between working with the high-end client and the client with more modest means?

There really is no difference in terms of working with the high-end client and the modest-budget client. I have worked with over a hundred homeowners in Ladera since June, 2000. Many Ladera client's hire me to do second and third landscape designs.

MORE ONLINE
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They never leave Ladera.....they just roll up in square footage and price point. Many of my past client's are moving from within Ladera to the new gated Covenant Hills.

The most expensive home I have done is 3 Fox Hole Road, a custom-built home in Covenant Hills. The largest lot in square footage was on a production home located in the Sedona subdivision.

My high-end client's have larger budgets, which means more elements in the design.

Ladera Ranch properties have smaller lots (even in the high-end homes). What are the special challenges in working with a smaller lot and making it an appealing design?

Many of my client's want pools and solid-roof outdoor rooms. Sometimes the small areas are the biggest landscape challenge. I just finished a project on Main Street that has no back yard...just a tiny side yard and tiny front area.

I was able to fit a barbecue, firepit, two water features and three custom gates into this tiny space and it looks just beautiful!

What are the special challenges working with LARMAC in getting designs approved?

I have a great working relationship with LARMAC. I put together a HOA submittal packet for my clients that helps to ease the burden of gathering the necessary information for submitting to the Association.

What are your favorite parts of the job?

I enjoy the balance of being in the field at job sites combined with being in the office drawing on the computer.

One of my most rewarding parts of this job is to see a design I drew on paper transform into a beautiful peaceful oasis.

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track of his favorite team, the Rams, on the 21 plasma TV sets in the house.

In the Family is a CD/DVD system that can house over 900 CDs or DVDs.

Guerrero said that the system is basically a hard drive that is accessible by any TV in the house. A menu system allows anyone in the house to play a DVD, CD or watch TV. Everyone can be watching something different he explained.

The system is fully modularized. "If a hard disk goes bad, you can simply replace the drive and you are completely up and running again," Guerrero added.

The touch-panel display that is in every bedroom of the house and in most rooms is a 6.4 in touch screen to control access to the house. Security camera footage can be seen from these displays (also all TVs would have access to security camera footage). The touch panel displays also control the thermostats in the house, the lighting system and the house audio system.

"Everything is well-hidden, nice and clean," Guerrero says. "All the television sets will be in nice frames and there is even talk of having artwork over some of them that scrolls up and down as needed."

Guerrero says that, once completed, the lighting, audio and video and access to the house can all be controlled from the many touch-panel displays around the house.

Burke said that the house will be a testament to the spirit of the Normans.

"They just create a nice, warm atmosphere and are all about entertaining."

FAMILY GETS DREAM BEDROOMS

The children's rooms are being designed by Whitlinger with input from Trent and the twins.

On the wall of Trent's room is a mural of a skate park, expressing his love of skateboarding. Trent, like his father, is also into martial arts. Trent, 8, is a Blue-Belt in Kiado-Ryu Karate and has been doing martial arts since he was 5. His father is a Black Belt.

The six-year-old twins look alike with long blond hair but their personalities are different.

Michelle says that Nikki is a little princess and Carissa is more of a tom-boy (one of Carissa's early desires for the décor of her room was "a race-car theme").

Nikki's room is that of a Hollywood glamour queen. There is a four-poster bed with a gauzy canopy. Her desk can also serve as a vanity as she gets older. The bathroom's décor is metal and cracked glass tiles, adding to the Hollywood theme.

Early on in the process Carissa fell in love with a dolphin faucet set, so Whitlinger is designing Carissa's room in an ocean theme. There is a subtle wave pattern in the tiles in the bathroom.

Whitlinger said that all of the children's room "will grow with them." She explained that none of the designs in the rooms would be too kid-like.

"I could see Trent being happy with his room's design well into college," she added.

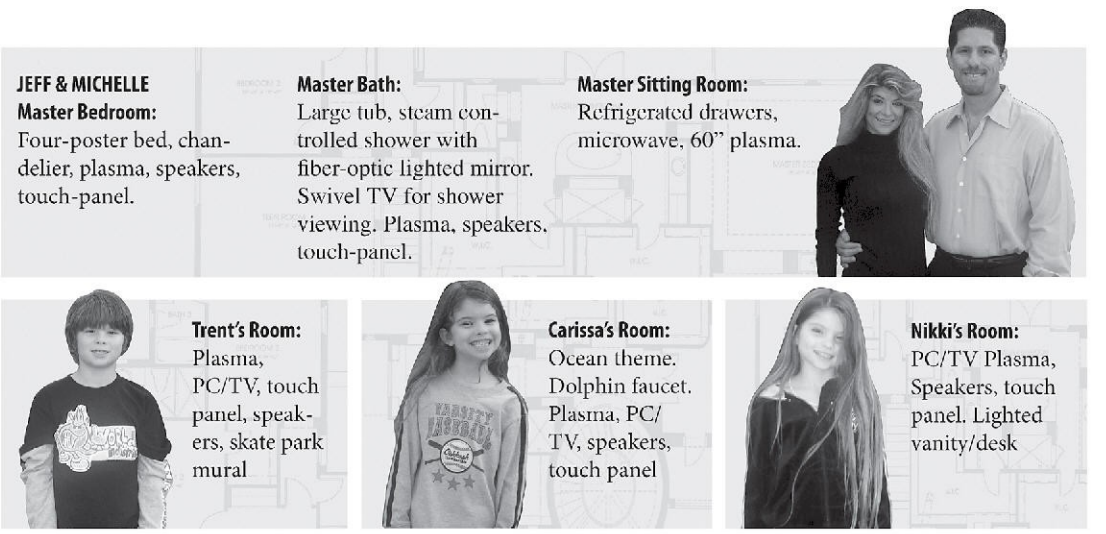
All the children's room will have the plasma-TV, control panel; PC/TV set that all the bedrooms have.

The master bedroom will contain all the amenities. The master sitting room will have refrigerated drawers, a microwave, the ubiquitous plasma TV and a barbecue pit on the deck.

Jeff laughed and said, "We can just live upstairs without ever having to go downstairs."

Norman said that the house is truly the realization of a dream.

"I know what it's like to not have money," Jeff said, "(Michelle and I) started in a single-bedroom apartment with $700 in the bank."



Coco's

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Southern California region, Borgese said.

"I'm going to miss it while they build it back up again," Chuck Gibson of Ladera Ranch said. "I was always surprised at how constantly busy it was. It always seemed to do a great deal of business."

Register staff writer John McDonald contributed to this report. To receive the latest information on the rebuilding of Coco's, visit cocosbakery.com

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