

Charity's Pearl benefits Boys & Girls Clubs

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There will be no mistaking the Charity House at Homearama 2002. Just look for the house topped with a blue heron weathervane.

The weathervane serves as the trademark of the custom homes built by Jerry Edmonds and Lana O'Meara of Designs of Distinction Ltd.

This year, as it catches the wind above the house called Charity's Pearl (House 10), the heron also represents the couple's support for Boys & Girls Clubs of South Hampton Roads. All proceeds from the sale of the Tidewater Builders Association/Cox Communications Charity House will go to the Boys & Girls Clubs — an organization that provides youth development programs in a safe environment for at-risk children.

"We have a special place in our hearts for helping children," O'Meara said. Her background gives her special insight into the value of organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs. She is a former elementary school teacher and counselor with the Norfolk Juvenile Court, and currently serves on the board of directors of Friends of the Norfolk Juvenile Court. "All children need structured activities and caring role models in order to develop into productive members of society. The Boys & Girls Clubs do an excellent job of providing that for at-risk children."

Edmonds and O'Meara are second-generation, award-winning builders. Edmonds is a certified building designer, with added experience in structural analysis. O'Meara holds a bachelor's degree in education and currently serves on the TBA Remodelers Council Executive Committee.

Since making their Homearama debut in 1998, when the showcase of homes first opened at Warrington Hall, the husband-and-wife team has won numerous awards. Last year, their Homearama showcase home, "Heron's Watch," at The Riverfront in Suffolk won Best in Show in the \$500,000 or less category. It also won Gold Awards for Most Creative and Best Patio or Deck.

Observant Warrington Hall visitors will see herons flying atop a number of homes built by O'Meara and Edmonds since Homearama 1998. The couple was so attracted to neighborhood's return-to-the-past con-



TIDEWATER BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

The blue heron weathervane is the signature piece of custom homes built by Lana O'Meara and Jerry Edmonds.

cept that they even moved into one of them nearly two years ago.

"The green areas, the 10-acre park, the wide, divided main road and medians make the neighborhood so much more open," O'Meara said. "The side-loading garages keep the cars off the street and out of sight. When we come home at night, we experience an immediate and welcome calmness, because of the neighborhood's serenity."

Since 1988, TBA members have helped Hampton Roads through their support of the Charity House program at Homearama. The 14 houses built to date have raised more than \$695,845 to help local children's organizations. Cox Communications, the Charity House co-sponsor, airs a documentary every year, detailing the home's construction.

The Charity House program sets the stage for TBA members to play an important supportive role in the future of area children.

"It's quite a team. Quite an effort," said Chet Emerson, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Hampton Roads. "Proceeds from this project make it possible for the Boys & Girls Clubs to continue its current programs and reach out to new communities without youth development programs."

Since Emerson came on board almost four years ago, a new 16,000-square-foot Boys & Girls Club was built in the

Green Run section of Virginia Beach, and new clubs were opened in Calvert Square in Norfolk and at the John F. Kennedy Middle School in Suffolk, bringing the total number of clubs in South Hampton Roads to eight. The number of children served by the clubs is expected to increase from 4,000 to 5,000.

Four more clubs, to be located on the Eastern Shore, and in Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Franklin, are being organized. In two years, the plan is to have 13 clubs throughout a 122-mile area, the largest area served by any one Boys & Girls Clubs organization in the country, according to Emerson.

Along with providing daily youth development programs, the area Boys & Girls Clubs are committed to increasing educational opportunities and updating computer technology, said Emerson. For teenagers, he said, there is a strong emphasis on teaching leadership and responsibility, as well as youth employment strategies.

"We are currently discussing the possibility of tapping into TBA's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program, which would benefit the club members who don't plan to go to college," said Emerson. "I believe many of our older club members would benefit from a relationship with a TBA member business."

"We appreciate the efforts of TBA in making a difference in the lives of our children and young adults."