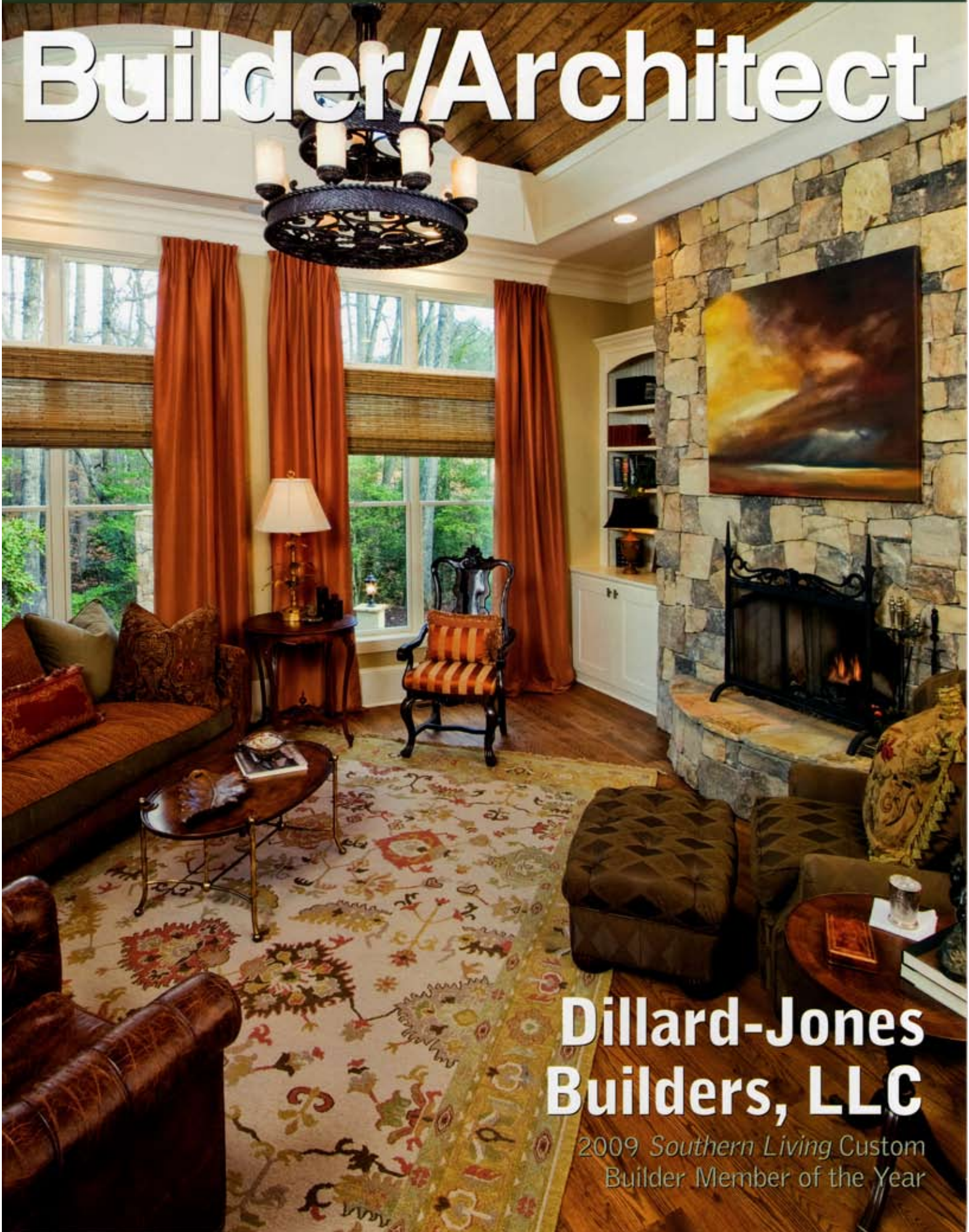


Builder/Architect



**Dillard-Jones
Builders, LLC**

*2009 Southern Living Custom
Builder Member of the Year*

Dillard-Jones Builders, LLC

Doing Things Right

By Jessica Klarp

When Tom Dillard, principal at Dillard-Jones Builders, LLC says he considers himself a partner in the building process, he means it. "We pride ourselves on our custom work," he said. "We concentrate on high-end, high-quality design/build projects that we design or include an architect, and then we work as a team with the homeowner to stay on budget and within the time frame. Everything is transparent."

From the first meeting to the final walkthrough and beyond, superior customer service and attention to detail are what separate this respected Greenville builder from the competition. So high are the company's standards that it was selected to be Greenville's representative in *Southern Living's* Custom Builder program. That accolade alone might distinguish the builder, but to Dillard it is the homeowner's praise and respect the builder most seeks. From the reaction of a recent client, he has succeeded beyond expectations.

The builder completes around eight to 10 custom homes a year, each one presenting its own challenges and rewards. The challenge at a Dillard-Jones Builders project recently completed at the Cliffs Falls South meant building on a very steep lake view lot with the directive to have the kitchen encompass the premium view spot. So, though the one-story home with attic bonus room that featured built-in bunk beds for the grandchildren and a finished basement that included a "man room" with dark stained wood ensconced wine cellar with an intimate café room for tastings, an adjacent area with widescreen TV and pool table, when the homeowner walked into the gourmet kitchen and saw the view to the lake as promised, he broke into tears of gratitude and relief.

Those very satisfied homeowners then referred the services of Dillard-Jones Builders to their good friends who wanted to build in The Cliffs at Keowee Springs. This home's relatively flat lot offered

Metallic tile and seeded glass light fixtures accentuate the kitchen at Walker's Bluff.



PHOTO BY STEPHEN STINSON

Customized coffered ceilings are a signature feature of all Dillard-Jones Builders homes. Inset photos: Thomas Dillard (President) and Susan Vernon (Vice President) of Dillard-Jones Builders, LLC

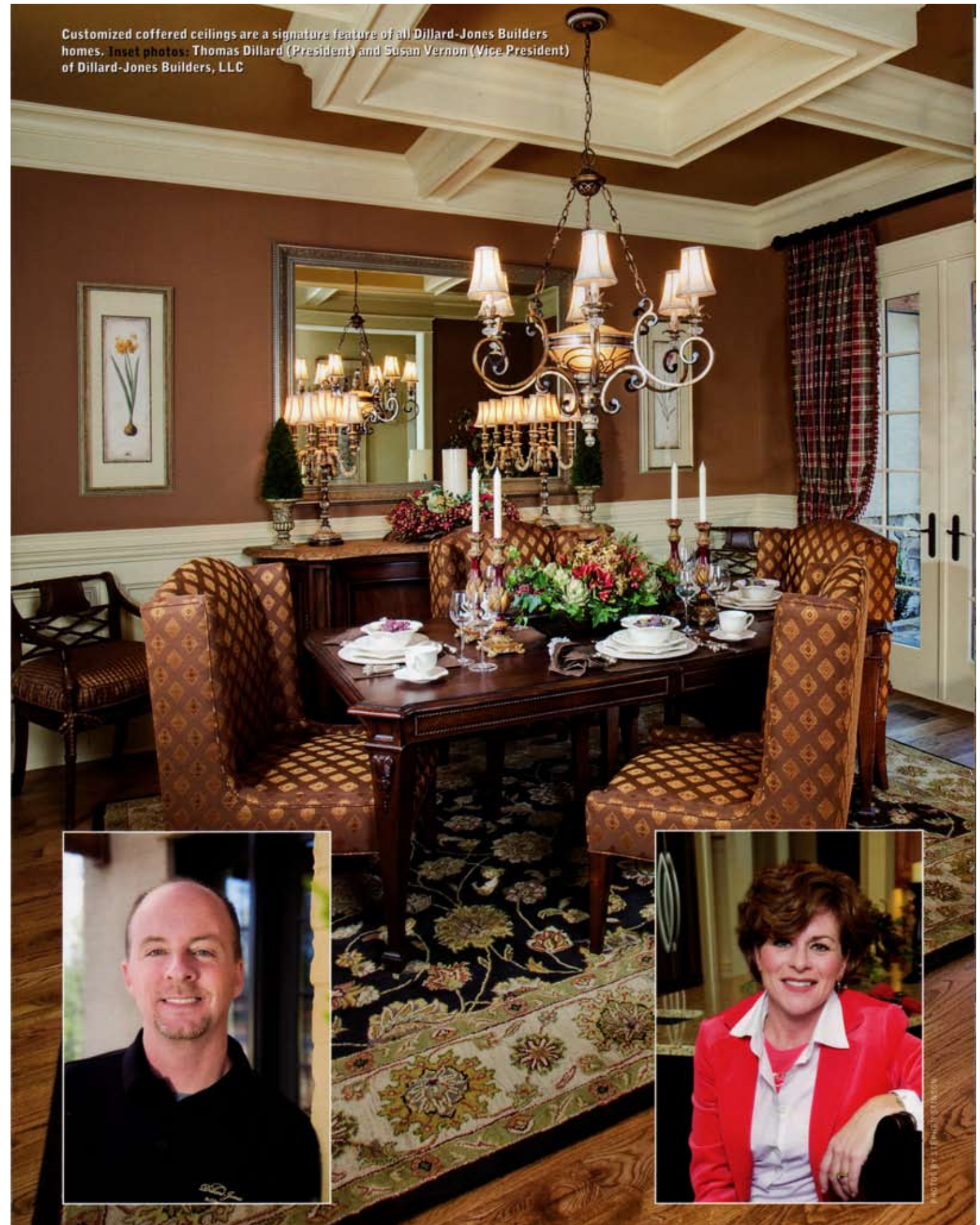


PHOTO BY STEPHEN STINSON



Custom-forged ironwork and faux-finished Tuscan plaster walls accent the wine cellar.

the builder an opportunity to extend the living area beyond the confines of the home's envelope. "We designed the whole home to take advantage of the view, so, though the home was wrapped in porches and decks, none obstructed the view from the two-story glass 'lake room,'" Dillard said. This home followed the trend of slightly smaller

Distinctive design elements make the Dillard-Jones Builders 2008 Southern Living Custom Builder member show house a real showplace.



PHOTOS BY STEPHEN STINSON

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homes, occupying 3,600 square feet, but the builder expanded that livable space by creating a lakeside fire pit and extensive patios.

A much larger home in Cliffs at Mountain Park reflects the tastes and trends desired by many Dillard-Jones Builders clients who fit into the retiring baby boomer demographic. The gorgeous low-maintenance 7,000-square-foot home on a ½-acre view lot features a post-and-beam core, stone-clad fireplaces, gourmet kitchen, rustic exterior finishes like stone, stucco and Old World brick, and a cedar shingle roof. What differentiates this home are the many "age-in-place" features that will offer the couple comfort and security for years to come: an elevator, easy access from the driveway into the garage and house, wider doorways, a roll-in shower and indoor "endless" pool. The interior has scads of custom details from trim to cabinetry and more than 2,500 square feet of outdoor verandas.

Dillard says he is seeing a trend toward smaller homes that have more custom details and low-maintenance features. "We have seen people getting away from dining rooms and master tubs and choosing instead large showers," he observed. "We actually do more custom doggie tubs than we do tubs for the master suite. But then we are all about value and customization, so we have become huge advocates of 'If you don't use it, lose it.'"

One thing that the company never varies on is its standard for green building. Each home Dillard-Jones Builders builds meets Energy Star standards and includes a host of green features that just make sense. "A few years ago we coined the phrase 'smart green' to describe the list of products and features we include in every one of our homes," he said, "because they just make sense and return a lot of value for our customers." These all focus on energy savings through high-efficiency appliances and HVAC systems,



The master bathroom at Walker's Bluff includes faux-finished cabinets, pedestal tub and walk-in shower.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN STINSON

PHOTO BY LISA CLAYTON



Special features of this Dillard-Jones Builders custom home at The Cliffs at Mountain Park include two master suites, an indoor swim-in-place pool and an elevator.

super insulated doors and windows, and air quality by using no-VOC paint, cellulose insulation and formaldehyde-free carpet.

The recently completed 2008 *Southern Living* show house includes the full complement of green features and a wide array of state-of-the-art technologies that make modern living more convenient. The home also offers convenience for potential clients who want to stay in Greenville proper. Dillard says that half of the custom homes he builds are inside the city limits and the many features included in the show house make it easy for new clients to see the quality and craftsmanship all in one home. "The *Southern Living* relationship is a big honor because it offers a third-party verification of our quality and standards, but at the same time it gave us the chance to put everything we do in one home, the tongue-in-groove barrel ceiling in the keeping room, the blown-in cellulose, the slate roof, the body spray system in the master shower. It's all there in one home. We were very pleased with the result."

In addition to custom-home building, due to demand from past clients and a shift in the marketplace, Dillard-Jones Builders now offers renovation services through its sister company, Elevations LLC. Like everything the company approaches, Elevations concentrates on

The study at Walker's Bluff features high ceilings with transom windows and two-story built-in bookcases.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN STINSON



delivering high-end, high-quality work in design/build renovations and enhancing outdoor living spaces. "It was a natural extension of our existing business," Dillard said. "Plus, it's fun to go in and improve a structure or a[n] under-used back yard." Most projects are extensive, completely transforming the home, adding extensive square footage, removing the roof and building up, or tearing out a side of the home and renovating the kitchen and living space with intricate detailing and custom features at every turn. Exterior details like patio kitchens, fire pits, terraced decking or plant filled hardscaping, waterfalls and pools are all aspects the company has recently completed for its satisfied customers.

With only five employees, the company has streamlined its systems and each team member has a designated role, which frees Dillard to do what he does best: serve the customer and oversee quality. Susan Vernon, the company's resident interior designer and Vice President, makes sure that customers stay within budget and assists in selections by accompanying each client to every supplier meeting. The efforts of an office manager, a job supervisor and a warranty specialist all guarantee that the process is as smooth as possible for clients. When the company was formed five years ago, Dillard shared the load with partner Bryan Jones. "We had a buyout planned from the start, so that's what happened at the end of 2007," Dillard said. "We are still good friends. I decided to keep the name to honor his commitment and contribution to the company." Dillard is Vice President of the Greenville HBA, will be president next year and currently serves as the 2009 Secretary on the Better Business Bureau Board of Directors.

It is Dillard's philosophy of respect and integrity that fuel the company's commitment to offering the best service possible. "We try to focus on things that give people more value for their money, but that last. Ethics are important to us. We want to do things right, and to do the right thing." With his positions within the HBA and his partnership with clients and subcontractors, not to mention his valued reputation for quality, Dillard feels that it is extra important to be honest, upfront and transparent in all things. "You have to walk the walk." ■

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