

SUCCESS BUILT ON EVALUATION AND INNOVATION

By MOLLY MURRAY
The News Journal

Word of mouth can be a powerful marketing tool for many businesses. That's what motivated Elizabeth Dolan to look at Estates at Dove Run, a Benchmark Builders development in Middletown.

Dolan said friends were living at another Benchmark development at the Village of Rocky Run. So when she went shopping, she looked at a Benchmark development, too.

"I really love it," she said.

Besides the design and the floor plan, Dolan said she is very pleased with the company's attention to its customers.

"They are very good about anything that needs to be fixed," she said, adding that from past experience, she can't say the same thing about all builders.

Wilmington-based Benchmark's growing reputation helped it receive recognition as an up and coming construction and real estate business.

One secret to the company's success, said Maura Glenn, the company's market-



The News Journal/ROBERT CRAIG

Benchmark Builders President Steven W. Bomberger is flanked by accountant Mary Smith (left) and marketing director Maura Glenn. The company says Delawareans demand sophisticated housing amenities.

ing director, is that innovation is encouraged from the top down.

"We try to design the houses, the communities to complement lifestyles," she said. That can range from young families to active adults. "We constantly evaluate what the market is looking for."

Glenn said the company

started small and then owner Steven W. Bomberger recognized the need for mid-priced homes. The company still strives to keep prices reasonable through the use of innovative construction products, she said.

Plus they try to find low-maintenance products for developments marketed to buyers 55 and older, she said.

Glenn said the Delaware market is very sophisticated because many people move here from other parts of the country. "They are very well-schooled in what they want," she said.

That means the company looks at both local and national construction trends.

The company offers a popular pre-wiring system in many homes to accommodate flat screen televisions, stereo systems, intercoms and security devices, she said.

In the application, Elizabeth Julian-Weinig, director of product development, stressed the high-efficiency energy consumption projects used in Benchmark's construction as one factor that

makes the company stand out. These products were used in more than two-thirds of the homes that Benchmark built in 2005, she wrote.

"That means that two-thirds of the homes we built last year were homes under the Energy Star Program," she wrote. "These homes meet the EPA guidelines for energy efficiency, which is greater than what local codes require.

In addition, she wrote that the company's strategy for growth over the next five years is to target an underserved housing market by providing affordable housing to active adults, single-family and urban consumers.

Contact Molly Murray at 856-7372 or nmurray@delawareonline.com.

BENCHMARK BUILDERS

WEB SITE: www.benchmarkbuilders.com

WHAT IT DOES: Develops residential communities and builds the houses in them.

DELAWARE EMPLOYEES: 42 full time, 3 part time

ANNUAL REVENUES: \$32 million

WHAT PANEL MEMBERS SAID: The company's five-year growth strategy, which includes targeting underserved markets in Delaware, makes it a company to watch.