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The Distinctive Difference

Lupe Nunez, Signature Homes

[BY: CORI SMELKER]

[PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL CISNEROS]

Some people like their job; others love their job; others still are passionate about their calling. Of the three, who would you most want to design and build your home? Enter Lupe Nunez, charismatic owner of L. Nunez, Signature Homes. “I like to go to sleep to wake up,” says this young achiever.

Nunez’s entrance to the world of designing and building elite homes was not a straight road. Nunez attended college and graduated with a B.S in Kinesiology; he then followed it up with an M.Ed in Exercise Physiology. “During my summer breaks I’d work with my uncle who owns a construction company. At the end of every summer I’d say to myself, ‘I won’t ever be in construction.’” Of course, fate has a funny way of working, and after graduation, Nunez found himself building homes. But there was a significant difference this time. “I was working for myself. Suddenly the long hours don’t matter as much.”

Although Nunez’s name is on the company, he acknowledges that he is part of a team. “Kate Giesy is my office manager. I might work with the clients, the sub-contractors and others, but Kate is the one who keeps me sane and organized. She runs the office for me, and makes sure I make it to all of my appointments. I couldn’t spend as much time away from the office as I do; if I didn’t know she was back there, keeping everything purring like a kitten. She keeps me on track which is essential, otherwise it would be easy to be de-railed,” he says.

Other people have impacted Nunez’s life as well. “I owe much of my success to, Ben Barranco. He took me under his wing when I was young and inexperienced. He showed me a vision and focus about business. His wife, Kathy and his daughter, Jenny, do all the interior selections. They put all the finishing touches in the house for me.” Not only is Barranco his mentor, he is also the developer. As a result, Nunez focuses on the areas where Barranco develops, which has involved largely the

Garden Ridge area. “We liken Garden Ridge to Alamo Heights – in fact we call it the suburban Alamo Heights,” Barranco, a genial gentleman says. “We find young families love to settle here for several reasons – the kids have a safe space to play, and the taxes are markedly less than in the city. Also Comal County offers a great school district.”

One of the other reasons Nunez and Barranco like the Garden Ridge area, and especially the sub-divisions where they tend to build, is because of the strict architectural directives they must adhere to. L. Nunez Signature Homes will not be issued an architectural contract if one home design is identical to another. This means there are no tract homes where every third or fourth home is the same with some minor cosmetic changes. Good news for residents of the sub-divisions who are assured their house is truly unique. Good too for Nunez and his team, because “it keeps us on our toes!” Nunez exclaims. “We have to be creative in this industry and custom design everything from the exterior paint colors, to the interior details.”

Kathy Barranco, a lovely strawberry blonde chimes in, “The finishing touches we add to the home make all the difference. Lupe does have some ‘signature’ marks that set him apart from other builders.” She points to the ceilings – the entrance hall offers a lofty barrel ceiling, and the dining room presents an imposing 14-foot dome. The attention to detail is seen in every aspect of Nunez’s homes; from the positioning of the indoor and outdoor fireplaces, to the kitchen appliances. “Each one of the completed homes has two dishwashers – another Nunez signature,” says Jenny Barranco, the second designer.

Other details set the homes apart as well – Kathy and Jenny work closely with clients to ensure their home is custom-built down to the finest point. “All of our homes are Energy Star rated, but we will always go the extra mile for our clients,” explains the vibrant and personable Jenny. Just recently they



Pictured from left to right: Jinny Barranco (Designer), (sitting) Ben Barranco (Developer), Joshua Maas (Super), Lupe Nunez (Owner), (sitting) Kathy Barranco (Designer), Kate Giesy (Office Manager)



installed a bamboo floor in one home, and another client has evinced interest in buying a countertop made from recycled glass. Nunez even offers to insulate the home with a new insulation material made from recycled paper.

Nunez has an in-house designer who helps the client make essential changes. "I am always upfront with my clients about price and budget," Nunez says. "There have been times I have informed a client that they are over budget on everything they're asking for. I would rather be truthful with them and have them seek alternative options, than deceive them and present them with an outrageous bill at the end of the build." Nunez sees the building of a home as a marriage — not everyone is going to be a perfect fit. "If I am dedicating 12 months of my life to getting a house built for a client, we both have to know that we will be happy with the end product. I realize that for most people, building a home is the biggest financial investment they will ever make in their lives. Therefore it's imperative I give them my best."

When clients approach Nunez they are in different stages of their home build. "I have some clients who have bought a lot, but that's as far as they have got. We will go to the lot and give recommendations on how best to design and build a home." Other times a client already has their plans and basically says, "Here are my plans, please build this for me." Nunez will make as many suggestions as he can, "But at the end of the day, they are the client, they are paying their money for me to build their dream home, so I build what they want."

Josh Maas, Nunez's superintendent is another valued team member. He supervises all the job sites, and ensures the sub-contractors are giving their best. "Josh is great at his job." Nunez says. "He works well with me and with other people. He is a great asset to the team. He knows how I like things to be done, and most of all, he knows the standard I expect from him and the sub-contractors."

It is apparent that much thought has gone into the creation of the homes. Personal, one-of-a-kind touches are found throughout each home Nunez finishes. A stain glass window adorns the wet bar area, and another stain glass window is in-


laid over the door to the study. The master bathroom always features a his and hers vanity and closet. "Of course hers is larger," Nunez laughs. A shower with two separate showerheads finishes off the master.

All of Nunez's homes have at least four bedrooms, and he builds closets into the study so it can be easily turned into a fifth bedroom if necessary. "I built a three-bedroom home once, and it sat on the market for months! In this neighborhood, people expect a four-bedroom home." Most of his homes also have what he calls a 'mudroom' "You come in from the garage, remove your shoes, hang up your coat, drop your keys, and even charge your phone in this space," he explains as he shows the area, just off the kitchen. "It is out of the way, and allows you to keep the rest of the house neat and clean."

Outside living is not a new concept, it's a way of life here in South Texas, but Nunez has breathed fresh life into an old idea. The exterior patio is equipped with fans to stave off the hot summers, and a built in fireplace is perfect for those nippy winter evenings. Nunez even builds a 'nook' for a plasma TV. Standing outside, it is easy to visualize a large dining table with smaller, more intimate conversation pits angled off to the sides.

The outdoor kitchen completes the look and feel of creating an entire living space from nothing. French doors lead to the patio from the main living area as well as from the master bedroom, another standard feature with a Nunez home.

Nunez lives and works in Garden Ridge. "I love it here," he says simply. He and his wife, Tameka moved from the northwest side of the city because they love the community so much. "My three kids (ages 9, 5 and 10 months) go to school here. We build where we live because this is the best place to be."

A home by Nunez is indeed unique, and with his great team working tirelessly alongside him to ensure that their clients get only the best, it is no wonder that regardless of the economy, Nunez is as busy as he could ever hope to be. "It's a good life," he says, "One I wouldn't give up for anything." 

For more information on Lupe Nunez Custom Homes please call 210.593.4201 or visit www.lnunezsinhomes.com.