

Home builder reaches milestone

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PINE GROVE - A Pine Grove company has built its 20,000th house.

Constructed by *Pine Grove Manufactured Homes Inc.*, the 1,904-square-foot house will be used as a display model by a builder in Glenwood Village, N.Y., a retirement community.

The home features an 8-foot ceiling, three bedrooms, a kitchen equipped with stainless steel appliances, brushed nickel light fixtures, Formica counter tops and a living room with columns. There are also two bathrooms, one of which has a large bathtub for soaking and a 54-inch shower stall, along with other amenities.

If sold in New York, the home would sell for \$220,000, according to Rodney Updegrave, regional sales manager. Locally, it would sell for about \$150,000.

"We cater to a lot of different income ranges," Updegrave said.

On average, models the company builds cost \$65,000 to \$150,000, said Wayne Fanelli, president and chief executive officer. He is also president of Pleasant Valley Homes, a sister company with \$15 million in sales, which was established in 2004. The company makes modular homes and also builds other structures, with a hotel in the north central part of the state being one, Updegrave said.

"I think a lot of the success is based on the fact that we've had the same ownership, the same management for nearly 30 years," Fanelli said. The company is owned by family members and others, he said. Fanelli, who is one of the owners, has held the title of president and chief executive officer for Pine Grove Manufactured Homes Inc. since 1997.

The workforce is another reason for the success of the company, he said. The 100,000-square-foot building at the Pine Grove company produces 2 to 3 homes a day, said Updegrave, or at least 480 homes a year. Each home is Energy Star approved, a rating for energy efficiency.

Homes are sold from Maine to Virginia and as far west as Ohio, Updegrave said.

About 100 people work at the Pleasant Valley Road site. Of those, about 80 to 85 are directly involved with a home's construction, he said. A finished product takes about three days. Once done, a home sits for a maximum of three to five days before being sent to its destination.

Employees work at one of 14 different stations in the facility Monday through Friday.

Rich Fessler, 36, of Schuylkill Haven, has been with the company 13 years.

"I like what I do," he said.

That isn't uncommon, according to Updegrave

"A lot of people have been here since day one," Updegrave said. "Unfortunately, in this industry you fight the trailer stereotype, and we've only built one of the best quality homes out there to prove that they're certainly not trailers."

Fanelli said the company plans to stay in the area for the foreseeable future.

"We'll be here," he said.



Andy Matsko/staff photo Rodney Updegrave, regional sales manager for Pine Grove Manufactured Homes Inc., looks at the 20,000th home the Pine Grove company manufactured Thursday.