

story by Julie Bird

photos by Nancy Pierce

Super superintendent

Home Builders Association
salutes Brian Provine for
overseeing construction
of custom homes

Christine Gonzales has never built a custom home before, but she is in good hands with project superintendent Brian Provine. The best in the Charlotte

area, in fact. So says the Home Builders Association of Charlotte, which named Provine the superintendent of the year for 2008 in the custom-builder category.

The award recognizes a superintendent's ability to run an efficient, safe and clean job site and the overall quality of the work.

But when you're building a custom house from 3,000 miles away, as Christine and her husband, Keith, are doing, it also helps if the guy in charge is a good communicator. And if, like Christine, you don't know much about the building trade, it's important to have a superintendent who can cut through the contractor speak.

"He leaves out the 'We're using 4-by-4 whatever here' and he says, 'Christine, should

Brian Provine of Kingswood Custom Homes was named superintendent of the year for custom homes by the Home Builders Association of Charlotte.

Provine is credited with strong people skills but subcontractors know he expects them to perform. Here he talks with Chris Mullis of Mullis Tile & Marble at a job site.

we put an arch in this door?" she says. "He treats you like a person and he lets you in on the process."

Provine is overseeing construction of the Gonzaleses' 11,000-square-foot dream home in The Sanctuary for Kingswood Custom Homes. It's a big job, made none the easier by the fact that the Gonzaleses and their three young children live in Los Angeles. Provine sends weekly online updates and photos, and they visit Charlotte for a week every two months to check on their home.

Christine Gonzales insists Provine sit in on every meeting with Kingswood, even when owner Peter Leeke is presiding. She finds his presence reassuring.

She says she will never forget their first meeting at the home site last year. It was an especially hot and muggy mid-summer day, and she was about seven months pregnant.

"We show up and it's like 8:00 in the morning and it's so hot. And he's set up a table and chairs and a beautiful bucket of ice-cold water," she recalls.

As they walked through the house, Provine took her hand as they climbed up and descended the still-open stairs. When she noticed an area where they hadn't planned doors, but now looked like they would be needed, she pulled him aside to ask what he would do. Put in doors, he replied.

Provine, 49, is a master carpenter with 20 years of framing experience on everything from homes and schools to a bridge over the Colorado River. The Nebraska native and his wife, Tammi,



moved around a bit before settling in the Charlotte area 14 years ago. Their daughter, Lindsey, is a freshman at Western Carolina University. Provine was a superintendent for another home builder until Leeke brought him on board in May 2007.

Until then, he had never supervised construction of homes on the scale that Kingswood builds. His projects have ranged in value from \$800,000 to \$4.5 million.

"I knew I could do the job. I was looking forward to it," Provine recalls. "I guess I was nervous, but I knew deep down inside I had the knowledge and what it takes to do it."

He has supervised construction of as many as seven homes at one time for Kingswood. Early this year, he was overseeing three, including the Gonzaleses' home and another he's building across the street for Christine's parents.

"He has blossomed into this great superintendent and this great builder," says Brian Hedgepeth, a Kingswood estimator who was behind Provine's nomination for the award. Provine's hands-on approach to building management and ability to direct workers are key strengths, Hedgepeth says. Subcontractors know "what he says is what goes."

Provine also is an exceptionally good scheduler, he adds. Construction is all about speed, and a good superintendent keeps things moving to avoid wasted labor. In fact, Provine has never failed to complete a home on time in his nearly two years with Kingswood.

The builder's vice president and lead interior designer, Louise Leeke, seconds Hedgepeth's assessment. But the first thing she says about Provine is, "He is just a nice guy. He is extremely hard-working and honest. It's easy to say, but not easy to come by."

The superintendent is equally adept at communicating with construction workers and high-end clients, Leeke says. "Brian is very patient and people like him. That's important."

For his part, Provine is most proud of his ability to run a tight schedule.

"When it snows, the lumberyard shuts down," he says after a recent storm. "I had just one guy show up to work. So

"He has blossomed into this great superintendent and this great builder."

Brian Hedgepeth



Provine has 20 years experience in building, but he hadn't worked on a large-scale homes until he joined Kingswood almost two years ago. He greets a subcontractor (above) and inspects progress at lower right.

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that throws the wrench in the blender; it slows everything down. If you lose one day to weather, you really lose three days on the job site."

Provine has a strong need to get to every job site every day, despite the press of meetings at the office or other business elsewhere.

"It's the way I am. I want to know what's going on, the progress, who's there, who's not there, if the material showed up," he says. "When they promise me the cabinets are going to be there and I go and they're not there, I want to know what's going on, you know?"

On the recent snowy morning, the weather is too cold to mix mortar for the Gonzaleses' home. Indeed, several consecutive icy mornings put the stonemasons behind by a full week. But, he promises, everything would be back on schedule in

the next three weeks.

Provine has to stop and think when asked what the closest parallel to his job might be. Maybe a teacher, he ventures.

"I have all these students, maybe they're like children every once in a while. You tell them to do something and they don't do it. And I'm sure a teacher learns something new every day, and I do, too. That's another thing I love about the position I'm in."

A framer at heart, he still thrills at the idea of starting with a truckload of lumber and ending up with someone's dream home.

"It's so satisfying when you meet a client and a year, year and a half later you're handing them the keys to the house and the homeowner has a tear in her eye, she's so happy," he says, unable to suppress a smile.

Bring a tissue, Mrs. Gonzales. ❀

