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CHARLOTTE NOV. 25/04

L.J. Kernaghan Construction Ltd.

The winner of the Star Makeover will have one of Northumberland County's most respected construction contractors on-site. John Kernaghan of L.J. Kernaghan Construction Ltd. in Colborne, will contribute his expertise for the benefit of not only the winner, but also Northumberland United Way.

"I was always interested in construction," John says. "My dad, Dave, was always into it. As I was growing up, I was always with my dad; I would work with him, learn from him, on projects."

When John completed high school in 1976, it was his father who urged the son to form his own company.

"He helped me for several years. He taught me how to bid projects, and from him I learned a lot of the trade on the job. It certainly is nice to have someone with you to learn from, to show you how things are done."

The construction business "kind of goes with the trend of the economy," John notes. "Right now, housing is busy, so 75 per cent of our business right now is housing. The other projects are smaller commercial and industrial work and we do some farm work, too."

"I like to do a project from the ground up, turn-key jobs" John says. "That way, you have better control of the whole project start to finish quality-wise. After all, your name is attached to a project. The work must meet a high standard."

The Kernaghan Construction crews arrive on a project and remain throughout the excavation and in-ground grading and setting of footings through the framing and finishing for move-in residency.

"You have to have a good drawing of the plans," John insists. "Some people have a plan ready to go, a lot look through books and I'll meet with them and discuss the type of home they want. Then, I'll have a drawing produced. If you have an exact set of plans, it's easy to get an accurate pricing and, in the long run, it can save a lot of money. With a good set of blue prints, there's little room for error."



John Kernaghan of L.J. Kernaghan Construction Ltd.

John has noticed the trends in housing design over the past two decades.

"In the late 80s, the raised bungalow was big - basements out of the ground, big windows. That's all gone now. Home designs are back to true bungalows but with a lot of rood. For example, there are steep roofs with offset pitches and speciality shingles or architectural treatments.

"And a lot of homes are going to nine-foot ceilings now. You can actually buy the studs in those lengths now, as a standard. The nine-foot ceiling makes rooms look larger, more roomy."

John was prescient when it comes to energy efficiency.

"In the late 1980s, I took a course in R2000 design and started using and building using those techniques. I still do. Interestingly, a lot of those principles have been adopted in today's Building Code.

"If you build a tight house, you can control the air flow in and out, which means you can better control the heat, air ventilation and moisture levels within a home."

In another step forward, John and his Kernaghan Construction staff are trained and qualified geothermal heating systems installers.

"It's the most energy-efficient house available, operating a heating and cooling system using a ground source system. My staff and I have learned the trade. We sell and install the units in our own homes (built for sale) and for other people, too."

In business for 27 years now, John Kernaghan has successfully cycled through two economic recessions and boom times. He credits maintaining high quality standards throughout the years for the company's respected reputation.

"I think it's going to be very busy in this area over the next decade," the builder says. "The pressure for new housing is building. And with the construction freeze on the Oak Ridges Moraine, it's just that much more for this area."