

# Midwest homes with Italian accent

## Dior houses a reflection of family's heritage

**By Leslie Mann**

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There are no mountains on the horizon. The closest vineyard is miles away. Otherwise, though, the houses that Peter Di Iorio builds reflect the homes in his native Pizzone, Italy. With their Juliet balconies, fluted columns and marble floors, Dior Builders Inc.'s houses suggest classic, Italian design.

"Preserving our heritage and presenting the future — that's been our motto from the start," says Di Iorio. "A house should have blue-chip value."

Palatine-based Dior Builders is a family affair that includes Peter's wife, Kathy; his brother, Joe; and his sons, Carlo, Mario and Anthony. Anthony's wife, Victoria, is the green guru of the group, on the hunt 24/7, she says, for eco-friendly products. Before she joined the family business, she owned a beauty products firm, founded as a result of her allergies to many cosmetics.

The name "Dior" is an abbreviation of the family name. "Much easier to spell!" says Peter Di Iorio.

To display its work, Dior Builders is opening its "Healthy House" in Long Grove from Aug. 28 to Sept. 13. Built in conjunction with the American Lung Association, the showhouse features environmentally-friendly products such as formaldehyde-free cabinetry, cotton insulation and recycled-glass countertops. Proceeds will benefit the Healthy Child Healthy World organization.

"Most of our buyers know they want 'healthy' and may know, for example, that they can have no-VOC paints and adhesives," says Victoria. "But they may not know all the products that are available. So it's our job to help educate them."

The Healthy House is on one of 24 half-acre lots that Dior Builders has at the Autumn Woods development in Long Grove. Completed, houses here will run \$989,000-plus, including lots. For buyers of single-family houses, Dior also has 1- to 9-acre lots in Inverness and one-third-acre lots in Palatine.

Dior is also building a town-house development in Palatine



Palatine-based Dior Builders is a family affair that includes from left, Mario, Kathy, Peter, Carlo, Victoria and Anthony Di Iorio. Not shown is Joe Di Iorio. **SHAUN SARTIN/PHOTOS FOR THE TRIBUNE**

called Plum Grove. The exteriors are completed, but the interiors are unfinished so buyers can make their own choices. These start at \$400,000.

Dior buyers, says Di Iorio, want functional floor plans with "flair." "Every buyer has different needs," he says. "One was a second marriage with a lot of kids so they wanted nine bedrooms. Another was a couple who both work from home so they needed two home offices."

Kitchens are not just for show, adds Di Iorio. "Thanks to the [cooking] TV shows, people are really cooking a lot," he says. "So we've done pizza ovens and baking centers. Outside, they want outdoor kitchens, not just grills."

The buzzword at Dior during the design stage is "windowscaping." "A house can't have too much light," says Di Iorio. "So we include lots of windows and skylights to bring the outside in."

The son of a road contractor, Di Iorio took the scenic route to home building, first spending 20 years in banking. In 1979, he built his first house in Long Grove. After home building on the side for a few years, he quit his day job. Kathy, a "city gal" who learned to sell by working Chicago's State Street retailers, she says, became his



With their Juliet balconies and fluted columns, Dior homes inspire buyers to bring classic elements of Italian architecture into their new homes.

sales manager.

Dior Builders has built six to 12 semi-custom and custom houses a year. The company keeps an inventory of spec houses for transferees who don't have time to custom-build. Dior also does kitchen, bathroom and whole-house remodels.

Now, Dior houses pepper the northwest and north suburbs. Because the company has established a reputation, says Di Iorio, Realtors say "Dior-built" in their advertisements when they list their houses for resale.

Sundays, the Dior clan gathers

at Peter and Kathy's Inverness home for dinner, where they talk shop. "You can't turn off the switch," admits Di Iorio. They vacation together, too, making regular treks to the family home in Italy.

As Dior Builders segues into its second generation, Di Iorio says he hopes to leave a legacy to his children and grandchildren. In addition to his appreciation for all things Italian and his recipe for merlot, Di Iorio says, "I hope they remember me for my passion for home building."