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Crafting a home piece by piece



**COURTESY PHOTO/
FIVE OAKS HOMES**

A huge crane lifts a section of a home to place it on a truck for transport to the owners property.

Florence company adds custom touch to modular homes

By TRACY HARMON
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

FLORENCE - A modular home-building business is reaching soaring heights at the Fremont County Airport Industrial Park thanks to the inexpensive cost of building here.

Five Oaks Homes are like huge puzzles that are built and placed together, piece by piece, then lifted by a crane onto semitrailer trucks, before being moved and reassembled on each owner's property. Once reassembled, the seams between each piece are covered with drywall, textured and flawlessly feathered to the point that no one can tell the homes were once in pieces.

"If you live in a resort or a remote location where it is real expensive to build a home, it makes sense," said Jacob Anderson, 28, who along with his father, Dennis Anderson, own Five Oaks Homes.



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Five Oaks Homes owners Dennis Anderson (left) and his son, Jacob, provide the brains and a lot of the brawn for their home-building business.

"It is easier to get the home built here for less money and then it balances out with the costs of the cranes and the trucking," Jacob Anderson said.

These are not like the modular homes that usually comes to mind - those typical cookie-cutter rectangular boxes. The Five Oaks homes are custom designed and built for each owner, so they can be as simple or as extravagant as the client wants them to be.

Simpler homes may cost around \$80 a square foot to build and take four months to complete, while the most grandiose project, such as the \$660,000, 4,400-square-foot casa the Andersons are now constructing, costs about \$150 a square foot and has taken more than a year to build.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/TRACY HARMON

Jacob Anderson checks out the progress on the largest home his company Five Oaks Homes has ever built at the Fremont County Airport

Industrial Park near Florence.

The extravagant home, which will go to Carbondale on Colorado's Western Slope, is so magnificent that it is being built in 20 pieces and will require 15 to 18 trucks to move it to its new lot, plus three days rather than the usual one to reassemble. It is a deluxe three-story home that will have it all - from central vacuuming, fireplaces and a spiral stairway to radiant (in-floor hot water) heat and a pointy pinnacle-roofed office to top it all off.

Jacob Anderson said every detail is carefully planned out in the home, including the huge tub that is elevated to allow bathers a view out the bathroom windows and shower fixtures that are set off-center so the shower can be turned on to warm up without getting the bather wet until that person is ready to step inside.

"This is pretty fancy and it is the largest one we've built so far," Jacob Anderson said. "For owners like this one, who lives in New York, we take pictures of the progress and post them on our Web site in photo galleries so they can watch their home being built."

The photo galleries are a great convenience for customers from Georgia, Tennessee or as far away as Peru, who have watched their homes being built.

Everything from framing and electrical wiring to plumbing and heat ducts is installed to keep wires and pipes from crossing over into other sections, so that each portion is a stand-alone unit that is easy to move.

"It is taking a lot of trial and error to get to this point and in every project we learn how to be more efficient. We have to keep in mind how each piece will fit on a truck, for example, with a height of 13 feet or less so that it will fit under (highway) overpasses," Jacob explained. "It takes a lot of planning ahead and good subcontractors who can follow the plans."



**CHIEFTAIN
PHOTO/TRACY
HARMON**

An employee doing work on the outside of the home is viewed through a window.

Five Oaks Homes employs 10 to 12 people on a regular basis, plus it provides plenty of work for subcontractors.

Dennis Anderson can be spotted drilling screws into the foundation frames, or Jacob Anderson will pitch in to do all sorts of projects like installing hardware, while his mother, Lynette, works with customers to walk them through the myriad of interior decorating decisions they must make.

The Andersons bought the Pro Source business in 1994 and for four years built nothing but roof trusses at the airport industrial park, before Five Oaks Homes was born.

"I've been doing finish carpentry since I was 14. I went to high school here and built trusses during the weekends and summers," Jacob Anderson said.

"We started building more and more pieces of homes and got the idea to design an entire home to take apart," he said.

Jacob Anderson attended college in Fresno, Calif., then recently returned to Fremont County to help his father with the business. The Andersons also build homes on site in Pueblo West, Colorado Springs and throughout Fremont County. Their modular homes have been shipped throughout the state to rural locations outside such towns as Telluride, Westcliffe, Gardner, Ridgeway and Eagle. The

Andersons are now working on specs for some projects in California and Arizona to see if it would be feasible to ship the homes out of state.

They will be able to keep busy during any cold days this winter thanks to ample space inside the truss building where they are assembling an addition to a hot springs spa near Crestone.

"We will build it here so we don't disturb the site and they can still have guests. It will have a conference room and treatment rooms that we can crank out factory-style indoors," Jacob Anderson said.

Once each house or addition is finished, windows are covered and each piece shrouded with a shrink-wrap protective layer.

Gary's Crane Service of Pueblo oversees loading each section on to trucks and a Denver-based transportation company handles the moving.

During all that time, Jacob Anderson can recall only one window being broken.

Surprisingly, the modular homes are, at places, twice as sturdy as site-built homes, according to the Andersons. They use blown-in foam insulation, which cures rigidly and strengthens the homes to protect against air infiltration.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/TRACY HARMON

Cracks between each section of home are wide enough that when they get drywall and texture, a feather-blend process erases the seams.

Additions to homes or business may be built to match the existing structure and

the Andersons even go to such lengths as acid washing a corrugated metal roof to give it a rustic appearance of a historic mine structure, or build with rounded-side radius walls to give structures that old-fashioned turret appeal.

"It is kinda fun facing all the challenges and thinking creatively outside of the box," Jacob Anderson said.

Five Oaks Homes received a boost when "Do it Yourself Network" filmed a video about the business.

"When it first aired three months ago our Web site hits multiplied by 20 and it's been on a bunch of times since then so it's been great," Jacob said.

For information, log onto www.fiveoakhomes.com or call 719-784-6428.

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