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Cooking up delicious designs

By Jenny Block Contributing Writer

May 10, 2007, 20:47

"It's very synergistic," Mary Kathryn Reese says of her relationship with partner, in life and business, Jennifer Sherrill. "We compliment each other."

It's that synergism that led these former corporate warriors to a world of high-end appliances and multifunctional butler's pantries. The pair combined their culinary know-how, remodeling prowess and management expertise for a new venture. How they embarked on their enterprise was equally as organic.

They adopted two little boys, something they were particularly excited to do since they were both adopted as well. In order to not miss out on raising them, they decided to leave the consulting world. The question was, what would they do next?

"We're a little structured," Reese says. "So we sat down and figured out that a kitchen company was just perfect" based on their mutual interests and individual skills, as well as the kind of lifestyle and flexibility they desired. It would be a new frontier for them both.

"If you love what you do, you find your way," Reese says. Still, it was a scary proposition. "Honestly we were uncertain. Well, scared," says Sherrill. "We went from seeing each other only on weekends to being together 24/7." Apparently, the experiment was a success. "All relationships require work," says Reese. "But we're pretty good at communicating."

Dividing work responsibilities has also played a large part in their formula for success. "We're not trying to do the same things," says Reese. "I'm on the front end of the process map, and she's really on the other."

They bought the company in 2004 and Reese remained in corporate America for a bit while Sherrill ran the business. When the time was right financially, Sherrill jumped in with both feet. The company "was making money when we bought it," Reese explains. "But we made it profitable in double-digit increases every year." Since they started, they've designed about 70 kitchens. And though they have only been at the helm for three years, their main crew that does the carpentry and framing has been working with the company for 10 years.

The home base for Kitchen Design Concepts is an impressive showroom, one that Reese and Sherrill invested in excess of \$100,000 to improve. They added a series of vignettes so clients can get a real feel for how materials will look once they are in place. There's also a working kitchen for soirées and classes. The showroom is also family friendly — complete with kid's kitchen for junior chefs to explore. "Every kid, boy or girl, loves to play make believe," says Reese of the kid visitors to the showroom. The



DREAM KITCHEN, DREAM TEAM: Jennifer Sherrill, left, and Mary Kathryn Reese co-founded Kitchen Design Concepts three years ago. Since then, they've lent their creative touch to about 70 kitchens. (Jake Dean)

vignettes run the gamut — from classic to modern with “a little bit of sex and sizzle even if it’s traditional,” Reese explains.

Choices abound from style to texture to color to design to use, like custom backsplashes, tile variations and countertops in gorgeous woods. “When people think wood countertops, they think maple butcher block. But life can be so much better,” Reese says. Because of that belief, they offer clients choices from the basic to the sublime in every arena — lights in glasses cabinets, ranges with bump-outs boasting turned legs and little, surprise mosaics. “You know, eye candy,” Reese explains.

Despite the name, their business isn’t solely about kitchens. Reese and Sherrill also do bathrooms and outdoor living areas. But whatever the project, they provide turnkey services from interior architecture to general contracting to interior decorating, allowing them to take clients through the remodeling process from the idea stage to the moment of completion. Reese and Sherrill approach each remodel armed with a lifestyle assessment used to customize each kitchen for each client, focusing on making projects work as fabulously as they look.

The assessment includes questions about design preferences, as well as the household’s daily routine, entertaining style and other lifestyle considerations. “We believe that every family is unique and that a kitchen is not just a collection of cabinets,” says Reese. “It’s a place where people gather.”

KDC even helps clients to set up a temporary kitchen for use while remodeling is underway. For Reese and Sherrill, the client’s happiness and comfort during the process is as important as their satisfaction with the end result. That includes easing client’s fears about the plethora of choices that have to be made. “We would never just say, ‘What do you want?’ We look at everything as a partnership,” says Reese. And choices are made all along the way to take the pressure off. “Like a flower, the palette unfolds,” Reese explains.

Even if clients have space limitations that don’t allow for major structural changes, Reese and Sherrill can still promise making dramatic differences. “We can take totally dysfunctional kitchens and turn them into dynamic, usable spaces,” says Reese. “There’s no lack of innovation or improvisation here.” And what if you don’t cook? Well, the two can make the kitchen look good without selling their clients pricey appliances they’ll never use.

And clients like the work KDC does. “100 percent of our jobs last year were referenceable,” says Reese. “We’re not like everyone else. Sometimes we even finish early and under budget.”

They also do charitable work, including contributing services to fundraisers; donating goods from remodels, and working with Habitat for Humanity. “I think people are happier if they share a little bit of what they have,” says Reese. “We feel so blessed. We just try to keep that energy going.”

Kitchen Design Concepts, 2741 E. Beltline Road, Suite 113. Monday through Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. 214-390-8300. KitchenDesignConcepts.com.

CORPORATE CRED

Kansas City native, Mary Kathryn Reese worked for more than 18 years managing multi-million dollar consulting projects for corporations. Her tenure included high-level positions at PricewaterhouseCoopers; DidoVici, Inc. and Deloitte Consulting. She’s also worked as a guest chef at some Kansas City restaurants.

As vice president of Kitchen Design Concepts, Reese oversees strategic planning, business development, finance, marketing and human resources. She also specializes in smart-home technology. Reese earned a degree in information systems from Kansas State University and is a member of the

National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) and of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA).

President of KDC and Florida native, Jennifer Sherrill was a senior manager for Deloitte Consulting and PricewaterhouseCoopers. But she has forever loved the world of remodeling and is the second woman in the Dallas area to earn the Certified Remodeler designation through NARI. Sherrill's role within KDC involves overseeing daily operations. She earned her finance degree, with honors, from the University of Florida and is an active member of the NARI and the National Kitchen & Bath Association.

This article appeared in the Dallas Voice print edition, April 27, 2007.

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