



The 2009 New American Home, at 6755 Agave Azul Court, set a high bar for efficient home building.



HERE AND BELOW: A Blue Heron-designed private custom residence in the Marquis Seven Hills community



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attracted 51,445 attendees and 1,137 exhibitors in 2012, and similar numbers are expected this year. Blue Heron's three-story, 6,712-square-foot featured home is located inside the Marquis Seven Hills development along the 18-hole Rio Secco Golf Club.

"Our goal was to achieve an ecological and aesthetic harmony between the home and its surrounding natural environment," says Blue Heron architect Michael Gardner. "We wanted to make

"Building a home is a very intimate thing."—STEVE JONES

outside spaces as much of the home's design solution as the interior."

The home blurs the distinction between indoor and outdoor through extensive glazing and natural lighting, with deep cantilevers accenting the horizontal connection with the desert landscape. The residence incorporates several eco-smart, water-saving technologies,

including a tank-free water heater, low-flow plumbing fixtures, and electricity generated by solar panels.

"Organic materials and green building are an intrinsic characteristic of our homes," says Tyler, who serves as president of the company. "The New American Home is just a continuation of what Blue Heron does every day."

Blue Heron reaffirms its environmental commitment through green construction techniques that include rammed-earth walls (earth compressed in a mold to create a solid wall), and recycled building materials such as bamboo floors, rice-husk paneling, and sustainable wood beams. The homes use drought-tolerant native landscaping as well as gabion walls, which are retaining walls made of thick galvanized-wire-filled stacked stones.

"Green building has become one of the top issues with builders and consumers today," says Dennis Smith, president and CEO of Home Builders Research, a Las Vegas-based residential industry analyst. "One of the upsides to the recession

is that it has forced firms to innovate and become more efficient, driving down costs for sustainable construction and making eco-friendly building more accessible."

Steve's penchant for challenges includes running Merlin Contracting, his 23-year-old Las Vegas building firm that is responsible for some of the valley's most photo-ready residences. The power elite, including publisher Danny Greenspun, real estate developer Michael Saltman, and casino mogul Barry Shier, among many others, routinely turn to Merlin to conjure up building magic.

"We go to great lengths to maintain good relationships with our customers, vendors, and subcontractors," Steve says. "This is still a small town, and reputations matter."

Blue Heron's reputation has led to a small but growing coterie of loyal and dedicated fans. The 24-employee company has built 85 homes in five communities throughout Southern Nevada; its residences range from 3,000 square feet to more than 10,000 square feet in size, with an average price tag of around \$1.5 million. Blue Heron expects to build 20 homes this year, which would double its volume from 2011.

Tyler is also the driving creative force behind the company's residence designs. As a result, Blue Heron handles everything from concept to completion in-house. The integrated turnkey approach ensures high-quality production throughout the building process, so customers get exactly what they want.

"We are a true design-builder, which gives us more control over the final results," Tyler says. "The vision and execution are handled by the same group of people, so nothing gets lost in translation."

The builder recently unveiled its sixth and newest boutique community, called Sky Terrace, in Green Valley. The development consists of contemporary desert homes with a clean aesthetic and linear geometry that emphasizes the surrounding landscape through sky decks, roof terraces, and roll-up glass doors.

"We have cultivated our own Blue Heron style characterized by warm earth tones, local materials, and sustainable products," Tyler says. "We have extremely open floor plans, with a lot of glass for a sense of transparency that connects with the outdoors." *Model home and sales center: 6755 Agave Azul Ct., 702-531-3000; blueheron.com* ▼



Blue Heron's duo: Son Tyler Jones and father Steve on the building site of the 2013 New American Home

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF DAVIS (2009 HOME); RICHARD BRIAN (MARQUIS); JEFFERSON APPLIGATE (JONES)