

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Home & Garden Show celebrates potential

By Bob Karlovits
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Professional organizer Vickie Dellaquila of McCandless looks at the Duquesne Light Home & Garden Show as a celebration of potential.

"We want to show you what you could become," she says of the work she and a group of her colleagues will present at the show that opens March 5 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Downtown.

The products and actions vary, but presenting the new seems to be the case for many exhibitors at the 10-day Downtown extravaganza with displays from more than 1,500 exhibitors. It will offer an estimated 300,000 visitors plenty of ideas, but it also provides a way for exhibitors to reach out to new clients.

"I've talked to people who say they get 80 percent of their work through the show," says Gabriel Mayhew from Mayhew Landscaping in Cecil, Washington County. "It's costly, but sometimes you have to go out on a limb."

The show beckons to Mayhew and exhibitors making their way to it for the first time.

EXPLORING A NEW MARKET

For Stacia Smith, the home show represents a way to further introduce her company to the Western Pennsylvania marketplace. She is the director of public relations and market development for Cambria USA, a Minnesota-based quartz countertop manufacturer that prides itself on using only quartz from United States sites.

"Pittsburgh is a vibrant market, and one that has high potential for Cambria," she says. "Pittsburgh has a long tradition of supporting American companies and American products and ours is the only one that fits that bill. We are excited to work with many local kitchen and bath retailers to introduce our product to this market."

Besides a display of the 10-year-old company's products, Cambria USA also will be hosting a visit by model Cheryl Tiegs, who will be interviewed onstage at the home show at 3 p.m. March 12.

Home decorations of other sorts are the focus for other first-timers.

Mayhew, for example, wants to use the show to display the range of services

his firm offers. He says it will display examples of projects from gardens to walls, walks and water features.

Jay Boettner from Boettner's Birdhouses in Harrisburg has one obvious product, but also will be displaying planters in stylized forms of breeds of dogs and cats. They sell for \$24.95 and \$39.95.

He says he has been finding increasing interest in his items because the tight economy has caused many homeowners to retreat to their property.

"They want something that lasts, and that is fine with me," he says. "I don't like to sell things that are short-term."

Miranda and Mike Yumak of Blawnox Custom Upholstery are using the home show to display furniture designed by customers. The company manufactures furniture and upholsters.

She says their advantage is that they can design pieces that fit well into the older Pittsburgh home, "which can be a little small sometimes." The company's pieces use kiln-dried maple for frames.

Individually designed pieces vary greatly in price, but, as an example, she says a wingback chair from her company would cost \$1,000 and up.

The local branch of the National Association of Professional Organizers, which operates under the name NAPO Pittsburgh, will be making its first full visit to the event, says Dellaquila of Organization Rules. She says the group put on a hastily assembled display in 2009, but this year, planned it better.

It will be offering workshops on managing paper products and techniques for kitchens, closets and children's rooms. Mini-consults about specific problems also will be available.

The group of 30 organizers also will offer displays of bins and organizational tools to help homeowners keep a house in order.

FINDING SOME HOUSEHOLD ENERGY

Decoration is not an issue for Joe Morinville and Keller Heaps, but both will talk of home improvements.

They will be showing off ways of bringing greater energy efficiency into the home. Morinville is founder of Energy Independent Solutions of Robinson, a firm that installs modules to capture sunlight for photovoltaic energy. He also is involved with an organization known as the Diagnostic Energy Auditors of Western Pennsylvania, a group that examines homes and finds ways for owners to eliminate energy waste.

Meanwhile, Heaps, from Squirrel Hill, runs Southwest Wind Power, which installs air turbines to generate electricity. Large, commercial turbines can be

seen on some Western Pennsylvania ridge tops, but they are relatively new to private, residential use, he says.

The turbines stand 35- to 80-feet-high, he says, and are driven by blades that are 6-feet-long. A turbine could cost between \$12,000 and \$20,000 to install, he says, but that cost would be eased through federal tax credits and state rebates.

"They are a little too big for an urban setting," he says. "Most of my customers have an acre or more and there are problems with ordinances in some communities, but there is great dynamic technology developing and we want to show that."

In the same sense, Morinville wants to display advantages of solar projects, which are being helped by federal tax and state rebate incentives.

"It is one of the few green ventures that really pays off," he says.

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