

MORE THAN A NAME

# AURORA SHINES

## As Symbol of Success

Big Winners Like Philip Russell and Mike Kargar Reap the Benefits of Business-Building Recognition

If you think winning awards is all about ego, think again. More and more, they are about setting yourself apart from your competition in what has become a highly competitive environment.

In the South, the hottest name in building industry honors is the Aurora Awards sponsored for the past 30-plus years by the Southeast Building Conference (SEBC), a trade show and educational conference held annually in Orlando.

Pensacola builder Philip Russell was one of the early winners on Aurora Award more than 20 years ago but he keeps entering year after year because he knows first-hand the marketing value of proven success.

"I put all our Auroras on display in our conference room for all our clients to see," said Russell.

"Several months ago, I met with a couple on a larger home. Little did I know they were getting a bid from a competitor.

"We were ultimately awarded the contract and later they told me they had gotten another bid and that ours was higher.

"They said they justified the higher price due to our reputation and the numerous awards we have received. This same scenario has probably happened in the past without my knowledge," said Russell.

Russell Home Builders is now a father-son team with young Kevin having joined the firm in 2004 after graduating from Florida State University.

Their three 2012 Aurora Awards included two for the energy-efficient performance of a \$1.4 million custom home built in Gulf Breeze and the third for a \$600,000 home built in East Pensacola Heights. These Auroras give Russell Home Builders a total of 19 since entering these competitions in 1987.

Mike Kargar, CEO of Kargar Homes in Ormond Beach may not have as long a history of success in Aurora as Philip Russell but this year, his seven Auroras made a powerful statement about his commitment to excellence.

"To me, winning an Aurora Award is like winning an Emmy and an Oscar," said Kargar in a recent interview with the Daytona Beach News-Journal.

"We have won many local awards, but Auroras are special. It takes a long time to get it and to win seven in one year is amazing. Ultimately, we want the best for our clients, and if we do that, the awards come."

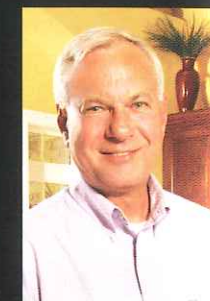
Kargar has been building custom homes in the Volusia-Flagler county area for almost 30 years, the last 13 years with his own firm.

His 2012 Auroras came on model homes in the LPGA International community in Daytona Beach and in Plantation Bay in Ormond Beach. The homes won in the single-family, bathroom, and energy-efficiency categories.

Kargar's homes are designed by Michael Sopoliga of MJS Inc. Custom Home Designers-Planners in Orlando.

"Stories about how Aurora has contributed to the success of our winners are truly heart-warming," said Kathy McDaniel of Highland Homes in Lakeland and 2012 Chair of the awards.

"Competition brings out the best in all of us and Aurora winners keep raising the bar every year, making winning tougher and more rewarding. It's not easy. Winners clearly earn the recognition."



Philip Russell

After being awarded a contract for a larger home, one of Russell's customers said they justified his higher price due to his reputation and the numerous awards displayed in their conference room.

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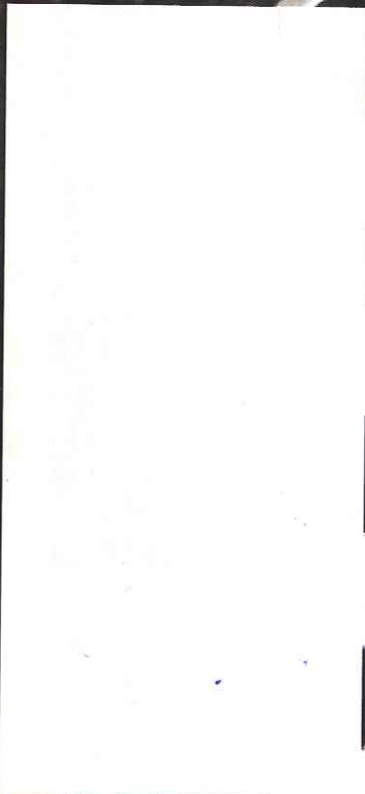
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