

Meet the Builder



Luxury Craftsmanship, Practical Comfort

When Dan Kaufmann and Scott O'Connell were roommates at a Virginia Tech fraternity in the late nineties, they never would have imagined they'd be partners in an award-winning business one day.

But in 2012, after a pivotal conversation, the two decided to pool their 40+ combined years of experience in the building industry to start their own company and work together. With O'Connell's background in commercial construction and Kaufmann's experience in residential building, they knew they had a lot to offer to the growing Richmond area market.



“After graduating with a Building Construction degree, I got into commercial construction doing office buildings and strip mall shopping centers, and you name it—a lot of big box stores in the DC area” O'Connell said.

“And my parents owned a general contracting and building business, so I've been doing this since I could put a little tool belt on,” Kaufmann added.

Today, O'Connell and Kaufmann's company is a recognized and respected name in the community, winning the Parade of Homes People's Choice Award five years in a row, among many others.

The two chose the name Clay Street Builders to commemorate their early college days together. “We actually lived in a house on Clay Street in Blacksburg, Virginia,” Kaufmann said. “And Clay Street Builders' red roof logo is identical to the roof of the house we lived in.”

According to Kaufmann and O'Connell, 100 percent of their work is custom—and Architect Matt Shrader's involvement is a key part of the entire building process. Before he came to the company, Shrader was flying all over the country, designing homes for people. Today, he works alongside O'Connell and Kaufmann, adding to the team expertise and providing a “one stop shop” for their clients where they can get everything they need for a custom home build.



As far as where they get the initial ideas for plans and home features, Kaufmann says their clients have often been collecting examples long before they started working with them. “We tell them all the time to send us their mood and Pinterest boards that everyone seems to have these days,” Kaufmann said. “That way, Matt and I can get a feel for what they’re looking for.”

Kaufmann says the most important thing to them is that the client is happy with the plan and design, while being involved continually throughout the process.

“Whatever someone comes to us with, our goal is to make their dream a reality,” Kaufmann said.

For both O’Connell and Kaufmann, family has been a key part of their company. O’Connell’s dad, Matt O’Connell, is the Business Manager and keeps the company running smoothly, and Kaufmann’s wife, Jessica, does 90% of their design work.

“I have no idea where she gets the ideas for what she does,” O’Connell commented. “A few times I’ve said ‘she’s gonna do what?’ But then she does it and it’s awesome. She’s on the front end of the trends.”

Recently, Clay Street Builders has joined forces with Liz Moore & Associates. “We have a really good relationship with Gayle Peace, our agent there who’s representing us,” Kaufmann said. “Liz Moore has a large reach, and a lot of new ideas on how to better market us. We look at it like they are part of our team now.”



The two say the most rewarding part of building homes is the relationships they’ve built along the way. In fact, they’re often invited to their clients’ open house parties and barbeques after their homes are completed.



“It’s the personal touch,” O’Connell said. As builders, a special bonus is seeing their work and progress in front of them every day, and knowing they’re making an impact.

“At the end of any given day, it’s kind of nice to look at what we’ve accomplished because we’re building something,” Kaufmann said. “That really brings joy to my life.”

For more info, go to ClayStreetBuilders.com