

## Donna Moody Retires



You may have heard her friendly voice on the phone when you called or met her in person when you stopped by the Landed Gentry office. Perhaps your paths never crossed, but you almost certainly benefited from her talents. We all have. For over 15 years, Donna Moody has been one of our behind-the-scenes assets, handling everything from front desk reception to bookkeeping to administrative projects not only for Landed Gentry, but also for Home Place and Wee Care (other Gentry family businesses). Her can-do approach and ever-present smile have helped keep the office running smoothly and efficiently, allowing our home building experts to focus on meeting our customers' needs. Outside the office, Donna is actively involved in animal rescue. Among other volunteer activities, she uses her own money to catch feral cats and provide them medical care, including



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## After the Sale Service

What ever happened to customer service?

Today, simple respect and responsiveness seems to be more the exception than the rule ... especially after the sale. How a homebuilder manages after-sale service, also called warranty service or call-backs, is a key indicator of the company's overall professionalism and ability to meet (and ideally exceed) a homebuyer's expectations.

The builder's goal is to quickly and completely respond to and resolve issues that come up during the time a home is under warranty. As a critical part of providing great housing value and achieving customer satisfaction, professional builders encourage questions from homebuyers and respond to their concerns in a timely and respectful manner.

A standard builder's warranty addresses specific issues with a home related to its structural components (such as the foundation and frame), basic electrical and other mechanical systems, and the quality of workmanship for a set time period. How a builder responds to warranty service inquiries varies depending on the policy offered and sold with the house: some are defined and managed entirely by the builder, while others are defined, at least in part, by independent agencies (such as an insurance company) and administered by the builder.

Specific warranty language and procedures benefit both the builder and the homeowner. Simply, a well-defined and properly communicated warranty service policy helps eliminate confusion about who is responsible for issues, concerns, and other call-back items that may occur in the first year or so of occupancy.

While there are specific differences among builders, a superior warranty service program includes:

**Documentation.** A documented process for responding to call-backs and customer service inquiries creates a "paper trail" that ensures that questions and concerns are properly communicated, managed, and resolved. A professional builder will document the details of the warranty policy and keep track of inquiries, response time, and specific types of service calls from the first call to follow-up to ensure the homeowner's ultimate satisfaction.

**Response time.** Responding to a service call is more an issue of timing than time; the key is to understand which calls will be addressed immediately, and which may require or allow more time. No one likes to

immunizations and neutering, before releasing them back to their wild homes. Retirement is not likely to slow her down, despite her joking remarks about "watching the corn grow." And, lucky for us, she'll still be available to fill in at the office once in a while. Landed Gentry thanks Donna for 15 years of dedicated service and personal friendships. And, who knows – perhaps you'll still get a chance to meet her on one of her 'days off' from retirement.

## Building Success 101

*Q: Why do builders sometimes send another company on a service call?*

A: Increasingly, new-home builders rely on a variety of trade (or specialty) contractors, such as electricians, plumbers, and heating and cooling experts, to help build your new house. Part of their contract is servicing their work. Who better than the person who installed your faucet to fix a leak? While the home builder is ultimately responsible for making sure that warranty work is documented and performed, he will rely on trade contractors to perform warranty service on his behalf, to his standards, and to your satisfaction

wonder if or when a call or email will be answered; if homeowners can depend on getting a reply from their builder within a reasonable (or better still, stated) time frame, chances are better that they'll be satisfied with how the issue is resolved.

**Collective calls.** Even if a builder responds to a warranty service call within a day or so, making a visit to the house to resolve a non-emergency situation may be timed to coincide with other scheduled work at the house. This "collective call" minimizes the number of times an owner needs to be at home to make the house available to the builder's warranty service team. Of course, emergency calls demand immediate attention, but collective calls can be a more convenient and reliable way to address a variety of concerns or maintenance issues at the same time.

**Scheduled visits.** Professional builders are becoming more proactive in how they address scheduled service and other routine maintenance work while a house is still under warranty. In many cases, a builder will schedule a visit and "walk through" (or tour) a new home within a month after occupancy. These visits are opportunities for homeowners to ask questions and for the builder to document or schedule service work covered by the warranty. Such visits also help builders refine their warranty service processes based on a homeowner's feedback.

No builder follows exactly the same policies and procedures for warranty service inquiries and incidents, but the goal to provide homeowners with the best new home buying and living experience possible is industry-wide. As professional builders continue to refine and improve how they address issues after the sale, they will ultimately deliver superior customer service and achieve buyer satisfaction.

Warm regards,

*Brian*

Brian Gentry  
President



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