

Healthy home helps owners breathe

Features clean air, reduced energy costs

By Sam Carter
Staff Writer

WAYNESBORO — When friends visit Gary Thompson's new home in Chesterfield County, he does not steer them to the living room or dining room.

Some of the best features are invisible.

"I always start with the air quality — that is very good, and that's a result not only of the filtration but the non-toxic paints," said Thompson, who with his wife, Renae, and three children moved into the Bexley subdivision house in November.

The Thompson's house was the first in the state to earn the designation "healthy home" with features like argon windows that block ultraviolet rays.

The concept of healthy homes is catching on and a Waynesboro building firm is playing a key role.

In partnership with the American Lung Association and Virginia Power, Westhills Co. is constructing what is the second healthy home in Virginia and the 14th in the country.

Construction started in May and should be completed by June on the three-bedroom, 2,500-square-foot home in the Stratford Farms subdivision off Pelham Drive.

"We feel this is a new concept people are hitting on," said Carl Kerby, president of Westhills Co.

The house will include argon-filled reflective windows that keep out ultraviolet rays and the sunlight that increases the temperature.

Special ducts prevent the loss of all but 3 percent of the heat compared to the average 35 percent lost in most homes.

A mechanical ventilation system replaces all the air in the house 1.5

House Features

Features of the "healthy home" being constructed by Westhills Co. in Waynesboro include:

- Paint and carpet that contain no volatile organic compounds used as solvents in many paints and stains.
- Carpet derived from recycled plastic bottles, and a deck that includes material from recycled milk cartons.
- A system that creates a positive pressure under the floor, preventing harmful radon gas from leaking into the house.
- A rain gutter that channels water to a rain garden behind the house.

times an hour. A filter eliminates potentially harmful particles such as pollen, bacteria and dust mites.

"The indoor air quality is similar to an operating room," said J. Slator Turner of EnerTec Co. in Glen Allen. EnerTec develops and implements systems for healthy homes, especially heating and cooling.

EnerTec has installed special systems in four office buildings in Richmond and more than 400 houses including the Westhills house.

The features recommended by EnerTec Co. can reduce utility costs by up to 60 percent.

In fact, EnerTec guarantees a heating and cooling bill of \$47.50 a month and Virginia Power offers an additional \$10 rebate for 10 years.

The health features will likely increase the price by \$15,000-\$18,000 on the Waynesboro home that is expected to fetch in the mid-\$200,000s.

As homebuyers express



Vincent Lerz/The Daily News Leader

From left, Richard Kane, vice president, and Carl Kerby, president of Westhills Co., stand inside a "healthy home" expected to be completed by June. The house in Waynesboro includes features like air filtration and special windows.

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more interest in healthful living, they will incorporate different aspects of healthy homes into their own dwellings, said Richard Kane, vice president of Westhills.

"The energy efficiency part of it is (supported) by Virginia Power," said Kelly Maxwell, an associate energy consultant for the utility company.

With the average person spending 90 percent of their time inside, the air quality of a house is essential, said Dan Sheehan, community activities director for the American Lung Association.

Westhills agreed to donate a percentage of the sales from the house to the American Lung Association.

Although the Thompsons chose their home in Chesterfield County because it met their needs, they appreciate the health features.

"We are certainly enjoying them, especially the air filtration," said Thompson.