

Selling the Luxuria lifestyle

Builder customizes for the way clients live

By Leslie Mann | Special to the Tribune

June 26, 2009

A claw-foot tub nestled in an alcove with an arched-beam ceiling. A custom chandelier made to match the wrought-iron stairway it illuminates. A hearth room niche built to house its owner's collection of tzedakah boxes. Together, they illustrate luxury, as defined by Luxuria Homes Inc.

Jeannine Scheck, president of the [Vernon Hills](#)-based company, caters to home buyers who can afford to build the houses of their dreams and tailor them to suit their families.

Scheck's clients choose her, she says, because of her background in interior design. "At first, clients asked me to review their floor plans," says Scheck, a graduate of the International Academy of Design Technology in Chicago. "Then they asked me to general [contract] their projects. By then, I had learned to work with the trades and knew my way around the job site."

That was 16 years and dozens of houses ago. Now Luxuria houses, which have price tags from \$1.5 million to \$8 million, pepper the North Shore.

In addition to custom-building, Scheck also completes whole-house remodels, which many clients unfold one room at a time. "They can do each room as they can afford it, but they have a master plan," she says.

Scheck begins each project by quizzing the clients about their family's lifestyle, schedule, tastes, furniture and collections. Although every house calls for a different array of products, Scheck says she maintains a showroom so clients can "touch and feel cabinetry and flooring samples and try out new products like low-voltage touch panels," which are lighting control systems.

Before her subcontractors put a hammer to a nail, Scheck fine-tunes the home design and its interior details. "Nothing is an afterthought," she says.

Being a woman in a male-dominated field is to her advantage, says Scheck. "Women are much more detail-oriented, I think," says the mother of three grown children. "I know, for example, you need countertop space on both sides of the cooktop. And, that

it's nice to have a refrigerator drawer away from the cooking area so the kids can get their own drinks while Mom is making dinner."

Most of her clients with teens, she says, want their houses to have gathering spaces for their kids' friends, with amusements such as swimming pools, pool tables and pop machines. "They want to know where their kids are," says Scheck.

Having a place for everything helps her busy clients stay organized. The result is storage designed specifically for their stuff, from a "Costco room" for bulk purchases to a hockey-gear closet for a family of skaters.

As the owner of three border collies, Scheck also understands her clients' need to make their houses pet-friendly. "I might recommend distressed-wood floors that are forgiving or a dog shower in the garage," she says.

Scheck's clients want outdoor kitchens and bars, with sunrooms serving as hyphens to the outdoor spaces. Just as she plans her interior designs from the start, she also incorporates her clients' outdoor living spaces.

Scheck and her staff oversee a team of subcontractors who have not only demonstrated expertise in their trades, but are eager to learn new products and skills.

In the end, Scheck says most of her clients become friends. "I get the bar mitzvah invitations," she says. Then they send her to their friends; most Luxuria clients are referrals.

Scheck has come a long way from the little girl who grew up in the projects in Milwaukee. "I used to look out the window at the creek near our building and think, 'If only I could get past that creek.'" she recalls. "When I was 8, we moved to a duplex and I thought I had become a princess." Now, she plays as hard as she works, hitting the gym daily and traveling to procure pieces she weaves into clients' homes, like the 19th-Century mahogany door that now opens a wine cellar in Riverwoods.

Driven by positive thinking, Scheck says the ups and downs of the business don't get to her. "I've been through a lot in my life," she says. "Things will go wrong, I know. What's important is how you resolve the problems and that you stand by your word." Besides, she adds, "You can't appreciate the good without living through the bad."

Related topic galleries: [Interior Design](#), [Marketing](#), [Dining and Drinking](#), [Wine, Beer, and Spirits](#), [New Products](#), [Bodies of Water](#), [Vernon Hills](#)
[All topics](#)

Get the Tribune delivered at home and save 25% off the newsstand price.