

newsobserver.com/realestate
real estate

North zone, serving Raleigh, Wake Forest, Henderson, Louisburg and more!

AGENT OF THE WEEK

THE GINGER ROGERS TEAM, (919) 573-1771
Coldwell Banker Howard Perry and Walston
www.gingerrogers.net

See Ginger's enhanced listings on HomeFinder.com.

**a family affair**

Joe F. Berini Construction Company celebrates 50 years



Top, a spacious kitchen with center island and granite countertops is the center of a Berini-built home in River's Edge, off Rose of Sharon Road in Durham. Above, Joe, Dante and Donny Berini continue the family business started by Dante's uncle, Joe Bernini, in 1959.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

CONTRIBUTED REPORT
BY REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM

Durham

Very few would argue with the statement that 50 years in business is a true accomplishment. Add to the statement that a family business has prospered for 50 years, and nothing short of a standing ovation is in order!

"It all actually started more than 80 years ago," says Dante Berini, president of Joe F. Berini Construction Company.

"My grandfather was a stone mason in Pittsburgh who was lured to Durham in the late 1920s to utilize his skills in construction projects at Duke University. All five of his sons became involved in the building industry, including my father, John Berini. My grandmother persuaded my Uncle Joe to enroll in Duke University's Engineering School. Uncle Joe made her very proud when he graduated from Duke in 1939 and entered the field of commercial construction."

As the story goes, Joe was acknowledged for his abilities in the commercial field, but it didn't give him the total satisfaction he desired. He debated his options, and decided to blaze his own trail. In 1959 Joe opened the doors to a residential building and development company, Joe F. Berini Construction Co. Inc.

In the late '50s, few residential builders and even fewer developers existed in Durham; Joe was a pioneer. He began development of his first neighborhood, West Hills, located in West Durham in 1961. Joe was in the right place at the right time — West Hills included 41 homes and was completed in 1966. Joe found his niche.

During these early years of the company, Joe realized he needed help, and was pleased he didn't have to look far. Joe's nephew, Dante, was eager to learn and seemed to have a knack for the business. He began working with Joe in 1963 while earning his business degree at East Carolina College (now East Carolina University).

Upon graduation, Dante began work with Joe on a full-time basis. Dante's high standards, eye for detail and strong work ethic meshed perfectly with Joe's direction for the company.

Together they developed Westwood Estates, a neighborhood of

SEE FAMILY, PAGE 4E

SMART MOVES

Tips on buying a first home during this summer season

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

This summer, many who've long wanted to buy their first home are determined to make that dream come true. And the combination of bargain home prices and low mortgage rates make the idea of home-buying seem especially alluring.

"In most areas, sellers still outnumber buyers by a wide margin. That means buyers remain the kings of the market," says Monte Helme, a former Century 21 executive and consultant to HouseHunt Inc. (www.househunt.com).

Helme says prospective first-time buyers are especially numerous now and represent an unusually large portion — about two-thirds — of all purchasers. Normally, repeat buyers are more numerous than first-timers.

"If you're a new purchaser and are eligible for federal tax credits available to first-time buyers, you can practically write your own ticket now," he says.

Clearly, those who've lost a job or expect to be not in a position to buy a home this summer. But people less affected by the recession are likely to find a much warmer welcome at the lenders' office, assuming their credit scores are strong, Helme says.

Tom Early, a real estate broker and former president of the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents (www.naeba.org), says a strong credit history is now crucial to obtaining a mortgage.

Ellen
JAMES MARTIN

Here are a few pointers for those who'd like to buy a home before Labor Day:

■ Obtain mortgage preapproval before shopping for a property.

In the past, many prospective homebuyers could simply pick up the phone and arrange for a tour of properties led by a real estate agent. But now, an increasing number of agents, especially veterans in the field,

want evidence that their clients are truly eligible to obtain a home loan.

As Early points out, it's no longer sufficient to call a mortgage lender and provide a general estimate of your income, assets and credit situation. To obtain a genuine statement of mortgage preapproval, you now need more documentation, including credit reports, pay stubs and possibly even federal tax returns.

■ Manage your children during a summertime real estate search.

Due to recession-era budget cuts, a small but gradually increasing number of students attend

SEE SMART, PAGE 4E

HOME ENERGY Q&ABY KEN SHEINKOPF
MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Question: I've seen you write a number of times that turning off lights when you leave a room that is empty will help save energy. I appreciate the thought, but come on, how much energy and money does this really save?

Aren't we just talking about something here that doesn't mean a whole lot in real terms?

Answer: You're right that I have written about this a number of times over the years, and I've done this because I really do believe that it makes a difference. Sure, turning out one light that you're not using isn't by itself going to change your financial picture. After all, if you turn off a 100-watt incandescent bulb that is on for six hours in a room not being used that you'd otherwise have left on, you're saving around six cents during that time.

Now before you start to snicker at this, consider that adds up to around \$1.80 per month, or more than \$20 a year. Now think about how many light bulbs you have in your home. I've seen estimates that say the



average home has 25 to 40 bulbs (think about some of the bathroom fixtures with six or more bulbs and the many multi-bulb lamps people use), and suddenly \$20 a year for turning off one bulb becomes a few hundred dollars a year for turning off a bunch of them.

When I tell people about this, I often hear that they think that turning bulbs on and off too often makes the bulbs burn out faster. Actually, frequent turning on and off won't shorten the life of an incandescent bulb's filament so there's no reason here to leave unneeded bulbs turned on.

Where this does make a difference is if you're using an en-

ergy-efficient compact fluorescent bulb (CFL). Energy experts generally agree that if a CFL is not going to be used for five minutes or more, turn it off, but frequent turning on and off can reduce its lifetime. These bulbs use only about a fourth of the energy used by incandescents, so they still will save a significant amount of money even if they're on for a couple of minutes when they're not needed.

Finally, to make my point a little stronger, take a walk around your home this evening and count how many light bulbs are turned on in empty rooms. If your home is typical, there are several empty rooms that are brightly lit, and if you ask whoever was in them last why they didn't turn the lights out, you'd hear that "I was going to be back in just a couple of minutes." Some people call this human nature, but I call it a waste of energy.

Ken Sheinkopf is a communications specialist with the American Solar Energy Society (www.ases.org). Send your energy questions to askken@ases.org.