

# LC NEWS Feature



## Bridlewood Homes Builder has true passion for craft

By Linda Woodard  
For The LCNews

**B**uilding homes isn't just about choosing a site where the home will be built, or about the types of materials to use in various applications, nor is it just about designs and planning, but equally it is about

building relationships, sometimes from the ground up; relationships that can stand the test of time through the seasons of the home building industry.

Carmine Gargarella, owner and president of Bridlewood Homes, from the very beginning, wanted the

name and logo of his company to be unique; something that would portray an image of quality and distinction; something that would echo the company's philosophy as well.

Building custom homes in London and surrounding areas since

1991, Gargarella made one strategic decision at the beginning and it has been an integral part of his company's success. He developed relationships with quality people.

"I place a lot of importance on relationships with my suppliers and trades.

They are, in fact, my life line," Gargarella said.

He describes these relationships as a "two-way street" where business is easy and reciprocal. He places that same importance on being able to provide the best possible product to the

consumer as well.

"I'm very proud of the fact that we've been able to bring Bridlewood Homes to the forefront of custom home building in the last 13 years," Gargarella said. "With the products and services we bring to each home, Bridlewood Homes has

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positioned itself well in the marketplace; often times it takes a generation or two before that happens.”

Born in London, Gargarella graduated from the University of Windsor's MBA Cooperative program in 1991. As part of his graduating requirements, he interned with Hewlett Packard as a marketing analyst in Toronto. He knew early on he wanted to have his own business and at age 26, he took advantage of a business opportunity and purchased six lots in Byron.

Gargarella said he remembers how tough things were in real estate and finances in 1991, but he persevered and built his first home there. The first year was tough he



From left to right: Ralph Hanshaw, Cheryl Devalk, Diane Gargarella, Carmine Gargarella.

recalled, but after that things snowballed.

“They were tough times, and yet it was a great time to get started in the industry,” Gargarella said.

It was during this time he developed relationships with land developers, suppliers and trades people,

surrounding himself with professional people.

“If you surround yourself with good people during hard times, they’ll be there for you in the good times,” he said.

Bridlewood Homes, an award-winning custom home

builder, is a turn-key operation. Something that Gargarella puts into practice is his belief in engaging home owners into the building process from the early planning stages right on through to home ownership.

“Our clients are involved all the way through the process.

After several meetings, sometimes with our architects, we decide on solutions that work best for our clients,” Gargarella said.

He explained that a home becomes so much more than merely a dwelling, and that there is a lot of emotion tied to the process.

“As a builder, you can do a lot of good, and then a towel bar could be put in the wrong place,” Gargarella said. “Sometimes it’s these kinds of things that stick in people’s minds instead of all the other good work a builder has done.”

Gargarella recognizes he’s not perfect but says they try to work with integrity, honesty, and respect. They look at what is reasonable and fair.

“We strive for equal respect among suppliers, trades, and our clients,” Gargarella said. “The door is open for my clients. I want to educate them through the process. At the end of the day, their home is a showcase for their worth and the work we do.”

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## Bridlewood Homes

The company strives to bring forward as many ideas as possible so the client has several options available in the designs, plans, and budget aspects of the home. So many decisions have to be made about the way products are used in the home, especially the kitchen and ensuite, and in most cases, it's usually women who make these decisions.

Bridlewood Homes has strengthened its brand recognition through the Dream of a Lifetime Lottery (a fund raising initiative through the foundations of London's hospitals). Bridlewood Homes have built five of the 11 dream homes over the past several years. The first was built in 1998 followed by others in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005.

Gargarella says he is proud of this relationship that goes toward helping London's hospitals.

"I believe in the dream, and it's always exciting to bring new and innovative ideas to the dream home. It's a fun, but more importantly, worthy project to be a part of," Gargarella said.

"The working relationship is great

between us. It is one I value, and one I hope to be a part of for years to come."

Bridlewood Homes are currently building in Byron Hills at the corner of Colonel Talbot and Southdale Road. Of the 15 lots purchased, most have been sold. In Hunt Club West, the location of the 2005 Dream of a Lifetime Lottery dream home, there are 20 lots and they are nearly three quarters complete. Both sites are developed by Hampton Group.

River Bend Mews, developed by Sifton Properties, will see 12 lots opening in June.

"Last year's inventory has depleted significantly with sales in each area and we're looking at topping up inventory in Byron Hills and Hunt Club West," Gargarella said. "In addition to these projects, we are constantly working with private land owners to develop custom homes on their own parcels of land."

Bridlewood Homes have also built customized summer homes and cottages in the Bayfield, Delaware and Kilworth areas.

Gargarella's philosophy about

surrounding himself with quality people includes his employees as well. Cheryl Devalk, office manager, manages much of the company's day-to-day operations. Some of her duties include customer liaison, scheduling, administrative duties, as well as ensuring the new homes are delivered in the most efficient manner.

Ralph Hanshaw, site supervisor, is the company's eyes and ears at each building site. He and Devalk are in constant communication with Gargarella throughout each day making sure things are coordinated, completed, and serviced as planned.

"Both Hanshaw and Devalk are an integral part of Bridlewood's team, and of the company's successes," Gargarella said.

Bridlewood Homes has developed a new home construction business model that many in the custom new home market have embraced.

"I'm very happy with the positioning of Bridlewood Homes in the London marketplace," Gargarella said. "I can look ahead and see

us fulfilling roots as a custom home builder for many years to come."

Gargarella says he is very fortunate to be able to do something he loves.

"Not many people ever get that opportunity in their lives. I am passionate about building new homes and Bridlewood Homes is simply the entity that allows me to carry this passion each day – I am very lucky!"

However, what Gargarella says he is most passionate about is his family.

"Diane and I share two great kids, Ben, age 6, and Emily, age 10," Gargarella said.

If you

ask him if he thinks his kids might follow in his footsteps, he'd tell you that what he wants for his kids, no matter what profession they choose, is to be happy and love what they do.

"What is most important is to develop the tools and skills you will need to carry out whatever it is you want to do – from there, everything else will fall into place. And hopefully by doing it, you will bring some

added value to society. You'd be able to say that you have made a difference in peoples' lives."

Bridlewood Homes is a member of the Canadian Home Builders Association and Carmine Gargarella is a board member of the London Home Builders Association, and is a registered builder with the Tarion Warranty Corporation.

Visit their web site at [www.bridlewoodhomes.ca](http://www.bridlewoodhomes.ca) or call (519) 652-1455 for more information.



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