

Best Of Cassville

FREE



A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE

CASSVILLE Democrat

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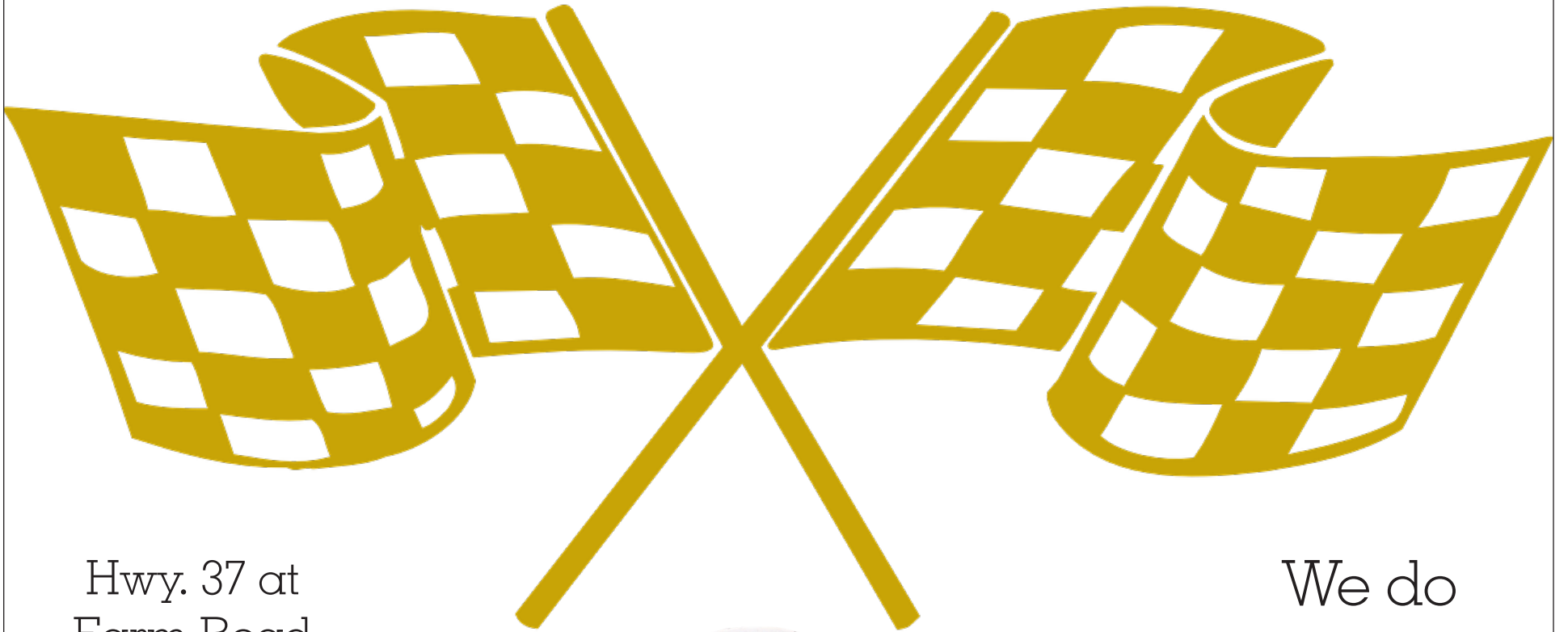
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Dale Stillings, Jr., owner of Stillings Builders, works on a frame in his shop.
Contributed photo



Stillings Builders can build homes from the ground up, including framing, roofing and more.
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Stillings Builders continues legacy of local craftsmanship

BY KYLE TROUTMAN

kt troutman@cassville-democrat.com

For more than half a century, Stillings Builders, LLC has been part of the construction landscape in Barry County, and the company's commitment to quality and customer service may be one factor contributing to Stillings Builders winning four Best of Cassville awards this year.

Legacy Owner Dale Stillings Jr., known simply as Junior, said he began in the construction business long before he took the reins of the family business.

"My dad, Dale Stillings, started Stillings Builders in 1972 with one brother in Ava, and then years later another brother started Stillings Builders in Salina, Kan."

Stillings said the family moved into the Cassville area in the late 1970s, and

construction quickly became a part of his childhood.

"Dad had his birthday 80th birthday last year, and one of my cousins was asking when I started," Stillings said. "I was probably 7 or 8, or so. I remember building in Eagle Rock way back in the 70s. I wasn't old enough to carry a full bundle of shingles up on the roof. I was 9 or 10, so I would break the bundle into thirds. I made three times the trips that everybody else would make up the roof to carry shingles at 10 years old."

Over time, Stillings grew from a young helper into the next generation of leadership in the business, eventually taking over in 2006.

"In 2005 I had lived in Iowa for 13 years," he said. "Dad was talking about retiring, so I came back in 2005, and by 2006, he handed it over to me. Ever since then, almost 20 years later, I've been doing it and then we have grown."

Stillings said his company today offers a wide range of services throughout the region.

"Over the last four years maybe, I have purchased concrete forms," he said. "I can do my own basement walls. I can do stem walls of a house or a crawlspace foundation. In the same time frame, I bought rolloff bins and I use my own rolloffs for dumpster services for my jobs. We also do framing and remodeling — we do so many remodels. I did two remodels for Security Bank, the Cassville remodel and the Wheaton branch."

Stillings said recent work has included a major renovation for a local clinic and an array of other construction tasks.

"I'm just finishing a nice big remodel for Herrin Animal Hospital here in town, but we do start-to-finish, ground-up, new construction, remodels, decks and roofs, of course."

Stillings said his early start shaped the experience he brings to each project.

"In summertime as a kid, I went and had fun after work," he said. "I worked all week and the summer, on Saturdays and Sundays, whatever dad needed me to do. So for me, it's all hands-on experience."

Even before taking over the business, Stillings said construction had already become second nature.

"If I worked at a factory, I always did jobs on the side," he said. "I've done other jobs, and then people say, 'Hey, can you build a deck?' Yeah, I can build that for you. I could do a room add on or remodel your bathroom or your kitchen."

As for favorite projects, Stillings said both remodels and new construction hold appeal.

"Personally, remodels are fun, but I like new construction with a little challenge," he said. "I like remodels because my goal is to make it look like it's always been part of the original building or original house."

Stillings said community members often affirm the success of that goal.

"I like to get the remodel finished and it looks like it's been there," he said. "I hear that all the time for remodeling from people driving by, that they can't hardly tell. I do enjoy doing that. It's almost like

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

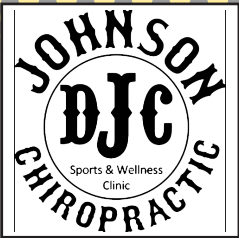
ON THE COVER: Stillings Builders builds a frame for a structure in the area. The company has been in business for more than 50 years.



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Stillings: Builders won four total Best of Cassville awards this year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

flipping a house.”

Stillings also enjoys tackling structural issues when older homes require more than a cosmetic fix.

“Sometimes, you start a remodel and a house has been neglected for a little while and you get rotten floor joists or termite damage,” he said. “I enjoy tearing out the floor and jacking it up and getting it back to level. I enjoy making people’s houses correct, and they don’t have to worry about it for the next 20-30 years if they hand it down to their kids.”

The business is supported by a small, but skilled crew, Stillings said.

“I have one young man, Dustin Moore, who came out of high school to me 11 years ago and has been with me ever since,” he said. “I have Ignacio Perez he does a good part of my remodeling, and he runs the remodeling crew and takes care of that. I have Victor Marino, and he runs the concrete division, and then I pretty much do my rollofs when I have time.”

The office operation remains simple.

“As far as office staff, it’s me, and my wife helps me in office work, but I do all my own paperwork and bidding and estimating,” he said.

Like many builders, Stillings has faced challenges in recent years, including rising costs and complicated remodels.

“You can only give an estimate that’s good for 10-20 days because of costs changing so fast,” he said. “COVID was difficult, but nobody told me no.’ Everybody told me to continue. Nobody said stop because the price of lumber has raised too much. We just offset the cost and do what we could.”

Looking ahead, Stillings said he intends to keep building, growing and expanding.

“Well, at my age, I’m gonna keep going,” he said. “I’m 58, so I’ve got several years. I’m going to keep growing and may expand a little bit west of Joplin. I don’t ever want to give up because my dad started this, and I’ve done nothing but try to grow from what he started in the early 1970s.”

Stillings said customer satisfaction remains central to the work, a factor reflected in the awards his business has received.

“My customers are fantastic,” he said. “You know you don’t get the perfect customer every time, but I’ve bend over backwards to make them happy. In the end, if

they can give me as a referral, I can keep them happy and future customers happy from their word — word-of-mouth is everything.”

That word-of-mouth is a contributor to Stillings’ awards this year, which include Best Home Builder, Best Home Repair/Remodeling, Best Roofing Company and Best Siding/Windows. Stillings said the company’s goal remains consistent across all projects.

“I do everything in my power to keep people happy, just doing the best quality I can and keeping it top-notch,” he said.

His father’s influence and the family’s construction background, Stillings said, still form the foundation of Stillings Builders.

“It’s just been in my blood ever since I was a little boy,” he said. “Dad gets out and helps me if I need help or advice. He’s the big starter of it all.”

Through decades of work, Stillings said he has had a hand in numerous local commercial and residential projects.

“Some of them I helped with in high school, like all the Mercy Clinics and Barry County Health and Rehab, and the Red Rose Inn and apartments on First Street,”



Dale Stillings, Jr., left, is pictured with his father, Dale Stillings, who started Stillings Builders more than 50 years ago. Kyle Troutman/ktoutman@cassville-democrat.com

he said. “I built Mineral Springs Baptist Church and numerous apartments in Mount Vernon and in Springfield.”

Through all the projects and new construction, Stillings said community ties remain paramount.

“We try to help people and sponsor things, and we try to keep it local on materials if I can,” he said.


For more information on Stillings Builders, people may reach Stillings at 417-342-2935.



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