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# Carolinas construction companies proudly contribute to *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* build

**ARTHUR MURRAY**  
— The North Carolina Construction News

It's not often that a builder is so proud of a project that didn't earn a dollar for his company. In fact, it cost the company time, materials and labor, during a period in which a lot of colleagues are struggling because of the bad economy.

But when *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* contacted Blue Ridge Log Cabins President Chip Smith about a project in Fayetteville, Smith didn't hesitate. He and his company wanted in — despite the tight deadline of 106 hours between the tearing down of the old house and the reveal to the homeowner.

Why? Blue Ridge always has been civic-minded, Smith says, and it has explored the prospect of working with the popular television show before. The cause was great: The project would tear down and rebuild the residence of former Navy chaplain Barbara Marshall, who was using it as what she called the Steps-N-Stages Jubilee House, a shelter for homeless women veterans. If that wasn't enough, first lady Michelle Obama would be at the reveal, when host Ty Pennington leads the crowd in shouting "Move that bus!"

Most of Blue Ridge's 100 employees made the trip from the headquarters at Cam-pobello, SC, to work on the project at one



**President Chip Smith of Blue Ridge Log Cabins is interviewed by Extreme Makeover crew for September 25 showing.**

point or another. They were joined by about 4,000 volunteers. Blue Ridge had begun planning the project in May and started making the 13 modular units that would be used for it. But even that head start didn't make things easy. "We worked right up until the deadline before Ty was supposed to be there and Michelle Obama. We were anxious."

Paul DiMeo, one of three Extreme Makeover designers who was part of the project, says he enjoyed the experience with Blue Ridge and its modular components.

**Extreme  
MAKEOVER  
HOME EDITION**

"Out of 190 homes, we've done this kind of home four times," DiMeo says. The Jubilee House project included two 3,000-square-foot dwellings — one for Marshall and for the homeless veterans she helps. The two structures are connected by a breezeway. "What's wonderful about this modular system is it already comes with drywall and electricity. You just have to connect all these things together."

While Blue Ridge was working on the residential portion of the project, Garner-based Creative Design Builders added a custom-designed greenhouse. Owner Janae Vogg says producers told her the greenhouse would be the "wow" factor of a project in Fayetteville.

Vogg says the 16 by 20 foot greenhouse is more like a detached sunroom, with a reinforced poly-carbonate roof and a water

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# Extreme Makeover

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and cooling system. It will be used to grow fruits and vegetables, but it has an air-vac system — similar to the pneumatic tubes at a bank drive-through — connecting it to the kitchen.

When all was said and done, the company donated about \$36,000 in materials and labor to the project. Vogg's crews worked round the clock, using spotlights to keep the effort going. The walls were manufactured at the company's plant but had to be reassembled on site. She maintains it was worth the company's time and effort. "I got to meet Mrs. Marshall. Her cause is real noble, and she's such a calm, serene and gracious lady."

Unlike other contractors, Creative Design Builders didn't finish the project before the reveal — but that was on purpose. Mrs. Obama planned to be in the greenhouse for the unveiling, and the glass windows would have sent temperatures soaring inside the structure. They left the glass out and went back to complete the installation in mid-August.

Dave Varner, president of Salisbury-based Superior Walls of North Carolina, says his crews installed about 400 feet of concrete walls for the basement of Jubilee House. The custom walls were lowered onto a bed of crushed stone. The company is experienced both with Blue Ridge and with Extreme Makeover. "We do all their basements that we can get to," Varner says, noting that the Pennsylvania-based parent company has 14 factories.

But it found problems when it showed up Saturday morning for its part of the project. "The excavation wasn't fully done because the excavator got a late start and ran over about seven hours," he says. "We did a lot of excavation ourselves." Varner says the nine-man crew "jumped in machines and grabbed shovels," working 24 hours to help make up time. "It made everybody tired, that's all."

Teresa Wilson, owner of Asheville Cranes, worked with Superior Walls setting the walls and then placing the 13 units. "We have worked with Blue Ridge Log Cabins for years," Wilson says. The company took two cranes to the site, with one working in front of the house and one in back. "The operators worked together setting the boxes," she says. "One would set a couple, then the other. It was a very smooth operation."



**Over 300 active duty and retired military service women participated in the rope pull tearing down the old shelter.**



**The contractors and subs met the tight deadline of 106 hours between the tearing down of the old house and reveal to the homeowner.**



**Garner-based Creative Design Builders completed a 16 by 20 foot greenhouse with a reinforced poly-carbonate roof and a water and cooling system.**

In fact, it was smooth enough that lost time was made up. "The project was behind about seven or eight hours when we began setting the walls because of problems with the grading," Wilson says. "We first set the walls and then began setting the house. When we finished setting the house at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, the project was ahead of schedule."

The producers contacted Snow's Landscaping & Lawn Care, a local Fayetteville company, to handle the rest of the landscaping around the residence. Owner Frank Snow says his company also provided irrigation, low-voltage lighting and retaining walls for the site. "Trying to fit it in was the hard part," he says, noting that his efforts also were hampered by the delays. "But we overcame it by pitching in to do things that we weren't going to do."

Jimmy Hall, owner of Jimmy Hall Heating and Air Conditioning in nearby Hope Mills, says he was recruited by Blue Ridge to design and install six Goodman heat pumps for the project. He agreed to help, despite some concerns. "The timeline was a little bit of an issue and working with so many people on the job," Hall says. "There was so much going on at one time. You had to fit in your little space."

He said he and his crew managed to put aside any distractions from the cameras or the impending visit by the first lady. "We knew we had a mission we had to complete on time. We just blocked that out. We knew we had to get it done."

Ultimately, Hall and others always kept their eyes on the final prize. "I met Barbara Marshall in the end," he says. "She's just a super lady. It made everybody tired, but for a good cause."

That's why Blue Ridge and Smith wanted to be part of the effort. "I believe that we all are presented with opportunities throughout our life to help others," Smith says. "Sometimes we don't know what the full scope of that requirement that's going to be placed on us. Often our lives are defined by what we do when presented with that opportunity."

You can't measure that in dollars.

*Special thanks to Asheville Crane, Creative Design Builders, Jimmy Hall Heating & Air Conditioning and Superior Walls of N.C. for sponsoring the Extreme Makeover Home Edition project feature. Additional participants in the Jubilee House project can be found by on the Extreme Makeover web page at [www.abc.com](http://www.abc.com).*



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# The Barker Lounge doggy boarding and daycare facility emerges from abandoned retail site in Charlotte



Main entry showcasing signage decals & services



Outdoor play areas


GABRIELLA JACOBS – The North Carolina Construction News

Sometimes, man is dog's best friend.

Proof? The Barker Lounge on Montford Drive in Charlotte, which opened in April. This facility is very specifically made for canine wants and needs – and bears no trace of its former life as a retail site.

The lounge (which describes itself as a “hangout for dogs” and whose playful logo depicts a bone-shaped treat in martini glass) offers daycare, boarding, grooming and training. It's one of five franchises of a New Jersey-based business; the others are in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Tennessee. The local owner is Mindy Evans, who's a certified Pet First Aid and CPR instructor.

The Montford Drive site was great for Evans because it was visible, near a neighborhood and a park – two big sources of dog-owners – plus it offered a building good for office and other indoor functions and land for assorted doggie outdoor functions, says Jennifer Orman, of commercial general contractor J.D. Goodrum Co. of Cornelius. Orman collaborated early steps, such as a zoning regulations and the building-permit process – with Barker executives, Lake Architectural of Marcellus, New York, and Mecklenburg County officials. All parties wanted to ensure the dogs could romp outdoors without safety and noise concerns.



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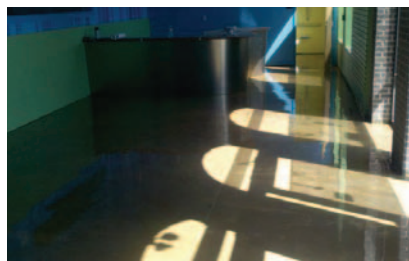
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**The original floor was in a very poor condition. Several layers of glue and thinset had to be removed. The flooring contractor used a special stain and a high-build epoxy—environmentally friendly for both humans and paws.**

## Barker Lounge

*Continued from page 4*

The site was zoned correctly, but regulations “were very restrictive for a doggie daycare,” says Jamie Yoxtheimer, vice president of JD Goodrum. “This was more challenging than typical but not a problem,” he says.

Goodrum is a 25-year-old firm which specializes in commercial construction projects including industrial, retail, office, warehouse, religious, institutional and recreational markets. You can see its work at, for example, Pine Island Country Club, Griffin Brothers Tire and Automotive Center, and the Westmoreland Athletic Complex. And the Barker Lounge is not Goodrum’s first client whose end-users would include animals. “We’ve completed other animal facilities in the region,” Yoxtheimer says.

The \$200,000 demolition and renovation project began in January and took about eight weeks. It was finished on time and within budget. Requirements included inside play areas, kennel and grooming areas, a modern lobby with a feature walls and staff areas, and outside play area. Altogether, the site is a little under 10,000 square feet.

Because The Barker Lounge is a fran-

chise, extra attention was paid to the signature blue and green colors, to ensure continuity. The feature wall seen upon entering, for example, has a lot of wood detail and showcases the corporate logo.

Nick Vrettos of Vrettos Pappas Consulting Engineers, says his firm collaborated with the architect on ceiling clearances for exhaust fans in the interior playrooms. The building’s plumbing needs were rather simple. But “we had to do a little homework” on the electrical work for the building, checking with Duke Energy to estimate the original tenant’s load profile and justify the Barker’s new loads. The building had been abandoned for a while, so research was needed, he said. Vrettos and childhood friends Kosta J. Pappas and Dino M. Pappas started their firm (<http://www.vpce.com>) about eight years ago. They specialize in constructing new buildings, renovating old buildings, up-fitting existing building and tenant spaces, and analyzing/upgrading existing engineered building systems.

Floors were a concern because, like Vrettos found with the electrical load details, prior use and abandonment of the building had to be taken into account. “There was lots of floor prep...the existing concrete floor had to be prepped and re-sealed,” Yox-

theimer says.

“The floor was in a very poor condition. It was an old porous floor with several layers of glue and thinset,” says Jeroen H.F. Kaijser Bots, owner of EUROfloors of Huntersville. EUROfloors’ expertise is concrete staining & epoxy. Kaijser Bots has been working in the commercial flooring & design field for about 15 years, both in the U.S. and the Netherlands. His experience includes commercial clients like Nike, Wake Forest University, Toyota, Nissan to residential clients in the Carolinas.

For this project, Bots used a special stain and a high-build epoxy. The stain and epoxy are environmentally friendly for both humans doing the application and paws inheriting the end result. The Barker Lounge’s floors now are attractive, durable and easy to maintain.

Not much landscaping was needed because existing trees complemented the outdoor play area. An artificial turf, however, was put down to facilitate maintenance. The Barker Lounge has indoor and outdoor security cameras, an air filtration system, and climate control.

Other subcontractors were Hartsell Brothers Fence and Automated Security Gate Systems of Charlotte, Coatings 2000 of Charlotte, Hinson Electrical Contractors of Kannapolis; and Carolina Contractors Services of Indian Trail, NC. “It was a good team effort,” Yoxtheimer says.

J.D. Goodrum’s role, Yoxtheimer says, was “To understand what the customer wanted and introduce that to the construction schedule and process it all.”

Customers are happy, according to online comments from several sources. Many have specified they like the facility’s cleanliness and organization. In fact, plenty of puppy parents have posted pictures of Fido climbing on the slide, running up a ramp, sitting in the wading pool or chasing a ball with his new daycare friends.

The Barker Lounge’s founder, Jason Puleio, is happy too. “I can honestly say that we were thoroughly pleased with every element of JD Goodrum’s involvement. They finished the project on time. Our facility turned out beautifully...exactly as called for when drawn up on paper! The attention to detail was second to none. Every part of the process and every ounce of work was done with the type of professionalism that is usually only found in very large projects...We were nothing less than 100 percent satisfied and if we had to do it all again, we wouldn’t change a thing.”

*Special thanks to EUROfloors of Huntersville and Hartsell Brothers Fence Company for sponsoring The Barker Lounge feature article.*

*Original retail space prior to renovation*



*Original retail interior*

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# Cary Arts Center renovation is focal point of downtown revitalization

**BEA QUIRK**  
– The North Carolina Construction News

Every renovation project has its own set of challenges. There are unique pre-existing conditions that limit the owners' and architects' vision and must be accommodated. Plus you never know what you're going to find just below the surface.

Transforming the 1938 Cary Elementary School into the Cary Arts Center had more than its share of unusual conditions and surprises – which included protecting an

award-winning blackjack oak tree that abutted the building and discovering the remains of a dormitory under the parking lot. But the architect, Raleigh-based Clearscapes, and the contractor, Winston-Salem-based New Atlantic Contracting, also had to tread very lightly during the 16-month, \$13.1 million design-bid-build project. For they were working on a beloved icon, a representation of which is included in the town seal.

"The building sits on the highest point in Cary, and it is the focal point of the revital-

ization of downtown," explains Ellie Torre, the project architect. "We put an addition in the back, but it had to be visually unaltered from the front. It was a powerful presence to maintain."

"Exterior modifications were off-limits," says Bob Egan, director of the Building Systems Group at Wooten Company, which handled the mechanical, plumbing, electrical and fire protection components of the renovation. "And we had to use the existing roof features, like wood joists and odd kinds of concrete. It was a hodgepodge of struc-

tural conditions."

Fluted aluminum wraps had been added to the columns on the front of the structure during a previous renovation. These were taken off and replaced with smooth column wraps with detailed tops and bases so it looked like the original. That had to be explained to some residents, who were concerned that the constructors were disturbing one of the town's treasures.

The project included a 41,000-square-

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# Cary Arts Center

Continued from page 6

foot renovation, plus construction of a 7,100-square foot addition that converted the old school auditorium into a modern 400-seat theater (complete with computer-controlled lighting systems) with a 60-foot-high fly loft above the stage. The three-story center also includes classrooms, studio and rehearsal space, offices, a small gallery and workshop space for ceramics (with kilns) and textile classes.

The front hall has been opened up to create a two-story lobby with a glass wall of artwork that features historic photos of the school (whose origins date back to 1867), as well as a grand staircase of multi-colored glass pieces, including hues of navy blue and indigo.

Says Torre, “We wove in a historic feel with hints and glimpses of the past and created a new fresh vibrant art center.”

Townpeople were more than happy with the final product. Some 5,000 of them showed up for the August 13 grand opening. “It has generated tremendous excitement, and members of the town council told us it exceeded their expectations,” comments Lyman Collins, Cary’s cultural arts manager.



That’s because public input was an integral part of the design process. Planning – which began in 2007 – included public meetings and focus groups long before construction began in 2009. At those meetings, users talked about their programming needs. The center was then designed to meet those needs.

“It was designed to be versatile for use by all groups,” Torre says. “The volunteers were very passionate about what it would take to realize their dreams.”

New Atlantic project manager Michael Hardman says the building was in “pretty bad shape” when they started. For one

thing, it lacked any kind of fire protection. The interior had to be completely gutted.

One issue to be addressed was that the school had several different floor systems that were not level with each other. Even concrete floors had different thicknesses. But the floors had to be made uniform and level to make the center handicapped accessible. The team used a number of solutions – from simple ones like laying carpet over the floors or applying a drywall-like flooring compound to more complex ones such as constructing a floating tile floor in the third-floor bathrooms.

Other issues required even more creative thinking. A new exhaust stack needed to be attached to the boiler in the basement, but there was no apparent way to install it. Yet there was an existing 60-foot chimney in the middle of the building. It took a week to put the stack together on-site and then an entire day – and two cranes – to hoist it into the existing chimney and attach it to the boiler.

“Watching them snake that inside the chimney was really something to watch – it was not easy,” recalls Brian Hamilton, the project manager for Wayne J. Griffin Electric, Inc.

New Atlantic subcontracted most of the work out, rather than self performing all the work, and we coordinated and managed those subcontractors. We did maintain a staff on site to address minor issues. But Hardman still met weekly with the subs that were used, right before his meeting with the engineers, various facility users and the architects.

“You can imagine what it was like with

engineers and artists in the same room,” Egan says. “That added a unique element, and they successfully incorporated art into the architecture of the building. I was impressed with what Clearscapes came up with, and it’s a credit to the contractors working together that it could happen. But it was the drive and willpower of the owners that made this a success.”

Collins, on the other hand, has high praise for New Atlantic. “They had a continual positive attitude about the project... like the day we found a dormitory buried under the parking lot. They told us, ‘We’ll get through this,’ and that was their attitude consistently. I felt comfortable with and trusted their leadership team.”

Because of the unexpected conditions, there were \$1 million in change orders “There weren’t a lot of contingency funds – every dollar was watched very closely,” Hardman says. But, adds Egan, “We could draw things, but there were physical limitations.”

One of those limitations was the small lot size, which had a zero lot line in the back, where the addition was built. In fact, the theater crosses the property line of the current Cary Elementary School, and easements had to be acquired. Crews worked Saturdays and evenings during the school year so as not to interrupt classes. A plywood wall was erected between the school and the construction, which students painted to create a colorful mural.

“It was a difficult project, but I think the whole thing turned out pretty nice,” Hamilton says.

## So you question the power of social media?

CHRIS HEARN – GUEST COLUMNIST – The North Carolina Construction News

facebook

twitter

LinkedIn

We regularly get involved in conversations where contractors tell us they understand that Facebook, Twitter, etc. are great tools for teenagers and college kids. Yet they have not been able to draw a correlation to the advantages this powerful business medium could bring to their business. While this economy has forced many businesses to look at new, cost effective tools to reach and hold potential clients, there has also been reluctance to embrace this technology wholeheartedly as a viable solution.

The question you should be considering is: How can I use this cost effective, productive tool to help grow my business? There are a number of ways to get started:

- Ask your current customers how they use and succeed using Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, etc.
- Find one or two people in your own organization who use social media every day and ask them for their opinion practices.
- Read any one of a number of blogs and websites that detail how you can employ this platform.
- Check competitive websites to get some ideas.
- Ask every person who contacts your business how they found out about your company.

If your business could use new customers, you should be seeking out this information. Your competition is probably doing the same thing.

Chris Hearn is Co-Founder of Qudeso, a North Carolina-based full service marketing firm. For more information call 877-478-3376 or email: [chearn@qudeso.com](mailto:chearn@qudeso.com).

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# Project Manager's Toolbox – Closing Out

BY RICHARD LAW – GUEST COLUMNIST  
– The North Carolina Construction News

Closing out a construction project can be an emotionally and financially trying process with what seems to have a constantly shifting end-point. However, this doesn't need to be the case. A closeout that is the product of a well-organized project, in which the policies and procedures have been consistently and carefully applied and maintained throughout the life of the project, can generate a feeling of successful accomplishment.

A poorly organized project with incomplete records can still be closed out. It's just a more likely to be a protracted and wasteful experience. An examination of the major tasks necessary for closing out a project provides us with a collection of activities that must be concluded in order to calmly reach closeout.

Contractors sometimes forget that Permits need to be closed as the permitted work is concluded. Permit control sometimes suffers from inattention. A case comes to mind regarding a recent nine-figure project (with a major international contractor as the Design-Build Entity), on which Permit maintenance was shirked. A State EPA Surface Water Discharge Permit was left open for over a year after all work that could have resulted in a discharge of surface water had

been completed. During a major storm, a surface water event occurred on an adjacent undeveloped property, and that event caused damage on a second adjacent property. Although the Permitted Project had no involvement in either the event, or in the damage caused, a State EPA examiner decided that the slick thing to do was to make coordinating the resolution of the situation the responsibility of the Permitted Contractor (as the price for closing a permit that should have been painlessly closed over a year earlier). Project closeout requires that all Permits be successfully concluded; this permit conclusion work is most easily done as the project progresses, instead of leaving it all to the end.

Required Owner Training must be certified as having been completed, and all Operations and Maintenance Data must be submitted and accepted. O&M's are things which can be accumulated piecemeal throughout the life of the project and held for dissemination as the various aspects of the project are transferred to Owner control (usually as a part of Owner Training). Remember that the final tests for each system are a part of transferring systems to Owner control. Be sure to also include any required systems sign-offs by Owner Representatives.

It is generally preferred that all required Warranties and Guarantees be included with



the O&M data. Accumulating these should be included as line items in the checklists for each O&M compilation. Each O&M can frequently require multiple certificates. These line items can be checked against the Warranties and Guarantees file as the O&M's are compiled to be certain that all required Warranties and Guarantees have been included.

Both the Owner and the Surety Company (for bonded projects) require assurances that a Contractor has met all of his obligations to his suppliers, sub-contractors, consultants, inspection entities, and anyone else having a contractual type of agreement with the Contractor. This means obtaining what is commonly termed a "Release of Lien" from each partner to all such agreements. A complete collection of these releases is usually required in order to receive the final payment for a project.

A complete collection of the original Contract Documents and all subsequent modifying documents is usually required as a closeout documentation group. This will usually also include one set of plans and specifications with all modifying documents (RFT's, ASI's, change orders, etc.) posted to them. A complete set of "as built", or, "red-lined" drawings will also be required for closeout.

We have considered five of the required task classes for a successful project closeout. In the case of each one, a separate file, continuously maintained during construction would be the preferred method of informa-

tion control. Each file should have a continuously maintained cover which synthesizes the current status of each required item. In the case of a project that has not had continuously maintained records, each closeout task will require the creation of a file specifically for closeout purposes. Of course, all of these tasks can be executed in conventional hard copy fashion; it's just somewhat laborious. A computerized project management documentation application can be an invaluable aid for more easily and concisely organizing and maintaining this information.

The very first closeout task should consist of generating a checklist that lists every single item requiring resolution prior to closeout. A well-organized project will have all closeout tasks delineated in the Submittal Registry so that they can be tracked and resolved. The portion of the Registry that covers closeout tasks can be printed as the checklist, or "scorecard", for managing project closeout.

The key with manual or computerized closeout control is being organized, deliberate, and painstaking in its documentation, making it far easier to pursue all of the efforts necessary to realizing a calm and successful closure of the project.

*Richard Law is principal of Jadesdad, a construction management consulting firm headquartered in Charlotte. He can be reached at [Richard@jadesdad.com](mailto:Richard@jadesdad.com) or 704-364-1926 or at the website [www.jadesdad.com](http://www.jadesdad.com).*

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