

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Husband and Wife Improve Homes Together

by Rebekah Keller

Not everyone is lucky enough to find a loving spouse or a compatible work colleague, but even fewer people find both of these in one person. Mary Vann and Jose Flores are a married couple in St. Louis who have transitioned their strong relationship into a successful business partnership. They have not only created a stable home for themselves, but are working to help others establish happy homes as well.

Mary and Jose know a thing or two about what makes a good home. She is a Coldwell Banker Gundaker realtor, and he owns his own contracting business, Las Aguilas Contracting. Together, they often collaborate on projects, combining both their strong suits to ensure they are putting the best possible houses on the market and producing homes which best coincide with their clients' needs and desires.

Mary has been in the real estate business for almost 20 years, and prides herself on her ability to properly market the houses she sells. She maintains that every house has its own specific features which determine what kind of people would be happiest living there.

"Each home has unique qualities beyond what's visible in the picture and the typical '2 bedroom, 2 bath' descriptions," she says. "People need to have an idea of the aspects that might make the house special for them."

This is precisely what Mary Vann does best. The current real estate market is a buyers' market, she says, and so everything is geared toward them. Therefore, she is incredibly perceptive when writing listings for a house, making sure she highlights its distinguishing attributes in a way that appeals to the appropriate target market. For example, Mary recently came across a home with 2 garages on an expansive spread of land, which, for some reason, had not yet sold. The garages were beautifully set up to house a workshop for a man who works on cars or does carpentry, and the large lot was perfect for a big family or for extended family to visit, Mary describes. Unfortunately, the previous seller didn't have it listed that way. Mary's techniques are successful because she assesses the property in an



individual manner, and tailors her selling tactics accordingly.

Undoubtedly, Mary Vann is not merely concerned with making sales and turning a profit. Her personalized service shows she is committed to finding the best possible fit for both family and home. Additionally, having grown up in St. Louis, she holds an intimate familiarity with the city and its surrounding areas.

Aside from effective marketing strategies, Mary is also skilled in helping her clients prepare their house for the market.

“It’s imperative to try to put the best face possible on a property prior to placing it on the market,” she explains. “You have to make it something that people are willing to pay for.”

Often times, houses are simply in need of small repairs here and there, but occasionally they require more major modifications. This is where her husband, Jose, enters the scene. When Mary’s clients need some work done, whether it is readying the house to be sold or enhancing the functionality of the home, Jose is able to coordinate with them and create a finished product that pleases everyone. In fact, no project is too small or too big, from replacing tile to painting rooms to removing or adding walls.

“Jose is perfect for these jobs because he can come into a house and get a good sense for what needs to be done to improve the property, whether for sale or general use,” says his wife.

Jose established his own contracting business six years ago, but has been involved in the industry from a young age when he started working for his father, and then later other contracting companies, until he finally founded his own company in order to oversee the quality of work himself. As a talented contractor, he can do small repairs and handiwork, full-blown renovations, and anything in between. What he truly excels



in, though, is redesign work. If his clients have a plan already in mind, he can follow that through and bring it into fruition; if they're undecided, he can see what needs to be done and offer up his own ideas.

"Having done this for the better part of my life, I have a knack for assessing the amount of space available and planning new ways to use it more effectively," he says.

The result is always a space that has been remodeled into a more functional, yet still attractive, living area that reflects the clients' original vision. Like his wife, Jose focuses his skills on working closely and personally with his clients, ensuring their complete satisfaction in his services.

When Jose started Las Aguilas Contracting, he wanted to be sure that he could provide quality products at a reasonable price, guaranteeing that his clients got the most for their money while still sticking to a budget. In keeping with this philosophy, he does his best to make certain that even less expensive renovation jobs still look "top of the line." Furthermore, his business remains all-encompassing by offering environmentally conscious materials, such as bamboo and cork, as well as handcrafted accent pieces, like doors and cabinets. It is no wonder that a good portion of his business comes solely from referrals and return customers.

Though they work well individually, Mary and Jose truly enjoy the projects that allow them to collaborate with each other. Over the years, they have shared clients simultaneously, rehabbed houses together, and even jointly labored over their own home. At one point, the two of them flipped a house in one year, with each adding their opinions and compromising on what changes needed to be done in order to increase its resale value. As is to be expected, they do admit that it can be challenging at times to work with the same partner they are with day-in and day-out, for better or for worse. However, neither lingers too long on this notion as they describe how much fun their working relationship can be, ascertaining that they are able to work so cohesively with one another because they know exactly how the other one thinks.

"We know how to work so well together because we're usually on the same level," Jose says.

"The nice thing about working with him is that I know where his head is and what he's thinking all the time," Mary explains. "It's really enjoyable; a lot of fun."

Mary Vann and Jose Flores are evidently people-oriented individuals who see it as a necessity to get to know their clients and community on an intimate level. Aside from working on homes together, both



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Mary and Jose find ways to selflessly give back to the community, finding fulfillment through generous charitable contributions as well. Mary volunteers with the Junior League of St. Louis and Support Dogs of St. Louis, and is a member of the Missouri Botanical Gardens and St. Louis Zoo. Jose volunteers his time at Lydia's House, an organization that helps battered women and children, and The Lab School, a nonprofit pre-school.