

## **JERRY HARRIS REMODELING**

### **Remodeling Hampton Roads for 35 years**

by Christine Knapp

As a new homeowner in the 1980s, Jerry Harris began remodeling his house in between deployments on the USS Atlanta. Impressed by his work, neighbors started asking for help with their home renovation projects. Over time Jerry perfected his craft, word-of-mouth spread from one neighborhood to another, and before he knew it, Jerry's remodeling business was in full swing.

Thirty-five years later, Jerry Harris Remodeling is still renovating homes throughout Hampton Roads. The business is a happy family affair. Jerry is president and COO while his older son, Jake, is vice president of operations, and his younger son, Josh, is vice president of marketing.

"One of the main reasons I decided to work alongside my dad and brother was because I want to leave our children a growing, thriving business as their legacy," Josh Harris says. "I also feel a sense of dedication and pride serving the local Hampton Roads community and fostering growth in our local economy."

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Still based in South Norfolk, where operations first began, the Harris family dutifully serves all five Southside cities- Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Portsmouth,

and Suffolk. On any given day, project managers sit alongside clients in their homes, discussing details about kitchen appliances, faucets, cabinets, paint, granite, lighting, porches, decks, and more.

Jerry Harris Remodeling helps clients expand their vision for kitchen and bathroom remodeling projects, as well as additions, exterior, and whole-house remodeling.

"We are a design-build firm that listens to our clients, creates their designs, and then, with their approval, build it in-house," Josh affirms.

The process is simple. After clients share their budget and ideas in an initial meeting, their in-house designer, Melody Zuniga, completes drawings of the renovated space as well as 3-D renderings. These allow clients to see what the remodel will look like before work begins.

"If a client knows they want to remodel the kitchen but needs help bringing his or her ideas and inspiration into the light of day, that's exactly what we do," Josh explains. "Before we ever get to work, the client will see the desired outcome. We know when we begin any project, everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goal; there are no surprises."

Then the client is paired with the design coordinator, Sydney Judah, and both meet regularly during the design and development phase to choose tiles, countertops, cabinets, and other elements. Once the client approves a set of plans, the Harris team hits the ground running. At the end of every week, the project manager updates the client on the project's progress and plans for the upcoming week.

When the project is complete, Jerry Harris Remodeling provides clients with a five-year workmanship warranty, covering anything done in the house, aside from manufacturer defects. "We stand behind our warranty- every time, without fail," Josh promises.



Jerry Harris with his sons Josh and Jake

What stands out the most about the Harris family, besides their commitment to their clients and the work they produce, is their commitment to one another.

"We intimately feel a duty not to let one another or our clients down," Josh says. "We feel that duty to the rest of our team members as well."

Perhaps this sense of accountability and trust comes from Jake and Josh's participation in the business from an early age.

"From age 13 through high school, I spent my summers working with my family," Josh reminisces. "My brother Jake did the same while growing up. Upon graduating from Christopher Newport University, he joined my dad and has been with the company for 12 years. Jake is the engine that keeps it all moving forward- overseeing scheduling, orders, job quality control, warranties, client satisfaction, and more. He is the key to all business operations, aided by his project managers and support staff."

All employees feel a part of the family. Karen Gallond started working for the company back in the late 1980s. Currently, she is the chief financial officer of Jerry Harris Remodeling.

"Karen has been running the office since before I was born," Josh smiles. "She keeps the gears turning behind the scenes. Chris Williams, our director of design, has helped build our business for the last 25 years, as has Rusty McNair, our longest tenured project manager.

"A similar longevity applies to all of our project managers," Josh observes. "Cord Whitley has been with us for over 20 years, since he was 18 years old. Chris Hill, our project manager and remodeling consultant, has been with us for 15 years, while David Godfrey and Jason Brewer have been with us for about 10 years. We train our employees in-house and promote from within, and I really think that is the key. Our family dynamic extends to our team. We consider them our family as well. We have even had other members of the same family come work for us. It speaks to the personal connectedness that we all feel. A rising tide lifts all boats."

"For as long as I can remember, our parents raised Jake and me with certain foundational principles," Josh continues. "Do unto others as you would have done unto you. Never lie, cheat, or steal. I truly believe if you treat everyone well, it comes back to you. Building a business with my family is incredibly fulfilling. We are always living the business; we're always in sync. There's constant communication and an unbreakable bond beneath it. It's not perfect, but when there are different ways to approach things, we're extremely comfortable in tackling things together head-on."

The family often spends their off days on the water fishing.

"If there's a tuna run coming, we're out there trying to catch the big one," Josh laughs. "Fishing is one of the glues that holds our family together. It's something we've always enjoyed doing."

Obviously, because of the pandemic, the Harris family is extra careful during projects.

"We're taking every precaution we can. Our entire team wears masks, and they are careful not to touch surfaces. We even offer virtual video conferences when needed."

Above all, Josh wants every potential and current customer to understand the Harris' overarching philosophy.

"We always strive for excellence. We are communicative, conscientious, and thoughtful. The time that we devote to every client is reflected in the finished project. As a client, they're part of our team, and we're part of theirs. Our family's goal is to give them exactly what they want."

The Harris family plans to remain local.

"Hampton Roads is, and always will be, our home," Josh concludes. "Serving this community has been my family's life work, and that isn't going to change."



The Jerry Harris Remodeling team. Back row from left: Chris Williams, Chris Hill, Jake Harris, Jerry Harris and Josh Harris. Front row from left: Karen Gallond, Sydney Judah, Melody Zuniga.

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