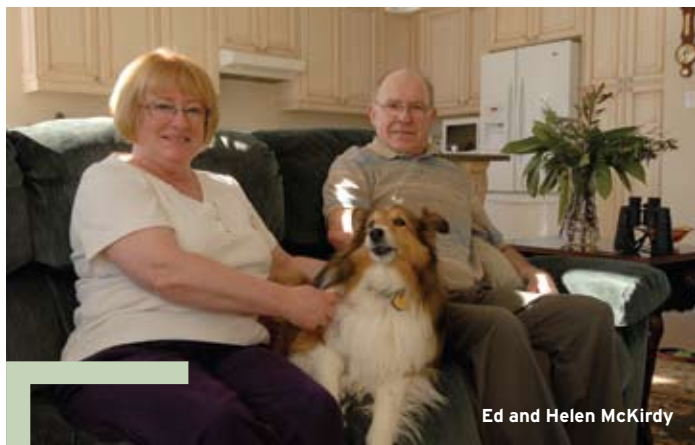


## editor's note



Ed and Helen McKirdy

**ED MCKIRDY WAS PLANTING HOSTAS** at the front of his new home in Minden last fall when he heard a familiar voice from across the street. Claudio Bortolussi, who built McKirdy's house, was putting up Christmas lights for another new neighbour. "Home Hardware has Christmas lights on sale," Bortolussi shouted. "If you get some, I'll put them up for you." McKirdy got the lights. Bortolussi hung them. "In the spring, he'll take them down," says McKirdy's wife, Helen.

The experience of this retired couple, who moved from a lakeside home into the Pine Ridge Estates subdivision by Highland Park Homes, is another telling example of why buyers are so pleased with their new homes. Their builders look after them. Bortolussi, Gino Capozzoli and Gustavo Rojas do quality work. They like happy customers. If that means going the extra mile, they're more than willing to wear out their shoes taking the steps that make the neighbourhood and their new homes the best they can be. The results of their enthusiasm and meticulous attention to detail can be seen on page 22 where we visit the McKirdys in their beautiful, three-bedroom home.

In Muskoka, we tour the newest cottage built by Charthouse Developments. With its seasoned team of highly skilled trades people, Charthouse has created a stunning, waterfront home. Thousands of shrubs and perennials, with dozens of newly planted trees, ring this 9,000 sq. ft. retreat. It was built to suit its environment, offering luxury in the woods with convenient road or water access to all three of Muskoka's big lakes. Photographer Sandy MacKay explores this gem on Lake Joseph with his eye for great style and architectural brilliance. See the results on page 38.

In the spring edition of *People*, we introduce readers to some of the region's best landscapers. With their many years of experience and skills honed on countless projects, these green-thumbed pros offer timely advice to those people thinking about building a new home or sprucing up their existing yard and gardens. These designers, landscape artists, gardeners and builders help put the great in the great outdoors. Meet them on page 56.

Spring is a time for new beginnings. So pour a cup of coffee or a glass of your favourite drink and plant the seeds of spring dreams with **OUR HOMES**.

Sincerely,

Walter Franczyk, *Managing Editor*  
walter@ourhomesmagazine.com



# tranquility base PINE RIDGE

MINDEN'S NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD

BY LORI FRANCYK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Nine-foot ceilings tower even higher in the open concept living room adjoining the kitchen and dining area of Ed and Helen McKirdy's home.

LEFT: Birds are a recurring theme in Helen's needlework on several of the walls in the three-bedroom bungalow.

Nestled in the scenic Haliburton Highlands, Ed and Helen McKirdy's new home is a symphony of sunlight and open spaces. "It's so bright and cheerful. There is a lot of light," says Helen as she watches Katy, the couple's eight-year-old Shetland sheepdog, bask in the sunlight filling the cosy sunroom.

*Continued on page 25*



With its brown-black granite countertops and antiqued cupboards, the kitchen is an enticing, favourite spot.

LEFT: A southeast exposure gives the family sun room plenty of warm sunshine.

BELOW: Katy, the McKirdy's Shetland sheepdog, keeps a wary but friendly eye on visitors.



Lake Scugog Lumber. Alta Moda Woodworking: Kitchen cabinets. JELD-WEN Windows and Doors. Chouinard Brothers: Roofing and aluminum. Benson Plumbing. Mariposa Electric. Taylor Made: Heating and Air Conditioning. Kawartha Floor Trends. Blinds to Go. Maple Drywall. BTM Barrie Trim and Mouldings. Kawartha Stair and Rail. The OverHead Door Co. J.A.C. Kernohan Construction: Concrete.

Built by **Highland Park Homes**, the McKirdys' three-bedroom bungalow is part of the Pine Ridge Estates development in the picturesque town of Minden. This exciting new subdivision features two- and three-bedroom bungalows ranging in size from 1,300 to 1,800 sq. ft.

Developers **Claudio Bortolussi**, **Gino Capozzoli** and associate **Gustavo Rojas**, of Highland Park Homes, are passionate in their quest for excellence. "We take pride in what we do. We build a good quality home and avoid taking shortcuts. We are on top of every stage of construction," says Capozzoli. Helen and Ed were impressed with Highland Park Homes' attention to detail. "We had a lot of consultation with Claudio and Gino. They have been very accommodating and are only a call away," says Ed.

It's a partnership based on shared values, years of experience and complementary skills. Bortolussi and Capozzoli teamed up years ago in the Greater Toronto Area and have worked on many projects together. "As

contractors and builders, we are very hands on," says Bortolussi. "We are able to take care of customers' needs in all areas." As an approved Tarion builder, the company offers new homebuyers a secured warranty package.

With Energy Star designation, Highland Park Homes are more energy efficient than those built to standard code. There are 76 houses planned for the development in three phases. The first phase, now under construction, has 10 homes completed and occupied. "This is a large housing development for Haliburton County," says Bortolussi. Helen and Ed agree the new subdivision is something special. The McKirdys originally intended to buy an older home but changed their minds when they discovered the Pine Ridge development. Being retired, they wanted a home that was basically maintenance free. "We needed to downsize our workload. But if you buy an older home, you may be buying someone else's problems. You never know what you are getting," says Ed. *Continued on page 26*

feature



**LEFT:** The master bedroom's en suite is a model of efficiency.

**BELOW:** With its view of the Gull River, the master bedroom is a calm oasis, basked by morning sunlight.



The McKirdys' bungalow, situated on a 75-by-150 foot lot, features an open concept kitchen, living and dining room with a cheery, propane fireplace in the middle of the living area. Nine-foot ceilings add an airy, elegant touch to the home, as do the engineered, oak-veneer hardwood floors. The kitchen has granite countertops, antique finish cupboards, ceramic tile and a convenient island workstation. "We're kitchen people. I love to cook and bake," Helen says, as she slices fresh, homemade buns at the island.

Ed, on the other hand, is drawn to the roomy living area where he enjoys "putting his feet up" and watching hockey and other sports on

television. In fact, Ed was at Maple Leaf Gardens when the Leafs last won the Stanley Cup in 1967. "I'm still a fan," he admits, reluctantly.

After meeting on a blind date, Helen and Ed have been married for 37 years. In the 1990s, the McKirdys decided they were tired of the hustle and bustle in Scarborough and moved to the Minden area to pursue a more tranquil lifestyle. They lived on nearby South Lake for a number of years before moving to the Minden development. "It is less stressful here than it was in Scarborough. It's a much slower pace and a good sense of community," says Helen. *Continued on page 28*

feature



LEFT: One of several model homes in Pine Ridge Estates Minden has finished landscaping around a front porch accented with stained posts and braces. (Mike Murphy Photo)

BELOW: In his basement, Ed works on a wooden model of the schooner Bluenose, a storied racing ship.

BOTTOM: A cardinal in the snow takes shape in Helen's hands as she cross-stitches a winter scene.



The community is an attractive feature of the Minden development, according to Capozzoli. "This is a prime location. It's close to all the amenities. There is a new hospital next door, schools, banks and shopping nearby, and it's only a three-minute walk to the Gull River. Plus, Minden is the only place in Haliburton County that has both town sewer and water.

Pine Ridge Estates Minden is ideal for both retirees or couples with young families.

Highland Park Homes continues to look for opportunities to provide well-built, affordable homes in the Minden area. With the help of Minden realtor **Bill Kulas**, the company is always seeking new property to develop. "We work closely with Bill. He is very knowledgeable and honest," says Bortolussi.

Preservation of the environment has also figured prominently in the builders' plans. They have pledged to reforest the subdivision and return the trees that were saved during excavation of the development.

Ed and Helen are confident their move to Pine Ridge will simplify and enrich their lives in the coming years. "We received very positive feedback from one of the first residents who moved here," Helen recalls as she pauses to adjust a framed, cross-stitch portrait in the master bedroom. Helen's intricate cross-stitch creations adorn the walls of their home and create a personal touch that compliments the cosy, intimate atmosphere of their residence. **OH**

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