



Passion Projects

BY AMY SOUZA

College Hill Homes in Corvallis combines strong project management, responsible budgeting and high-quality design to bring clients' dreams to life.

Over the past 15 years, Mikiah and Heather Smith have built themselves multiple homes around Corvallis, and they've just purchased property to start their next project, which includes a dedicated home office to meet with clients. Little did they know when they embarked upon their first project that they were laying the foundation for their company, College Hill Homes.

"We discovered a passion and gift we didn't know we had," says Heather. "People saw what we had done with our own homes and started asking us to build for them, and our company was born."

With a background in college athletics — as softball and baseball players and later softball coaches at Oregon State — the couple brings a competitive spirit, a knack for team-building, and a strong desire to have fun and enjoy the process. While working

on their own projects, the couple learned quickly what else was important to them: timeliness, transparency and honesty. They pride themselves on creating accurate budgets and efficient build schedules and sticking to them. This requires creating a winning team full of skilled subcontractors, each playing the roles that they were chosen for.

"Life is about building relationships, and it's no different when building a business," Heather says. "We partner with subcontractors who are really great at what they do and enjoyable to be around. Then we put them in a position to be successful by trusting them to do their jobs."

For a recent North Albany remodel, the Smiths worked with a widow who'd raised three children in her 1970s-era home and whose daughter planned to soon marry in the backyard. The cli-



^ The Smiths enjoy this home's contrast between old and new: a contemporary iron railing system contrasted against the original door, and the way new flooring highlights the existing fireplace surround.

ent and her husband had remodeled the home's kitchen together in 1993, installing high-end, custom oak cabinets, and Heather knew the room had meaning beyond just a physical space. When she and Mikiah left the initial meeting, they looked at each other and said: "There's no way we're demo-ing those cabinets."

"It was evident that the joy of their lives was loving each other and raising their children together," Heather says. "This kitchen felt like it had such a strong connection to her husband and her children's childhood, we wanted to honor that in this renovation."

Along with two full-bath updates, the couple refreshed the kitchen by updating the cabinets with paint and new hardware, using subway tile as a backsplash and feature wall, and replacing tile flooring with white oak that stretched throughout the home's main level. They also replaced the home's entryway oak railing and half wall with modern black iron from ASF Ironworks. The result is a bright, fresh space that retains the previous remodel's story.

Most clients have a sense of what they want, especially now that the internet offers so much inspiration. But they turn to professionals like College Hill Homes to help them hone their visions. That starts with active listening, Heather says.

"You learn a lot about people from their emotions and the things they tell you, which might not just be about the space," she says. "Our homes are more than just what backsplash we choose. Those walls are full of memories." collegehillhomes.net

