

# suburban life

*Cheers!*  
pg. 20

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page 12



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# Building Happiness

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“Happiness is at the heart of everything we do,” says Alyssa Titus, director of marketing for Schell Brothers LLC, a new-home builder based in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. “Every decision we make is driven not by money or the bottom line, but by the happiness of our homeowners and members of our team. ... I would say there’s not another company doing what we do.”

Titus’s sentiment may sound like marketing boilerplate, but in the case of Schell Brothers, it’s also true to life. Spend a few minutes talking with a member of the Schell Brothers leadership team about the company’s distinctive culture and business model, and one thing becomes clear: Schell Brothers is in a class by itself.

In 2003, Chris Schell left behind a lucrative career as a hedge fund manager to start a business as a new-home builder. In the two decades since, the Schell Brothers brand has become synonymous with high-quality construction, community

engagement, and, of course, happiness. While its roots are deeply embedded in the sandy soil of southern Delaware, the company has made inroads into two other high-growth markets—namely, Richmond, Virginia, and Nashville, Tennessee. The company has grown in other ways, too; its team has swelled to nearly 300 employees, with settlements on approximately 500 homes per year.

Schell Brothers designs homes of exceptional craftsmanship, elegance, and forethought, notable for their emphasis on abundant natural light. Utilizing what’s known as Schellter™ Advanced Building Science, Schell Brothers builds each home with exacting standards in regard to home construction, energy efficiency, and indoor air quality. Buyers can choose from numerous floorplan options, working alongside experienced designers to suit their specific tastes and lifestyles by way of “thousands of options for personalization.”

Buyers are intensely involved in the

process from start to finish. A proprietary customer portal called Heartbeat serves as a central hub that facilitates communication between buyers and all Schell Brothers team members who are involved in the construction of their home. Although Heartbeat began as a problem-solving tool to streamline the finance department's transition from paper to digital, the platform now helps buyers track the progress of their build, find design ideas for inspiration, and access mortgage documents and other vital information related to their home, among other uses.

"When we're building a home for you, we want it to be the most remarkable experience," Titus says. "Our construction managers build every house like it's their mother's house. Every Friday, a construction manager will call you to give you a personal update so you know exactly where you stand. We're also changing how we build houses based on the feedback we get from customers. We ask each customer to fill out a survey and tell us about their experience. Chris [Schell] reads and responds to every one of them. All of us do."

Anyone who purchases a Schell Brothers' home becomes not only "a member of the family," but also a friend. Titus says it's not uncommon for buyers to enjoy happy hours and other get-togethers with Schell Brothers' community sales managers.

The connection between Schell Brothers and a buyer doesn't end once the construction of their home comes to an end. One might even say the bond is only just beginning. Titus cites two examples of community attractions that have helped deepen relationships between builder and buyer: Schellville, a Christmas-themed village that is better ex-



perienced than described, where visitors flock to enjoy a roller rink, a sledding hill, a train ride, a tree maze, and live music, among other winter-holiday attractions; and The Coffee House in Rehoboth Beach, a one-of-a-kind dining destination that provides members of the community with handcrafted coffee and dynamic cuisine, all powered by Schell Brothers.

Schell Brothers is a fine example of a company that has done well by doing good. Its distinctive culture has resulted in numerous accolades and awards, including 2023 "Builder of the Year" honors from *Pro Builder* magazine. While Schell and his leadership team appreciate the attention, they're more focused on making sure they do what they set out to do when they started the company more than 20 years ago: make a lasting positive difference for an ever-growing family of team members and homebuyers.

If it all sounds "too good to be true," Titus admits that most people don't quite buy into the company's culture until they experience it firsthand. She would know. A former entrepreneur herself, Titus knew only a little about Schell Brothers when a mutual

friend informed her that the company was interested in hiring her to lead its marketing efforts. Having had no prior experience in home construction, she had her doubts—until the formal interview with Chris Schell.

"I was instantly drawn to Chris's positive attitude and entrepreneurial spirit," she says. "After we talked, my impression was, 'Wow.' I was familiar with Schell Brothers and always knew there was some 'special sauce' behind it, but I didn't realize just how remarkable the company was. I met the rest of the executive team ... and I knew I wanted to surround myself with people like them. That was seven years ago, and I've been blessed ever since."

For anyone who is approaching retirement or otherwise looking to make a significant life transition, Titus urges them to consider a Schell Brothers home in Delaware. Originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, she grew up as a "Jersey Shore girl." She and her family moved to Delaware more than 20 years ago, drawn to the area for its reliably relaxed pace.

Although most Delaware beach towns have managed to retain their small-town vibes, Titus says they have the added benefits of "awesome health care, top school districts, and terrific restaurants with James Beard Award-nominated chefs." Yet another advantage: no beach tags.

"Delaware is an incredible place to retire: tax friendly, beautiful beaches, and an eclectic group of interesting people," she adds. "It's a great place to call home, where happiness is contagious." ■

