

# Builders construct allergy-free 'green' home in Patriots Walk

by Sherry Hamilton

Kathy Slade of Gloucester has a longstanding problem with allergies that was exacerbated after surgery caused nerve damage in her nasal passages. She hopes a new "green" home she and her husband, John, just had built in Patriots Walk will allow her to live a relatively allergy-free life.

The former Smithfield and Peninsula residents sold two previous homes because they were bad for Kathy Slade's allergies: one house had mold spores, while another had a cat problem that wasn't apparent until they had lived there awhile.

Not one to continue on a failed course, Kathy Slade began to gather information on building materials that are less likely to cause allergic reactions. After deciding what materials would be beneficial to her health, she said, she and her husband sat down with Patriots Walk contractors Brett Schultz and Steve Elkins to discuss what the couple needed in a home.

"I said I need a house I can live in," said Slade, "and we

talked for three hours about all the things we wanted to do."

"She did all the research," said Schultz, "and she laid it all out for us very nicely."

Among the materials Slade wanted to use were carpet padding that can prevent mold and dust mites from getting imbedded in carpeting, carpets made of recycled materials containing no chemicals or toxins, paints containing little or no volatile organic compounds, green wallboard in the kitchen and bathrooms to help prevent mold and mildew, and hardwood flooring.

In addition, they used plywood rather than particle board to wrap the house to cut down on exposure to toxic glue, and white masonry sand and black plastic under the house to help keep filtered sunlight from causing mold growth. The builders also ran the HVAC through the attic to cut down on condensation under the house.

Finally, once they were in the furnishing stage, they put dust mite covers on all mattresses.

Schultz and Elkins and their third partner, Pete Henderson,

place an emphasis on eco-friendly building. They begin by clustering homes to preserve green space and clearing a maximum of 50 percent of each lot to help with conservation. Then they use energy-efficient HVAC and appliances, industry-standard R-values for insulation, double pane windows, and steel clad exterior doors to help cut down on energy use.

Schultz said that some people ask about doing more "but when they start getting into how much it takes, it overwhelms them and they don't want to go that far."

Slade said that the extra measures taken to make her home more livable were surprisingly reasonable in cost. While they made the home a little more expensive, she said, it was worth the cost if it helps control her allergies. Besides, she said, eco-friendly building is "the wave of the future."

It looks like allergy-free homes will be a part of the builders' future. They said they're discussing putting together an allergy-free package for their future customers.