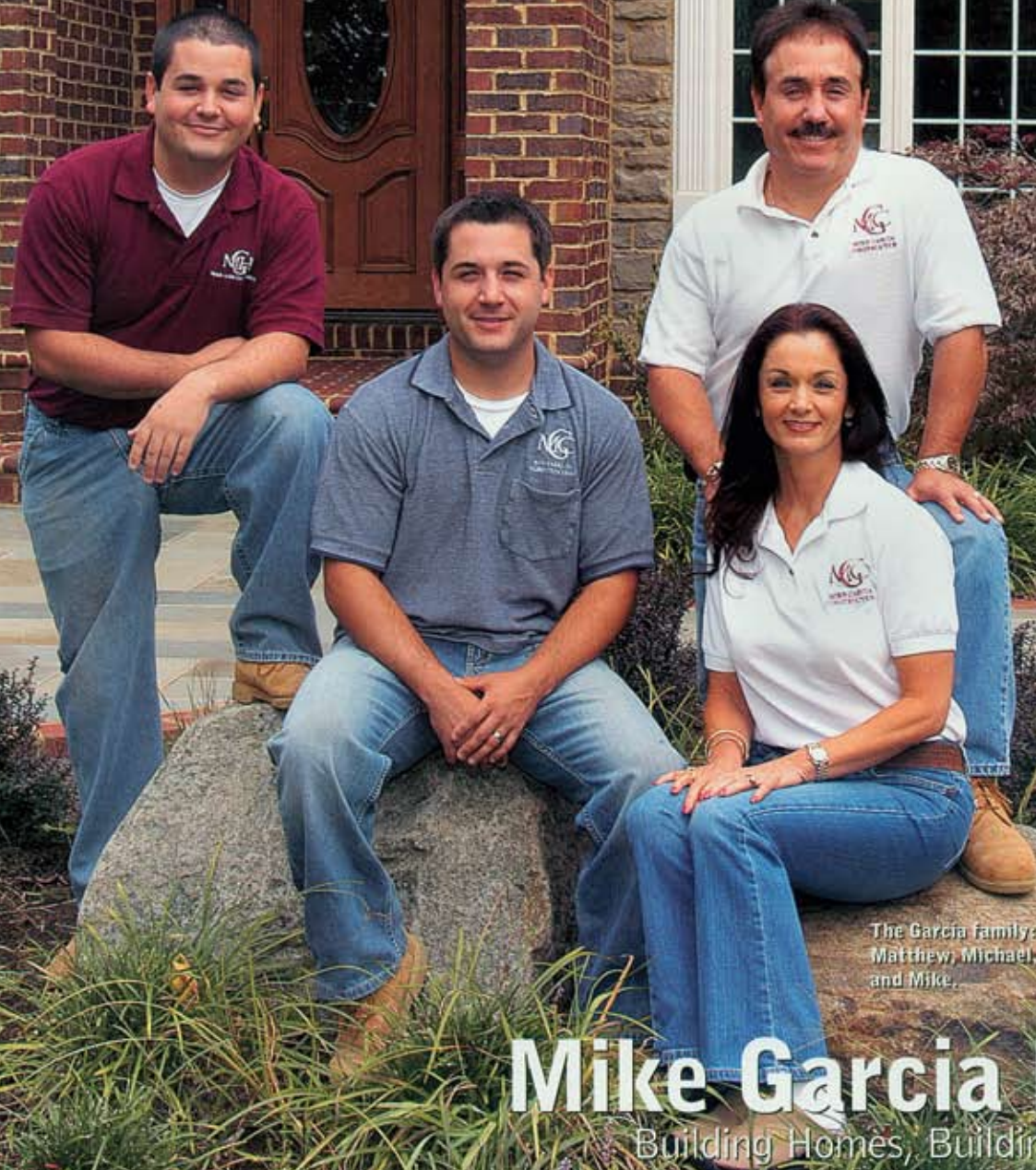


# Builder/Architect



The Garcia family: (l-r)  
Matthew, Michael, Robin  
and Mike.

**Mike Garcia Homes**  
Building Homes, Building for a Lifetime



# Mike Garcia Homes

## Building Homes, Building for a Lifetime

By Joel M. Paul

Mike Garcia has nearly 30 years in the home building business, 25 of them as owner of Mike Garcia Homes, a luxury custom home builder in Northern Virginia. He knows when you put your name on the houses you build, there's more to it than just lumber and nails.

Mike knows that working hard, doing a quality job above and beyond expectations and having a reputation as being fair, is what matters.

He learned this first from his father, who owns Columbia Tree Service, one of the oldest tree companies in Northern Virginia. Mike's father still works every day, and he sees the same for himself. He says he can't imagine not working.

He now passes on this work ethic to his son, Michael, a recent graduate from the University of Virginia, who has joined the family business on the commercial building side.

His second son, Matthew, is at Virginia Tech, majoring in construc-

tion management, and he has also decided to join his father, brother and mother in the family business when he graduates.

Mike and his beautiful wife Robin have been married 28 years, which he says is truly his "greatest accomplishment." Robin is a big reason why the family and the family business are so successful. She works directly with each homeowner, helping them make all selections, and keeping them on schedule toward completing their dream home.

"I don't ever want to lose my skills," Mike says, "and ever say someday, I used to be able to do that. It is important to me to pass on these skills and trades I have to my sons. I told them, if anything happens to me, you'd always have your skills. No one will ever take that away from you. More importantly, you will always be able to take care of yourself and your family."

### Office administration department







**New homes division**

"I tell them never to forget the principles of working hard and doing a good job. You give people more than they asked for, ask them to spread your good name around, and you'll have a line waiting for your services. It is as simple as that, and is very important to me that they understand that."

What more can one say where a lesson in hammering is a lesson in life? It's not so much what you do in life that creates your success; more important how you conduct yourself is the guiding thought.

Over the 25-plus years, Mike Garcia Homes has built nearly 400 houses. Not one is the same, they are proud to say, because of the individual service and consulting each homeowner receives.

A Mike Garcia Homes' client wants the design of their new home to be as creative as possible. They want it built right and built to last. Contrary to the boom periods when home buyers bought and sold their homes quickly, Mike Garcia Homes' buyers say this is their home for the next 10 to 20 years, or even forever. They aren't quite ready for the condos, and the active adult communities. They want their home to fit their lifestyle.

Mike emphasizes to his home buyer to view their house as a residence, and as a long-term investment as well. "We're proud to tell clients that you can have the only house of its kind in the subdivision. A house of unique design, quality built, decay resistant, energy efficient and low maintenance. That when

you go to sell the house 15 years from now, it's going to look just as good because your house has held up. You won't need to keep throwing a lot of money into it and doing a lot of maintenance on your home over those years to keep up its appearance. Instead, you can spend time with your grandkids, or you can enjoy your boat or travel. But whatever you choose, you have the free time to do it."

It is that uniqueness in design that Mike Garcia prides his company on. No matter if the homeowner comes in with a file full of designs, Mike's in-house architect still needs to draw the plans to meet Mike Garcia's standards, quality built with quality materials, in addition to incorporating the client's needs.

There are other factors as well. Mike Garcia is also a developer. They develop very special neighborhoods. Selection of your lot has a huge effect on the final design of your

home; along with client's lifestyle, views, orientation, proximity to other homes are key considerations in the design. This is your dream home; you have one shot to get it right.

"It just blows my mind," Mike says, "that so many builders are redefining what a custom-built house is. Other builders say they are custom, but all they are doing is modifying their own designs."

"We build from the ground up, we take all the home ideas a home buyer has seen and wanted, and design a house of their dreams."

**Home remodeling division**







**Model home at Cannon Bluff Estates**

People usually believe that the bigger home is a better value. The Mike Garcia approach, which his clients have hardily accepted over the years, says it's OK to give up size for quality and uniqueness of design. It is hard for people to visualize a house on paper. So, the company is working on developing the ability to design the home in 3-D. This will help clients tremendously.

Dave Enke, Sales Manager for Mike Garcia homes, says it's a constant story. He has a lot of people coming to him, asking for a 5,000-square-foot home because they are presently living in a 4,000-

square-foot box, and they arbitrarily think 1,000 square feet more is the answer.

Dave says to the home buyer, "What would you say if I design your home exactly the way you wanted, designed around your lifestyle, but it ends up being 4,200 square feet?"

The new designs incorporate the trends of today. For some, that means downsizing or even eliminating the living room and expanding the kitchen, kitchen nook and family or great room. Mike says some people like 10-foot ceilings throughout the first floor, and they have a

**Interior picture of model at Cannon Bluff Estates**







Finished basement area in model at Cannon Bluff Estates

lot of requests for multi-level first floors. You see 9-, 12- and 16-foot ceiling levels in rooms throughout one-story homes. Kitchens seem to have gotten bigger, because of the islands as the focal center of the room. People gather around the islands at meal times and during parties. One of Mike Garcia Homes' models has an open area for the kitchen nook, family room and kitchen. But it is not the conventional rectangle that most people are familiar with. You could have four people sitting at your kitchen table, 10 people around the island, and a room full of people in the family room watching TV. And someone in the kitchen could have a conversation with anyone in any of the rooms, and they wouldn't have to yell. That's how unique design works within a person's lifestyle. Additionally, Mike says, we see more home offices being requested; also exercise rooms and media rooms. Our clients want to be able to enjoy all of that, but they have less free time. So they want their house to be everything they wanted it to be without going someplace else. They don't want to get back into the car after they've been in traffic commuting for an hour or so to go someplace else to enjoy themselves.

"With my 30 years of experience in the industry right here in Northern Virginia, I believe for the knowledge, effort and protection we give our homeowners, in the type of quality products we put in their homes, it is the best investment and buy in the industry. We believe there is a security blanket around the homeowner — that if they have a problem in 10 or 15 years down the road, we will still be here. It's part of our service. We are a family. And you help out family."

Compromising on the essentials and details of your home is not a factor in a Mike Garcia home. "We have our quality standards," Mike explains, "that does not allow us to put in non-quality products. Dave's our sales manager, but he is also a teacher to our home buyers. He breaks down the homeowner's budget like this: Your beginning budget is comprised of land and the site costs, and whatever is left is

your house budget."

Quite emphatically, Mike said, there are only three factors to building a house: size, quality and price. In the Mike Garcia's way of thinking, only two of the three are variables: size and price. Quality will never be a variable, Mike says. It's not in the company's vocabulary.

Dave added: "What we offer is value protection. Based upon our uniqueness of design, high level of construction techniques and materials, and surrounded by other Mike Garcia homes, our clients should feel very comfortable with their investment."

Knowing what your customers want, knowing the industry thoroughly and knowing construction is the hallmark of Mike Garcia's 30 years in the business. In addition to gaining that knowledge, he has also experienced first hand the up-and-down cycles that the industry has gone through over the years.

"Understanding that cycles are inevitable, and being able to read the signs early allows you to position yourself to keep your team together. You have to diversify so you don't write people off. You don't ever want to do that. You have to figure out other ways to keep the doors open and your overhead down," Mike said. The company now has three profit centers: residential home building, commercial building and remodeling.

"Many of our clients love the location of their current home, but would like more room or updated features. Carl Juran, President of our remodeling division, has 35 years of experience and can help the homeowner visualize and budget their project. The homeowner works directly with our in-house architect to transform their home to fit their current lifestyle. Vice President Henry Frye, who has been with the company for 23 years, will oversee the day-to-day progress of the project, and remain in close contact with the homeowner throughout. With the help of the office support team, we will guide





#### Commercial division

you through the remodeling process to ensure an enjoyable experience," Mike described.

"Five years ago, we started a more earnest commercial division as a way to keep overhead expenses down. When you grow as we have, you take on more overhead. We have to do more volume to keep the overhead numbers at a reasonable rate. Today we have 26 employees. Just five years ago we had 14. I've enjoyed the commercial market very much. It's fun working with the architects designing buildings. We have done everything from daycare centers and office buildings, to warehouses. We typically build for ourselves, but we also partner with users. Like in our new corporate office building, we looked for users who cannot go out on their own and build buildings. So we go in, design it, build it, and control the cost all along the way.

"Once completed and full, we stabilize the building and then go on to the next project. We have an interest in each building we build. Our buildings are built with the same diligence as we do in our residential

#### Medical building on Prince William Parkway



Foyer at medical building

homes and remodeling projects. We use the highest quality materials for the lowest maintenance. We're one of the first in the county to use the tilt-up concrete technique in office building. If there's ever a hurricane or tornado or flood, there is no better place to be than in one of our buildings. These are not modular buildings; they are custom-built. We design it, put the doors where we want to put the doors, and put the windows where we want the windows to be. In the last five years, we've built 12 buildings."

As a former president of the Prince William Chapter and the Custom Builders Council of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association, Mike has been a staunch supporter of the concept of co-op purchasing. Being able to buy lumber, light fixtures, steel, etc. at a co-op price makes a huge difference. That's a savings that goes back to the customer. Mike believes that the future is all about partnering. His philosophy has always been good people helping good people. Mike Garcia Homes is a very loyal building company. "We stay with our trades and people, and educate them to the newest trends and techniques. We protect them, they protect us.

"I have project supervisors who can still put on a tool pouch to work in the field, as they are needed. We promote from within, but they have to come up through the ranks to learn the skills they need to become project supervisors and managers later. That's how we do it here and it works. I have the knowledge to build a house. Others have hands-on knowledge as well. We don't have paper pushers here. They know firsthand, because they've been out in the field. They know what quality is," Mike says proudly.

"I do believe we are the best value for the money out there. Others may say it, but I think we are different. I'm proud of the company, proud of our accomplishments, proud of our people and proud of what we do."

For more information on Mike Garcia Homes, call (703) 897-0900, and visit their website at [www.mikegarcia.com](http://www.mikegarcia.com). ■