

Lifestyle

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Bajan company wins top award for making homes affordable



Size matters

by GERCINE CARTER

LIZ CUPPLES always knew she wanted to be an architect.

Sitting in her Cane Garden, St Thomas office, against a backdrop of several house designs, Cupples talked about the development of Trinity Homes, the company which she founded and through which housing design is being made more affordable to middle and lower income earners in Barbados.

It is a venture for which her company recently won an international award, **Pioneers Of Prosperity**. The award was created by the United States-based group On The Frontier (OTF) and the competition is divided among four developing regions – Africa, the Caribbean, South America and Latin America.

Trinity Homes was adjudged to be a quality small company possessing the dynamics required for qualification.

Winners attract the interest of wealthy international investors who help the companies grow with their money and advice.

Global network

“What the OTF group is trying to create from this award system is a global network of developing regional businesses,” Cupples explained.

The 1984 Queen’s College Exhibitioner studied architecture at Canterbury



ARCHITECT LIZ CUPPLES and husband Chris mulling over architectural plans in the Cane Garden offices of Trinity Homes. (Pictures by Gregory Waldron.)

School, part of Kent University in Britain. Right after graduation, she worked in London before embarking on postgraduate studies in fine art which she said served her well.

Cupples recalled her first job as a novice architect in London working alongside a Danish architect and Danish staff who spoke no English.

“It was trial by fire. You learnt fast.”

When that company folded,

Liz turned to art, supporting herself for one year through lucrative sales of her work.

She returned to Barbados in 1993 and joined Caribbean Design Associates. Today she says she is indebted to architects George Reifer and Frank Johnson for the experience gained.

She soon launched out on her own in partnership, setting up with Architects Cubed, a company whose closure

was precipitated by some unfortunate incidents.

But friends kept pressing Liz for her services.

“I had a friend who could not get nice designs . . . she was a teacher and could not afford an architect; so that’s why we started doing house plans so that people in her bracket with her income level could get nice house plans without having to pay the full whack of an architect,” Liz explained.

She set up Liz Quintyne Inc. in 1996, and designed house plans.

Customer’s demand

Eventually she and husband Chris, a business and economics graduate, created their own construction teams because of demand from customers. They now have three construction teams and a portfolio of about 40 house designs, which clients are encouraged to have customised.

The couple recently ventured into land development, selling their St Thomas home to invest in Castle Rock Development in Cane Garden, comprising 14 houses and five town houses.

Recession brought changes in the housing market and in their focus as well. Previously, they had been working mainly with British-based Barbadians intent on relocating to Barbados.

The Cane Garden development will be the first where Trinity Homes will build “batches of houses”. Another

development is planned for Cane Vale, Christ Church and there are ideas for yet another two.

“You need a roll-over to keep the company busy, to keep the workers busy”, said Cupples.

“Our aim is to meet the middle market to the lower income market with some style, some dignity, some choice, and we will try to increase or develop that concept more”. The emphasis is on affordability with quality house designs.

“Our houses are small . . . and they look good too. We’ve had some small designs where customers have taken them to the bank and the bank does not think they are possible. But it is. You just have to know how to work with the space”.

In keeping with the scaled-down house design, Liz is planning on adding a new section to the company for building modular furniture suited to the rooms.

She surmises that with land prices in Barbados escalating, people are only able to afford small plots. Therefore, houses must be designed to suit, and furnishing must be a key consideration.

Liz observes, “property is very important for the wealth of the family” – one reason why she makes particular accommodation for single parents wanting to acquire a home and another that saw her winning the **Pioneer Of Prosperity Award**.