

## **As a successful female builder, Pam Anderson has endured the doubts of others.**

*by JENNIFER DECKER  
Staff reporter - Lapeer County Press*

**LAPEER COUNTY** — As a successful female builder, Pam Anderson has endured the doubts of others.

But that's not about to stop the woman who was just nominated for Woman of the Year for the National Association of Women in Construction.

"I thought 'Why me' because I'm a small builder in Lapeer looking beyond profitability and looking at the human side of building," she said.

As a general contractor and president and owner of Anderson Custom Construction, Anderson hires subcontractors for new home construction. She also does a little bit of everything else; from setting up heaters to making sure subcontractors have their supplies and even recently wiring her first fireplace switch. It's all part of operating her own company.

Two years ago, when her late husband, Joe, died suddenly from a heart attack Anderson took over the whole company. The fact she had a builder's license helped. She also has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Walsh College.

"I completed jobs we already had and I learned to love it," she said. "I love seeing a project come together. You take ideas from paper and make them real. It's leaving something lasting that will outlive me because I try to build a quality project and don't want to build Cracker Jack houses."

Currently, Anderson has three homes under construction around the county.

Being a woman in a male-dominated career field hasn't come without pitfalls.

"Strangers have doubted me," she said. "The idea of females in construction is like, 'Ah, she wants to play builder.' But I'm organized and listen and am always willing to learn. It's a fascinating field and there's always new technology."

Some of it is a matter of changing men's attitudes, she said.

"I try to balance it where I ask them to do things, not tell them. Men don't like being told what to do by women. Why I hire men is for their expertise and respect for their knowledge."

Anderson might wear Carhart's, work boots, drive a pick-up truck, and get dirty as a builder, but admitted to still being feminine at heart.

"I wear make-up to protect my face against the elements, but underneath, I'm still a girl," she said.

Anderson considers her specialty to be the livability factor of houses.

"I'm getting into handicapped-accessible houses ... to include an elevator and open floor plan. Why would I put a wheelchair lift or elevator in a house? It doubles the space. Another plus is you can put in a mother-in-law apartment with a life and you'll have a family member who's accessible to everyone."

Anderson has worked with Jack Lewis, barrier free design and private consultant for the Construction Code Authority in Lapeer. Lewis should know a thing or two about barriers, since he's a wheelchair user and disabled himself.

"I think Pam's a remarkable woman to be so successful in this industry and we're lucky to have her in this area," Lewis said. "Barrier free housing is a requirement under the Americans With Disabilities Act and Michigan Building Codes. It's not a question if we want to—it's the law. She's an exceptional woman with her insight and her way to look beyond the norm."

Anderson has three daughters: Katie, 25; Melissa, 23; and Meghan, 21. Of the three, only Katie used to work for a contractor, currently works at Lake Orion's Home Depot, and might be following in her mother's footsteps.

Anderson's also treasurer of the Lapeer Home Builder's Association, where social and professional networking takes place. Currently, she's looking for someone who'd like a fully accessible home with a wheelchair lift for the Fall Parade of Homes, which is sponsored by the builder's association.

For more information on fully accessible homes, visit Anderson's Web site at:  
[www.pamandersonhomes.com](http://www.pamandersonhomes.com).