The homeowners thought poor comfort was a fact of life in old houses.

Comfort/energy makeover

75-year-old mini-Tudor gets inverter technology

SPECIAL TO CONTRACTOR

ARLINGTON, VA. — There’s very little that’s typical about Rich Abernathy, president of Air Cool & Heating Systems, a seven-person firm based in Alexandria, Va. He’s an explorer, always looking for new ways to tackle a challenge.

“I need to be aware of new and emerging technology solutions. Especially now, with energy concerns riding high on my customer’s list of concerns,” said Abernathy.

In the past year or so, they’ve seen a dramatic shift away from standard HVAC systems. His customers want solar heat and photovoltaic, geothermal, radiant heat and high efficiency ductless systems.

“To stay sharp, we do it all,” he said.

“One of the things I encourage — almost demand — of my customers is that they collect a year’s worth of energy and fuel receipts before we do our work,” added Abernathy. “And because every system we install will substantially reduce their energy consumption, I want them to see the impact of it. There are often huge comfort advantages, but energy savings are usually in the lead.”

A year ago, Abernathy received a call from Sharon Douglass. A real estate agent, she and her clients were looking for ways to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

They decided to install a new HVAC system with inverter technology. Abernathy and his team worked closely with the clients to ensure the system was tailored to their specific needs.

The homeowners thought poor comfort was a fact of life in old houses. Turn to Mini-Tudor, page 15

Obama lauds McKinstry’s energy leadership

SEATTLE — In an interview with columnist Joe Klein of Time magazine, President-Elect Barack Obama lauded mechanical giant McKinstry Co. for its innovative leadership in helping to move the country closer to a green, new energy economy.

McKinstry Co. is ranked as the 18th largest mechanical contractor in the nation in CONTRACTOR’s annual Book of Giants (May 2008, p. 32).

On October 29, in a 30-minute program that aired on all the major networks, Obama laid out his vision for America’s future, highlighting companies that have led the way in promoting green jobs, sustainable business practices and helping to reduce the country’s dependence on foreign energy sources.

During the spot, McKinstry was recognized for its commitment to sustainable, design/build practices and promoting an energy efficient America.

“Recently, I visited the McKinstry Co. in Seattle,” stated Mr. Obama during the program. “They’re retrofitting schools and office buildings to make them energy efficient, creating jobs, saving their customers money, reducing carbon emissions and helping end our dependency on Middle Eastern oil. As president, I’ll use companies like McKinstry as a model for the nation.”

McKinstry CEO Dean Allen said, “This national recognition validates the great work we do here at McKinstry. We take great pride in our contributions as a leader in the green economy, and our efforts to have a positive impact on the environment.”

Headquartered in Seattle, Turn to McKinstry, page 8

EPA refines WaterSense for Homes spec

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a draft WaterSense specification for water-efficient, single family new homes in May 2008. As EPA refines its draft specification for WaterSense labeled new homes, the agency has been working with seven pilot programs.

By Koeller and Veritec, June 1, 2007

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75-year-old mini-Tudor gets inverter technology

Since the McDougals expressed interest in having a more efficient form of heat for the upstairs and main living areas of the home, plus air conditioning, Abernathy selected heat pumps from among several different models of Fujitsu’s wall-mounted Halcyon R-410a inverter heat pump line, opting for units with efficiency ratings of up to 21 SEER and 10.0 HSPF. The lineup now includes 62 models of Fujitsu’s wall-mounted inverter heat pump systems with capacity ranges of 9,000 to 42,000 Btuh.

For the upper bedroom — a space McDougal says was “unfit for living” during the warmer months — Abernathy installed a 9,000 Btuh unit. He selected an 18,000 Btuh dual-zone system to serve the master bedroom and living room. And in the kitchen, a 12,000 Btuh unit.

The McDougals have now eliminated the humidity that we had to tolerate for years went with it,” she said. “Another benefit is the [plasma IAQ] air filtration that the systems offer. The air inside feels and smells cleaner. We quickly learned that we needed more of a good thing, so we asked Rich to return to complete the job.”

“I wasn’t entirely surprised to hear back from them so soon,” said Abernathy. “In fact, I thought I might get a call when I saw how the home had been heated and cooled for years. The new units made a huge difference in the main areas of the home.”

During their second installation at the McDougals’ home, Abernathy’s crew installed two more 12,000 Btuh heat pump systems for the sunroom and basement.

“We never imagined comfort like this in the home, or the energy savings we’re seeing” said McDougal. “The most amazing change was in the basement where we had high humidity. That’s gone now, and the air is so much nicer there. Last winter, we could enjoy that space for the first time. We now wish we’d have done this sooner.”

Just as Abernathy had requested, McDougal found previous invoices from Washington Gas and Virginia Electric. They now save 20% to 21% on their electric bill and more than 50% on the gas bill.

“Our savings have been terrific, even now with the entire home either cooled or heated. Before, we just tried to ignore the discomfort,” said McDougal.

“Professionally, it’s made a difference for me living in our home. Now, when I’m showing older homes like ours, I don’t have to make excuses about insufficient heating or cooling. Ductless systems are so well suited to homes like the one we live in.”

NATE launches consumer site

ARLINGTON, VA. – North American Technician Excellence announced criteria changes to the Consumer Contractor Connection (C3), a contractor referral service, which will be launched in January 2009.

“Do we have the technician excellence bar with the C3 referral service to provide consumers and homeowners with a resource to help them find contractors in their area,” said Rex Byron, president of NATE.

The Website will feature the value of NATE certification and how consumers can find NATE contractors.

All contractors who participate in the 25% category will need to have 50% of their technicians NATE-certified.

Additional information is available at www.natex.org.

For information circle XXX

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