

Form And Function Meet In The Busiest Room In The House

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PulteGroup Design Expert Says Kitchen is the Driving Force in Defining Decor of Overall Home

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich., Aug. 29, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- As families congregate to cook, do homework and watch TV, the kitchen has become the busiest room in the house. Yet the hottest kitchen trends are everything but busy – cleaner lines, sleek two-tone appliances and innovative storage solutions.

"The kitchen is the center of activity for families," said Janice Jones, vice president of merchandizing for national homebuilder PulteGroup. With the popularity of open floor plan designs, Jones said the kitchen – more than ever before - has evolved into the most important part of the family's communal space. "In the past, home design was driven by practicality, but now homeowners want function and design to meet – and it starts in the kitchen."

Jones heads a team of 20 design professionals who oversee interior merchandising and specifications for approximately 1,100 Pulte Homes, Centex and Del Webb model homes across the nation. Jones's team will oversee the interior design and merchandising of more than 1 million square feet of model homes and amenities in 2012 alone, effectively making it one of the largest design shops in the nation.

"Most homebuilding companies don't have an internal design voice like we do. It's usually very construction driven," Jones said. "We talk with homebuyers and learn what they want and where they want it to happen. We talk with our homeowners about what they love and what they would change in their current homes – and we use those ideas when designing new homes."

Meanwhile, Jones said the kitchen as "an aesthetic impression" has evolved with clean lines, ample storage, easy to clean and uncluttered spaces. "The kitchen is now a driving force in defining the decor of the home overall."

Seeing Is Believing: Jones said that PulteGroup's 700-plus new home communities across the country feature fully furnished model homes because the majority of homebuyers prefer to see the design ideas "in action." Pulte also allows homebuyers to design their dream kitchen with a click of a mouse with its new interactive Kitchen Studio. Images on www.pulte.com allow users to visualize a custom kitchen space by selecting from a variety of colors and finishes – from flooring to wall color.

"Only 20% of homebuyers have the confidence to visualize and colorize the space. Most homebuyers we talk with tell us they want help in designing their home because going through all the options themselves is a lot of work and stress," Jones said. "This is why showing the latest trends and demonstrating what's possible is so important."

Kitchen Trend Highlights

- **Islands:** New kitchen layouts and designs are open and island-centric, using multi-functional spaces that allow everything from homework, to craft and work projects to dinner and entertaining. To keep the clutter off the island, but near the kitchen, Pulte has also introduced new home designs that feature Pulte Planning Centers™ for the family. This multi-functional space is close to the kitchen – the main living area of the home - and gives families the room they need to manage their busy lives and stay organized. The designs are the result of considerable consumer research and feedback.
- **Color & Appliances:** Two-tone colors and contrasting colors on cabinets, counters and appliances are an emerging trend in kitchen design. PulteGroup is rolling out new *Black Ice* and *White Ice* appliances offered by national partner Whirlpool. The new appliance designs are the outcome of extensive consumer research showing kitchens are trending toward more timeless, contemporary styling.

"This is the biggest visible news in the appliance world in years," Jones said, adding that the new look was inspired by popular cutting edge high tech gadgets like Smartphones.

- **Storage:** The trend in homes is smarter use of space where families spend the most time. For smaller spaces, innovative storage solutions are important, such as: larger deeper drawers in lieu of cabinets on the lower surfaces; pop-up cabinets for heavier kitchen appliances like mixers; vertical pull-out drawers for large trays; shallow storage compartments in

previously wasted areas under the sink or stovetop.

"Right now it's all about style and selections meeting convenience and multi-functionality in the kitchen," Jones said.

- **Additional Kitchen Trends:**

- Oil rubbed bronze fixtures
- Tile with natural-looking materials and larger formatted designs
- Glazed cream colored cabinets
- Painted cabinetry in grey tones
- Contrasting wood floors
- Larger islands that serve as nook spaces
- Space in the kitchen that allows for connectivity
- Contemporary cabinet hardware
- Quartz solid surface manufactured surfaces – "they are becoming favored as much as granite and are expected to continue to gain popularity"

About PulteGroup

PulteGroup, Inc. (NYSE: PHM), based in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., is one of America's largest homebuilding companies with operations in approximately 60 markets throughout the country. Through its brand portfolio that includes Centex, Pulte Homes and Del Webb, the company is one of the industry's most versatile homebuilders able to meet the needs of multiple buyer groups and respond to changing consumer demand. PulteGroup conducts extensive research to provide homebuyers with innovative solutions and new homes designed for the way people actually live today. As the most awarded homebuilder in customer satisfaction, PulteGroup brands have consistently ranked among top homebuilders in third-party customer satisfaction studies.

For more information about PulteGroup, Inc. and PulteGroup brands, go to pultegroupinc.com; www.pulte.com; www.centex.com; www.delwebb.com.

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