



Issue Date: November - December 2003, Posted On: 12/1/2003

## HOMES FOR GREAT HOSTS

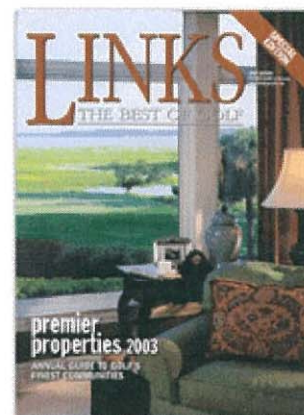
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Finding the ideal fairway-view home takes some doing. You'll visit coastal, mountain and desert regions. You'll debate the merits of equity and non-equity memberships. You'll play the courses, roam the clubhouses and shop for the perfect lot. You'll consider every factor and decide which community is the right fit, then you'll be ready to pull the trigger.

But before you commit, consider one more thing: What will life be like when family and friends come for visits? When your calm, uncluttered life becomes a chaotic "Animal House" overnight, will you have resources in your community to call on for ideas and assistance?

Developers are beginning to recognize this sporadic yet ongoing need, and are responding by offering more services and programs. Their goal is to differentiate themselves by taking cues from resorts and implementing programs that create a private, resort-like experience for residents and their guests.

"The idea of creating an intimate private club with resort amenities has taken off," says Mike Meldman, chairman and CEO of Discovery Land Company, which developed the signature Outdoor Pursuits Program at its nine residential golf communities across the country and helped pioneer the overall concept. "People want a place where they can enjoy themselves with their families. They want to find a place that will entice family members to join them for some high-quality time together."



There are sociological reasons for seeking out communities that value family. One of the silver linings of our post-9/11 world is that people seem to be more family-oriented. As such, second and third homes are being purchased not as escapes from families, but as refuges for families. And as the age of the second-home buyer trends younger, developers are finding that golf-and-only-golf doesn't cut it. People are looking for homes where there is something for everyone, from great-grandparents to small children, even if it's only for one week a year.

Iron Horse Golf Club in Whitefish, Mont., is one such place, thanks to its use of the Outdoor Pursuits concept. The program is devoted to enhancing the experience of each member and guest during their time at the mountain retreat. Essentially it's an outdoor concierge service, but instead of booking dinner reservations, director Rob Corette and his staff book fly-fishing trips, whitewater rafting adventures, trail rides, backcountry excursions and numerous activities on pristine Whitefish Lake.

"We're committed to making life as easy as possible for our residents and their families when they are here," says Corette. "The program's goal is to introduce our members and their guests to everything the Flathead Valley has to offer. Rather than selling somebody some property and telling them they are on their own, we say, 'Let's help them explore a bit.'"

The service allows property owners to feel like they are on vacation while enjoying the comforts of home. They simply contact the Outdoor Pursuits department and request the activities they would like scheduled during their stay. An itinerary complete with an "items to bring" list and driving directions will greet the member or guest on arrival.

As a further convenience, a system has been devised to turn local outfitters and guides into de facto extensions of the club. The vendor companies bill Iron Horse directly, and members in turn see the charges on their monthly statements.

Entertaining younger children poses another set of challenges. Many communities offer summer camp programs, an especially appealing option for grandparents who might want to spend quality time with their grandchildren (i.e., sans parents), but don't think they can keep up with Junior for an entire week without some assistance. Camp Iron Horse runs throughout the summer, and family members or guests can sign up on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Family-oriented communities offer more activities for young visitors. Take The Point in Lake Norman, N.C., for example. Here, activities director Cindy Wiedmeyer has created an events calendar so chock-full of activities that many members have told her vacations weren't necessary, thanks to her creativity and keen sense of fun. Most of the action is centered around the junior Olympic-sized pool and its towering waterslide.

But there are also choices for the cerebral set: The Chautauqua lecture series, for example, schedules experts in subjects ranging from gardening to politics to share their wisdom and insights with residents.

"We want to be a cut above the rest," says Wiedmeyer, who got her start organizing water aerobics for arthritis sufferers. "Everybody has a golf course, everybody has a fine restaurant and a pool, but we offer much more."

For some, entertaining teenage grandchildren is more challenging than reaching a par-5 in two. Ballantyne Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., organizes rock climbing and rappelling trips, as well as a can't-miss limousine scavenger hunt in which a driver shepherds participants all over town in search of the requisite items.

Gold Mountain, a community in Clio, Calif., dedicated to preserving the environment as well as the Native American culture, hosts summer campfire nights, during which cowboy poets and storytellers spin yarns about the local history. Developers Peggy and Dariel Garner, who once farmed exotic vegetables in Mexico, also included six miles of hiking trails and 15 miles of bike paths, and they regularly lead residents and guests on bird-watching and wildflower walks.

The space you create in the house is an equally important yet often complicated piece of the overall puzzle. Architecturally you need to design-or find-a home that is convenient, cozy and intimate for when it's just the two of you but will comfortably accommodate your children, grandchildren or other couples.

"Privacy is really important, and it works in both directions," says Bob Bacon of RJ Bacon Residential Design, a Phoenix firm that specializes in luxury custom homes in golf communities. "As the primary resident you want privacy for yourselves and you want to afford it to your guests, as well.

"But you don't want to compromise your daily comfort and convenience to accommodate the rare occasion when there are lots of people staying in your home," Bacon adds. "That would be like designing a church just for Easter Sunday."

Start by arranging the kitchen, family room and master suite in close proximity, Bacon suggests. Then expand logically, being careful not to create a long hallway with never-used bedrooms branching off on either side. Rather, widen the corridor enough so it could accommodate a desk or some bookshelves. The rooms themselves can double as offices, exercise rooms or art studios. If possible, create separate entrances to the outdoor space, which enhances everyone's experience of the home. "It's wonderful for visitors to have access to the home's amenities without imposing or traveling through the primary residential space," says Bacon.

Luckily, you don't have to design a million-dollar custom home with a guest house to enjoy such advantages-these concepts can be implemented even in more modest-sized homes. "If you take the time to make sure things are properly designed and configured," Bacon says, "your home can be comfortable and cost-effective, and still accommodate your extended family as often as you want to have them."

To be sure, figuring out ways to enhance the visits of your most cherished guests isn't brain surgery, but if you have the option, why not leave it up to the professionals? In other words, why live through "Animal House" when you can have "Family Affair," instead?