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Rhode Island Builders Association member profile: Bob Brierley of Calyx Homes Ltd.

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There's nobody quite as happy as somebody who loves his work, and Bob Brierley of Calyx Homes Ltd. loves the role he has played as a builder and remodeler for the last 25 years.

"1986 was a big year for me. I started in business on my own after five years working for someone else, I got married, and I joined the Rhode Island Builders Association," Bob commented as he chatted with this writer on a Rehoboth, Mass., jobsite, where he and a crew were building a back porch and garage.

With power knocked out by Tropical Storm Irene, Bob and his men were operating entirely by generator.

"Not only do I have a loyal customer base, but I have a huge following of 4 to 6 year-old boys because I really am 'Bob the Builder!'" he declared, referring to the endearing, "can-do" animated character that originated on British television in 1998. "I was preparing for a job at a house in Cumberland about a month ago, and when I told the little boy that I was Bob the Builder, he acted like he'd met the pope!"

Debuting on American television in 2001, "Bob" and his "machine team" are a perfect reflection of the real Bob's attitude of positive-thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and follow-through.

"Just like my animated counterpart, I can do it!"

And his customers respond. After a kitchen remodel, one Cranston homeowner simply said, "Bob rocks!"

Until four years ago, Lincoln-based Calyx Homes built spec houses and a few custom homes. But then Bob "saw the writing on the wall" and anticipated changes in the market. He was right.

"We looked at the remodeling market and thought that more of it would be a good fit for us during a credit crisis," Bob said. "We still do home building, but now we do a lot of kitchens, bathrooms, porches, additions, roofing and siding."

Today, Calyx works the Rhode Island market as far south as South Kingstown and Narragansett, and in Massachusetts as far out as Foxboro and South Dartmouth. The company consists primarily of Bob and his wife, Joanne, with a varying number of subcontractors. As of this writing, Calyx had five projects in the works.

Unusual name, Calyx.

"Joanne and I were looking for a name for the company, and she wears a perfume called Calyx. We looked it up and found that it's a botanical term for the green petal that covers the flower and the bud before the flower opens up. We build and remodel shelter for the family/flower/bud, as it were," Bob explained.

Bob considers RIBA an essential part of his business.

"I joined RIBA the year I started on my own. The health insurance program is very important to my

family and me, and I can't count the number of educational courses I have taken through RIBA over the years, and that have made me a better builder and businessman," Bob stated.

He also serves on RIBA's green building committee and is active with the remodelers' committee.

Bob likes to stay on top of trends in the industry, including "green" building and remodeling. He recently started a second company, Northeast Energy Reduction Corp., which handles insulation and weatherization projects.

"You have to be flexible and be willing to try new things. I work with people and guide them through the whole process. I'll price out any project. Like Bob the Builder, I'll figure out how to fix it! As a result, 2010 was one of my best years ever, and 2011 looks good too."

With three children in college, Bob plans to "keep my nose to the grindstone, and I hope to do what I love doing for many years to come."

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