

Hearts And Hammers

L.I. Builder Alure Practices Extreme Giving

BY BRENDAN MANLEY

BMANLEY@LONGISLANDPRESS.COM

When millions of Americans tune in each week to *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, they only witness a fraction of what goes on during the course of each weeklong project. Star host/team leader Ty Pennington and his fellow camera-friendly designers may be the public face of the show, but it's the local contractors—those who are tapped to help whenever a makeover comes to their area—who go above and beyond the call of duty to truly create the magic you see on the screen.

This is something that Plainview-based Alure Home Improvements, which has now completed four extreme makeovers, knows all too well.

The company has grown rapidly in recent years, and just wrapped up their latest *Makeover* mission: building a new three-story home in Jamaica, Queens for the Peter family—Guyanese immigrants who suffered a devastating fire in their home, only to be abandoned by their insurance company six months later. Prior to the makeover, the Peters, who live with seven children (four of their own, an adopted son and a niece and nephew), were still living in the burned-out house, without heat and

Not only did the renovation—an incredible round-the-clock effort to build the entire house in roughly five days—require the usual time and manpower commitments from Alure, a host of unforeseen construction problems made it their toughest assignment yet. Not to mention, it isn't cheap: between the materials, labor (the largest expense) and lost earnings, in total the four makeovers have roughly cost Alure more than \$1 million, and it's not their sole charitable endeavor. This is not the kind of work a company does when they're simply looking for good PR.

"*Extreme Makeover* adds a heck of a lot of credibility to us, and it adds a certain amount of exposure in the community, but the amount we spend we could clearly put into a marketing and PR campaign and be all over the place," Ferro explains. "This is truly fueled by our desire to do the right thing in the community, and as long as business is good, we can continue doing so. Alure has continued to grow, and with success we've had more resources to do more for the community. We've got other projects no one even knows about."

All one needs to do is spend a little time with the Alure team to know that Ferro's conviction is as much more than lip service.



Above: The Alure team captains congregate to help "move that bus." The company has now completed four *Extreme Makeovers*.

Right: Alure President Sal Ferro applauds his crew's hard work.



around me produced. I felt privileged to lead that team," Ferro says. "The family was overwhelmed—beaming with happiness—and they were so humble and appreciative. They got down and kissed the ground before they walked in the house....It reinforces so much of what we do. It's an incredible thing."

"It was an unbelievable feeling to hear John

screen. This is something that Plainview-based Alure Home Improvements, which has now completed four extreme makeovers, knows all too well.

The company has grown rapidly in recent years, and just wrapped up their latest *Makeover* mission: building a new three-story home in Jamaica, Queens for the Peter family—Guyanese immigrants who suffered a devastating fire in their home, only to be abandoned by their insurance company six months later. Prior to the makeover, the Peters, who live with seven children (four of their own, an adopted son and a niece and nephew), were still living in the burned-out house, without heat and hot water and little electricity.

"I felt it was a chance to really show this family what America has to offer—how good Americans can be," explains Sal Ferro, president of Alure and partner in the

work a company does when they're simply looking for good PR.

"*Extreme Makeover* adds a heck of a lot of credibility to us, and it adds a certain amount of exposure in the community, but the amount we spend we could clearly put into a marketing and PR campaign and be all over the place," Ferro explains. "This is truly fueled by our desire to do the right thing in the community, and as long as business is good, we can continue doing so. Alure has continued to grow, and with success we've had more resources to do more for the community. We've got other projects no one even knows about."

All one needs to do is spend a little time with the Alure team to know that Ferro's sentiments are much more than lip service. The company's welcoming, close-knit family atmosphere is both pervasive and infectious, and when hard at work, their dedication to task and team is remarkable. For



Above: The Alure team captains congregate to help "move that bus." The company has now completed four *Extreme Makeovers*.

Right: Alure President Sal Ferro applauds his crew's hard work.



around-me produced, I felt privileged to lead that team," Ferro says. "The family was overwhelmed—beaming with happiness—and they were so humble and appreciative. They got down and kissed the ground before they walked in the house....It reinforces so much of what we do. It's an incredible thing."

Those who've benefited from Alure's kindness and generosity also have a tendency to keep in touch and remain an active part of the company's family. John Vitale, the widowed Suffolk County police officer whose St. James home was rebuilt by Alure last year, spent an entire day working alongside Alure employees during the Peter family build. Another regular at the site was Lucy Ali and family—Ali, a single mother of two adopted boys, had her Queens house restored by Alure after a crooked contractor took her money, partially demolished the house and ran. Ali, who loves to cook, arrived several times with seemingly endless trays of food she'd made—delicious creations like Jamaican jerk chicken and yellow rice—and was there awaiting the Peters' homecoming.

"Each [makeover] had a different emotional toll on us, and in each one we had an affectionate tie with the family," Ferro says.

"It was an unbelievable feeling to have John Vitale and the Ali family there. It reinforced that we *did* work for the right people—they appreciated what we did for them and came back to help us out. It was very inspirational to me and the rest of the team."

Now that the dust has literally settled and the Alure staff has somewhat caught up on sleep, Ferro and company are already considering their next good deed. So, will Alure once again be called upon to perform an extreme makeover?

"Probably sooner than we think," Ferro says with a chuckle. "We want to inspire other builders and human beings with our act of kindness to help others, and this is the best way to do it." ●

The Peter family episode of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition will air in several weeks. Stay tuned for more coverage in the Press.

"It was a chance to really show this family what America has to offer—how good Americans can be."

company along with brothers Carl and Bob Hyman, who've carried on the 60-plus-year-old family business their father founded. "The Peter family got a raw deal, and somebody stepped up. It was very gratifying to make a difference, not only to represent Alure, but also the good that this country can do for others and how we can step it up and help each other."

makeovers, many of the workers put in extremely long hours, sometimes upwards of 16 hours per shift, and higher-ups like Ferro and Director of Marketing Seth Selesnow often forego sleep entirely. But it's all worth it on the day of the big "Reveal."

"I looked at that home, when it was done, and I was just beaming with pride; not pride for myself, but for what the people