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Howard, Ohio— OakBridge Timber Framing Ltd., based here, precuts and installs timber frame homes. Established in 1986 by Johnny Miller and Levi Hochstetler, the company is comprised of three generations of an Amish family.

Throughout history Amish and Mennonite people have been recognized for their hard work, attention to detail and true commitment to the craft of constructing barns and other buildings. Miller and Hochstetler began OakBridge Timber Framing from their experience raising barns in their youth. “Timber framing has always been part of our culture,” owner and CEO Johnny Miller said. “My father built mortise and tenon structures with his father.”

OakBridge Timber Framing’s custom timber frame homes are constructed from **White Oak** and Douglas fir. Much like their Amish ancestors, the skilled craftsmen at OakBridge take pride in their work as they craft each timber with hand tools. Utilizing a traditional draw bore technique with 1 inch pegs, the joiners achieve exact cuts and precision in the joinery of timbers. “We use a draw

bore technique, which makes for much tighter joints,” Miller explained. “We plane and finish our frames using a lot of techniques to keep our joints as tight as possible.”

Johnny Miller and his team of eight employees build an average of 15 homes or structures per year. “Our projects are beautiful homes, banks and museums,” he said. He added that he appreciates the size of his company as it is today, to ensure exceptional quality craftsmanship. “I have been to many old fashioned barn raisings where the frame is raised, enclosed and even the stalls are built in one day by a crowd of several hundred people. But those framers used rough sawn and unfinished timbers and the joints didn’t fit very tight. Our plan is to grow in size slowly, but focus primarily on growing in quality and service.”

OakBridge Timber

BY MICHELLE KELLER

Building Homes That Reflect Values



A family owned and operated company, key employees include Johnny Miller's brother and co owner, Aaron Miller, who is also the production manager. Neal Miller also a brother, works in production. Their father Andrew Miller oversees quality control and production. Johnny's sons James and Andrew Miller are also in production. His daughter Leah Miller is secretary and the office manager is Joni Miller.

The Millers prefer to use **Red** and **White Oak** Hardwood lumber and Douglas fir softwood lumber. "Oak has a nice grain pattern and beautiful character. White Oak is rot resistant," Miller commented. "We live in the heart of some of the best Oak in the country. Douglas fir also is a strong wood; it's softer and lighter."

With timber frame homes now in 22 states, Johnny Miller is still in contact with many of his previous customers. "Our mission is

1. (Left to right): Members of the OakBridge team: Andrew, Aaron, James and Johnny Miller are shown here securing an octagonal truss system for a breakfast room located in Hamilton, Ohio. A large White Oak center post connects all the collar ties and rafters with traditional joinery.

2. CEO and owner, Johnny Miller, installs screen porch rafters from White Oak. The front, rear and screen porch were installed at a later date.

3. (Left to right): Michael Nietupski, representative from Fischer Structural Insulated Panels, and members of the OakBridge team discuss where to place the straps to lift the entire truss into place above the breakfast room. The breakfast room truss will be lifted up between the great room (left) and the hearth room (right). Notice the live valley system in the great room (to eliminate snow and ice build up).

4. In the Great Room, OakBridge Timber Framing's craftsmanship takes center stage with hammer beam Oak framework and vaulted ceilings.

5. The Kirsch residence, built by OakBridge Timber Framing, is located in Belgrade, Mont. This 4,000 square-foot home has an additional 1,000 square-foot guest apartment.

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To build dream homes that reflect our values," he said, referring to the company's mission statement, which is complimented by the company motto, "Where quality is first, quality lasts."

OakBridge's satisfied customers have remarkable comments about their homes. "Thank you for the quality of product and spirit of cooperation that we enjoyed while working with you. The finished product is truly magnificent, as attested to by the many superlatives we receive from friends and neighbors," R.T. Thompson, on Catawba Island in Port Clinton, Ohio, said. Another customer Mike and Denise Bellcock of Watertown, Wis., said, "We are so excited, this is a dream come true!" Laura Eloie who had a custom OakBridge timber frame home built in Chicago, Ill., said, "Thanks so much for our awesome frame. It is causing quite a stir around here. We have already had many comments on how beautiful and well constructed the frame is. You all do outstanding work. We would be happy to reference for you on your future projects."

Committed to the environment, OakBridge

Timber frame homes are constructed from the highest quality timbers. The entire building process is energy efficient and non toxic to the environment. And in keeping with their Amish culture, the OakBridge facility is run by manpower, pneumatic and hydraulic power.

OakBridge Timber Framing Ltd. is a member of the Timber Framers Guild, Timber Frame Business Council, the Building Industry Assoc. of North Central Ohio, and the Better Business Bureau (BBB).

All of OakBridge's homes are custom designed for each customer, either from an original design, or from one of 12 different floor plans from which an OakBridge customer can create their own dream home. Those plans include: the Bookwalter, Elo, Frederick, Freeman, Jenkins, Johnson, Joyce, Lemon, Lentz, Pistone, Price and the Thompsen. To view these floor plans and more information visit www.oakbridgetimberframing.com.

The OakBridge website is sponsored and maintained by Friends of OakBridge Timber Framing Ltd., out of appreciation and deep respect for their integrity, craftsman and values.



The breakfast room truss is shown here after placement.

TIGERPLY -

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wood became a bigger factor in their requirements, we decided that we could bring some solutions and solve some problems for our customers to keep costs minimal and achieve the quality level they want at the same time."

"We spent several years developing the product," he continued. "It was just in the past year that we've achieved the consistent quality at the production volume that we were seeking. We've accomplished that through partnerships with manufacturers around the globe."

Ryan noted that Rod has used his 30 years of experience in the plywood industry to help foster this effort. "We have utilized the knowledge of my brother Rod, who's been good enough to give us his time and energy," he said. Rod spends about half of his time in the company's production office located in Xuzhou, China, continuing to manage the production and build quality control teams. "Our goal is to build a top notch, high quality, first rate product," Ryan said. "When you build a brand, you're making an investment of all your time and energy to say, we're signing something that goes in the marketplace. By putting our brand on it, it's our signature that we've put in all of our energy and all of our efforts to be proud of what we made, we're not just trading a commodity. As a result our product is comparable with the highest quality of any production around the world."

Among the many products manufactured by SFI under the TigerPLY brand, one recent offering is TigerLITE. "TigerLITE comes with an 18 mm, 3/4 inch, 4x8 panel which is an ultra light 46 pounds per panel," Ryan revealed. "These are primarily used in RV, aircraft and marine applications. Due to the ultra lightweight, we get more panels on a truck and therefore we can offer our distributors higher quality with lower cost. It's just one of the many items we've developed to bring some value to the marketplace."

"Our most recent product catalog features our 2010 'Core Options.' Core Options offers customers a set of core grades and thicknesses," Ryan continued. "We've developed Core Options for 2010 to define how we build a panel. We have a variety of products. We manufacture lumber cores, we do some all Birch panels, some Eucalyptus panels, and combination cores. We have a product that we developed called C 9, which is a thick veneer. Actually, we've installed machine core composites to build a panel with the least