

FEATURED PROJECT

FEATURED PROJECT: Rio Grande Valley Parade of Homes™
BUILDER: Chris Ryan Homes and Investments
LOCAL HBA AFFILIATION: Rio Grande Valley HBA

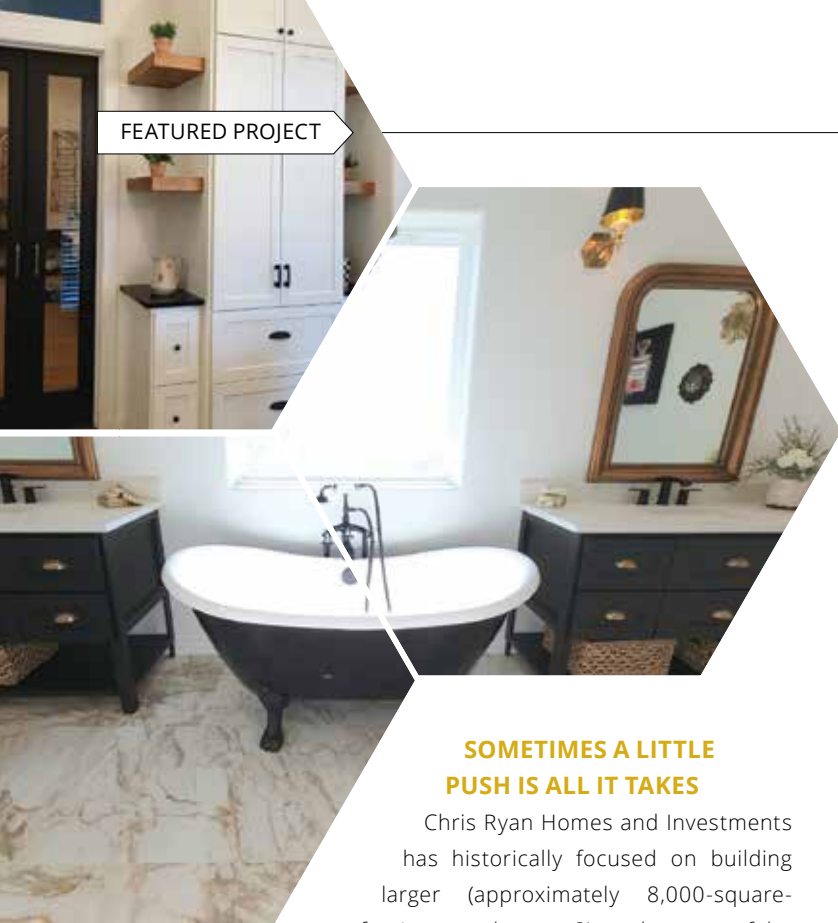
HERE'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE:

For Quality,

GO TO CHRIS RYAN HOMES AND INVESTMENTS

by VICTORIA LUING, Contributing Editor

Mary Ramirez, owner of Chris Ryan Homes and Investments, has a go-getter attitude that encourages her company to succeed in building quality homes — sometimes selling them before construction has even completed. Ramirez has five brothers, and being the only girl, she had to make her presence known while growing up. She has now proven herself to be a successful and strong Texas woman builder within a traditionally male-dominated industry. “I’m very proud that I’m a woman builder,” Ramirez says. “I’ve been building for 27 years, and when I started, it was tough. Especially down here as a Hispanic woman, it was hard.” Chris Ryan Homes and Investments is a custom homebuilder working within the Rio Grande Valley, and Ramirez has demonstrated time and time again that her work is top tier. For the last 14 years, Ramirez has been displaying her craftsmanship in the Rio Grande Valley Parade of Homes™. In this year’s RGVA Parade, Ramirez presented a home that sold within five days, and it was a home that was unique from her past work.



SOMETIMES A LITTLE PUSH IS ALL IT TAKES

Chris Ryan Homes and Investments has historically focused on building larger (approximately 8,000-square-foot) custom homes. Since the onset of the pandemic, material prices have risen, and many homebuilders have experienced extensive supply delays and some construction was forced to be left incomplete for large amounts of time. Because of this, Ramirez and her husband (co-owner) decided to shift their company's focus to building smaller homes that have around 2,400 square feet of living space. Making this change has allowed Chris Ryan Homes and Investments to spend more time on each house to ensure they live up to the quality standard Chris Ryan Homes and Investments strives for. This switch also limits Chris Ryan Homes and Investments to building around five projects in a year's span. Ramirez explains that this is preferable since it lets her be closer to her family and has saved her time and money.

Ramirez recognizes that most of her talents are thanks to the valuable time she spent with her father as a young adult. "I learned a lot of qualities from him, especially that quality itself is important," she explains. "I'm not a builder that focuses on the quantity; I focus on the quality." Ramirez continues to explain that Chris Ryan Homes and Investments values the quality their homes provide, and that when they start building, they finish their work rather than take on a ton of projects at once and let homes sit unfinished. "I see builders come and go, and I see how they can build junk and disappear. It's sad when customers don't do enough research on the builders and instead go with the cheapest one they can find," she says.

Chris Ryan Homes and Investments is a company that is solely run by Ramirez and her husband. Because of that, Ramirez is at the job sites every single day. Ramirez says her team knows she's a little different from other homebuilders and often tells them, "This is the way I like it; this is the way I'm going to build. If you want to work with me, then this is how it's going to be." The subcontractors understand Ramirez's high expectations, and they know that even though she's a force to be reckoned with, Ramirez's goal is to push the subcontractors to provide the best homes Chris Ryan Homes and Investments can create. For this farm-style RGVBA Parade house, Chris Ryan Homes and Investments began the foundation in the beginning of January 2022. By the first week of June, the four-bedroom, three-bath, 2,300-square-foot home was ready to be previewed for the RGVBA Parade of Homes.

"This home is almost a replica of my personal home that I built about a year and a half ago," Ramirez says. "During construction, I would get nonstop people coming by to take pictures. I called them the paparazzi." Seeing the interest people had in her home, Ramirez



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— *Mary Ramirez*

was inspired to build more homes with a similar style. From that inspiration came Chris Ryan Homes’ 2022 RGVBA Parade of Homes farm-style house.

FOR QUALITY, LOOK NO FURTHER

Since Chris Ryan Homes and Investments began to create smaller spec homes, this RGVBA Parade submission was not a custom creation. However, Ramirez explains that in the last 14 years, Chris Ryan Homes and Investments has displayed a wide variety of homes in their local parades, and the company even provides refreshments to customers who walk through the homes to help create a homey atmosphere. “I always provide hot dogs, chips and drinks in the garage,” Ramirez details. “Sometimes I’ll set up a TV and a play area for the kids so that they can sit, eat and watch cartoons while their parents tour the house.” Ramirez jokes that she’s even recruited her daughter to babysit on some occasions.

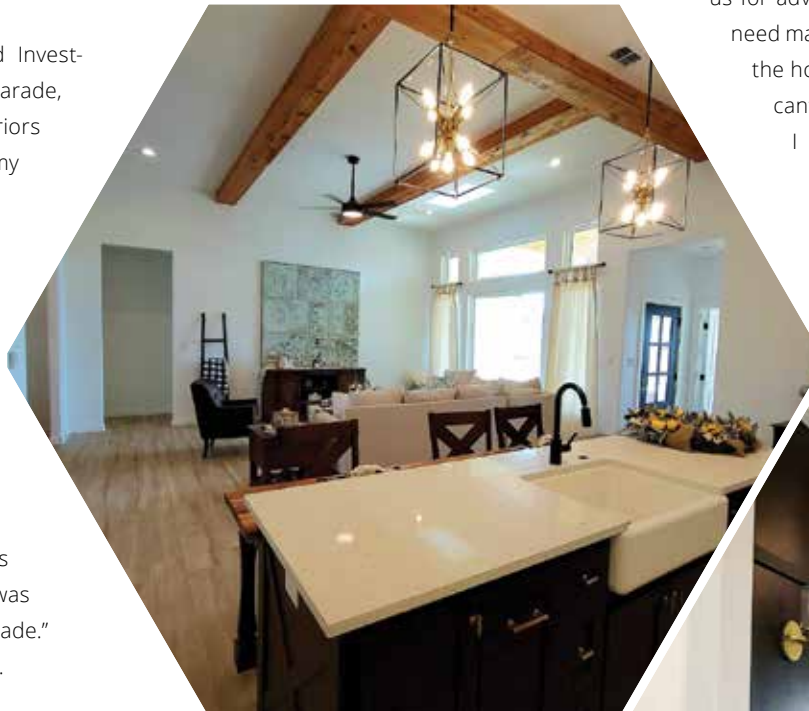
Each time Chris Ryan Homes and Investments showcases a house in a parade, Ramirez makes sure that the interiors are fully decorated. “I don’t show my homes without furniture,” she says. Placing furniture throughout the house not only fills the echoey spaces, but it also encourages design concepts within potential buyers. Anyone that purchases a parade house that Chris Ryan Homes and Investments builds has the option to buy any furniture pieces displayed. “I finished decorating this house on Thursday, and Saturday was the first weekend of the RGVBA Parade.” Within only five days, the house sold.

The new owners of the house are a little older and were looking to downsize. Their previous home was larger and contained multiple floors. This home has a single floor and

no stairs, making transition from room to room easier and more accessible for the couple. The front exterior contains a cozy patio area overlooking the yard and street. The farmhouse aspect can be seen with the use of the vertical wooden columns separating the patio from the walkway, as well as the roof overhang above the two-car garage and dining room window. Entering the front door, a black crosshatched wooden wall is on the right, which complements the crossing white ceiling beams above it. The entryway opens to a dining area on the left, and the kitchen and living space are straight through.

More monochromatic themes are displayed within the kitchen using black and white cabinetry. A farmhouse sink is set within a quartz and butcher block-topped, long center island, and wooden beams intersect the ceiling above. A door in the back of the room opens into the backyard where Ramirez says the owners are planning to build a pool. The owners’ bathroom contains marble-like flooring tiles, and a claw-footed bathtub sits in between his/her vanities. Ramirez explains that the Chris Ryan Homes and Investments crew befriended the new owners, and soon Chris Ryan Homes and Investments will be installing a fence around the home and some

new shelves in the garage. “We often get old clients that call us for advice on things that need maintenance around the house or yard, and I can’t do the work, but I can recommend someone to provide the service they’re look-



ing for,” Ramirez says. She continues to say that Chris Ryan Homes and Investments does everything in their power to make their customers excited for the homes they’ll live in. “If you’re looking for the cheapest builder, well, that’s not me. But, if you want a quality builder, look right here.”

CAN I SPEAK TO CHRIS RYAN?

When Ramirez says that she’s out on the job site every single day, she doesn’t mean that she just stops by on occasion to check on the progress of the construction. She is a true builder, hence the success Chris Ryan Homes and Investments has seen. Her accomplishments didn’t come easily though. She explains that when she started her company, she named it after her two sons, Christopher and Ryan. At first, she thought the company name might provide a bit of an advantage because it was using traditionally male names. But she quickly found that many people would call the company line and ask to speak to Mr. Ryan. When she would tell the customers that she was actually able to help them, a good majority would ask to speak to a man instead. “I’d sigh and think, ‘Here we go, I have to tell this story again.’ And then I’d explain that I’m the owner and the company was named after my boys,” she says. Ramirez also states that she developed a subdivision called Miranda Estates and owns a commercial plaza — Miranda Plaza — both named after her daughter, Miranda, who is a senior at Texas A&M University.

THE SUBCONTRACTORS UNDERSTAND RAMIREZ’S HIGH EXPECTATIONS, AND THEY KNOW THAT EVEN THOUGH SHE’S A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, RAMIREZ’S GOAL IS TO PUSH THE BUILDERS TO PROVIDE THE BEST HOMES CHRIS RYAN HOMES CAN CREATE.

Over the years, Ramirez has had to put her foot down many times with her team of subcontractors. “As a woman, you have to have that kind of character because you’re in a man’s field,” she describes. “To get respect, I had to be strict and to the point.” Thankfully, the world is entering a time where women within construction and homebuilding are getting more recognition, respect and experience. Ramirez says she has other women friends in this line of work who have the same attitude as she does. A goal of these women and Chris Ryan Homes and Investments is to make sure to encourage other women to join the industry and let them know they can do it, too. Ramirez laughs and says that even though she’s going home most days covered in dirt, “when I have a meeting, I shower and get myself looking professional.”

CATCH AND RELEASE

Ramirez comes from a strong Catholic and Hispanic family where everyone is close to their parents. Even though Chris Ryan Homes and Investments is named after her two sons, Ramirez’s daughter has shown an interest in interior design. She once recommended that her daughter take over the family company. “She said she loves designing, but she hears the way I have to be strict with my crew and she doesn’t think she would have the energy to do that,” Ramirez laughs. “She’s more like my husband who is the good cop, and I’m more like the bad cop.”

When it comes to homebuilding, Ramirez says she enjoys the work, but it does have its stresses just like any other career. No matter the stress, after her work is complete, Ramirez will gaze at her creations and feel accomplished. With her daughter still in school, Chris Ryan Homes and Investments is seeing Ramirez come to work almost every day. “I’m kind of half retired,” she says. “I love to fish and hunt. I do my fishing at a house we have on an island — it’s my stress reliever. If I stay here on the weekend, I end up working. So, my husband has to push me to leave sometimes.” Ramirez’s commitment to Chris Ryan Homes and Investments and her devotion to prove herself as a successful woman in the homebuilding industry has ultimately led to Chris Ryan Homes’ continued growth and high-quality homes. Be sure to swing by the next RGVBA Parade of Homes that Chris Ryan Homes and Investments showcases in to get a view of their first-rate work in person — and grab a hot dog while you’re at it — or check out their previous RGVBA Parade of Homes entries on their website: www.chrisryanhomes.com. ★

