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## Giving spirit unimpeded

### Slow housing market hasn't stopped Cutter's generosity

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**COLD SPRING** - When new home construction was churning at a record-setting pace in recent years, it was no problem for Jim Cutter's company to give money and land to charitable groups and community causes in Northern Kentucky.

In fact, two years ago, Cutter's company - Cold Spring-based Cutter Construction Co. - donated land valued at \$200,000 to Newport Catholic Central High School to be used for parking.

Although the burden of carrying about \$3.5 million in unsold inventory and a weak housing market have forced him to cut back his charitable contributions, Cutter says he feels compelled to give back. When he was 3 years old, his father died and his mother had to raise him by herself, and "that made me feel it's my job to help other people," Cutter says.

Cutter still plans to donate his personal and company time to community events, but in a different way.

"I don't have the ability to offer financial support to some community groups now because things are very tight," he said.

Cutter says his company's sales last year came in flat over the year before, at \$5 million, and instead of having six to 12 months of work lined up, its pipeline of projects has dropped to one month.

Moreover, Cutter is carrying on his books an unsold \$2.5 million home at the Estates at Wiedemann Mansion in Newport that's been listed since the summer of 2005.

He says the home was built for Northern Kentucky's Citifest home show two years ago but has not had a lot of traffic from potential buyers since then.

"We thought it would sell before it was finished because all of the homes in the previous Citifest shows sold prior to completion," he says.

Cutter also has a new home listed for slightly more than \$1 million in Verona that's been on the market since fall of 2005.

But despite the slow market and backlog of inventory, Cutter still plans to donate his personal and company time to community projects.

Cutter's contributions were recognized recently when he received the Home Builders Association of Northern Kentucky's lifetime achievement award, the Donald M. Wiedeman Award, named for its 37-year executive director. It's one of the top honors presented by the trade group, which has 1,300 member companies.

The award is given to someone who has contributed unselfishly of time, money and labor to the association and the community, said Mike Kegley, chairman of the group's board of directors.

Dan Dressman, executive director of the builders group, said the Drees Co., Fischer Homes, Arlinghaus Builders, Stegman Construction and other builders also donate time, effort and money in Northern Kentucky.

"There's a lot of builders who make solid contributions to the community, and Cutter is one of them," he said.

Jim Stegman, the group's president, says Cutter has always been one to step up and take charge of any task or project that the association has asked him to do. Cutter has served as an executive officer of the association for five years and was its president last year.



"He has an incredible desire to always help people no matter what it is," Stegman says.

Michael Schroth, executive director at the Campbell Lodge Boys' Home in Cold Spring, says Cutter has been involved about six years as an active board member.

He says Cutter and another board member are co-chairing a \$500,000 fund for an equine center, which would allow the home to provide its equine program to children year round.

So far, \$310,000 has been raised for the center, which would be roughly 15,000 square feet and provide shelter for the horses. Cutter also has donated employees and equipment to help the home prepare to build the center.

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