

House Building



Ben Lake was the speaker at the Optimist Club on May 23. He is the owner of Ben Lake Homes Ben was born in California and lived in Iowa for four years when his father was the Principal at Abraham Lincoln. Ben and his wife Shawn have five children, the youngest being six weeks old.

Ben wanted to be a dentist, but decided to get a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree when he had trouble with microbiology in college. While in college he helped with painting and remodeling homes. A friend in Key Real Estate convinced him to try building homes, so in 2004 he built his first house.

In 2008 Ben built eight homes. With the housing market falling, they did not sell, providing a lesson in economics. He likes to build Arts and Crafts style homes, preferably using empty lots in older neighborhoods. He has his own woodworking shop for creating the wide style woodwork common in those homes.

Ben likes to hire one or two youth in his business and train them, the way his father and others trained him. They make mistakes like anyone learning, but they learn quickly from their mistakes.

His home construction business is losing customers because they cannot get home loans. The county has also adopted new codes, including putting fire sprinklers in homes beginning in 2011. Ben thinks the market for new homes will not pick up anytime soon.