

# Marketing Machine

**Alabama's Woodland Homes thrives on self-promotion.**

**M**IKE FRIDAY ISN'T SHY about tooting the horn of his company, Huntsville, Ala.-based Woodland Homes, which he started in 1995 and which last year cracked BUILDER's top 200 builders ranking for the first time. "As I've built this company, I realized that nobody is going to promote Woodland Homes unless we do it ourselves," says the 48-year-old Friday, who's been selling homes since he was 19.

Friday is always thinking of ways to heighten customers' awareness of his company. He positioned Woodland Homes' 10,000-square-foot headquarters behind a fully furnished model next to a huge electronic billboard with its ad along a highway where 65,000 cars travel daily.

Woodland Homes won top prizes at its annual Parade of Homes event so often that the local BIA stopped judging the contest altogether. Friday and his wife, Melissa, now star in their own cable TV program, "Dream Home Cooking," where Melissa prepares her favorite recipes inside a model at one of Woodland's 10 communities and Mike conducts tours of the homes. Maybe it's a coincidence, but in June, when the show debuted and aired 140 times, Woodland Homes had record sales—31 homes, versus 15 to 18 during other months this year. Friday spent the first 15 years of his career working in other builders' sales offices and was mostly dissatisfied with the customer service they offered. So about 18 months ago, he instituted a policy where customers are



**ATTACHED TO GROWTH:** Adding a multifamily division a few years ago gave a tremendous boost to Woodland Homes, which expects to double in size by 2011.

contacted two days, 10 days, 14 days, and 30 days after closing. "Our goal is to have an army of consumers out there promoting Woodland," says Friday, whose company generates 20 percent of its business from referrals. Friday is confident that Woodland Homes can double its size within the next two to three years. Its multifamily division, which Friday started in 2005, "has made a tremendous difference for us" in terms of increased volume. (Woodland has conducted one-day promotional events where it has sold 25 townhomes in two hours.) Woodland's townhouses, which range from 1,400 to 1,800 square feet and sell from the \$160s to the \$220s, include detached garages and have small backyards.

"Whatever we focus on expands," boasts Friday. To free up more of his time to concentrate on sales, marketing, and land acquisition, Friday hired Matt Lombardo as Woodland's operations manager in 2003. Lombardo came on board at a time when the builder's cycle time was a leisurely 253 days. By enforcing a construction timetable, Woodland reduced its cycle time by 100 days and is confident enough to schedule closings 60 days out.

Woodland Homes controls more than 1,700 lots, which might seem excessive for a company that expects to close 190 homes this year. But Friday is banking on the influx of high-paying jobs into the Huntsville area, which he calls "a high-tech mecca." The Pentagon alone is relocating more than 4,700 jobs to the Tennessee Valley region by 2011. "Our best years are ahead of us," Friday asserts.

Mike Friday, CEO and co-owner, Woodland Homes, Huntsville, Ala.

