

Spotlighting spaces, locking in leads

Through its Outdoor Living Spaces Tour, Tussey Landscaping markets itself amid giving back. *By SARAH PFLEDDERER*

Arla Bratton had only one product in mind to add to her landscape when she set out on Tussey Landscaping's Outdoor Living Spaces Tour two years ago: Bubbling rocks.

"That's what I was interested in to begin with, just the bubbling rocks," she says. "Then I saw the pondless waterfall."

The annual, self-guided tour features about 10 homes landscaped by Tussey Landscaping, a Hollidaysburg, Pa.-based, design/build firm with a 95 percent residential client base.

By Bratton's last stop, bubbling rocks were at the bottom of her list of backyard additions.

"It turned into a total makeover," says Bratton, who became a client of Tussey Landscaping shortly after.

Walk out Bratton's backdoor today, and you'll step onto a stone porch extension complete with a fire pit, built-in pizza oven and that pondless waterfall surrounded by landscaping.

Clients like Bratton are the ROI Tussey Landscaping has earned since starting its Outdoor Living Spaces Tour eight years ago, says

Steve Martin, owner.

"The people that go on the tours, they just rave," he says. "We always see a number of calls and folks that will set up a consultation after the tour."



PULLING IT TOGETHER

Profits from the ticketed event go to The Arc of Blair County, an Altoona, Pa.-based nonprofit that serves individuals with disabilities.

Last year's tour, held Sept. 14, raised \$1,200 for the The Arc. Tussey sold more than 200 tickets at \$10 per couple and \$18 per group, with no limit to the number of people per group. The company spent about \$1,500 marketing the event.

"It's just an extra layer that goes into our marketing," Martin says, and recalls the first year of the tour, in 2006, drew about 70 people. "I think it's very effective that proceeds go to a charity. ... It's a way to give back to the community that's fun for everybody."

Martin adopted the idea for the Outdoor Living Spaces Tour from the pond tours put on by Chicago-based Aquascape Designs, for which Tussey Landscaping is a certified contractor.

Tussey Landscaping began with just pond tours as well. A couple years later it changed the name to the Outdoor Living Spaces Tour to draw better attention to hardscaping featured. Two years ago, as a callout to the landscape lighting featured, it tagged onto the tour a "Moonlight Walk."

The tour typically runs from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., allowing attendees to begin and

About 10 homes, landscaped by Tussey Landscaping, are featured on its Outdoor Living Spaces Tour.

continued on page 36



Steve Martin

MARKETWATCH

continued from page 34

end at their leisure and swing by as many homes as their schedules allow.

“It is totally self guided. They can start wherever they want to, end up wherever they want to,” Martin says. “At any point in the day, there’s people at all locations. That’s how it works.”

Tickets are sold on Tussey Landscaping’s website and over the counter at its supply center Tussey Mountain Mulch. Upon purchase, ticketholders may print off directions to the featured homes as well as descriptions of the landscaped properties.

Included in the tour stops every year are Martin’s home and the Tussey Mountain Mulch facility, where chefs prepare food for visitors throughout the day. Martin aims to debut a range of landscapes and will cycle out three to five new homes every year on the tour.

“We send a letter out or ask clients if they’re interested,” he says. “Normally these kind of people would like to showcase their backyard.”

Bratton’s home made the list of tour stops last year and, as a customer, she says, it was flatter-



Profits from the Outdoor Living Spaces Tour benefit The Arc of Blair County. Tickets are sold at \$10 per person or \$18 per group.

ing to be asked to open up her space to the public.

“It was a compliment that they wanted to feature my house because mine is more family-oriented landscaping,” she says. “It made me feel very good.”

The concept of homeowners opening up their spaces is pleasing to Martin as well—especially from a sales standpoint.

“Some (homeowners) actually have refreshments out and they just tell everyone all about their project and how it went,” he says. “They turn into our salespeople.”

The Ticker:

DESIGN/BUILD

John Deere added two skid-steer models, 318E and 320E, and two compact track loader models, 319E and 323E, to the E-Series line introduced in 2013.



Aquascape Designs opened two new educational portals this month: Aquascape Academy Online and Aquascape Academy Hands-On. The online training includes video sessions, iPad tutorials, PowerPoint presentations and quizzes. Hands-On is free, instructor-led classroom and training sessions held at the company headquarters in St. Charles, Ill.

Bobcat Co. released its first Tier 4 loaders. These machines debuted with new Bobcat-branded, non-diesel particulate filter engines. The new engines, used in 500 frame-size loaders, have a 4 percent to 12 percent increase in torque over previous models.



The 2013 Outdoor Living Spaces Tour drew more than 200 people and raised \$1,200 for The Arc of Blair County.