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Sean Hegstad – Connection Through Collaboration

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Sean Hegstad – Connection Through Collaboration

By Jennifer Dodge

“To us, good design is very important,” describes Sean Hegstad, owner of Haven Design Workshop. “But, in the end, that’s not what’s most important. It’s making sure that the people we’re serving understand that they can make good things with good designs. Our goal is to serve clients who appreciate good design.”

Sean explains that design is not always about style. It’s about adapting the client’s

style and making it beautiful. Haven is different because they are catering their services to the specific needs and wants of their clients. “We all understand the fact that we’re here to make their world better. We are here to help shape their lives in a way that makes things better. Every client is different, and we try to understand how we can best serve them. To me, that’s the most rewarding part of the process,” Sean continues. “I actually enjoy the reconstruction of the design of where they live.”

Haven Design Workshop provides architectural design services for anyone looking to build a home office or remodel their current space. “They may like where they live,” Sean says of clients looking for guidance and design for their current homes. “They just want to improve how they live in that space.” Haven Design Workshop works with clients to design the living space and home that best fits the way they want to live and how they see themselves living in that

Photography by Radley Muller Photography

space now and into the future. Providing clear communication throughout the entire process, clients are an integral part of that design of their new home every step of the way. “I design for the client,” says Sean. “That culture exists throughout our office. We make sure that listening to the client is first and foremost. We want to make sure we are serving them the way they want to be served.” While Haven aspires to integrate sustainability into each project, the end result is always a reflection of the home their clients envision and how they want to live in the space. “That collaborative process we have with them, that’s a lot of fun,” Sean describes of working with clients on creating their homes. “This is their home. We really want to create something special for the clients that reflects how they live together now and how they want to live together in the future.” This collaboration with each team member and with clients is the crucial foundation and culture of his architectural business. Since growing up in Lacey, Washington, he has always had an interest and appreciation of how things are built and their impact on people. Combined with that interest and appreciation, Sean also has an enormous appreciation for nature, often tying the two together.



“I once wrote an article years ago called ‘Forts of all Sorts,’” he laughs, describing childhood days living in a subdivision with a greenbelt where he built all kinds of forts from pieces of the natural surroundings. “We were always back there building things.” As his family home was being built, Sean had the opportunity also to experience the process from the client’s perspective, making choices as the homeowner. “These were the beginning stages

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where he became the design architect of record for Fairhaven Gardens, among other high-profile projects.

"I had an office in the attic of our first home," he laughs.

A long-time resident now of Bellingham and Whatcom County, Sean continues to focus on collaborative design and building residential and commercial projects with his team and clients.

In 2008, with their first office along Harris Avenue in Fairhaven, Sean is continuing to live his dream of creating homes that fit the lives of his clients, including designing his own homes that fit the lifestyle of his growing family throughout the years.

In 2006 they sold their first house in Bellingham and bought five acres north of Bellingham. They built a home for themselves that reflected their lifestyle with young children.

After selling this house as their lifestyle once again changed, Sean designed and built a net-zero energy home in Lynden, which showed the care and effectiveness of that particularly unique design for the area.

With part of the proceeds of selling their home, Sean also built Haven's mixed-use building in Ferndale, which has five apartments as well as their architectural design office.

"This office was an investment for us, as well as a showcase of our work," explains Sean.

The design extends to the culture of collaboration in the office,

making it an enjoyable place to work. As a team of six employees and one intern, they strive to ensure they are giving the clients more than they expect by doing things that are special and unique in a very collaborative way, including working with the contractors early in the process.

Every team member has a different ability and brings a set of skills and strengths to the business. Those abilities and skills are combined to create a solid experience for the clients.

"I appreciate the collaboration that goes on in the office," says Brenda, Drafting Technician, who came to Haven Design Workshop over six years ago from Montana, where she studied architecture. "We listen to our clients, taking in their input and creating what is best for them."

She goes on to say that each of the team members has their own areas of expertise, building on those roles as they work together and always asking, "how can we

make this better as a team."

For over seven years, Amy, a team member, concurs and says the open atmosphere of the office makes it ideal for bouncing ideas off of each other.

As the Office Manager and Permit Technician, she says, "I love the challenge of the work and enjoy the great clients we have and making their lives easier through the process."

All of this speaks to what Sean and his team strive to create at Haven Design Workshop.

"We're not looking to be stars with our own designs, but we want to make sure our clients get what they want," says Sean. "How do they live? How do they use the space? The clients are the ones that are spending the money. This is to improve their lives. There's always a story behind what they want and what they see as their ideal future. It's our job to shape that home and enhance that future."



As the old saying goes, "home is where the heart is." Sean Hegstad and the Haven Design Workshop team strive to make that feeling a reality for their clients.

For more information and a gallery of Haven's work, visit www.haven-dw.com *SL*

of what formed who I am."

In high school, Sean decided to pursue an education in architecture and embark on the journey of his appreciation for the building process and nature through a career in architectural design. While in college, he also worked in construction to better understand the building process and its impact on the environment and people.

After graduating, he made his way to Bellingham, where he secured a summer internship with a local firm, ultimately, after graduating, was hired as a full-time employee and lived in an apartment above the office.

In 2004, he started his own company, Sean Hegstad Architect,

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