



News from

The Front Porch

Fall 2010 - Brought to you quarterly by The McCue Mortgage Company



How to Choose a Contractor

If you've taken advantage of low interest rates to take out a home equity or home improvement loan to put on an addition or undertake a major remodel, one of your first and most important decisions will be choosing the right contractor. Often the best route is to ask family members and friends for recommendations. Pay close attention to the type of job they had done – you'll want to find a contractor with a lot of experience in the same type of project you're undertaking – and remember, redoing a room or finishing a basement is a very different type of project than, for example, a kitchen renovation or a major addition. Research your project thoroughly so you fully understand every aspect – from building to electric to plumbing – and the average costs of each, and you'll be better prepared to evaluate estimates. Check with your local building inspector to ensure you (or your contractor) obtain the proper permits.

Interview possible contractors and collect multiple plans and bids. Make sure to see the complete bid in writing. Ask for a breakdown of costs: materials, labor, profit margin, and other expenses. Materials typically account for about 40% of the total cost (be sure to discuss specific grade and quality of materials), and profit margin is typically 15-20%. But bear in mind, in leaner times, many contractors are willing to negotiate on profit margin, and labor costs can be considerably cheaper. Be cautious of "low ball" bids – which can be red flags for contractors who cut corners or are not properly insured – so also ask what's not included, and get it in writing. Ask when the work will begin and how long it will take – including time you will need to be away – and what time workers will arrive at your house.

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FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

Like many companies in this age of social networking and mobile communications, McCue Mortgage has its own Facebook page. We encourage you to "Like" us on Facebook so you don't miss out on the promotions, contests and good information we'll be posting there. Over the past few months, we've featured contests that have sent customers to Lake Compounce, New Britain Rock Cats baseball games and, in this issue, a chance for your family to go to the new Connecticut Science Center (see promotion inside).

As we grow our Facebook population, we'll also be posting good tips on everything from home maintenance to how to create a rock garden and other landscaping tips. We'll also be hosting some friendly competitions, such as who has the best garden or the tastiest recipe.

More importantly we will be using Facebook to communicate important, non-confidential, general information such as how to make sense of your escrow statement, when year-end statements are mailed, and other relevant information.

As we celebrate our 60th Anniversary this year, I can't help but think back to the time when applications were taken by pen and pencil on paper, and underwriting was a manual process (it is now automated). Who would have thought that we would be using something like Facebook to connect with our customers?

So next time you're on Facebook, search "McCue Mortgage" and friend us!

Bill McCue

William J. McCue, President
The McCue Mortgage Company

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1-800-382-0017

www.mccuemortgage.com



Barbara Horan (center) and husband Gene (right) of Cromwell receive their voucher for one month's mortgage payment from McCue Mortgage's Gary Kulik after winning the home run contest. Rick Violette (Bristol), Christy Jackson (New Britain) and Mary Kenney (Middletown) were also winners and received a free mortgage payment.



McCue Mortgage customer Matt Costa throws out the first pitch in Saturday's Rock Cats game.

McCue Rocks with the Rock Cats



McCue Mortgage treated about 1500 customers to a fun-filled weekend of hometown baseball during the New Britain Rock Cats' three-game weekend series against the Akron Aeros, August 6-7. Four lucky customers won a month's

mortgage payment as part of the Company's home run contest, when a name was drawn every time a Rock Cat found the fence. The winners were Barbara Horan and her husband Gene of Cromwell on Saturday, and Rick Violette

of Bristol, Christy Jackson of New Britain, and Mary Kenney of Middletown on Sunday! The ball games and contests were part of McCue's ongoing year-long 60th Anniversary Celebration. ▲



More Fun with McCue Mortgage

This summer, as part of our 60th Anniversary Celebration, we sent families to Lake Compounce and the New Britain Rock Cats. Well the fun hasn't ended! Go to our Facebook page (search "McCue Mortgage") and look for instructions on how to enter our science center contest. We'll be sending several families to the Connecticut Science Center...FREE! The Connecticut Science Center is the newest attraction in Connecticut, and makes for a great family adventure. You must register by October 25th, and each family is eligible for a maximum of 5 tickets. Go to the McCue Mortgage Facebook page and register today!



Photo by Lanny Nagler – Provided by Connecticut Science Center

How to Choose a Contractor

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Will sub-contractors be used and how will they be paid? Will the contractor obtain necessary permits or do you need to? Also ask the contractor about licensing and bonding, a list of previous clients, and how many projects they work on concurrently. And do they have liability insurance and workers' compensation certificates (to ensure you are not liable if a worker is injured on your property)? The written bid should also include the contractor's full name, license number, driver's license number, address, and telephone number.

Check license, insurance, and references. Make sure to hire a contractor who is licensed and fully insured. Check with the Better Business Bureau to see if there have been any complaints filed against a contractor. It's amazing how many people ask for references and never check them! Take the time to call contractors' references and ask questions – for example: Are you satisfied with the job? Was the job completed on time and within the agreed budget? Did they arrive on time on work days? Were they neat and respectful of your property? Were they working on multiple projects at the same time? How many? Were there any problems with the project after it was completed and if so, were they handled to your satisfaction? If possible, visit a current job site, and see for yourself.

Establish a payment plan. Be wary of contractors who ask for 50% up front, or request payment in cash. A recommended payment plan includes 10% at contract signing, three payments of 25% at specific milestones, and the final 15% when every item on your "punch list" is complete. Ask that the contractor obtain lien releases from suppliers and subcontractors (these releases protect you if the contractor does not pay his or her bills).

Finally, it's important to understand that the best way to ensure a successful project is to communicate clearly. Make sure your contractor fully understands all of your expectations. Also, many projects undergo minor changes and modifications along the way – remember changing your mind may also change your project's completion date, and bottom line. Be sure to communicate desired changes as quickly as possible, and ask how they will affect timing and price. ▲

For more information call:

Ken Sullivan of Kenneth Sullivan Remodeling at 860-844-0116



Oh Great Pumpkin! Find a Pumpkin Patch Near You

Looking for a great "pick your own" pumpkin patch near you? Well look no further. We uncovered a great website, www.pumpkinpatchesandmore.org/CTpumpkins.php that's chock full of suggestions and a whole lot more! Here are a few of patches recommended on the site – and be sure to check it yourself for more suggestions ... including what to do with your pumpkin after Halloween!

FAIRFIELD COUNTY: McLaughlin Vineyards, 14 Albert's Hill Road, Sandy Hook; and Warrup's Farm, 51 John Read Road, West Redding

LITCHFIELD COUNTY: Ellsworth Orchard and Berry Farm, 461 Cornwall Bridge Road, Sharon; and March Farm, 160 Munger Lane, Bethlehem

HARTFORD COUNTY: Brown's Harvest, 60 Rainbow Road, Route 75, Windsor; and Belltown Hill Orchards, 483 Matson Hill Road, South Glastonbury

TOLLAND COUNTY: Rock Maple Farm, 5 Moulton Hill Road, Stafford; and Johnny Applesed's Farm, Route 83 & 13 Schoolhouse Road, Ellington

NEW HAVEN COUNTY: Country Corners Farm, 288 Brewster Road, Griswold; and Ives Farm, 1585 Cheshire St, Cheshire

MIDDLESEX COUNTY: Gotta's Farm, 661 Glastonbury Turnpike, Portland; and Lyman Orchards, Jct. Routes 147 and 157, Middlefield

NEW LONDON COUNTY: Holmberg Orchards, 12 Orchard Drive, Route 12, Gales Ferry and Scott's Yankee Farmer, 436 Boston Post Road (Route 1), East Lyme

WINDHAM COUNTY: Lapsley Orchard, 403 Orchard Hill Road, Rte 169, Pomfret Center

To Better Serve You

A quick escrow reminder! You should have received your escrow analysis from McCue in August. Any refunds due to you were distributed in the third week of September – if you haven't received yours yet and are due one, expect it shortly. Any related payment changes will be effective as of October 1, 2010. If you have any questions, please contact Loan Servicing by phone at 1-800-382-0017, press "1" for routine customer calls, or "3" to discuss your escrow analysis (note our recorded phone information has recently changed!). Or, click the "Escrow Information" link on our website (www.mccuemortgage.com) for info and FAQs! ▲

The Front Porch

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The McCue Mortgage Company
Attention: Gary Kulik
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We're on Facebook – Like us and keep up with all that's new at McCue Mortgage!

1-800-382-0017

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From the back porch...

*Fun Pumpkin Trivia from pumpkinpatch.com**

- The Connecticut field variety is the traditional American pumpkin.
- Pumpkins contain potassium and Vitamin A.
- Pumpkin flowers are edible.
- In early colonial times, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for the crust of pies, not the filling.
- Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snake bites.
- Pumpkins are 90 percent water.
- Eighty percent of the pumpkin supply in the United States is available in October.
- Native Americans called pumpkins “isquotm squash,” used the seeds for food and medicine, and flattened strips of pumpkins, dried them and made mats.

**Check this site for more pumpkin fun, including links to free carving stencils!*



For a laugh...

How do you fix a broken jack-o-lantern? **With a pumpkin patch!**
What is a pumpkin's favorite sport? **Squash!**
What did one jack-o-lantern say to the other? **Cut it out!**

Got a Clue?

How much did the largest pumpkin ever grown weigh?

- a) 1,827 lbs b) 1,725 lbs**
c) 1,689 lbs d) 1,502 lbs

Email your answer to:

puzzle@mccuemortgage.com and include your name, loan number, address and phone number.

Remember to play the puzzle every issue to increase your odds of winning! We take all the correct answers and select a winner each November who receives one month's mortgage payment courtesy of McCue Mortgage. The winner will be notified and published in *The Front Porch*. You must be a McCue Mortgage customer to win.

Answer to last issue's puzzle:

How old did the oldest (documented) dog live to be?

Answer: C) 29