

HOT honors America's Best Builder!

Homeowners of Texas is happy to recognize Helen Dragas as **America's Best Builder**, an award presented in 2009 by *Builder Magazine*. This is refreshing to us since we focus so much time on bad or unscrupulous builders and the need for legislative reforms to improve Texas home building and ensure a level playing field with homeowners. We'd love to see a Texas builder win next.

Helen Dragas

Ms. Dragas is the president and CEO of The Dragas Co's., a diversified real estate company in Virginia Beach founded by her father, a Greek immigrant whose family barely survived the Nazi occupation.

We learned about Dragas when researching growing problems with Chinese drywall. After reports of toxic drywall in of her 73 condos in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach, The Dragas Co. spent more than \$5 million to relocate the residents and fix the units.

A Compassionate Conservative

Community involvement is a strong component of her company's culture, and when Dragas wanted school-age children have housing stability, her company donated \$1.5 million to fight homelessness in the region.

She started in the home building business at age 13 conducting customer service interviews. Maybe that's what taught her empathy.

Now she has an ultra-conservative financial philosophy, carries virtually no debt, is politically active, and has a disciplined decision making style. And with ready access to cash, The Dragas Co. was able to weather the hard times with relative ease and is able to snap up lots at bargain prices.

Ms. Dragas serves on or has served on a number of foundations and commissions and is a member of the University of Virginia Board of Visitors. Several qualities stood out to us from the university's alumni profile¹ (see below). We include some of her interview answers here:

- **What characteristics to you look for in people?** Emotional intelligence, integrity, motivation and initiative. ['Sounds like someone I'd like to work for.]
- **How do you stay ahead of the competition?** I just try to do my very best every day, hire the best people I can find, and facilitate their success.
- **In which social networks do you engage?** Young Presidents Organization. [I had the pleasure of presenting at the YPO conference while at IBM and have utmost respect for the organization.]
- **What's your favorite cause?** Education, across the spectrum. I'm also passionate about homelessness, particularly family homelessness.
- **How to you deal with conflict?** I seek understanding and try to encourage others to do the same. Awareness and understanding go a long way toward taking the negative energy out of a conflict. [More builders need this attitude.]
- **What motivates you?** I definitely have a competitive streak, but the older I get, the more I am motivated by a desire to contribute and to make the most of whatever skills, gifts, and opportunities God has given me.

This profile is written by Wayne Caswell, Communications Director, Homeowners of Texas.



¹ http://www.darden.virginia.edu/uploadedFiles/Information/Alumni/20_Questions/20QuestionsHelenDragas.pdf