

Interview of **MIKE HOLMES**  
Conducted by **DAVE BURNETT**

**MR. BURNETT:** Joining us today is one of the housing industry's most successful TV stars, Mike Holmes. Mike is here to talk about his participation at the 2011 National Healthy Homes Conference in Denver. Mike Holmes is the star of two shows on HGTV, "Homes on Homes" and "Homes Inspection." Mike, thank you for being with us today.

**MR. HOLMES:** My pleasure, Dave. How are you?

**MR. BURNETT:** I'm doing great. Obviously, Mike, you have a great love for home, particularly rehabilitation. Where does this passion come from?

**MR. HOLMES:** You know, as a little kid growing up and watching my father who was a jack-of-all-trades, master of none, I learned so much doing electrical at 6 and finishing my first basement at 12 and running my first company at 19 and on and on and on. It ended up being, you know, who would have thought that by the time I was, I think it was, around 30 that I'd be on television talking about construction, what's right, what's wrong, what we're doing wrong, and what we should be doing about it.

**MR. BURNETT:** Just from your TV work alone, you've seen some homes that are in pretty bad condition. Can you describe some of the conditions you've seen?

**MR. HOLMES:** Some of the worst I've seen obviously -- and some people think is it just electrical or is it just plumbing -- the truth is it's all of the above.

One house was so bad, I had no choice but to take it down and build a brand-new home, and along with that story was how the contractor had liened the homeowners for \$543,000, had contaminated the structure, never mind the home with all the products that he used, and it was really the way they did it. Imagine having to take a house down and build it again. That's ridiculous.

**MR. BURNETT:** Now, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, has developed Seven Principles of Healthy Homes, and clearly you're talking about homes that are not healthy at all. Let me very briefly list those seven principles and ask you about them.

**MR. HOLMES:** Sure.

**MR. BURNETT:** Keep it dry, clean, pest free, safe, contaminate free, ventilated, and maintained. Mike, how do you incorporate these seven principles when you're doing renovations?

**MR. HOLMES:** You know, the truth is it's easier than everyone thinks. Let's just talk about dry for a second. Why do we want the house dry? Well, that's really simple. If it's just full of

too much moisture, which is not only humidity in the air but possibly water infiltration, then you're just bringing in an environment for mites, for roaches, rodents, molds of all kinds. Clean is very important. You don't have garbage in the house. Let's reduce any pest infestations and any exposure to contaminants that are in the air.

Safe. Now, when you speak of safe, that brings you right to contaminants. A lot of chemicals I don't think we know that are in products out there, such as VOCs, volatile organic compound, and once we start learning about what we should have in our house and what we shouldn't have in our house, I think that's when we're going to start paying more attention to see what we can do about it.

Look at it this way. If we could see what was in the air, then we'd panic and pay attention to it. Because we can't see it, we're going to call it the invisible issues that we just don't know enough about it.

Ventilated. A lot of our old houses leaked so much air that it allowed pure air ventilation in the home; in other words, clean air coming in, much like leaving a few windows open. More times, I think, today in the present, we are not opening our windows. We are trying to close them up and conserve energy, which I get, which is smart, but what we're doing is actually blocking in or holding in all the contaminants that are in our homes, and we're making them too airtight with not enough ventilation.

Maintaining is really important. Maintaining your home is as simple as if you have wood on the outside of your house, you're going to have to paint it, seal it. The one thing I want to say about lead paint -- and it's normally in older homes -- you're talking about 240,000 U.S. children are affected by lead every year, and that is not good. It's usually around the windows, the old paint on the old windows and/or trim, but we used lead paint even on our walls back then because it was the equivalent to a vapor barrier, so we're learning.

**MR. BURNETT:** Thank you very much for summing up all of those seven principles because you did it very, very well.

You do a lot of traveling especially with two shows on television, but you nonetheless found the time to attend the National Healthy Homes Conference. Why do you think it's important to attend, and do you encourage others to go?

**MR. HOLMES:** You know, there's about a thousand requests a month for me to go places, speak places, and do things, but I mean, I want to pick and choose since I don't have enough hours in the day. I want to pick and choose the right things to do, and the Healthy Housing in Denver was definitely a smart thing because there's a lot that I can do to help educate people, not to mention not to use these products but how they can better their homes for indoor air quality for their kids.

**MR. BURNETT:** In closing, is there anything else that you would like to share with our

audience that's very important for them to know?

**MR. HOLMES:** I've said it a few times. Spend your money right the first time, and it will work for you. Spend it wrong, and it will hurt you in many different ways, not just about air quality but in having to do it again. I think the more that we can learn about our houses, learn about the environment, and learn how we can be better for both the environment and our future, our kids, I think the better we're going to be. It's just about education.

**MR. BURNETT:** Mike Holmes, star of "Homes on Homes" and "Homes Inspection," Mike, thanks for speaking with me and our audience. You've shared a lot of great information, and I'd like to thank you, the audience, for listening.

For more information about the National Healthy Homes Conference, please go to [www.healthyhomesconference.org](http://www.healthyhomesconference.org). We look forward to seeing you in Denver.

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