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Meet Your
Neighbors

*Wayne
& Barbara*
LeRoux

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meet the team,
**CHELSEA
 POTTHAST
 DAWSON &
 CHARLES
 DAWSON**

Potthast Dawson Design

BY ELIZABETH MCCABE



Dream it. Believe it. Do it.

Chelsea Potthast Dawson delights in bringing people's visions to reality with her expertise. She builds experiences that are layered, textured, thoughtful, and tailored, down to the last detail piece of barware. And now, she's doing it with her husband, Charles, by her side.

Chelsea's world is shifting in all the right ways.

"My husband, Charles Dawson, recently joined the team," she says. "He's an incredible asset." Charles officially stepped into the business at the start of 2025. He's a sixth-generation native of St. Petersburg and has worked in various trades of construction and project management for over 2 decades. He brings his valuable experience from over 200 new construction projects, home remodels, high-rise condos, as well as commercial properties, and government and military buildings. He

has the practical, hands-on edge that beautifully complements Chelsea's artistic mind. Combined, the duo has more than 33 years of experience in the construction and design world.

"It's been a really good shift for the business," Chelsea shares. "He's such a people person and has immense discipline, while I'm the eccentric artist who gets into my design groove and runs wild!"

Together, they make a balanced husband and wife team, Potthast Dawson Design, the new brand they'll officially unveil this year.

From the Big Leagues to Building Her Own Legacy

Chelsea launched her design firm in 2016, after working in Los Angeles in Hospitality Design, as well as a premier design firm in Sarasota, where the work was as glamorous as it sounds. Think

Four Seasons. Ritz-Carltons. Bahamas. And high-end residences that stretched from Palm Beach to Aspen to Greenwich and Manhattan.

Moving to St. Petersburg marked an unexpected turn. "It was quite a change," she admits.

But business accelerated quickly. Since the firm began, she's taken on remarkable projects and developed deep trust with clients. That confidence naturally expanded, pulling Chelsea and her team into construction administration

and support. "Clients need guidance on everything – finishes, fixtures, and furnishings, and also request input on builder selection and architect recommendations. We find our clients crave consistency, quality, design cohesion, and meticulous guidance," Chelsea says, and her team has delivered.

Designing for the Well-Traveled and the Detail-Oriented

The firm gravitates toward large, highly detailed projects, especially homes where clients appreciate curated, elevated, personal attention to their design.

"We like to work with clients who bring ideas from their own experience; travels around the world, possess art or items of sentiment; they are cultured, and want a meaningful home," she explains. "We always make it about their wants and needs. We roll out the 'red carpet!'"

Her team learns how clients live, how they want to live, and how their home should support everything from daily routines to entertaining. "We operate from a standpoint of 'form follows function' at every level." This means their involvement begins with design concepts, including the exterior palette, roof material, pool design, and paver layouts. They implement interior space planning and selections - plumbing fixtures,

cabinetry and hardware, sofas, bedding, art and accessories, and tabletop items, and well... you name it! "We'll even stock the fridge for them if they'd like!" she says.

One current project is in its fourth year, an artistic marathon of bespoke craftsmanship.

"We're doing faux shagreen vanity doors in the guest bath with big jewel-toned hardware. In the kitchen, we're using Pecky Cypress—a rare, water and bug-resistant wood found only in swamp regions of Florida and the southeast United States. Every corner of the project has custom fittings."

Potthast Dawson designs projects in which no two homes are alike - no neighbor will ever have the same look.

"Inspiration comes from nature," Chelsea says without hesitation. "What we see in God's creation is just incredible. The best designer is the One who made it all." The team works with natural materials: marble, quartzite, rare wood species, and color tones that align architecture and design with the local landscape, creating a sense of place.

Chelsea and Charles' affinity toward design and development isn't accidental. Chelsea grew up in many mediums of art, winning awards throughout her childhood, and attended art camp every summer at the Arts Center (now

The Morean Arts Center). Her not-so-distant relative was notable American Impressionist Edward Henry Potthast. The Potthast Brothers from Germany were furniture craftsmen in Maryland, and her late paternal grandfather was an award-winning photographer. "Design and construction run deep in both mine and Charles' family of origin," she says. Charles credits his commitment to excellence to his late Grandfather, Dr. Peter E. Dawson, a revolutionary in scientific dental design as well as a community developer. As the founder of the global-reaching Dawson Academy, Dr. Dawson was the innovator and inventor of modern-day dentistry methods and tools. His distinction toward greatness helped to put Saint Petersburg 'on the map', as he was a developer and investor in many of the downtown St. Pete buildings still standing.

Favorite Clients? The Brave Ones.

Their favorite projects? The ones where clients give creative latitude and trust them to gently push them beyond the predictable.

"We have amazing clients!" Chelsea adds. "They may not know exactly what they want, and they may or may not have ideas. We can quickly tease it out of them and deduce what they're really after."

And because many clients are from out of town, her firm's ability to manage full-scale, turnkey design from afar makes them a perfect fit for areas like Florida, where many are moving from afar.

Life Outside the Studio

At home, Chelsea and Charles' life revolves around their two adorable animals, Cash, their lovable lab mix, and a Persian-British longhair mix, Harry, who rules the roost. When they're not designing dream homes or caring for their pets, you'll find them boating, at the beach, or traveling.

Their next chapter together is unfolding beautifully.

***Want to learn more?
 Check out
 PotthastDawsonDesign.com.***