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this month

After the kids leave, a Wynnewood couple opts to stay put, transforming the family home to suit their less chaotic lifestyle. (page 44)

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second act

A Wynnewood couple didn't flee the nest after it emptied—they renovated it. *By Tara Behan*

By now, most of us know that an empty nester is synonymous with downsizing. The conventional wisdom is that, once the kids leave, parents pack up and move to a home more suitable for two. One Wynnewood couple has bucked the trend, opting to stay put in their 100-year-old stone Tudor while making all the renovations necessary to accommodate their new, more streamlined lifestyle.

"The main reason I didn't want to move somewhere nearby was that I dreaded driving by with my husband and seeing some young couple bringing our home into the 21st century," says the owner. "That would surely make me wish I could have my old, newly updated house back."

The couple has lived in the house since moving to the Main Line from Boston in 1986. And after spending a

summer in their new beach house in North Carolina's Outer Banks, they decided to bring the same comfortable, relaxed feel to their primary residence. Ardmore architect Jeff Spoelker and New York City interior designer Rebecca Short had worked with the couple on their North Carolina house, and Paoli-based custom builder Stan Barry had renovated just about every room in *continued on page 48*

JOHN LEWIS

resources **architect:** Jeff Spoelker, JMS Architecture, Ardmore; (215) 200-3269, jmsarchitecture.com. **builder:** Stan Barry, Barry Custom Builders, 20 S. Valley Road, Suite 101, Paoli; (610) 640-1610, barrycustombuilders.com. **interior designer:** Rebecca Short, Blair Design Associates, New York; (212) 595-0203, blairdesignnyc.com.



REPURPOSED GEM: (Clockwise from opposite page) A compact kitchen with a tiered island and modern furnishings suits the owners' more casual lifestyle, in which cooking is no longer a priority; the kitchen flows into a casual living area dominated by a neutral color scheme; pocket doors in the dining room lead to a cozy sitting area; the exterior of the home, with a windowed pass-through leading to a new three-car garage and offices.



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habitat continued from page 44

the Wynnewood home over the past 15 years. All three were called upon for the latest project.

"When I finished what I thought was the last job in their house, I told them I wouldn't be hearing from them unless one of the rooms burned down," says Barry. "Then I got the call that they wanted to do this major renovation, ripping apart a lot of what I'd done."

Work included gutting the existing three-car garage and transforming it into a combination kitchen-family room with a cathedral ceiling and doors leading out to a rehabbed pool and terrace. Updated plans also called for a windowed gallery pass-through leading to a new three-car garage, with a shared office above.

Filled with windows, the office area has two workstations separated by sliding barn doors, plus a full bathroom. Another room in the home used to be a place for watching TV. Now, it's for working out.

"The great thing about this design is that the owners were able to decide what worked for them," says Spoelker. "They didn't want to exercise in the lower level of the home anymore, so why not rip down the paneling in a room they didn't have much use for and make it an inviting spot with a flat-screen television, where they'd want to go to exercise? They made their own rules."

As planned, the combination kitchen-family room is now the focal point for gatherings of every type, especially when their three sons are visiting. "They wanted to design a house that their sons and, eventually, their families would want to visit," says Spoelker.

Since neither owner does a lot of major cooking, the modest kitchen works for their needs. A tiered island with sink faces the living area, and most of the cream-colored cabinets and appliances are along the wall leading to the butler's pantry.

As the interior designer, Short had to make the new modern furnishings work in a traditional setting. "It was crucial that we created an environment that reflected the homeowners' new identity," she says.

Which is why Short covered the family area's cube ottoman in horsehair fabric. "If I have a modern piece of furniture in a traditional house, I like to go with a more traditional fabric," she says.

A cream sofa and gray side chair provide the perfect neutral backdrop

for pillows and throws in more dynamic colors, while an aubergine Ralph Pucci chair highlights an otherwise dark corner. "I didn't want a brightly colored sofa to be the elephant in this open space," Short says.

A favorite spot for meals and reading the paper, the banquette area has window seats similar to those in the couple's Outer Banks beach house. Short took an existing mahogany table and replaced its legs with a pair of white bases fashioned after Eero Saarinen's famed tulip table. Sleek, white Turner chairs add to the modern aesthetic. "We kept the history of the table that the family has used for years, and we updated it," she says.

Short also worked on the small sitting area, which is separated from the dining room by pocket doors. "It was a bit of a design challenge because it bridges the older part of the home with the newer part," she says.

A bold Ikat print covers the top of a round storage ottoman in the center of the room. "Ikat is great because it comes in many different forms and colors,"



The office area's two workstations are separated by sliding barn doors.

says Short. "It's a punchy way to bring a graphic splash to a home that's traditional but leaning modern."

With the help of an expert team, the owners now have a home that reflects a new stage in their lives—and they didn't have to uproot themselves to do it.

"The renovations were a chance for them to explore their identity and rediscover themselves and who they've become," Short says. "It's important to embrace who you are now and design a home to host the next generation. That's certainly what we did here." **MLT**

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