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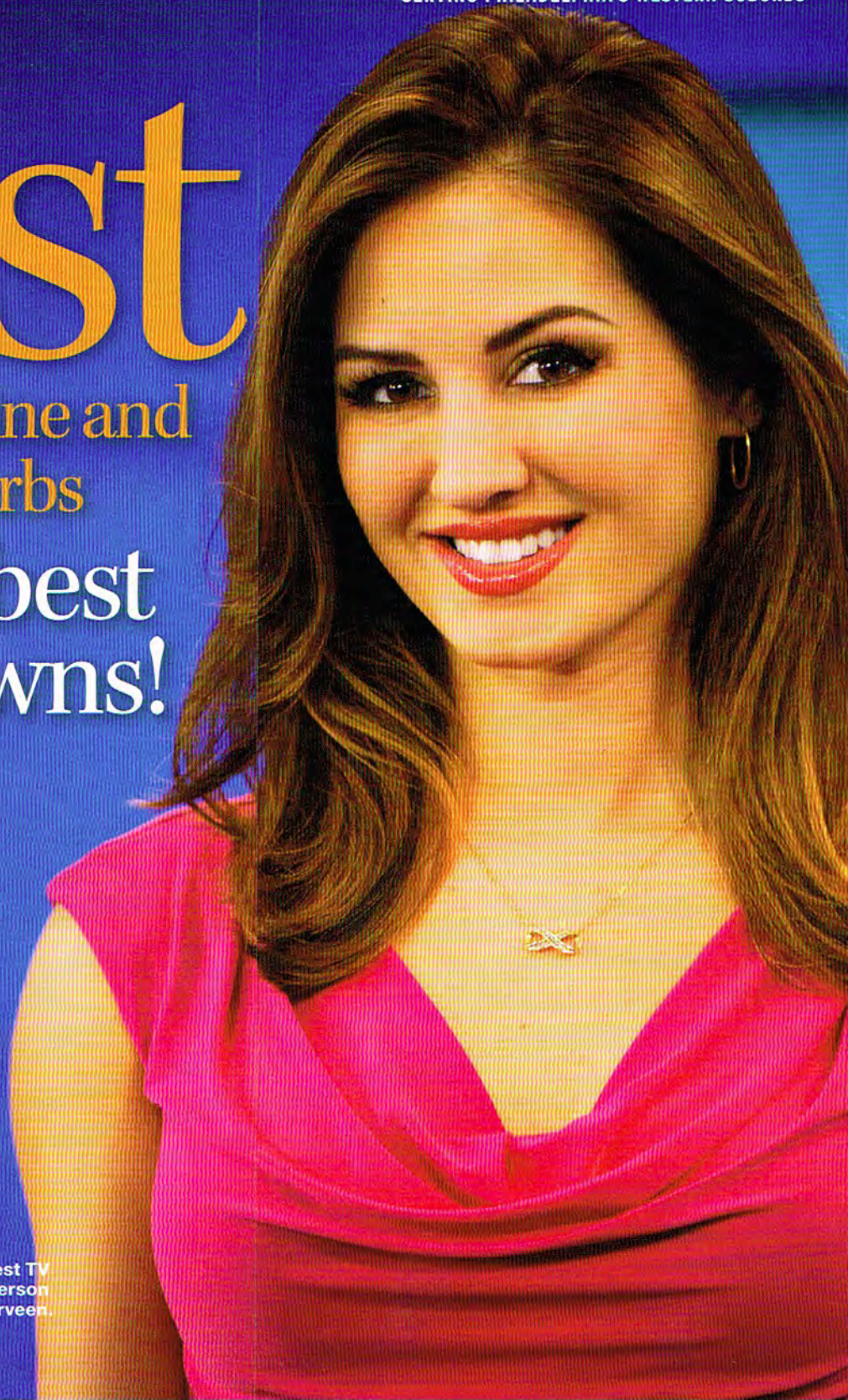

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the right fit

A Gladwyne couple devises a modern empty nest that can easily accommodate a full house. *By Tara Behan*

It was a request Main Line architect Jeff Spoelker was familiar with: empty nesters looking to transform a dated ranch-style home into something open and fresh—suitable for two, but adaptable enough to accommodate family and friends.

"Projects like this force you to think about the concept of being an empty nester in a different way," says Spoelker of the 60-year-old Gladwyne residence he helped to overhaul in 2011. "The downsizing was more about getting a house with a layout that met their current needs."

In the end, it took an injury to show the owners what they really needed. "My husband had an accident and lived on the first floor of our last house for more than two months," says one owner. "He grew to like it."

With all three children out on their own, the couple wanted to stay close to their Gladwyne neighborhood and friends. Condo living was not an option—especially now that *continued on page 52*

resources **architect:** JMS Architecture, Jeff Spoelker, Ardmore, (215) 200-3269, jmsarchitecture.com. **builder:** E.B. Mahoney Builders, 718 W. Lancaster Ave., Bryn Mawr, (610) 527-6584, ebmahoney.com. **interior designer:** Karen Pelzer Interiors, Philadelphia, (215) 205-2148.

TOM CRANE PHOTOGRAPHY

QUALITY OF LIFE: (Clockwise from opposite page) In this unique empty nest, the living and dining rooms blend to form one large, open area in the center of the home; a simple but impressive shadow-box vignette in the family room; the design of the kitchen satisfies the owners' penchant for entertaining by offering plenty of prep space, a substantial center island and an eat-in area; an exterior shot of the Gladwyne abode after renovations.

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The master bedroom.

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habitat *continued from page 48*

they'd grown accustomed to hosting their son, a Naval Academy graduate, and his out-of-town friends.

They were lucky enough to find a property for sale on their current street. "I remember saying to my husband, 'You've got to be kidding me,'" says the owner.

The couple wasn't ready to tackle a tear-down, so thank goodness the home was already set up for single-floor living. The layout, however, would have to be changed. "Jeff's plans showed us exactly how the space could be opened up, which was what we were looking for," the owner says.

Spoelker's open-concept floor plan in the center of the house encompasses a combined living-and-dining space, a wing for three bedrooms, and another wing for the kitchen. While the owners don't use the living/dining area on a daily basis, they must pass through it to get from one section of the home to the other. Its high tray ceiling opens up to three dormers, allowing plenty of light into the space. "If we didn't have those windows, it would be a much darker room," says Spoelker.

The kitchen is the place where everyone congregates. "We always joke that it was set up like a B&B," says Spoelker, who designated the space with both cooks and non-cooks in mind.

A large island provides seating for four, along with an eat-in table. An opening from the kitchen to the dining area is outfitted with a set of fold-back windows, making it a functional pass-through that maintains the open feel. White cabinetry adheres to the clean aesthetic found throughout the home.

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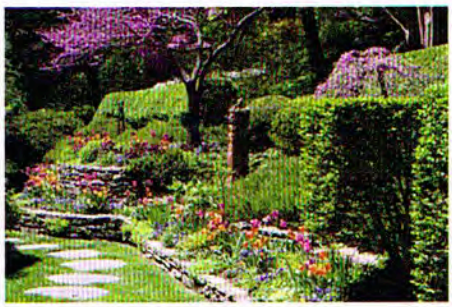

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The master bathroom.

With its abundance of natural light, the kitchen also has two sets of French doors along a wall of windows that offsets a multi-functional space used as a home office and TV room. This allows anyone in the kitchen to see straight through to a picturesque view that includes the golf course at Philadelphia Country Club. And while they may be in separate rooms—she working in the kitchen and he catching up on bills—the two never feel isolated thanks to that design feature.

When it came to the new home's interior design, less was definitely more. "I used to have a lot of antiques, and I wanted to lighten the space up," the owner says. "I wanted everything pared down and smoother—and not as fussy as my previous house."

Philadelphia-based interior designer Karen Pelzer first decided what existing furniture would fit the new home. "This was a new beginning for these clients, so I wanted the house to really read clean and fresh," says Pelzer. "And it does."

Still, the owners weren't afraid of color. Pelzer used a pale yellow in the living room, giving it a sunny, happy look. "No matter what the weather or the season, I never wanted them to feel the gray in their home," she says.

On the walls of one of the bedrooms, Pelzer experimented with a deep navy blue, accented with white trim. In the kitchen, apple-green cushions and chairs really pop. "The owners were more traditional in their last home," says Pelzer. "They now live in a more transitional space."

Apparently, rightsizing is the new downsizing—this home is proof. "It proves that a space can be completely customized and multi-functional," says Spoelker. MLT

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