

## Expansive Lower-Level Makeover to Haymarket Home Wins Two National Awards for Design Excellence

*Sun Design Remodeling Honored with Chrysalis, Master Design Award*

An interior design plan for a 2,500 square foot unfinished basement in a Haymarket home recently captured two top national honors for one of northern Virginia's leading design/build remodelers. Sun Design Remodeling Specialists of Burke won both a Chrysalis Award and a Master Design Award for converting the open footprint of a five-year old Prince William home into a family sports and entertainment suite.

Conferred by the editors of Better Homes and Gardens and other consumer magazines, the Chrysalis Award is one of the remodeling industry's most prestigious prizes; the Master Design Award, sponsored by Qualified Remodeler Magazine, is a contest in which winners are selected by other professionals.

The winning design, executed for James and Kathleen White and their three children, presents a skillfully-finished suite of rooms that includes an indoor soccer court, a fully equipped fitness center, a state-of-art media room, a crafts room and a bathing spa. The solution incorporates all existing structural supports, often re-deployed as finely-crafted columns or architecturally-appropriate bulkheads that are used to define the boundaries of specific activity zones.

The primary challenge, says Sun Design's designer Liz Lee, was to "scale-down" the volume while enhancing both available light and visual continuum.

Glass, knee walls, transom windows, low voltage accent lights and other devices were employed to "expertly accomplish these requirements," judges noted.

Ironically, the makeover started as a search by parents for ways to keep the soccer ball out of a first level family room.

"We had some exercise equipment in the basement, so it made sense to confine soccer to the downstairs also," White recalls, adding that she and her husband had begun thinking seriously about what to do with the lower level almost two years ago, but couldn't come up with a working plan.

"Liz Lee's floorplan was logical and disciplined," White says. "She had great ideas for where main rooms should be located and showed us lots of sketches on how the finished interior might look. This really helped us make informed decisions."

One of Lee's guidelines, the designer admits, was to pay close attention to what the existing footprint *implied*.

"There were certain issues in the existing area—light sources, plumbing—that seem to dictate obvious choices," Lee said. "But we also wanted the finished interior compatible with the architectural style of the existing house."

Although the new space contains 8 primary activity zones, the bathing spa and guest room are only contained within 4 walls. The larger challenge, Lee observes, was to *define* separate activity areas while preserving sight lines and fully exploiting limited natural light.

On this score, the guest accommodation was located in the footprint's southeastern corner since converting a small door to a window would mean the space could qualify as a bedroom under county code requirements. Likewise, the recessed base support to an upper level chimney suggested a handy spot for the soccer court's main focal point: the goal

In other ways, though, activity zones are less formally consigned—save the fact that sports and games are on the western side of a central north-to-south hallway while and the media center, gym, guest quarters and wet bar are concentrated in the southern half.

### **Soccer Anyone?**

One of the project's most pressing technical challenges was specifying floor and wall coverings for the soccer court. The project team found little available literature on indoor soccer court design, so she found a supplier to help her research materials that would give the ball an appropriate "bounce back".

The solution: melamine sheets fused into a laminate and joined by white spine to achieve a clean, seamless finish. The surface mollifies the return speeds one might expect from exposed cinderblock, even cushioning unintended body blows. Similarly, the flooring is comprised of modular tiles with a rubber cover base molding.

White says the whole family participates in soccer, and the kids even receive coaching instructions in the convenient home facility:

Other activity areas include:

A Media Room: A recess created to support 1<sup>st</sup> level bay windows provided a perfect niche to conceal the electronics needed for the panel television, CD/ DVD consoles and other frequently-used appliances. I-beams were concealed between architecturally appropriate headers. Recessed accent lighting under the headers adds depth and ambiance;

A mini-kitchen and wet bar, centrally-located, fits snugly in custom-designed cabinetry below the stairs;

A fully-equipped fitness center partitioned from the room's primary corridor by a glass wall;

A bathroom and bathing spa adjoins the gym and is also accessible from the hall. Accessories include the Kohler Purist Wading Pool wet service lavatory; an open-bottom hand basin, a custom bathroom sink and a wall mounted faucet;

An Arts and crafts room: Kathleen wanted a designated area to interact with children on arts and crafts projects. The program called for photo storage and gift wrapping station complete with dowels in an easily accessible open cabinet. An island with pendulum lighting provides a working surface that's easy to maneuver around. Shelving and cabinets were custom-designed to meet use requirements.

So how does one contain the ruckus rising from the rumpus room? An R-30 insulated ceiling keeps noises from rising to the upper level.

"Considering how much activity is going on down there, everything's very peaceful in the rest of the house," White says. "And, of course, that's just what we wanted."