

# keeping it... in the family



Exterior Project Photos by Don Scanlin Photography  
Before and Interior Photos provided by Metzler Home Builders



Winning Category:  
*Whole House,  
Division 3*

## SPOTLIGHT

### project description

Type:	Major renovation and addition.
Contractor:	<b>Metzler Home Builders</b> (see ad on p. 31)
Trade Partners:	Conestoga Country Kitchens, Inc. (see ad p. 40) HAJOCA Corporation (see ad p. 36) J.K. Mechanical, Inc. (see ad p. 33) Leibley Plumbing, Inc. (see ad p. 38) Ralph L. Wilhelm Jr., Inc. Seamless Spouting (see ad p. 34) Trend Home Systems (see ad p. 34) Vintage Landscaping (see ad p. 32) Yale Lighting Concepts & Design (see ad p. 41)
Scope:	<p>Inheriting the 1970's rancher provided an excellent opportunity for the owners to move from a three-story row home to one floor living in a detached home. The home's limited square footage and 1970's architecture proved to be a challenge to design the home to meet the desire of the owners.</p> <p>Due to the 7½-foot ceilings, confining spaces, and narrow hallways the existing home was razed to the floor system. Also, 16 feet was added to the back of the entire home which allowed for the expansion of the floor plan and freedom in space planning. The ceilings were also raised to 9 feet to add to the home's grandeur.</p> <p>While the desire was to expand the home beyond two bedrooms, financial constraints prevented it. During the planning phase the option of creating a second floor with a one and a half story structure was pursued. The existing stairwell location which runs perpendicular to the roof system made the option cost prohibitive. To address the owners wishes the daylight basement, while remaining unfinished, was prepared with egress windows to easily accommodate two additional bedrooms in the future.</p> <p>While almost everything in the home is new, hardwood in the guest bedroom was saved to reduce cost. Covering the hardwood during demolition and protecting the wood from the elements was accomplished by using plastic and sheets of ½" OSB that would eventually be used for wall sheathing.</p> <p>The owners' desire was not to compliment the original architecture but change the architectural style. The home was designed with a Craftsman style to complement their existing Arts and Crafts furniture.</p>

**W**hen Janice's father passed away, she and her husband Greg were confronted with a very heavy decision. In the wake of their grieving, a decision had to be made on what to do with the tiny and dated home they just inherited. Heavy, because this was the home Janice's parents had built in 1971. It held many happy memories of her parents as well as her formative years. It was the happy place where their children visited their grandparents, and living in the same town not that far away, they visited frequently.

What was certain was the empty nesters were definitely not interested in staying in their 3-story city row home any longer—30 years was enough. Although they had fond

memories of the home in which their children were raised, the row home with its three floors just wasn't a good match to see them through their middle and twilight years. In addition to the multiple floors and basement laundry, the home had off-street parking for only one car and with the growing number of multiple car families in the neighborhood, parking was an ongoing issue. City-living inconveniences became less tolerable as the years went by.

On the table were several options: find an existing home in the right neighborhood that met their requirements; find a lot in the right area for them to build a new home; or do something with the home they just inherited. Having explored the first two options without much success, the

couple kept coming back to the idea of doing something with Janice's parent's home—despite its shortcomings.

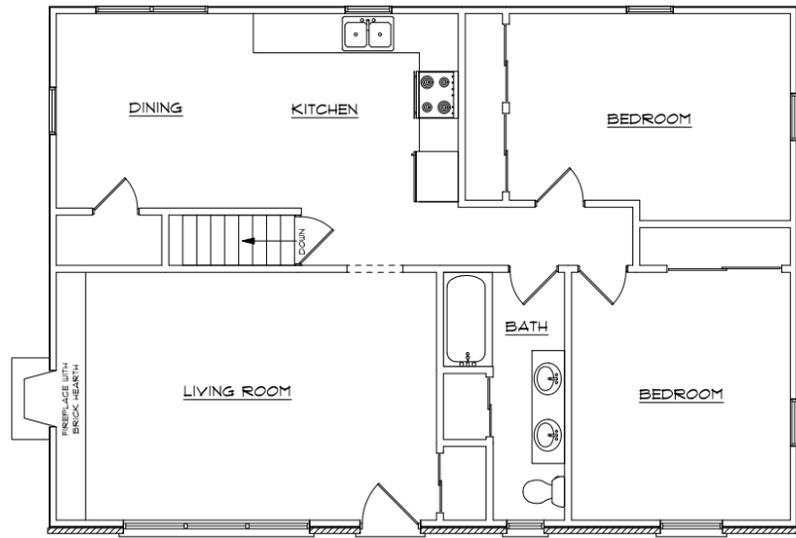
In addition to its overall lack of size, the plain-Jane rancher had very small rooms, tiny closets, and narrow hallways. The 7½-foot ceilings made the small rooms feel even smaller. Consistent with the home in general, both the kitchen and bathroom were very outdated. From a mechanical point of view, while still functional, the electric ceiling heat and air-conditioning system were extremely inefficient by today's standards.

In the home's favor were two factors—two very important factors. Most important, the home had extremely high

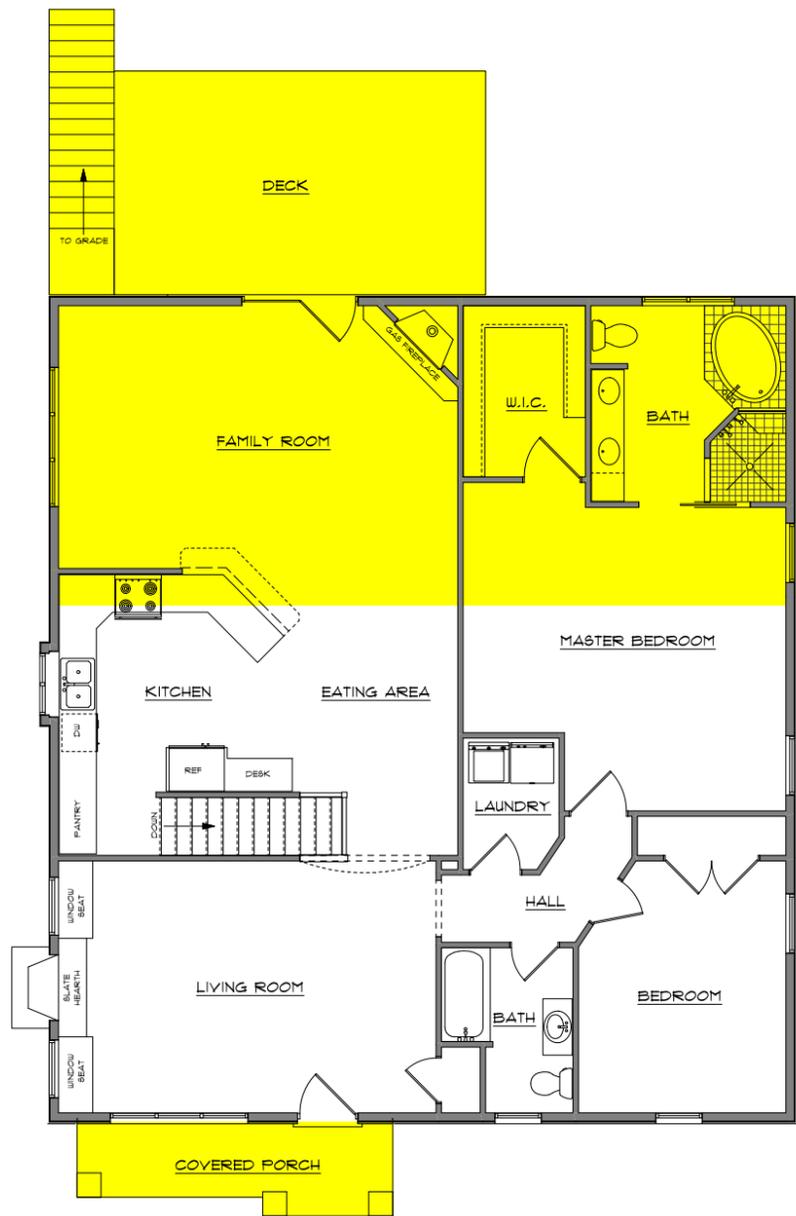
sentimental value, especially to Janice. Secondly, the lot is located in a very beautiful and quiet, established neighborhood relatively close (within walking distance) to several extended family members. To make it work for them however, the house would require a major makeover and thanks to the vision, expertise, and talents of Lancaster-based builder, Metzler Home Builders and its team of trade partners, a major makeover it was.

As further described in the above Project Description, to accommodate the homeowners' request for a more open floor plan with higher ceilings, the decision was made to deconstruct the original home to the floor system on the first floor. To allow for the creation of a great room, a spacious

ORIGINAL INTERIOR



ORIGINAL FLOOR PLAN



RENOVATED FLOOR PLAN

master suite, and additional garage bay, an addition 16 feet in depth was added to the back of the entire home.

While constructing new walls allowed for the ceilings to be increased to 9 feet and provided the freedom in space planning, significant savings were realized as the result of utilizing the original foundation and floor system. At Janice and Greg's insistence, the original living room fireplace was saved along with the stairwell location leading to the basement. For improved flow and to allow more openness, the orientation of the stairs was reconfigured. And even though virtually everything in the home is new, the oak hardwood flooring in the guest bedroom was saved from both demolition damage as well as exposure to the elements during the construction.

To learn more about the project and the motivation behind it, we sat down with Janice and Greg. Here's what we learned.

**In considering your various options, what swayed you to renovate your parent's home rather than move into an existing property or to build new?**

Greg: After a lot of researching and looking at new homes, existing homes, as well as various lot locations—it basically came down to dollars and cents. To get what we really thought we wanted in our golden years, probably the best option was to sell our house and renovate this property.

Janice: This home has always been a part of me and I wasn't sure we could ever let it go. Basically, I'm a Columbia girl and I wanted to stay here. Because of it being in a very quiet, serene neighborhood, this home has always been peaceful. Plus, our grandson lives here in Columbia...that's a big part of it. Our family is here and it's convenient for everyone. My aunt is half a block down through the field there [pointing out the patio door] and my youngest son is probably five blocks away.

Greg: We saw some houses we liked but when we started to look at them closely, we could see that the quality just wasn't there or we found that the property wasn't quite as nice. That was the thing that we came back to a lot with this property. The



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neighborhood here is already established and we knew that our current views would never be compromised by any new construction. Also, being at the end of the street and with the neighboring retirement village, we knew that traffic would never be a problem here. You can always build a house that you like but it's hard to find a lot that's perfect for your needs. Taking all this into consideration, I didn't

think we could give up this lot. All of these factors added up to us keeping the property and doing a major renovation.

**Can you tell us how you came upon Metzler Home Builders and your selection process?**

Greg: We ran into Dan Metzler [President of Metzler Home Builders] at a Parade of Homes showing. At the time, we still weren't decided on what we wanted to do but we were definitely exploring ideas. In describing our situation with Dan, he shared with us an issue of R&A Magazine that showcased a similar project in which Metzler's dramatically transformed another one-story rancher. The more we kept looking at the before photos in that article we thought it looked so much like our place. The more we thought about it and seeing the incredible transformation that the Metzler team did on that rancher, the more we thought that they could do something like that at our place. I think that's what got us hooked on the idea of renovating.

Janice: For me, I was impressed with Dan's approach at that open house. He was very open and, yet, not at all pushy—even though we took our time before committing to the

project. From the outset, I could just tell that they were good people. I don't know how to explain why I felt that way...I just had that feeling. When Dan got Tim Zehr involved, [Metzler's Senior Designer/Estimator] those feelings only grew stronger. Tim is the sweetest person to work with—and I worked with him a lot through emails, phone calls and personal visits on his part. It got to the point where I would say "I'm so sorry, your wife is going to hate us". And he would say "no, no, it's okay". It didn't matter what we wanted—he was always there for us.

Greg: I think Tim was instrumental in making the thing come together and making us feel comfortable. He worked with us all but a year before we finally committed and said yes. Metzler's had a lot of time invested in us before they knew they had us...but never once did Tim make us feel uncomfortable.

Janice: No, he never became impatient with us...nor show any signs of frustration. His patience, as well as Dan's, was a BIG plus for us.

**In transforming the rancher, what specific changes did you want incorporated in the plans?**

Janice: Since we have no plans on ever moving again, our primary requirement was one-floor living. I don't ever want to have to carry wash up and down steps again. We also definitely wanted the ceilings raised and the space designed to accommodate wheelchair mobility. At Tim's recommendation, we also had the shower stall reinforced with extra studing for the installation of hand rails if ever needed down the road.

**Were there any other ideas that surfaced as a result of working with the Metzler team?**

Greg: Yes, we had gas heat at our old place and were kind of sold on having it again here. Unfortunately, this end of the street didn't have a gas line and having one installed was cost prohibitive...so I started to think about in-floor radiant heat. We talked to Tim about it and he pointed out that because we were using the existing basement and rafter structure, it wouldn't be the easiest thing to do. To make a long story short, it was a little bit out of our price range. As an alternative, Tim suggested that we may want to consider a geothermal system. That got my curiosity going so we made some phone calls and talked to some people. When Tim crunched all the numbers, including the incredible rebates that were offered at the time, it made sense to go that route. In addition, since geothermal is touted as the most efficient system available, we were expecting to see ongoing energy savings—and we are! We ended up going with a *WaterFurnace Geothermal System* installed by J.K. Mechanical. It didn't take much time to realize that was a smart move because, with the exception of the cook top which is propane, we're basically all electric here and it is very cost efficient. And the heat is great.



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It's always consistently warm without the uncomfortable hot/cold fluctuations you get with forced air. As for air conditioning in the warmer months, it too works great in terms of both comfort and efficiency. Again, this was all the result of a recommendation from

Tim—an item that we hadn't previously considered that continues to have a great payoff.

Janice: Another suggested change that Tim and Skip (Metzler trim carpenter) came up with was going with wider

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trim moulding. Skip gave us a call one day and said that he thought that maybe we would want to see the custom work he did around the door and window trim using the wider moulding. Needless to say, it looked great.

Greg: Tim crunched the numbers and despite the additional expense, we decided to go for it. And we're glad we did.

Janice: And sticking with our arts and craft theme, Tim also suggested a custom wood surround for the front of the tub in the master bath similar to what Skip had built around the fireplace in the living room. Although this was actually a cost savings measure, we thought it was absolutely perfect for the look we were going after. We knew we wanted something unique, but we didn't know exactly what. The Metzler guys came up with those ideas.

Greg: That was another nice thing working with Tim. With his creativity and computer drafting skills, he would shoot ideas over to us for us to react to. Based on our comments, he'd come back a day or two later with a new set of drawings. We did a lot of back and forth this way and it didn't take long to feel really comfortable with the process and Metzler's commitment to working with us. They listened to what we had to say, did their homework, and came up with some great ideas.

**How did things work out during the construction phase and the schedule that was established?**

Janice: Great...they set a schedule and pretty much stuck to it. They started at the end of September and we were in on January 9th—which happens to be my mother's birthday. I find this very ironic...like it was meant to be.

Greg: One thing that really impressed us was how quickly everyone reacted to something that was overlooked regarding the drywall corners. We wanted rounded rather than square corners but unfortunately this detail was overlooked when they were installing it. Once it was pointed out, however, it

was corrected immediately—no hesitation, no objections.

**How would you rate the overall performance of Metzler Home Builders and their team of subcontractors?**

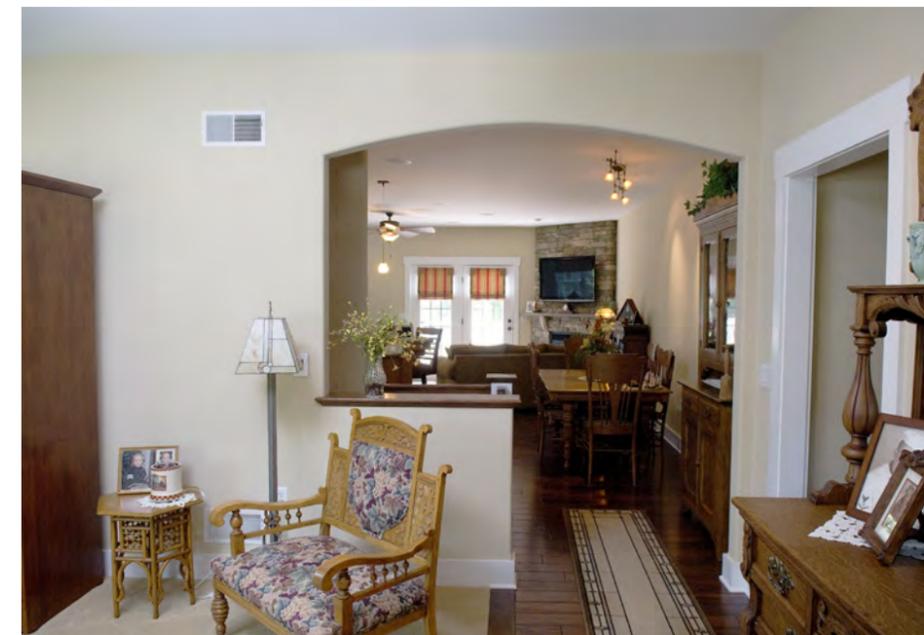
Janice: I can't say enough good things about them. I never built a house before and initially I was scared and very nervous about redoing my parent's home. As it turned out, thanks to the great job Metzler's did and how comfortable they made me feel throughout the process, I couldn't be happier. Even the subcontractors, they were all so nice and accommodating. They'd stop what they were doing to answer questions. It was a great experience. As I've said before, I think us being here was meant to be. To me, this is still my parent's home and I feel their presence here. It's very comforting to know that we were able to keep their house in our family.

Greg: I'd give Metzler Home Builders and their entire crew an outstanding rating. They were all good people who did great work. There were no surprises, no hidden costs.

Janice: In addition to a final walkthrough with Dan and Tim, they actually scheduled a follow-up a full year later during which they repaired nail pops, touched up paint, and fixed some faucets that were sticking.

Greg: For the painting, we were told to apply sticky notes to anything that needed touched up and we had a bunch of them. In a single day, it looked like the whole place was repainted. To be honest, I forgot all about Metzler's commitment to do a one-year follow-up...but they didn't. It was incredible. They even replaced some siding that was stained from a sealant they used on the chimney. Because it went on clear, no one noticed it at the time, but a year later I noticed the discoloration when I was cleaning the siding. One call to Metzler's, and it was taken care of—no problem.

Janice: It was such a great experience, I feel like they are family. When we see them at the builders' show, I actually get a hug.





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**What about the worksite—did they keep it secure, safe, and orderly?**

Janice: They did! We'd come up at night and everything would be cleaned up. There were numerous times that we would come up in the evening after they left and you almost would've thought they didn't work that day. You'd see the progress, but besides that, you didn't see any mess...the place was always tidy.

Greg: Yes, very much so. Having seen other projects over the years in different parts of the county, often times you would see construction debris or things blowing around...we didn't see any of that. And that brings to mind, something that impressed me early on. Before the project actually started, Tim went to the neighbors, introduced himself and told them a little about the upcoming project. He gave them his card and asked them to call him personally if there was anything they saw that they didn't like or was infringing on their property. Although there were no such incidents, I thought this was a very nice public relations gesture—a gesture the neighbors very much appreciated.

**And speaking of the neighbors, what has been their reaction to your new beautiful home?**

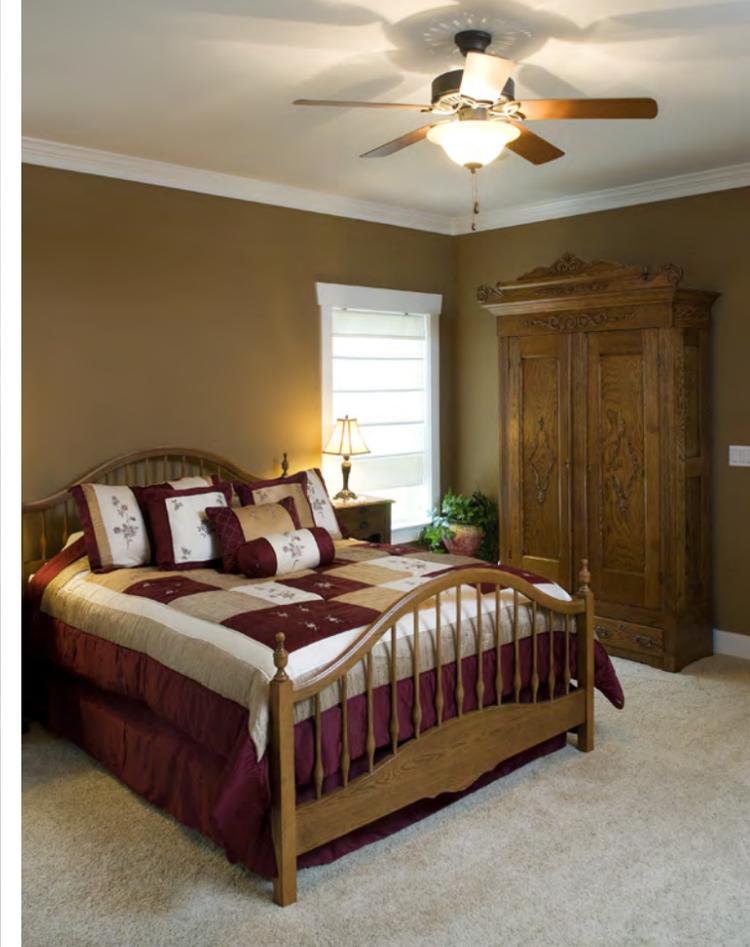
Janice: [chuckling] The next door neighbor who has lived here forever is mad at me because his wife now wants to do their house. They both actually love it... they think it made a great improvement. We've had SO many comments about this house and so many people want to come in and see it. I think that everybody around here enjoys it.

**Do you have any advice for others contemplating a project?**

Greg: It's all about the planning. Start early and be thorough...try to cross all your t's and dot your i's.

Janice: And find yourself a good builder...like we did.

Greg: Another piece of advice that I'd give, is actually advice we received from



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Jim Templin at Conestoga Country Kitchens. Basically, he advised us not to skimp on the kitchen. Kitchens are the most visible and utilized room in the house. Everyone sees it. I thought that was terrific advice.

### How has your new home enriched your life?

Janice: Single-floor living makes everyday living so much easier. I love it here! I love sitting out on the deck. It's calm and relaxing. And because of its ties with my parents, it really feels

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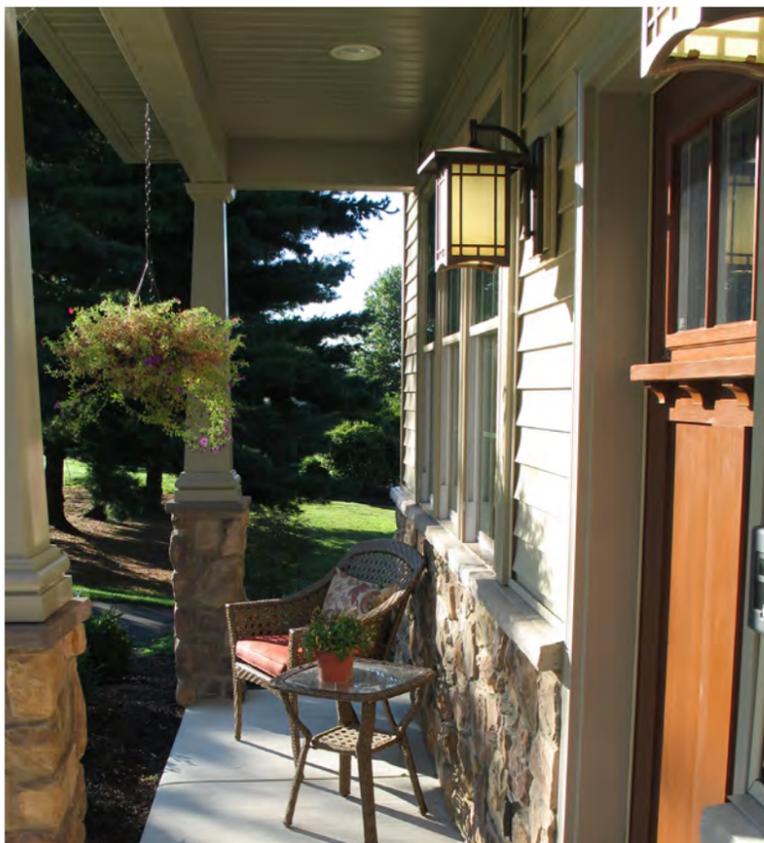


like home to me. Our home—as well as their home—and our kids feel that way too.

Greg: I think we both look forward to coming home and staying home more than we ever did.

Janice: My mother always wanted me to take this house but we never wanted it the way it was—it just wasn't us. It wasn't our taste and we would not have been comfortable. By making the changes we were able to keep the home in the family. I think my mother is very happy that we did.

R&A



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