

# A Space for everything & everyone in their space

Basement reno eases family growing pains

BY MARGARET ANNE FEHR



**G**rowing pains afflict both children and houses especially as toddlers inevitably morph into adolescents and each family member starts to need their own space.

Bev and Bob, parents of two young teenagers, had been feeling the space squeeze for quite some time but rather than pick up and move to a larger house in a new but unfamiliar neighbourhood, they decided to turn their attention to their basement which had remained unfinished since they purchased the house 20 years ago.

Says Bev, "We were always planning to do something with the basement but time just went by. We tried to do it on our own a few times, but it just never happened."

Instead of putting renovation plans off yet again, the couple decided to forge ahead by calling Mike Kerr of All-Canadian Renovations to transform 1000 square feet of undeveloped basement space into a multi-functional retreat that offered each family member something special.

Preserving an open concept was vital to designating space for favorite family and solo leisure activities and after a family

huddle, a renovation plans with a number of 'must-haves' was formulated.

First on the list was the pool table which according to Bev, 'is a very big space-taker that really required some planning.' Set in the middle of the room, the table provides lots of peripheral clearance for the Tuesday night pool crowd as well as halogen ceiling lights for shadow-less illumination when assessing those all important bank shots.

Another 'must-have' area for father and daughter is the workout area at the far end of the room. Just a few steps away from the 'gym' is the spacious bathroom featuring corner shower, pedestal sink and toilet. Kerr says, "The bathroom entrance was placed slightly outside of the gym area so that it could be easily accessed by others while the gym was in use and its galley style layout offers a pleasing view from the

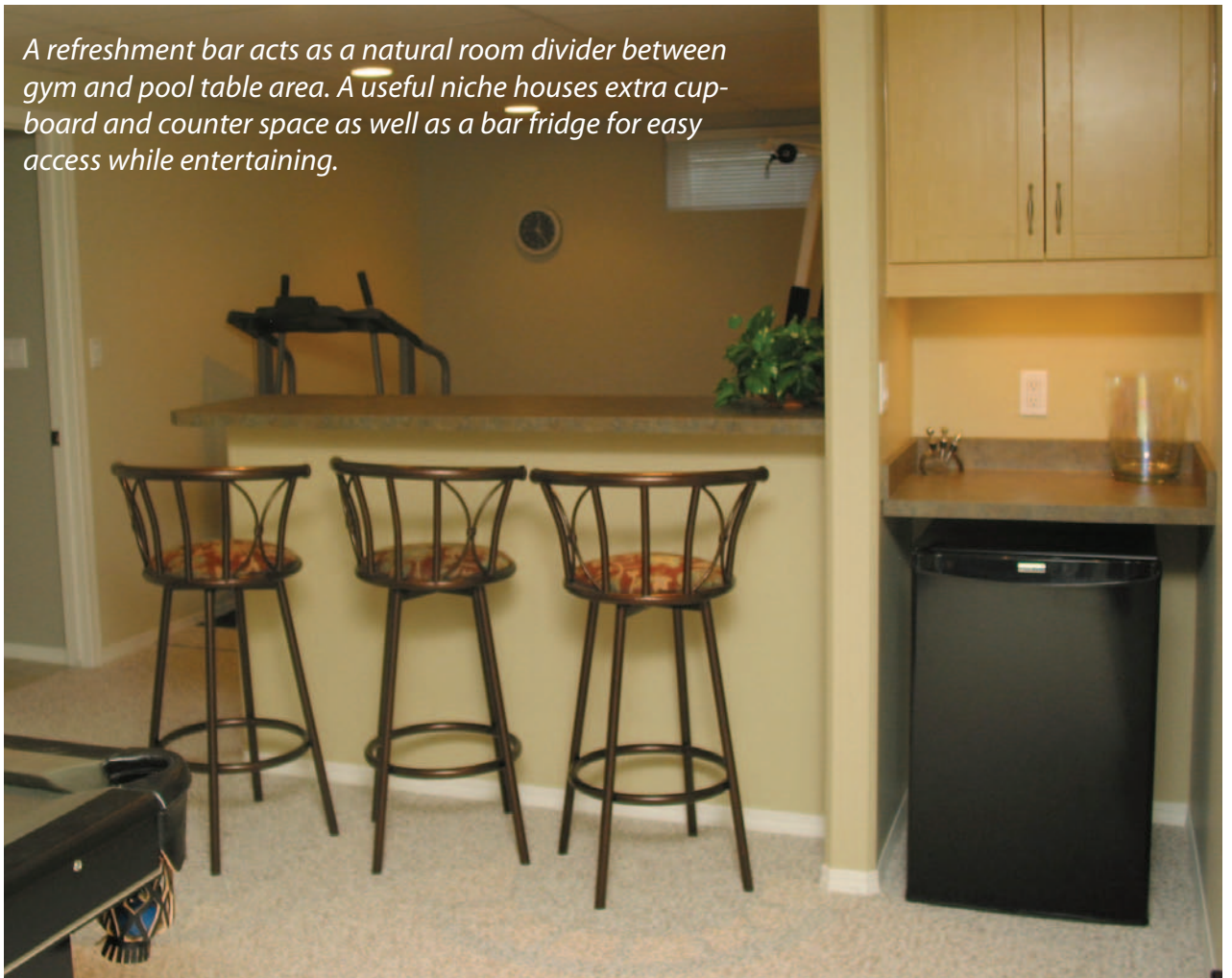
remainder of the room."

A refreshment bar acts as a natural room divider between gym and pool table area. A useful niche houses extra cupboard and counter space as well as a bar fridge for easy access while entertaining.

The entertainment, 'hang-out area' at the opposite end of the room showcases the father-son favorite, a big-screen TV flanked by a series of dramatically-lit art niches (Bev's fave) that have been recessed to impart a three-dimensional effect for visual interest. Extra lower cabinet space in a maple laminate completes the feature wall.

A recurring theme throughout the space is the beveled edge drywall treatment that imparts a subtle dimensional quality throughout the room and is especially effective in the art niche feature wall. Says Kerr, the more common treatment

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Wanting to have the look of a fireplace without any of the fuss of a real one, the couple chose an electric fireplace insert with slate front and rounded-mantle for an extra touch of character. The electric unit features a holographic flame that can be set from full blaze to dying embers and produces enough heat to take the edge off a cool-ish evening.

While the main area of the renovation accommodates numerous activities, the transitional space from downstairs stairway to the main room is well utilized. A computer niche and work station occupy a corner space adjacent to the base of the stairway where the couple's teenagers can work on school projects in a separate space that is not affected by noise from TV or other activities.

Kerr comments, "We planned it so we would gain a bit of space from the adjoining laundry area to create more of a defined niche for the computer which still left plenty of room in the utility/laundry space."

The renovation plans also included lots of well-appointed

storage space behind the fireplace wall and underneath the stairs and another door leads to the laundry room and workshop area that Bev says is useful for messy projects with glue guns and what-not!

Except for the bathroom tile floor the remainder of the floor is covered with a long-wearing Berber carpeting in neutral shade that serves to unify the space and provide warmth underfoot.

Bev consulted with an interior designer to strive for the same unified effect in wall colours and came up with a palette of soft yellows and greens that allow the open concept space to flow harmoniously.

With the renovations completed in early January, the family has had seven months to get accustomed to their new living space and it would appear that their previous growing pains have been effectively solved. Father and son enjoy watching sports together on the big screen TV, daughter can now spread out her homework assignments in a space that affords her quiet, concentration time and mom can put up her feet and do her crossword puzzles whenever she likes.

It's all good! 