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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Clifton residents to hold open-house tour of newly remodeled homes for the benefit of local widow.

BY JOHN BYRD

Neighbors help each other. That's what communities have always been about. Long-time Clifton resident Bob Gallagher is rallying his friends and peers to help his neighbor Elsa Armendaris.

Armendaris, a mother of seven, needs funds to repair the badly deteriorated driveway to her home, which is also a local day care center. To help out, Gallagher, who is a principal at Sun Design Remodeling, has organized a tour of three newly remodeled Clifton homes, each the handiwork of a different remodeler.

"The homes are all pretty spectacular in their own right," Gallagher says. "We've found that homeowners really enjoy seeing what their neighbors are doing. But this is also about helping a local person in need; that's the sense of community which Clifton has always exemplified."

In addition to showcasing a home recently renovated by Sun Design Remodeling, the tour will feature recent work by Daniels Design and Remodeling and Kohlmark Group Architects and Builders, all active in Clifton and environs for years.

Tim Reed of Tibbs Paving will be donating the labor, equipment and trucking needed for the driveway re-paving. Armendaris has also raised several thousand dollars for the project.

ARMENDARIS' STORY IS ONE of quiet determination in pursuit of the American Dream.



A native of El Salvador, Armendaris lost her husband, David, to leukemia six years ago and, as the sole means of her family's support, decided to set up her home as a day care center.

With its tree-shaded lot and sizable liv-

ing and family rooms, the house provided a perfect setting. Among other features, the two-level structure is off the main road, down a winding driveway. A safe place for kids.

Initially, the center did well. Since it was

Details

Remodeler's Charity Home Tour, Nov. 15, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Visit www.RemodelersCharityHomeTour.com or call 703-425-5588 for more.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOME FRONTS NEWS

LEFT: Granite surfaces, marble tile wall covering, a coffered ceiling are among the finishwork details distinguishing the Layfield kitchen by Sun Design Remodeling.

convenient to nearby Clifton Elementary, parents would leave their children with Armendaris before and after school. Many of the children at the center were friends with her own children

But when Clifton Elementary closed in 2010, the day care center lost more than half its students. Not long after that, the winding asphalt driveway leading to the house began to seriously deteriorate.

Armendaris says that she and her children with the help of a friendly neighbor have been patching the drive for years. However, it eventually become obvious that her own fix-up efforts wouldn't be enough.

Soon she began soliciting bids from professional pavers, some of whom were simply working the neighborhood.

"I wasn't sure what I really needed, or who was reliable," she recalls. "But what really slowed the process was the cost."

That's when her friend, Christina Gallagher, whose children had attended the day care center, offered to ask her husband, Bob, for ideas.

"I just thought there must be a way that a community as old and close-knit as Clifton could help one of its own," said Bob Gallagher, who grew up in Clifton where his father practiced medicine. "My company has learned a lot from doing our own home tours, so a coalition of remodelers already active in Clifton seems like a logical way to reach out to the community."

SEE NEIGHBORS, PAGE 4

Planting for Fall Planning your autumn garden and yard.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As the first few weeks of fall unfold, carrying with them the promise of rich and vibrant colors, many local residents are starting to plan their fall gardens, both ornamental and edible. Pruning and overall garden cleanup will make way for fall plants. In fact, this is the perfect time to clear away summer foliage and plant, horticulture gurus said.

"Because the ground is still warm and air is cool, there is less transplant shock for plants when you take them out of the con-

tainer to plant them," said Kelly Grimes of Good Earth Garden Market in Potomac, Md. "Now is a great time to put in a landscape."

The first step is preparing the ground. "You have to amend the soil; that is mixing in compost and soil so the plants' roots can grab a hold of the soil with compost," said Grimes. "That really helps any planting."

Katia Goffin of Katia Goffin Gardens in McLean, Va., likens planning a garden to putting together a puzzle. "Everything has to [look] like it belongs," she said. "It's about designing your bed line so it enhances your property, versus 'I stuck this in my garden and doesn't it look good?'"

Take a few minutes and actually plan out your garden because no matter what you decide to plant for fall, an aesthetically appealing garden starts with an effective strategy. "It is getting a good plan together," Goffin said. "It is a question of scale and putting it together right. You have to look at your plot of land and decide where you want plants to go and how you want it to look."

FOR DECORATIVE GARDENS and yards, mums and pansies are among fall's

SEE PLANTING, PAGE 7

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Clifton Home Tour

Details

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FROM PAGE 3

THE TOUR

The tour has been conceived to provide a close-up look at how Clifton residents live today, and to profile several design trends now being applied to local homes. It also will reflect some of the community's varied demographics — which range from young families to retirees retrofitting their house to age-in-place.

MAKEOVER IN COLCHESTER HUNT

In Clifton's Colchester Hunt section, Steve and Maureen Landry are putting the finishing touches on a forward-looking retrofit executed by Tom Flach at Kohlmark Architects. The Craftsman-style architecture embraces an open floor plan which the Landrys see as perfect for a host of regular social pursuits such as book clubs and after-church gatherings.

Referring to the house as "his last home," Steve Landry, 65, says he and his wife actually looked for a larger house "further out" before deciding that improving what they had was their best option.

"It was Tom Flach's clever ideas that were the deciding factor," Maureen Landry said.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOME FRONTS NEWS

Remodeler Ted Daniels added 2,000 square feet to his personal residence on Hunting Horse Drive and reconfigured the first floor to include a comfortable family room adjacent to a large gourmet kitchen. Daniels had purchased the cherry wood mantle years before he knew where he would use it.



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Clifton Home Tour

The plan included needs for the immediate future, and also elements that might be needed to age in place over extended time.

For instance, the former 400-square-foot garage has been converted into a master suite with 14-foot cathedral ceilings, a full bath and an 8-foot wall of windows focused on the garden and two-tiered pond. While the couple's initial plan is to use the new space as a reading room, Maureen Landry said that the suite is a nod to an aging-in-place strategy that calls for frequently used spaces to be on the same floor.

"We've even got ideas and costs for an elevator, should we need one," she said.

With the former powder room absorbed into the new suite, and interior walls removed, the architect developed the new open floor plan.

The kitchen and dining zone is now formed into a 600-square-foot family kitchen that revolves around a two-tier food preparation island and dining counter. Mounted on a cherry wood base, the island is surfaced in both walnut butcher block and Vermont soapstone.

KITCHEN SUITE IN ELEGANT TRANSITIONAL STYLE

Not too far away in Clifton Heights, Rick and Kelly Layfield are reveling in a new family-friendly kitchen and outlier zones custom-designed for their active daily household needs by Jon Benson, lead designer at Sun Design Remodeling.

"We have three children under age 12,"

Kelly said, "so we wanted a plan that would make it easier for everyone to interact, and that also offered sightlines from the kitchen to the backyard where the kids play."

That meant re-working a course of windows on the rear elevation, making it easier to access the outside from several directions and introducing an open floor plan.

The project added a grilling deck next to the screened porch and just outside the new kitchen door. Rick Layfield, who is the family's grilling chef finds it a great place to interact with friends and family while pursuing a favored recipe.

FAMILY HOME ON HUNTING HORSE DRIVE

Those who know their way around Hunting Horse Drive sometimes might wonder what happened to the circa-1970s Colonial style house that used to be perched up on the overlook. Clearly, the sprawling manor house there now is an entirely different home, but how did it get there?

Owner and professional remodeler Ted Daniels says the makeover was the result of an inspired plan to create an environment that would work better for himself, wife Gayle and their two children.

Purchasing the 4,400-square-foot production house in 2000, Daniels initially thought the house adequate for raising a family, and focused on the serious business of renovating other people's homes. Certainly, the five-acre wood lot had everything to offer in the

SEE CLIFTON, PAGE 7

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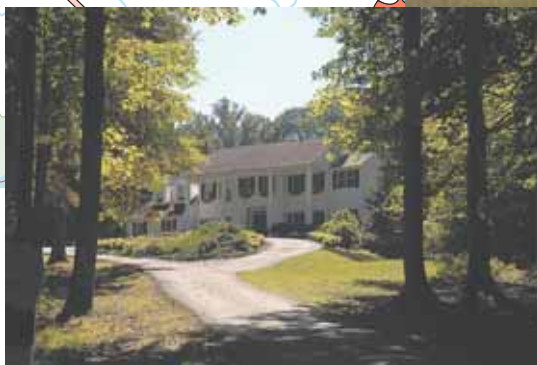
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Clifton

FROM PAGE 5

way of a lovely bucolic setting.

But after living in the house for a while, Daniels developed a growing list of possible improvements, which prompted a decision to add 2,000 square feet to the rear of the house, and gut the entire first and second floors almost down to the studs.

"For starters, I didn't like the way the first floor was configured," Daniels says. "The kitchen and family room were partitioned in a way that inhibited traffic, and the interior was really dated. I wanted a quiet first floor place where the kids could do their homework. Also, there wasn't enough storage." He also wanted better lines-of-sight.

Upstairs, the master bedroom was too small. The sitting room, which offered the best view, also became a kind of clutter-prone foyer between the walk-in closet and the master bath.

"It was as if we were living in someone else's house," Daniels said. "I wanted a plan that would really support a whole spectrum of daily family requirements."

With substantial new square footage now extending out the rear of the existing structure, Daniels reconfigured floor plans on the first and second level, concentrating on how his family would use the new space.

The 396-square-foot kitchen segues easily into a rear-facing great room that features floor-to-ceiling windows flanking a central French door. The many original built-ins include a food preparation island and knee-high walnut cabinets which provide a space divider between two primary activity zones. The inside corner of the kitchen accommodates a family dining nook.

The primary focal point of the family room is a hand-carved cherry wood mantle piece Daniels bought years ago, having no idea when or where he would use it.

"It's comforting to see an impulse buy become a real focal point," he said.

Upstairs, Daniels built a 715-square-foot master bedroom suite that opens directly to a sprawling balcony with views in three directions.

"This is the spot where we can have some privacy and still keep an eye on the kids," Gayle Daniels said. "It's quite romantic."

The master bath includes a soaking tub, a spacious walk-in shower and a private closet for Gayle's vanity.

Planting for Fall

FROM PAGE 3

best flowering plants. "Mums need full sunlight to open and come in obvious, bold fall colors," said Grimes. "Pansies will take part sun, are a great color and will continue to bloom through spring."

Yarrow, asters, sedums, Lenten roses, and coral bells are among the fall plants that Jonathan Storvick, natural resource manager at the Office of Sustainability at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., recommends.

"Fall is a great time to plant larger-sized perennials and container shrubs," said Storvick. "It also happens to be the time of year when nurseries are trying to get rid of a lot of their stock, so you can find some great deals."

For example, said Joel Cook of Merrifield Garden Center, in Fairfax, Merrifield and Gainesville, Va., "Burning bushes have beautiful fall colors like orange and fire red. As far as trees, maples like Japanese maples, sugar maple or black gum maple have beautiful colors."

Another eye-catching option is the yellow twig dogwood. Its "bright yellow branches and twig color ... are also fantastic for winter," said Mark White of GardenWise in Arlington, Va. "This shrub develops in great clumps and is a wonderful contrast against any red twig. Oval-shaped green leaves turn to orange-red in fall, followed by white fruit tinged with green."

One plant that is often associated with cooler weather is a holly tree, but Eric Shorb of American Plant in Bethesda, Md., offers a caveat. "As we get closer to the end of November and the beginning of December you want to be careful about planting such broadleaf evergreens," he said. "If they haven't had time to develop a sufficient enough root system they can become susceptible to wind burn because the roots will not be able to absorb moisture."

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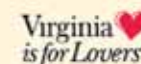
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