

Fall 2015
HomeLifeStyle



The
Arlington
Connection

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Trading Spaces

Two retirees swap townhouse for an RV.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

A retired couple is feeling liberated after selling their Old Town Alexandria home and buying a Winnebago. Cathy and Mick Hanratty, who'd been living in their Winnebago at Fort Belvoir, left town earlier this week to see the country.

"We have three greyhounds so we had to have our dogs with us when we travel," said Cathy, a retired nurse. "With the RV, we can go anywhere we want to go and take our dogs with us. ... We don't have to worry about finding a hotel when we travel that accepts animals."

The couple lived in Old Town for 16 years. While they enjoyed the community, they found the winter weather too brutal for their liking. "When winter came, I hated it," said Cathy. "Now we'll be in Florida in winter."

The Hanrattys say the transition wasn't as difficult for them as it might be for some because of their backgrounds. "We are both Army brats so we've been doing this all our lives," said Mick, a retired Army colonel. "It's not like someone who lived in the same place all our lives to all of a sudden move



Cathy and Mick Hanratty sold their Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, home and bought a Winnebago.

to an RV. We're used to a transient manner."

The Hanrattys say their Winnebago is comfortable. It boasts a living room with a large-screen television, recessed lighting and an electric fireplace. The kitchen is equipped with a convection-microwave oven, an apartment-sized refrigerator in stainless steel and a propane stove. There is a king-size bed in the bedroom and woodwork in a cherry finish.

"One thing that impressed us was all the storage," said Mick. "There's even a lot of overhead storage."

Porcelain flooring throughout "makes it much easier to clean," said Cathy.

The Hanrattys, who have been married for 42 years, say their new lifestyle offers them flexibility. "It's much more relaxing," said Cathy. "If we go someplace we don't like, we can pick up and go somewhere else. When you own a house in Old Town, you can't just leave if you decide you don't like it."

Their Old Town Alexandria home, which was located in Old Town Village, actually sold before it went on the market. "It's a really popular area," said Lisa Groover, of McEneaney Associates, the couple's real estate agent. "People are always looking for homes there."

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The living room of Cathy and Mick Hanratty's Winnebago has an electric fireplace and large-screen television.



Cathy and Mick Hanratty's Winnebago has a king-sized bed and an abundance of storage.

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BOWA basement renovation includes space for arts & crafts, games and media.

Remodeling Design in 2015: It's all about the Family

Adapting your home so it tracks your family's development over the years.

BY JOSHUA BAKER
BOWA

Almost every luxury remodel starts with the same question "How can we improve our family's life at home?" But this answer varies as our families grow, age and evolve. And the best designs consider both current and future needs.

For young families, the focus is almost always child-centric. Kitchens are designed with low drawers for easy access to the most important items, like sippy cups and napkins. Refrigerator drawers installed as beverage stations and below-the-counter microwaves allow the "vertically challenged" to help themselves. Study areas are incorporated into family spaces to allow for parent-child interaction at homework time.

Creative storage solutions and child-friendly finishes, like washable wall paint, chalkboard paint in play areas, and custom ceramic tiles featuring kids' artwork in their bath, all lend to a successful design.

In the teen years, the question asked most often is, "How do I create the house where all the kids and their friends want to hang out?" For this age group, creative basement remodels with game areas are most popular, and perhaps not surprisingly, basement bars are often minimized or omitted completely. As opposed to the closed-off theaters of the past, media viewing rooms are now open and designed as multi-purpose spaces that also facilitate informal gatherings and entertaining. For the ambitious, outdoor features, such as pools, patios and fire pits, can create a neighborhood destination. (Though pools and water features are of-

ten delayed until kids are old enough to be safe around water.)

Teen-friendly designs often include a family foyer, an entrance from the garage with plenty of storage for sports equipment, coats, backpacks, etc. Other potential opportunities for teens include creating small, fun spaces like lofts in bedrooms, themed bedrooms, and making sure that there are plenty of USB charging stations.

For empty nesters, remodeling typically involves "downsizing" within the home by planning to use the space more efficiently. Often, one-level living is designed for convenience and to reduce energy use. Heating and cooling systems are zoned so only the inhabited areas are fully conditioned when in use. Apartment-style washer and dryers are right sized for a couple. Smaller, drawer-style dishwashers are also available. And, perhaps now is the time to discuss repurposing spaces that were previously used as game rooms or homework stations into areas to accommodate hobbies and interests.

Almost all design discussions should at least contemplate the potential for boomerang kids (children coming home after college), in-laws, or elderly family members who might join the home. For those wanting more independence and privacy, in-law suites sometimes include private entrances and even a small kitchenette. Sometimes kids' rooms are moved to the basement to add more privacy.

For all of us as we get older, a house that incorporates the principles of universal design, which allow us to live comfortably and safely in the homes we love, is a critical conversation. Design considerations include creating accessibility-friendly baths, kitchens, entrances and passageways and

perhaps reconfiguring to minimize steps. Often, a strategy that comes up is the consideration of the installation of an elevator to facilitate long-time use.

The design priorities for each remodel are unique to the family, but thinking about all the different phases of family life is critical to long-term success.

Josh Baker is the founder and co-chairman of BOWA, an award-winning design and construction company specializing in luxury renovations, remodels and additions in the greater Washington, D.C. area. BOWA has more than 25 years of experience and has been honored with 170 local and national awards. Visit www.bowa.com or call 703-734-9050.



Renovated home office by BOWA features space for the whole family.



Custom designed cabinetry in this renovated family foyer in Great Falls keeps a busy family organized.