

Senior Living

APRIL 2017

Mount Vernon Gazette

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Senior Living Medicare 101

Medicare experts from the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) will discuss what you need to know about Medicare plan options in 2017.

Wednesday/April 12, 2-3:30 p.m.
Reston Community Center 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston Contact Karen Brutsché: 703-390-6157

Tuesday/May 9, 7-8:30 p.m.
Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Ln., Alexandria Contact VICAP: 703-324-5851

Wednesday/May 10, 7-8:30 p.m.
Thomas Jefferson Library 7415 Arlington Blvd., Falls Church Contact VICAP: 703-324-5851

Tuesday/May 16, 7-8:30 p.m.
Centreville Regional Library 14200 Saint Germain Dr., Centreville Contact VICAP: 703-324-5851

For one-on-one advice regarding Medicare, please call Fairfax County's VICAP at 703-324-5851. Visit them at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/DFS/OlderAdultsServices/vicap.htm.

Another good way to learn options is to listen to a podcast with Medicare expert William Vaughan. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and click on the 50+ Podcast.

MORE CALENDAR

Saturdays. Widow/Widower Group. The death of a spouse can be devastating. This free six-week support group will help you learn ways to cope with this difficult experience. Haven of Northern Virginia Inc., 4606 Ravensworth Road, Annandale. Registration required. For information and times call 703-941-7000.

Thursday/April 13. 7-8:30 p.m. Garden Maintenance-Spring: Gearing Up! Master Gardeners teach you the basics of planning, planting and maintaining your new garden. Get fresh ideas and great advice. Free. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. 703-978-5600.

Tuesday/April 18. 1-3 p.m. Exploring the FamilySearch Website. Learn how to effectively search the world's largest family history website, www.familysearch.org, from expert Carol Kostakos Petranek. Free. Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road, Alexandria. Call 703-768-4101 or visit www.mvgenealogy.org.

Wednesday/April 19. 9:30-11 a.m. Mary B. Gallagher author of "My Life with Jackie Kennedy" discusses her life during the time she served as secretary for Jackie Kennedy. Free/Public invited. Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road, Alexandria. Call 703-360-4979.

Wednesday/April 19. 1-3 p.m. Fairfax Area Commission on Aging meets at the McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean. 703-324-5403.

Wednesday/April 19. 7:30-8:30 p.m. Preserve Your Heirloom Photographs and Documents. Learn about the Virginia Room's historical collections and discover preservation techniques. Free. George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Tnpk., Annandale. 703-256-3800.

Sunday/April 23. 8 a.m. Birding for Beginners. Interested in birding? Learn about the park's birds and some basic identification skills. Program begins with an indoor discussion. \$10/\$12. Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. To register, call 703-222-4664.

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GH

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Senior Living

Mid-Century Classic for Artful One-level Living

In 1950s, Hollin Hills was a mecca for cutting-edge housing design; 60 years later, mid-century modern is a resurgent style ripe for nuanced improvements.

BY JOHN BYRD

PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

Two years ago, Jeff and Jenny Herre, both retired, were living in a five-level townhouse in Old Town Alexandria with a view of the river. Long-term residents, they were satisfied with all the house had to offer. They collected art and fine furniture and their periodic renovations over several years had extended all the way to the attic.

As they approached their 70s, however, they questioned how much effort they wanted to expend getting from room to room.

“We were wondering aloud whether we’d still want to be climbing five flights of stairs in 10 years,” Jeff Herre said. “That’s when we began thinking about downsizing, and ways we might concentrate our primary living needs on one level.”

As the research got under way, Jeff Herre saw that cost would inevitably play a role in their choices. One-level structures in and around Old Town were appreciably beyond the family budget. Looking further out of town, the options boiled down to: a) purchase a ready-to-occupy home which would come at a higher price; or b) find an older home with renovation potential that could be shaped into a place brimming with personal style.

The latter course would entail finding a



At slightly over 900 square feet, the primary living area the Herres remodeled home in Hollin Hills is comparatively small. But designer Jon Benson’s wall elevations employ texture and color that make the space feel expansive.

creative design/build team with whom one could collaborate closely.

After assessing available northern Virginia properties for several months, a Realtor introduced the Herres to a home in Hollin Hills, a community of some 450 houses in Hybla Valley. Hollin Hills is renowned in architectural circles — even listed in the historic record as one of the first communities in the U.S. to feature modern architecture exclusively, mid-century modern in particular.

“In the 1950s, most progressive modern homes were owner-commissioned,” said Roger Lataille, a design consultant at Sun Design Remodeling. “But Hollin Hills was an entire development focused on the advanced architectural concepts that emerged after World War II.”

Part of the enduring appeal was that architect Charles Goodman and landscape architect Dan Kiley had sited each Hollin Hills residence to maximize privacy. Even though lots are seldom more than one acre, it’s difficult for your neighbor to see you from their house, and vice versa.

“We loved the wooded setting right away,” said Jeff Herre. “The problem was, the house itself didn’t look like anything we’d

want to live in.”

For starters, there were the obstructed sight lines starting from the front entrance. Walking in, one looked left at interior dry-wall that defined the parameters of a 10-foot-by-10-foot galley kitchen. To the immediate right, a floor-to-ceiling exposed brick hearth with a masonry niche designed for firewood. To the left, a floor-to-ceiling bookcase and an odd chandelier. Straight ahead, an open stairwell descending to ground level.

Further back, a door leading to the master suite, which included the original 70-square-foot tile-clad bathroom. Two closets less than two feet deep provided the only wardrobe accommodation.

While floor-to-ceiling windows dominating the eastern and western wall elevations boasted a dramatic view of surrounding woodland, the Herres also soon learned that much of the glazing was single pane.

Herre’s question for Lataille from the start was right to the point: “Can you make the changes we want within our budget?”

Topping Herre’s wish-list: an open plan with places for art display that will work well for entertaining; design that allows the

SEE HOLLIN HILLS, PAGE 5

The cook top island and dining counter of the new open kitchen plan. Light maple Shaker-style cabinets combined with quartz Caesar-stone counter surfaces reinforce the ambiance of a room surrounded by windows.



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Mount Vernon Gazette

Senior Living



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

This garden at 607 Cameron Street is one stop on Old Town's Garden Tour, starting April 22, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Alexandria Visitors Center, 221 King St. The members of the Garden Club of Alexandria and The Hunting Creek Garden Club are sponsoring tour of five homes in Old Town. \$45 in advance, \$55 day of tour. Visit www.vagardenweek.org for more.

TUESDAY/APRIL 11

Garden Experts Answer Questions.

11 a.m.-noon in Simpson Park Demonstration Gardens, 420 E. Monroe St. Stop by and chat with the VCE Master Gardeners who maintain the Simpson Park Demonstration Gardens and see what is springing to life. Visit mgvnv.org for more.

SATURDAY/APRIL 15

Country-Western Dance. 6-9:30 p.m. at the at Lincolnia Senior Center, 4710 North Chambliss St. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles welcome. \$10; non-members \$12. Visit www.nvcwda.org or call 703-860-4941 for more.

TUESDAY/APRIL 18

Lions Club. 6:30 p.m. at Pema's restaurant, 8430 Richmond Highway. The Mount Vernon Evening Lions dinner meeting speaker will give tips on using Uber. Call Andrea Corsillo 703-960-4973 for information.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 19

Antiques Club. 7 p.m. at Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road. Free, public invited. The Alexandria/Mount Vernon Antiques

Club will feature Mary B. Gallagher, the author of "My Life with Jackie Kennedy," for whom she worked as her secretary for a number of years. Call 703-360-4979 for more.

FRI, APRIL 21

Third Friday Dance. 7:30-9:30 p.m., Room 112 at Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road. The performers are with the Mount Vernon Swing Band under the leadership of Owen Hammett. \$4. Visit www.hollinhallseniorcenter.org or call 703-765-4645 for more.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Garden Tour. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Alexandria Visitors Center, 221 King St. The members of the Garden Club of Alexandria and The Hunting Creek Garden Club are sponsoring a tour of five homes in Old Town. \$45 in advance, \$55 day of tour. Visit www.vagardenweek.org for more.

SUNDAY/APRIL 30

Ballet Performance: "Cinderella." Three seatings: noon, 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive. \$12. Visit metropolitanarts.org/ for more.



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Senior Living

Hollin Hills

FROM PAGE 3

couple to mainly live on one level; a master bath with a walk-in shower and a new powder room; additional storage; a visually compelling interior design; replacement of single pane windows with insulated double-ply thermal glass.

“There have been significant developments in open floor plan design in recent years,” Lataille said. “Part of this is driven by demand: more people want spaces that allow for both privacy and easy interaction. Part are options made possible by improving technologies. For instance, a reverse downdraft vent incorporated into a cook top works well for homeowners who want to keep the kitchen open, unobstructed by a hood hanging from the ceiling.”

This is one factor that has made a kitchen-centric floorplan a popular option for a home’s primary living space, and offered a practical solution for amateur chef Jenny Herre, who enjoys regaling guests with her original dishes while otherwise fully engaging in the party all around her.

“We thought an open kitchen would really work in this house,” Jeff Herre said, “but we needed to see well-developed ideas before moving forward with the purchase.”

Enter Jon Benson, Sun Design’s lead designer, and a master craftsman with several published books on woodworking to his credit.

“When you’re removing kitchen walls, the goal is to develop a space plan that meets all functional requirements, yet really supports the room aesthetically,” Benson said. “That’s why it’s important to design elevations that present an appropriate combination of color, texture and tone. When this is done correctly, walls tends to be less necessary — and an open plan can work well.”

On this score, Benson designed a cook top island and dining counter perfectly positioned between the dining room and the seating area around the fireplace. Custom-designed roll-out trays in both the island and near the oven stack provide a space-saving solution.

Light maple Shaker-style cabinet facings combined with quartz Caesarstone counter surfaces present clean lines and reinforce the light, accessible ambiance of a room surrounded by windows.

Nearby, Benson’s re-designed

“We were wondering aloud whether we’d still want to be climbing five flights of stairs in 10 years. That’s when we began thinking about ... ways we might concentrate our primary living needs on one level.”

— Jeff Herre

hearth features America Palisades ceramic tile. Dark gray, the floor-to-ceiling vertical cladding presents an offsetting visual anchor in a composition otherwise comprised of light pastels.

The dining room table, in easy reach of the new island, is a stylized mid-century design.

To complement the play of light throughout the house, frosted glass doors are employed throughout the first level, including to the entrance to the lower level which is now enclosed.

A larger walk-in shower and double-vanity have replaced the existing former bath and there are walk-in closets adjoining the bedroom.

Collectibles from India, Lebanon and Brazil are now on view in Benson-designed display spaces.

“This really feels like our home now,” said Jeff Herre. “We’ve made the transition we wanted, and are pleased with it.”

Sun Design Remodeling frequently sponsors design and remodeling seminars as well as tours of recently remodeled homes. Headquartered in Burke, the Sun Design also maintains an office in McLean. Sun Design will be sponsoring an open house in a recently remodeled home on April 29 and 30 from 11a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For more information: www.SunDesignInc.com

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. (byrdmatx@gmail.com)



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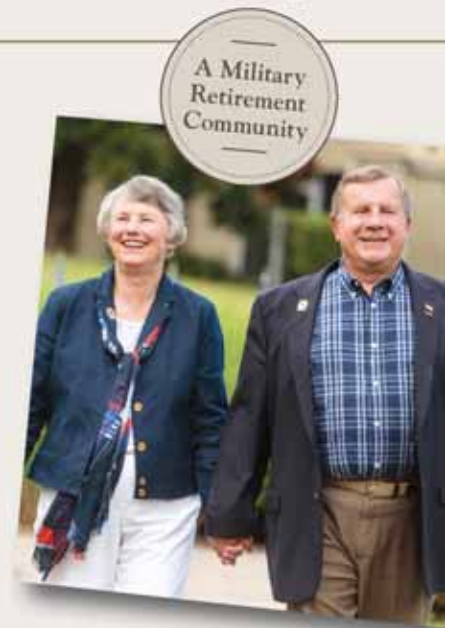


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Fit for the Golden Years

Exercises for strength, endurance, balance and aerobics are key.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

At 7 a.m. each weekday, a group of Del Ray seniors meet at Starbucks to embark on a brisk, 45-minute walk. The women return to their starting point for coffee and conversation. Their goal is to stay active and socially engaged.

“Even those of us who’ve never exercised and aren’t necessarily fit enjoy our walks,” said Joyce Herrington, one of the group members. “It’s mostly social and we enjoy it. The fact that we’re getting some exercise is a bonus.”

Late last month, representatives from Go4Life, a program created by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), held a pilot workshop in Potomac, Md., that was designed to test methods for motivating older adults to increase their physical activity. Workshop participants were from Potomac Community Village, one of several Go4Life partner organizations of seniors who are helping to design strategies to engage seniors in exercise programs.

Sheila Moldover, Potomac Community Village Communications Chair believes that local seniors can benefit from Go4Life.

“We’re going to include some easy and simple flexibility, balance and strength exercises at each of our Potomac Community Village meetings, and distribute Go4Life materials to our members, including to those who are already exercising,” she said. “We want to encourage everyone to pay attention to their balance, flexibility and strength as well as to endurance. We see that as enabling us to age in place, to thrive in place, and be healthy and active.”

Go4Life, an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is designed to help those who are over 50 incorporate exercise and physical activity into their daily lives.

“We want people to know that it’s never too late to start an exercise program, and we focus on four types of exercise: strength, endurance balance and flexibility,” said



PHOTO BY SHEILA MOLDOVER

Members of a Community Village attend a workshop on the Go4Life program, which was designed to help those who are over 50 incorporate exercise and physical activity into their daily lives.

your old age. Exercise is not only for your physical health, but also your cognitive health.”

A well-rounded exercise program should include exercises that focus on aerobic exercise, flexibility, muscular strength and muscular endurance, and balance, says Susan P Thompson, Ph.D., assistant dean, Health Physical Education at Northern Virginia Community College.

“Cardiovascular exercises should be done most days of the week for a minimum of 20-30 minutes,” she said. “Walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, hiking and any activity that uses your large muscles in a continuous movement will increase your heart rate and improve circulation.”

Stretching and moving your joints through their range of motion will keep the joints lubricated and less stiff. “Stretching will also help decrease pain and stiffness in the back, neck, hip and feet,” said Thompson. “For the sportsman it will increase your power and ability to improve your follow through motion. For the hiker, it will let you lift your arms and legs higher. You can stretch daily. Yoga and dance are activities which focus on stretching.”

Improved muscular strength and endurance will allow you to do everyday tasks with less energy with less chance of injury, advises Thompson. “Leg strength will enable you to walk faster, get up and down from chairs with more ease,” she said. “For resistance, [you can use] hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, water walking and exercise or your own body weight. Resistance training should be done two-three times a week working the major muscles.”

“The most important thing is to find an exercise or activity that you enjoy. If you enjoy what you are doing, you will be more likely to continue.”

— Susan P Thompson, Ph.D., Northern Virginia Community College.

Stephanie Dailey of the Go4Life program at the NIA. “It’s important that they’re doing all four components. Older adults can gain a lot from exercising. In fact, people have a lot more to lose by not exercising than by starting exercising.”

WHEN BEGINNING an exercise program, Dailey recommends guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“About 150 minutes per week of moderate activity is recommended for adults,” she said. “If you are going to start a fitness program, see your doctor first.”

For older adults exercise is important for maintaining function, physical strength and fitness, managing and preventing diseases, improving your mood and giving you more energy.

In spite of a popular misconception, older adults can gain strength and improve their

muscles with these exercises, says personal trainer Christian Elliot, CEO, Founder TRUE Health and Wholeness in Arlington, Va. “I work with people who are in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s and I’ve never met a person who couldn’t improve their fitness,” he said. “We’re not going to stop aging, but you can certainly slow it.”

Elliot recalls a client who was in her late 50s who didn’t have a history of physical fitness, but wanted to get in shape. “She has hit some of the most phenomenal milestones, like being able to hold a 12-minute plank, do 50 push-ups and five push-ups on one arm,” he said.

For those who are new to fitness, there is good news. “There’s a lot of evidence that middle age is a great time to get fit,” said Julie Ries, Ph.D, professor of physical therapy at Marymount University. “You want to be active and healthy in your middle age so that will keep dementia at bay in

Women in Retirement? Busier than Ever

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

More than a half-dozen local women recently answered the question: What can you say about retirement? Jamie Usrey, who was a teacher in the Arlington County Public School system for 20 years, is hardly letting a lot of grass grow under her feet.

She said, “I feel a little embarrassed when I say I am retired when I look at people who are still working hard ... like Hillary Clinton. I am enjoying being able to be outside more — biking, playing tennis, working in the yard, going for walks with friends and tak-

ing more trips to see national parks where we can hike through the beauty of nature. I have more time to exercise ... love those zumba classes ... and read. ... I do want to find a way to be more helpful in making our government work better ... next week.”

Jan Heining says she is “happier than ever with even more travel, near daily long bike rides, daily mile swims in the summer, and far more time for reading ... I also get to spend far more time at our beach house where I can more easily avoid politics.”

Ruth Neikirk said: “Retire? I never did retire. I stay busy. It’s good to stay busy.”

Karen Smagala said: “I’m busier than I ever have been since retirement, and I’m enjoying life so much more. My blood pres-

sure went down when I stopped working. I do the Master Gardener program and I work at the library in the tool shed.”

Sheridan Collins said: “Busier than ever! Docenting at the Textile Museum provides continuing education for the brain, tennis and gym keep me fit, and this year more time on politicking helps maintain a healthy attitude. And then there’s grandmothering requiring lots of travel. All good!”

Mary Lanaras said: “Retirement is like: everyday is a snow day!” Lanaras worked to home school her children until middle school and helped her husband, Charles, with his real estate business.

Joanna Cameron said: “Retirement is just a word signifying that your priorities have

shifted to ones that are all about enjoying what you love, getting outside more and relishing the things that make you happy. Staying in motion above all.”

And then there are people like Flo Broussard, 88, an Arlington resident from 1960 until she moved to Goodwin House a few years ago: she responded by saying: “Retirement? I’m a lifelong volunteer. I have volunteered for WETA, The White House, Alexandria Hospital, and several other organizations. Then when I ‘retired’ to Goodwin House, I still volunteer, doing plantings and making crafts for sale to benefit local charities.”

And there she was on April 2 at the Rehydration Salts project at Temple Beth El.

Senior Living

Bridge Sharpens Mental Skills

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Dark clouds and heavy rain didn't deter the 9 1/2 tables of duplicate bridge players from showing up at Madison Senior Center in Arlington on Friday, March 31. Complete silence envelops the room as furrowed brows concentrate on the cards in their hands. An occasional "both of the kings are off" or "I knew I should have stayed home" penetrates the silence.

Mike Zane, coordinator of the group and an American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) certified director said, "we've been going ... well, it's got to be at least 10 years." Zane said that bridge was big in the 1930s-60s. "If you watch any old film, even a war film, you'd see a bridge game. Even Ian Fleming played the Earl of Sandwich in a James Bond film. But," he continued, "it's lost its flavor."

Zane said it used to be that in the military academies the two required extracurricular classes were ballroom dancing and bridge, two important social skills.

Zane looks around the room and pulls out a long computer sheet of names. "The players at the tables go up (clockwise) and the board goes down (counterclockwise)." He explains each player has 13 cards and you play with a partner against the other two players at your table. The highest card wins. Each table will rotate and play the same set of cards. The object is 24 hands or 24 problems to solve. "It's the easiest game in the world." Zane says he started playing bridge because his mother, father, and sister played. "Bridge takes four people."

In European high schools every student is required



Duplicate bridge players concentrate on their next move at the regular ACBL-sanctioned games held Friday mornings at Madison Senior Center.

to take bridge according to Zane. "I am interested in getting bridge into schools in America. That's the only way it will survive."

It Takes a Village: Supporting Seniors

What Is a Village?

The Village concept is a growing grassroots movement that aims to provide the support that older adults may require when choosing to age-in-place. The idea is simple: neighbor helping neighbor. Villages help older adults stay in their communities by helping to coordinate and deliver services and support within their communities.

How Does It Work?

Village organizers, who are typically ages 50 and older, create volunteer programs for seniors in their communities as well as vet and negotiate with service providers to assist older adults in their homes. A broad range of services may be available, including rides to medical appointments, discounts at local theaters, reliable home repair services, and home health care. Many Villages also offer social activities and informational seminars for their members.

What Is the Cost for Services?

Some Villages may charge a membership fee, which varies from Village to Village. In some cases, there are no fees and instead the Village establishes volunteer programs. Some utilize volunteer time exchanges called "time banks." The cost for professional services, such as for home repairs, will vary. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/lcicc/villages.htm.

LTCCC

The Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC) is promoting the Village concept in the Fairfax community and helping interested volunteers set up Villages in their neighborhoods by providing them with guidance. The LTCCC Services for Seniors committee created a sub-committee so Fairfax area villages can exchange information and learn from each other. County staff who support the LTCCC provide technical assistance to citizens interested in developing Villages in their communities. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/lcicc/.

Local Village Organizations

- ❖ Braddock District Council Aging in Place Program — email wallbdc@gmail.com
- ❖ Herndon Village Network (HVN) — www.herndonvillagenetwork.org
- ❖ Lake Barcroft Village — www.lakebarcroftvillage.org
- ❖ McLean Community: A Village for All Ages (MCVA) — www.McLeanCVA.org or email info@McLeanCVA.org
- ❖ Mosby Woods Village — email mosbywoodsvillage@gmail.com
- ❖ Mount Vernon at Home Village — www.mountvernonathome.org
- ❖ Reston for a Lifetime — www.restonforalifetime.org
- ❖ Reston Useful Services Exchange — www.restonuse.org

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Senior Living

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BY JOHN BYRD

Blissful retirement often validates of the old homily: “Busy hands mean happy hearts.”

On this point, it is hard to imagine a more fruitful environment than the home of Kirby and Helen Thornton, two 70-something retirees who recently completed focused renovations to a log cabin style home in Lorton they have occupied for more than 20 years.

The changes were all about tweaking to even higher relevance aspects of the home that had gradually become a source of distinctively personal satisfaction to both seniors.

Kirby Thornton, a former electrical engineer, has been exploring his passion for woodworking for many years. Helen Thornton, a one time research analyst, revels in creating shimmering objets d’arte from fused glass. When not pursuing their hobbies, the couple might otherwise be found taking in the scenery from the wide, rustic-style front porch that now graces the home’s front elevation.

For all the quiet simplicity that abounds in every direction though, the Thornton’s lifestyle accommodation has been decades in the making, beginning with purchasing the 2,900 sq foot house and garage in the late 1990s.

“We were attracted to the relaxed ambiance of a log home,” Kirby Thornton said. “There were changes we wanted to make from the first, but since we were both busy, modifications would have to occur in phases.”

The first step was acquiring more storage space.

As Kirby Thornton tells it, the couple hired Foster Remodeling Solutions of Lorton to remove an unneeded balcony, add a floor above the open garage and apportion the space for storage and other uses to be determined.

Soon Kirby Thornton decided that the windowless garage loft would work fine as a place to take up woodworking. He had actually purchased a lathe from the home’s previous owner. Helen Thornton, seeing the loft’s potentials as a studio, acquired a kiln and began fusing glass.

The pursuit of one’s muse being all-absorbing, the pair spent little time worrying about the fact that the workspace provided zero natural light, or that it was hard to stand erect under the four foot high ceiling that dominated much of the floorspace.

About the only change to the physical



PHOTOS BY LARRY COLFER

Rough-hewn timbers — the handiwork of Foster master carpenter Mike Borman — is integral to the aesthetics of a new front elevation that is both inviting and whimsical. Red cedar trim and molding provides sympathetic color accents.

space in this interval was the introduction of a partition designed to keep wood dust on Kirby Thornton’s side of the studio.

Even so, as full retirement dawned, both saw there was now time to reconsider the larger “wish list” of remodeling preferences.

“We knew we would have to change the studio roof line to get the head room and natural light we wanted,” Kirby Thornton said. “About this time, Helen was looking into front porch ideas in log home magazines. We sketched out several designs of what we thought we wanted. That’s when we called Foster Remodeling back in.”

But the first surprise inspired another pause: Turned out the front porch seen as spanning the entire front elevation couldn’t be built because of its proximity to a part of the home’s septic system.

“The symmetry, the curb appeal, was important to us,” Helen Thornton said. “We wanted a balanced facade on both the house and the garage. We were kind of at a loss.” Fortunately, Foster’s team led by Chris Arnold came up with an innovative solution.

Foster’s architectural concept call for a faux peak on the main house at exactly the same pitch as the one above the garage which is, in turn, reinforced by the peak of a front-facing archway that defines the ground-level entrance to the porch.

A porch swing occupying the far corner now fleshes-out the portrait of a restful care-free idyll amidst flowers and trees. For an expanded view, there’s a large Velux skylight overhead.

Underfoot, a flagstone patio lends color and texture, a natural tonal complement to the dark-stained log siding. Kirby Thornton says the couple selected the color palettes

at a nearby stone yard over several days, and played with combinations until they found what they wanted.

Rough-hewn timbers, the handiwork of Foster master carpenter Mike Borman, is integral to the aesthetics of a new front elevation that is both inviting and whimsical. Red cedar trim and molding, meanwhile, provide sympathetic color accents.

To fashion studio space useful to all, Foster found a way to elevate the headroom to fully six feet, freeing up all 770 square feet of floorspace. A front-facing dormer featuring a pair of double hung windows invites generous southerly light. Kirby’s wood shop — equipped with a lathe, a drill press and table saw — is tucked snugly behind a new partition. Helen Thornton uses two kilns to produce her work.

Matching the logs needed to “pop up” the second level also entailed a close examination of existing details.

“We spent quite a while researching options with various vendors, which is a challenge when you’re working with a 30-year-old exterior,” said project manager Chris Arnold.

Summarizing the well-planned lifestyle shift, Kirby Thornton says the couple are frequently in the studio at the same time.

A window in the interior partition allows each spouse to witness the other’s progress, if so inclined. It’s a working environment, but also a place of interaction and play.

The distinctive by-products of the Thornton’s labors are mostly donated to friends, children and grandchildren. Kirby Thornton is keen on picture frames and book cases; Helen Thornton recently completed a glass bird bath.

“This is a very sweet place to be spend-



Underfoot, a flagstone patio lends setting-appropriate color and texture. The Velux skylight allows needed available light.

ing this time in our lives, “Kirby Thornton said. “Perfect in fact.”

Foster Remodeling Solutions will be holding an open house in its expanded design and selection center Saturday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be three seminars. A workshop on Aging-In-Place will be held at 1 p.m. The design center is located at 7211-H Telegraph Square Drive, Lorton, VA 22079. To RSVP call: 703/550-1371, or contact us at www.fosterremodeling.com

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