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# Senior Living Fit for the Golden Years

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

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**A**t 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



**Members of the Potomac 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.**

PHOTO BY SHEILA MOLDOVER

**"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 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

SEE FIT, PAGE 7

## Bridge Sharpens Mental Skills

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**D**ark 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 (counter-



**Duplicate bridge players concentrate on their next move at the regular ACBL-sanctioned games held Friday mornings from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Madison Senior Center.**

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/  
THE CONNECTION

SEE BRIDGE, PAGE 7





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## Senior Living

# Women in Retirement? Busier than Ever

Doing what one wants.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

**M**ore 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 taking 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 love doing Reading Recovery "light" with three kids where I feel I am kind of still 'working' but don't have to go to meetings or write up long reports. I do want to find a way to be more helpful in making our government work better ... next week. Lots to still do and lots to still see."

Jan Heininger 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 lots and lots of books. 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 pressure went down when I stopped working. People who aren't retired think that retired

people have all this time: but I don't have more time. I had to stop saying 'yes' to people who thought I had free time. I do the Master Gardener program and I work at the library in the tool shed two hours a week."

Sheridan Collins said: "Busier than ever! Documenting 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!"

Joanna Cameron said: "Retirement? There is no such word! If you retire, you stop moving, and if you stop moving, you get old. 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."

For many women, retirement is a foreign concept: they didn't necessarily work outside the home earning a salary from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lanaras worked to home school her children until middle school and helped her husband, Charles, with his real estate business. 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.



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## Senior Living

# Council Passes Senior Property Tax Credit

The Montgomery County Council passed Bill 42-16 on March 7, which will provide a tax credit for people who are over 65 years of age and who either:

- ❖ Have owned and lived in the dwelling that they own for at least 40 consecutive years, or

- ❖ are retired from one of the United States' armed forces (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy).

The owner who is 65 or over and who has owned and lived in the dwelling for at least 40 consecutive years must be on the deed for the property. An owner who is 65 or over and is a military retiree must be on the deed for the property.

Not all owners must be over 65, just the one that meets the requirements above. Not all owners must have owned and lived in the dwelling for at least 40 consecutive years, just the one that meets the requirements above. Not all owners must be retired from the U. S. armed forces, just the one that meets the requirements above.

This bill will provide a 20 percent credit, on county property taxes only, only for owner-occupied dwellings for which at least one of the owners meet the eligibility requirements. The credit is granted for five consecutive years, and the credit is not available after that five-year period.

There is only one credit; if an owner is 65 or over and has owned and lived in the same dwelling for at least 40 consecutive years, and that owner is also a military retiree, the tax credit is still a 20 percent tax credit on county property taxes only, for five consecutive years.

"Dwelling" refers to the entire property, not just the home on the land; it includes the land. The assessment on a dwelling is therefore the assessment that is shown on the tax bill, as this includes both the home and the land.

For owners that are at least 65 years of age and have owned and lived in the same dwelling for at least 40 consecutive years, the tax credit is only available if the dwelling has an assessment of \$650,000 or less, at the time of the application for the credit. If the dwelling is assessed at more than \$650,000, then the property is not an eligible property, and no credit will be granted.

For owners that are at least 65 years of age and are military retirees the tax credit is only available if the dwelling has an assessment of \$500,000 or less, at the time of the application for the credit. If the dwelling is assessed at more than \$500,000, then the property is not an eligible property, and no credit will be granted.

An application must be made each year for the tax credits. The applications will be due on April 1, before the tax year that begins on July 1 of the same calendar year. Tax years begin on July 1 — the 2017 tax year begins on July 1, 2017.

For 2017 taxes only, applications will be accepted until Sept. 1, 2017. To receive a credit for 2017 taxes, one must apply by Sept. 1, 2017.

For all other tax years, one must apply by April 1.

This tax credit will not be issued on the annual property tax bill that is sent in July, instead it will be calculated and issued on a subsequent revision of your tax bill, with the tax credit appearing as a line item deduction on the bill.

The revised bill amount will be available by calling MC311 (dial 311 if in the county, and dial 240-777-0311 if calling from outside of Montgomery County).

Please mail your application to: Department of Finance, Division of Treasury; Attn: Bill 42-16 Tax Credit; 255 Rockville Pike, Suite L-15; Rockville, MD 20850



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# Senior Living

## Elaborating a Log Cabin

Retirees find special satisfactions in pair of art studios, and front porch with view.

BY JOHN BYRD

**B**lissful 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 sources 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 ambience 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](http://www.fosterremodeling.com)

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



# Bridge Sharpens Mental Skills

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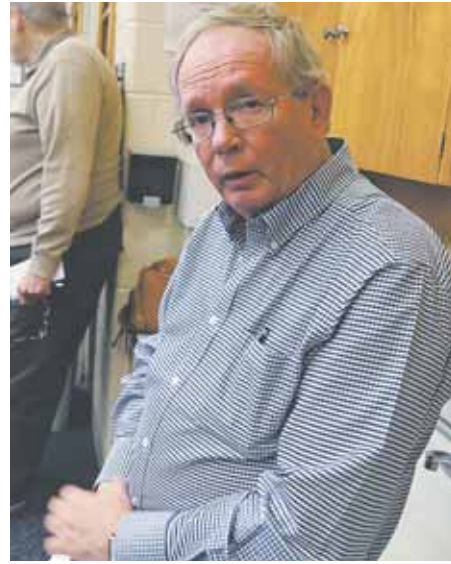
clockwise.)” He explains each player has 13 cards and you play with a partner against the other two players at your table. The highest card wins. Each table will rotate and play the same set of cards. The object is 24 hands or 24 problems to solve. “It’s the easi-

est game in the world.”

The duplicate bridge group plays on Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., about the time it takes to play one game with a half hour lunch break. 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 to take bridge according to Zane. “I am interested in getting bridge into schools in America. That’s the only way it will survive.”



**Mike Zane, coordinator of the Friday morning duplicate bridge group at Madison Senior Center and an ACBL certified director, says he is hoping to copy European schools and get bridge into American high schools. “That’s the only way it will survive.”**

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/  
THE CONNECTION

# Fit for Golden Years

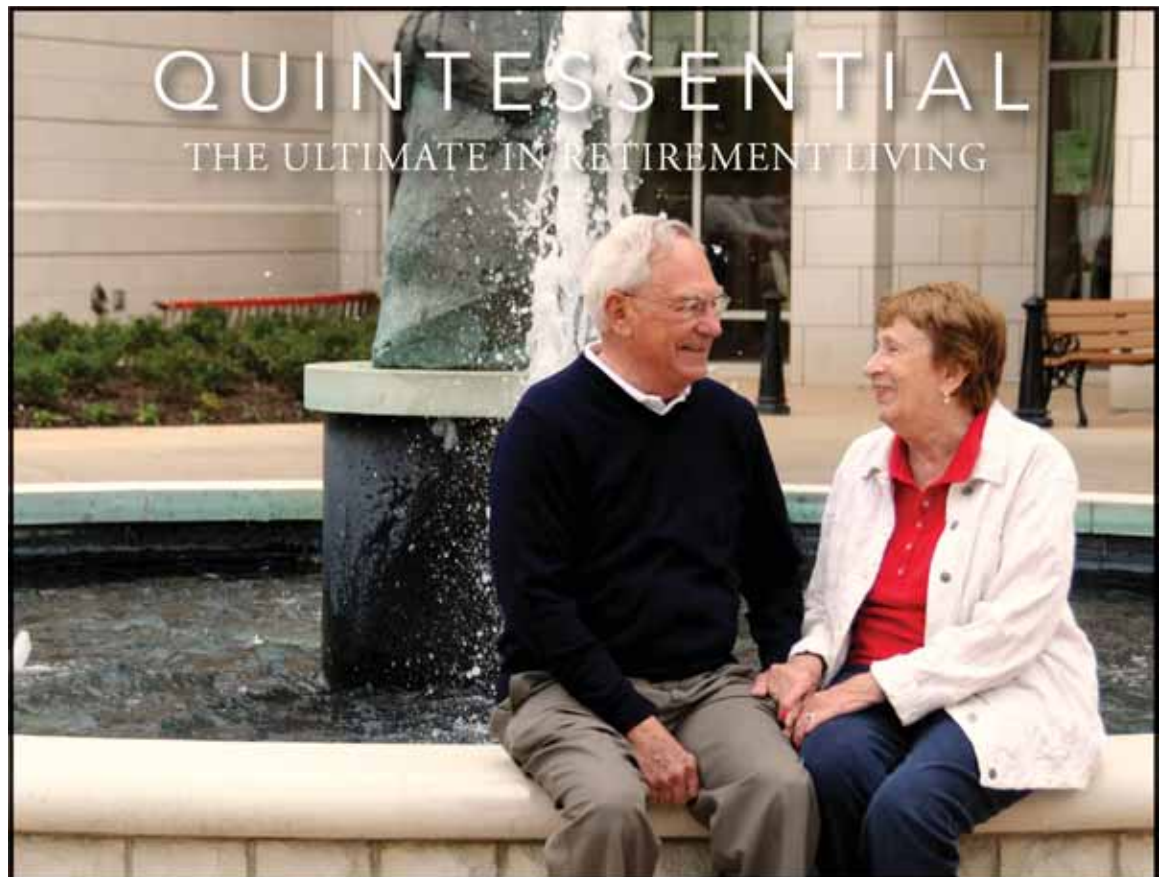
FROM PAGE 3

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. Pilates and other floor work focus

on the core muscles.”

Balance training is important to prevent falls, one of the leading causes of death and disability in the senior population. “Although muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and cardiovascular exercises contribute to better balance, specific balance training is focused on body awareness, controlling your center of gravity, being able to navigate your environment and react quickly,” said Thompson. “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.



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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

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

After assessing available northern Virginia properties for several months, a Realtor in-



**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.**

PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

roduced 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 drywall 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 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."

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, 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."

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.

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.

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 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For more information: [www.SunDesignInc.com](http://www.SunDesignInc.com)*

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**Light maple Shaker-style cabinets combined with quartz Caesarstone counter surfaces reinforce the ambiance of a light-filled room.**