

VIEW

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Red oak hardwood was installed in the floors of the kitchen and Florida rooms, then new windows were put in place.

GOING TO WORK

Peggy's father, Richard Latimer, of Farmington Hills, completed electrical work and heat. "That wasn't easy to do in a crawlspace, which is where Richard needed to work to install the baseboard heating in the Florida room. Peggy's uncle, Ron Latimer, did the drywall.

The project evolved into a family affair, Peggy said. "I didn't even think of my uncle," she said. "We got a couple quotes and they were just so expensive. We thought about doing it ourselves, as I had muddled and sanded (drywall) before, but I had no desire to do it again.

"My dad contacted my uncle, he gave us a great price, and he did a great job."

That project wasn't without its complications. When the old windows were replaced in the living room, it was discovered that water had seeped behind a sill and deteriorated wood. That needed to be repaired. New bay windows were installed and plaster needed to be matched up.

Then there were the pumpkin orange cabinets and 1970s wallpaper. "They had character," Peggy said. "We hated (the cabinets) when we started, but we liked them in the end."

"We have friends who have new homes, and everybody's looked the same," Peggy said of kitchen cabinets. "These are really '50s looking. All we did was replace the hardware and put a countertop in and put in a stainless steel sink."

Wood paneling was replaced with bead board to lighten it up. A new Navy Gray Formica countertop was installed in the kitchen, which opened up into the dining room.

GOOD MATCH

Peggy and Dave installed a blue tile. "It was a such a good match, and it is a simple color."

They also moved a butcher block from underneath a microwave oven to an open counter space, Peggy said. "We lost that space," she said of the old location. "We moved it so (the butcher block) would be used more."

The couple also did all the painting and staining themselves, Peggy said. Peggy helped her father with light fixtures, while her father completed all the electrical.

The project's total cost was about \$20,000 for the kitchen, living room and Florida room. The couple still wants to replace the carpet in the living room.

The living room was opened up with more light, with the new French doors from the Florida room to the living room and the new bay window to the back yard. "We replaced the window treatments, because the old drapes really cut the views down. We replaced the window and the panes (which also affected the view), and now have two bay windows."

Now when the Wilkes set up the Christmas tree in the living room they can see it when they sit in the family room, Peggy said.

"We just really like it," she said. "It's really opened up the whole area. It may brighten it up. We wanted to make the living room more of a 'family' room, and we love the flow from the dining room."

"Now we can get that nice cross breeze with that (bay window) and front door open. We have a perfect layout for a party, and when we have people over, they say it's such a comfortable house."

The Wilkes started the remodeling in October 2000, and they finished last Christmas.

"It took a while, but it was worth it. We did it as we had the money to do it. We never got in over our heads about it."

Got a remodeling project of your home that has transformed it? We'd like to know about it and include it in our At Home section. Send a letter describing the project, including before and after photos. Contact At Home Editor Ken Abramczyk at the Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009 or e-mail kabramczyk@homecomm.net.

Get your house literally in order

I enjoy entertaining but I find it very difficult to get ready for guests. The day guests are due to arrive I feel stressed and make unreasonable demands on my family and myself. All the preparations are very overwhelming.



Domestic Planner
Diana Koenig

Getting your house ready for guests may feel like an impossible task. Keep in mind your guests are coming for a visit, not to judge your housekeeping skills. You are not conducting a tour through your entire house. Guests may only visit a few rooms.

You do not need to worry about establishing order in the

garage, laundry room, basement storage area, bedrooms, closets, drawers, and cabinets (if you have overnight guests you may need to organize a bedroom and closet). Do not allow your lack of organization skills to keep you from extending hospitality. I have listed some tips to help you get ready for guests.

Helpful Tips:
Keep it simple. Shut doors to areas that are messy. Walk through your house with a laundry basket and pick-up clutter. Carry the filled basket around your house putting individual items back where they belong. Using the laundry basket will save you time by eliminating back and forth trips to get things.

Straighten stacks of papers, books and magazines. Messy stacks look cluttered. Use the "hide and seek" system for loose unorganized papers. Put

these items in a basket or drawer to deal with later.

Dust the most obvious areas. You can do a thorough dusting at a later time.

Use an air freshener or scented candle to give a "welcome" aroma.

Shake throw rugs by doors. Vacuum areas where guests will be sitting. Spot mop kitchen and bathroom floors.

Clean bathroom sinks, toilets, and mirrors. Hang clean hand towels and light a scented candle. The kitchen is a gathering place; therefore your guests will probably spend a large amount of time in this area. Make it shine. Wipe down appliances and counter tops. Clear counters of clutter and add a vase of fresh flowers.

Use a small paintbrush to touch up areas that have chipped paint. Do this in areas your guests will be congregating. Prepare simple meals and

snacks. Baked potatoes, steamed broccoli, and chicken with a slice of cheese and mushroom soup are simple and delicious. Popcorn and ice cream sundaes are easy and popular snacks. You are more likely to entertain if you do not spend all day in the kitchen.

Pay your children a small fee to help you get ready. Money motivates unmotivated people. Relax, smile, and tell your guests to help themselves to anything they need. Your warm hospitality will be remembered, not your dust bunnies.

Call some friends, you are ready to entertain.

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WIRED

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placed in the basement. Ports - similar in size and appearance to a traditional electrical box with wiring for telephone, cable TV and computer Internet services - are placed in individual rooms and carry wire behind walls to the hub distribution center.

Main cable TV, telephone lines and Internet connections coming into the home attach to the hub.

Consumers can design a plan that carries various capabilities per room via ports, wiring and the hub that suit their purposes. Cable connections at the hub allow for different rooms to come "on line."

Several different companies provide various capabilities, said Walter H. Denike, master electrician with RCI.

"Everybody made products that didn't interface," he said.

"Now, all manufacturers see structured wiring as the way to go to make options network."

"It's like enhancing the nervous system in the body,"

Denike added. "As long as you can send a signal through the house, you can do anything as long as you have the right equipment at each end."

Other electrical contractors install structured wiring systems.

Struble pegged the price at about \$125 per wall port outlet to retrofit an existing home, plus \$1,000 for the hub.

NEW IS BETTER

"It's much easier, much more economical (to install) new," he said. "I have complete flexibility with never having to go back into the walls again."

"Clients at the higher end a lot of times have a pretty good idea what they want to do," Struble said. "Some want full automation, the highest level of control. Others want to keep it simple. It's an investment in flexibility and interconnecting of a house," he said.

The future is now with structured wiring, said Marc Cohen, president of Wired for Sound in West Bloomfield.

"This is not Lost In Space, Close Encounters. This is reality," he said. "We tell what's available ... and design to a customer's needs ... make it



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The panel features room for expansion and rerouting wiring.

work for a customer. It keeps them in touch with technology.

"I think the big advantage is once the wiring's in place, it's a pretty universal system," Cohen said. "It grows with the industry. Once in place, it doesn't have to be redone in 10 years. It's a very clean, very organized approach to saying in touch with what might come about."

Cohen pegs installation costs at 50 cents to \$3 per wire foot depending on exactly what a customer wants.

Stonebrooke Development offers structured wiring systems as a standard feature at "The Orchards of Lyon" in Lyon Township. Prices of new homes there average \$250,000.

"People just love it," said Pamela Robinson, sales

manager. "Most people know what it's about - new technology, fast speed."

Cohen meets with purchasers to custom design specific systems, she added.

Buyers will demand structured wiring systems of builders as they become aware of technology's potential in the home, Struble predicted.

Buyers of older existing houses will want it, too, he added.

"I think it's a feature that will add value to a house. Just think - any room they can plug in a telephone, cable TV, computer," Struble said. "Realtors can advertise it as a house technologically up to date."

Denike agrees. "This is going to become the standard of the industry," he said.



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