

Collective Design

BY MICHELLE XIARHOS CURRAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN HARKINS

When Jean and Vincent Helfrich moved into their North Andover home seven years ago, the couple knew they would make changes.

Space wasn't the issue. The stately Georgian colonial—with over 6,000 square feet of living area—had enough room even for an active family with four boys who are all involved in multiple sports. But as Jean puts it, "It didn't have any of the bells and whistles."

Jean and Vincent knew what they wanted, a place that was formal enough to entertain friends, but also a home that was comfortable and functional for a large family. Fortunately for the couple, Vincent—or Vinnie, as his friends call him—grew up in North Andover and knew some local guys who could make their visions a reality. Brothers Paul and John DiSalvo attended North Andover High School with Vinnie and they all played football together. Both families own second-generation businesses. Vinnie and his brother Joe are the owners of Helfrich Brothers, a mechanical contracting company located in Lawrence that was started by their father in 1948. And just a hop, skip, and a jump away in North Andover, the DiSalvos own Pridecraft, a woodworking facility specializing in custom cabinetry founded by their father in 1969 as a custom furniture business.





The most recent renovation to the Helrich's home is the sunroom, formerly a porch. Above the fireplace is a custom-made cabinet with a mechanized wood panel that lifts to reveal a flat screen TV.



The Helfrich's warm and inviting living room, nestled between the office and kitchen area, features a wall of built-ins that hides a TV and stereo, among other things.

Both businesses have evolved and grown over the years, and the Helfrichs and DiSalvos continued to remain in touch even long after their football days were over.

"We've always done a little work for him and we always kind of stayed connected that way," says Paul about Vinnie.

The DiSalvos did custom woodwork in

the Helfrich's previous house, and so when Jean and Vinnie began making plans to renovate their current home, they knew exactly who to call.

"I just think they're unsurpassed. They're meticulous. They do take pride in their work," says Jean about the DiSalvos, who do much of their work by hand. "When you

deal with Pridecraft, you deal with Paul and John. They want you to love what they do. They are just great guys."

The DiSalvos have worked their magic in just about every room in the Helfrich's home, from creating custom homework stations for each of the boys to crafting an efficient and beautiful mahogany office for Jean, the place she refers to as command central.

"It's been a process of years," says Paul.

Though it may have taken years, the payoff has been big. The collaborative effort put in by the Helfrichs, Pridecraft, and the other local designers and installers who made the couple's dream a reality has resulted in a home that is functional, comfortable, and showcases the couple's sophisticated sense of style.

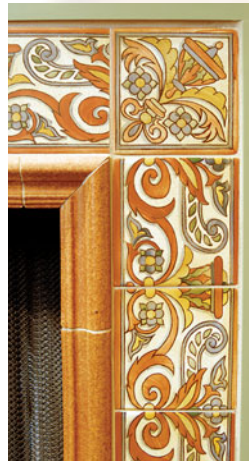
"It's very easy working with Jean because she has excellent taste and knows what she wants," explains interior designer David Cyr, owner of DMC Interiors, who also graduated North Andover High and assisted in the design and put the finishing touches—such as window treatments, color schemes, furniture, and décor—on many of the Helfrich's new rooms. (Paula Daher, owner of Daher Interior Design, also worked with the Helfrichs on their home.)

"Vinnie and Jean—they really get involved with the process," says John DiSalvo. "It was definitely a team effort based on a lot of people."

Each room has been carefully designed and built so that clutter is kept to a bare minimum, and everything has a place. In the living room—the family's media center—an



At left: Jean Helfrich's office displays rich mahogany woodwork including built-in bookcases, detailed paneled walls, and a coffered ceiling. At right: (top) Beautiful painted tiles surround the living room fireplace; (bottom) a cozy corner for chess affords a lovely view of the backyard.





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the Big Hill!*

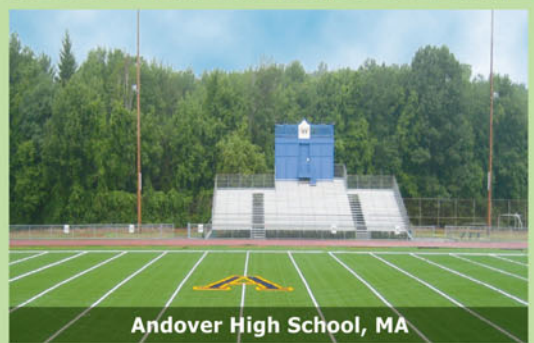
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The "hub" of the Helfrich's home, the kitchen features extensive custom cabinetry, a large center island where the family most frequently gathers, and an Old World style alcove that houses a stove top and was built to resemble a fireplace.

entire wall of built-in cabinetry hides the television, DVD player, and surround sound components for both that room and the new sunroom. Drawers and shelving store compact discs and movies and display neat rows of leather-bound books. Pridecraft also created a custom mantel piece and coffered

ceilings in the room. The bold green color of the custom woodwork contrasts with the more subtle shade of taupe on the walls.

"Not many people are brave enough to do that and she is," notes David about Jean's color choice for the room. "That's a testament to her."



In the sunroom, where walls of windows provide the family with a view of the wooded yard and pool, a built-in cabinet and mechanized wooden panel covers the flat-screen television above the custom-tiled fireplace.

"Aesthetically, as a designer, I don't like to see electronics," says David, who worked closely with Jean on the English garden-style room. "Everything should be hidden, especially today, when TVs are so big. It's like the elephant in the room."

Architectural beams and a cathedral ceiling give the sunroom—previously a porch—a light, airy feel. David chose a crème color scheme for the room and bamboo blinds to showcase the detailed wooden panels between each window.

"The moldings were very important," explains David. "It would have been a shame to cover that up in any way."

A heated tile floor and custom furniture complete the sunroom, and for the Helfrichs it is one of their favorite rooms in the home. "This porch is really where, as a family, we would watch a movie," says Jean. And recently, while relaxing in the room with her youngest son, the pair was able to watch two deer cross their yard.

The other favorite room in the home is the Old World style kitchen. With a large center island, a stovetop built into an alcove

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resembling a fireplace, a refrigerator hidden by custom cabinetry, and a separate bar area, it's a room that feels less like a workspace and more like a family meeting space, which is exactly how Jean refers to it.

"I love the island," says Jean, who pores over design magazines for inspiration. "The kids all sit around and do their homework there. It is cohesive to the way we live."

"We really got exactly what we wanted," she adds, even down to the hinges on their cabinets. "They're real craftsmen. If there's something you think can't be done, they'll figure it out."

Command central, Jean's office, is built from a rich, natural mahogany and features a wall of built-in bookcases, detailed paneled walls, and a coffered ceiling.

"It was always a study, but a lot of rooms like that don't get used," she says. Now, cabinets hide computer components and extra storage space allows Jean to run her family's busy schedule from a neat, streamlined space. "When you walk in, the room doesn't look a mess," notes Jean.

"The kids don't really leave the house without going in there and checking the calendar. That's where we function out of."

Another interesting and unique feature of the Helfrich home is the mudroom-



The Helfrich's youngest son Kyle gladly posed for a picture in the boys' ultra-organized mudroom/locker room.



turned-locker room, where the Helfrich boys store all their sports equipment. Designed by John DiSalvo, the small room features an individual locker cubby and drawer for each son and silver nameplates

designed by David Cyr.

"I like my house a lot, but I think it's also a comfortable house for four boys," says Jean. "I wanted a house that was great for everyone. Nothing's too off-limits." **MVM**

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