

HOME & DESIGN



LOWER LEVELS GET A LIFT

UPPER LEVEL AMENITIES MOVE DOWNSTAIRS

UPSCALE RESALE SHOPPING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

THE ART OF DISPLAYING ART

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THE FRANKS' GOAL WAS TO HAVE THE BASEMENT BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE COULD COME, FLOP AROUND AND FEEL COMFORTABLE

Once the atmosphere and floor plan were completed, Postif addressed smaller details that catered to the Franks' specific needs. French doors at the bottom of the staircase leading from the main-floor kitchen seal the basement off from the rest of the house and ensure privacy for occupants. "I have two teenage girls who really wanted a place to hang out with their friends," says Franks. "I also have a son who has frequent sleepovers. It had to work for all of us."

Franks hosts monthly book club meetings downstairs, and her husband, Rick, watches sports events there. Built-in bookshelves house games and favorite books; a nearby game table often is the site of late-night poker sessions.

"The chairs are covered with a playing card fabric that's really great because it doesn't show the potato chip stains," she says. Franks says the kids' favorite feature – and maybe even hers – is the eight-person curved sectional sofa that faces the large-screen TV. "It is tough enough to take any abuse the kids can dish out," she says of the sofa, which is coated with a water- and stain-repellent checkerboard fabric.

"My goal was to have the basement be a place where people could come, flop around and feel comfortable," says Franks. "Now that it's done, we use it all the time. It's definitely worth its weight in gold."

LOWER LEVEL LUXE

The lower level in one new home on Walnut Lake in West Bloomfield measures about 5,000 square feet, says Birmingham interior designer Jeffrey King. Not only does it match the upper level's size, but it also includes many of the same features, including two bedrooms, full-size kitchen, step-down bar, media room, sunken bar and even a full-size in-ground pool with a waterfall hot tub.

THE OWNERS WANTED THE LOWER LEVEL TO BE GEARED TOWARD THE KIDS AND ENTERTAINING

The recently completed house, a "classic contemporary" according to King, was a blank canvas when he started working on it two years ago. The home is owned by a couple who entertains frequently and has three children and a large extended family.

Facing page: This Northville Township home's hearth room/sitting area makes use of indirect sunlight for an open, warm feel, rather than cheery and bright. At right: Red is the primary hue throughout this classic contemporary West Bloomfield lower level, which features an indoor pool.



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Facing page: The billiards room is simple and chic, providing a neutralizer for the predominantly red décor. Stainless steel rules the kitchen, which is a full kitchen but smaller scale to fit the lower level.

"They wanted the lower level to be geared toward the kids and entertaining," says King.

Working with the homeowners and also with associate Amy Weinstein, King opted for classic contemporary furniture from the 1950s, including chairs by Charles Eames, a chaise lounge by Le Corbusier and bar stools by Herman Miller.

Not far from the main seating area, a 15-by-18-foot home theater seats eight people and features red leather electric-powered recliners.

While the pieces used throughout look like mid-century modern antiques, they're actually quite sturdy, says the designer. "All are reproductions, but really, really good ones," says King. The group worked

closely with Arkitektura in Birmingham to achieve the desired look and quality.

"We purposely didn't choose anything too fragile or fussy," King says. "These are sturdy pieces that never go out of style and are very durable. Kids can beat them up."

Throughout the space, King and Weinstein kicked it up a notch with accents in red, white, gray and black. "Red is a classic accent color that's always in fashion," says Weinstein. "Color is a great thing to use in lower levels, because they don't typically get a lot of light."

"Today's lower levels are truly multi-purpose spaces," says King. "You don't have to ever come upstairs if you don't want to." ■