

This Old House

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BUNGALOW—
AND THE
DAILY LIVES
OF TWO BUSY
PARENTS AND
THEIR THREE
YOUNG SONS

BY DEBORAH
BALDWIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
ALEX HAYDEN

PRODUCED BY
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MICHELE GRECO





TIDY FIT

OPPOSITE: Useful hooks and nooks start at the front door and line the living room. **THIS PAGE:** Columned half-wall dividers straddle the kitchen and dining room and double as storage for media components on one side and cookware and backpacks on the other.



IN

some neighborhoods, the name of a family-oriented architectural designer is passed around like a recipe for foolproof bake-sale brownies. The word on the playground in Seattle's Queen Anne section, known for its historic but dysfunctional bungalows, is "Call Kim Clements." Never mind her firm's reputation as a one-stop shop for remodeling projects—she's also the mother of three young boys. "I knew she'd know exactly what I needed," says Stacy Sikora, who called on Clements when her own offspring were threatening to turn her three-bedroom, two-bath Craftsman into a boy cave.

"Do we move to a bigger house?" Stacy recalls thinking. "But we love our location, a block from the community center and a big park, and just two blocks from the library." So Stacy and her husband, Scott, decided to stay while making room in their busy lives for a fastidious six-month redo.

The project gained traction after they were fixed up with Clements and her husband and design partner, Joe Schneider, at a school fund-raiser. The two couples realized they not only had similar taste but also had boys in the same grades: "a matched set," as Clements puts it. "I knew where the pressures were," she adds. "The kids play sports, they're academic, they're all going in different directions, and you're trying to manage all that in a lovely but limited footprint"—a polite way of saying, "in a cramped and cluttered shared space with a layout that makes no sense for a family today."

Stacy recalls: "You had to go through the living room and the dining room to get to the kitchen. Or you could go up the stairs and then down the other stairs." Once you got there, she continues, "the kitchen was small and closed-in. With your arms out you could almost touch the sink on one side and the stove on the other." A previous owner had lowered the ceiling. There was just enough room for a table—for four.

The rest of the first floor seemed to be working against the growing family as well, with the front door opening right into the living room and so little storage that Stacy still talks about the row of coat hooks now along one wall as if Clements had invented the wheel.

"Visiting Kim and Joe's house helped me make decisions on how to design and decorate our own house," says Stacy, recalling such enviable fixes as a kid-resistant dining table made from old bowling-alley flooring.





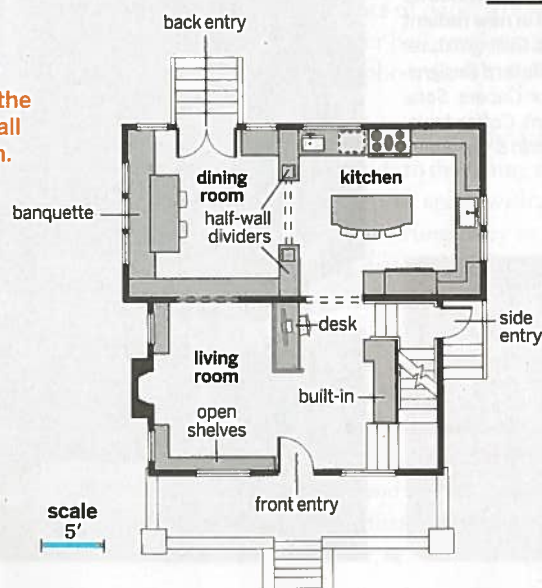
IMPROVED CIRCULATION

LEFT: Bumping out the sink wall eased traffic flow around the generous new island. **BELOW:** The dining room kept its original coffered ceiling while gaining French doors and a wider opening to the kitchen. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:** The living room's built-in desk and command center are steps from the kitchen. *Paint: Benjamin Moore's Sea Haze (walls) and Dill Pickle (island). Cabinets: Belmont Cabinet Co.*



FLOOR PLAN

To open up the 2,035-square-foot bungalow's cramped first floor, the design-build team replaced two sets of stairs to the second floor with one set, stacking it over new basement stairs, and bumped out the kitchen's sink wall to add 30 square feet. An opening in an interior wall now channels light from a new set of French doors in the dining room. Built-ins throughout filled a glaring storage gap.





MODERN FAMILY SPACE

RIGHT: The dramatic schist fireplace surround and the whimsical ceiling fixture give the living room a fresh look. The new opening over the sofa brings in light while separating the reading-and-relaxing zone from the kitchen-dining-room-study-hall fray. The room kept its original leaded-glass windows, **ABOVE.** Elsewhere, energy-efficient replacement windows help seal in new radiant floor heat. *Ceiling fixture:*

Ballard Designs.

Armchairs: Capers. Sofa: Pottery Barn. Coffee table: David Smith & Company

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Before they could get to the fun stuff, however, Clements and her design-build team had to work out ways to wring more usable living space from a 90-plus-year-old house on a small corner lot.

The dormered second floor needed only minor fixes. It holds the boys' shared lair, a smaller master bedroom, Scott's home office, and one of the home's two full baths (the other is in the finished basement). But the first floor, where everyone liked to gather, felt claustrophobic and chopped up. The driving question, Clements says, was "How do we have a family of five live comfortably in a modestly scaled house, with a place for everything?"

Her answer was to pretty much take the first floor apart and put it together again, inserting storage in unexpected places as in a Japanese puzzle box.

Out came the front and rear staircases, making way for a key first piece: a smart-looking set of built-ins





NEAT TRICK

ABOVE: Beveled-mirror fronts add a formal note to the stair-wrapped built-in that serves as a coat closet. Stacked cabinets at one end hold hooks for kids' outerwear below and a charging station and files above.

These cabinets also conceal the laundry chute, which opens, **RIGHT**, at the crossroads between the bedrooms and the bath and empties into the basement at the foot of the washing machine. Pulls: Rejuvenation. Steel baskets: Land of Nod



wrapped by a single set of stairs. The design-build team also altered the stairs to the basement, adding a landing halfway down with a door that opens to the side yard. Clements characterizes this new entrance as an experiment in behavior modification: a subtle architectural hint to incoming soccer players to dispatch their gear down below before surfacing to ask about dinner.

To shake up the confined spaces and bring in more light, the team cut a generous opening in an interior wall and lined up French doors in the room beyond it, yielding a sunny sight line from the front of the house through the dining room to a neighbor's yard—call it a visual land grab.

The kitchen lost its dropped ceiling as well as its back stairs, while gaining 30 square feet in the form of a cantilevered bumpout—puzzle piece number two. The tiny add-on required no foundation yet was “the small release valve that made everything work,” says Clements. Scott, who likes to unwind from his tech job by reading cookbooks, gained extra prep space, a supersize German fridge, and a spiffy induction cooktop. The kids got personal cubbies—meaningful real estate, since they share a bedroom—with hooks for lunch boxes and backpacks, and bins for stray cell phones. “We didn’t have space for one big mudroom,” Clements explains. “So we figured out what they needed and spread it out.”

The living room's alcove-like lounging area gained definition in two strokes. One involved rehanging the front door so that, when a visitor steps in, the alcove is behind the door, not in front of it. The other is a partition wall that encloses a desk and command center. Here, Stacy oversees torrents of paperwork that pool around the shared computer before coming to rest in more bins, drawers, and cupboards. A magnetic back-splash holds reminders.

The command center communicates directly with the kitchen, which now opens wide to the dining room. Clements finished this multipurpose space with a familiar-looking table, topped with bowling-alley wood, and a TV within eavesdropping distance of the cook.

The result is a free-flowing hive of activity at the back of the house. Those seeking refuge can sneak into the living room to nap under the guise of reading. In fact, says a pleased Stacy, “we’re in the dining room and kitchen the whole time—the new setup just works for everyone.” That includes the designers’ three boys, who have become regular guests. No surprise: It seems the two families find they’re equally at home in each other’s house. ■