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Creating a custom office ensures the perfect space

By DEBBIE WALTZER

These days, James Zaucha is surrounded by his children's toys as he works at a computer in the living room of his 1,000-square-foot rented home in the village of Pittsford.

But come May, Zaucha will be working in the home office of his dreams, located in separate quarters within his family's new 4,500-square-foot house in Malvern Hills, off Route 64.

Fortunately, his kids and their belongings will still be nearby, but the custom-built workspace, constructed by Ketmar Development Corp., will offer a welcome alternative to his current tight quarters—and is definitely a step up from the windowless corporate cubicles that he occupied in years past.

Zaucha is a stock transfer agent for EquiServe and most recently worked out of the company's Jersey City, N.J., office. But last year, his wife, Laurie, landed an enticing career opportunity to serve as vice president of human resources for the Americas for Bausch & Lomb Inc., and the pair decided to move to Rochester. Since most of James' work is done via computer, fax and cell phone, his employer was open to his proposal to work off-site from Rochester, and the couple—parents of Courtney, 5, and Ryan, 2—moved here early last summer.

Initially, James wanted to purchase an older home while Laurie preferred a new one. But once they looked at the offerings within Malvern Hills, James was convinced that new construction was the way to go. Another plus was the proximity of Laurie's brother and his family, who live less than one mile from the development, which eventually will include 35 homes. (The development currently features eight custom homes ranging in size from 3,000 to 8,000 square feet with price tags ranging from \$600,000 to just under \$1.5 million, Ketmar president Marie Kenton says.)

Still, working exclusively from his home has been a transition for James, previously accustomed to co-workers in the cubicles next door, spontaneous meetings and water cooler chitchat. But new high-speed computer connections, frequent contact with colleagues and clients by phone and—most influential—the experience of watch-

ing his new office come together, have made him quite excited about what's to come.

James' new 15-by-17 office will feature many amenities, notes Kenton, who has been in business since 1988 and has constructed high-end homes in Pittsford, Victor, Mendon and Canandaigua as well as along the shores of Lake Ontario.

The office will be painted in a shade of taupe and will feature maple built-in cabinets, a spacious window and sliding doors, hardwood flooring, recessed lighting and a gas fireplace, Kenton says.

The room also will be multifunctional—following national office design trends—and can double as a guest room for the family's visiting relatives and friends. The couple will buy a pullout sleeper sofa for the room. A bathroom with a shower, and an ample closet, are under construction directly adjacent to the office.

"A lot of thought needs to go into designing a home office, including its location within the home, its multiple functions and whether or not clients will visit the office, which might necessitate the addition of a separate entrance or conference table space," Kenton says.

Ketmar recently built an office within a master suite for a husband-and-wife medical team—a pathologist and an ophthalmologist—so that they could easily handle emergency calls in the middle of the night.

"But it's truly not that costly to construct a private home office, and they surely are popular," Kenton says. "Almost all of our clients want at least one office in their new homes or as part of a renovation project."

Gazing out the sliding doors of his soon-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Come May, James Zaucha will be working in a custom-built home office in his family's new 4,500-square-foot house in Malvern Hills.

to-be home office onto a sloped, wooded backyard, James expresses his enthusiasm for what is to come.

"This is going to be a great house to live in," he says. "The amount of natural light throughout is fantastic, and I like the view. While I'll do most of my work within the office, I also won't hesitate to carry my laptop and cell phone into the kitchen and work from there. What's more, if one of my kids get sick, then they can easily stay home from day care and I can take care of them.

"I'm looking forward to working in this home."

As workmen brought in and installed new furniture in James Silverman's Brighton home one morning last month, the CPA and co-owner of Synapse Software Inc.—which offers customized accounting software for the homebuilding industry—could barely contain his excitement.

Silverman and his family—wife, Vin-

cenza, associate director of finance for the University of Rochester Medical Center; daughter, Danielle, a graduate student at Nazareth College of Rochester; and son, Kevin, a personal trainer with Personal Health Approach—live in a contemporary two-story home on Shalimar Drive, which they have occupied since Dec. 13, 2002.

But they actually have lived on that spot since 1987—until a fire completely destroyed their home in December 2001.

The family was celebrating Hanukkah, and Silverman was just beginning to start up the glass-top electric stove to fry his signature potato latkes when the phone rang informing the Silvermans of a family emergency.

Frazzled, Silverman dashed out of the house, forgetting that he had turned on the stove. Quickly, the house filled with smoke—damage that likely could have been corrected.

But that is not the end of the story. The smoke apparently caused the house's main electric circuit board to overheat, and one week later—while the family was out—the entire house burned to the ground.

The Silvermans were traumatized by the fire, which destroyed nearly all of their possessions. But they also were determined to rebuild and return to their homestead. They were “blessed,” says Silverman, because his Synapse business partner and home builder James Erwin offered his model home as temporary living quarters to the family until their new house was built. The new home was ready for occupancy in December 2002.

Office space was critical for Silverman, who works exclusively from home, so the family included a separate 10-by-13 office in the blueprints, as well as additional space in the finished basement. His files completely destroyed, Silverman made do for a while by working in the first-floor office in a summer lawn chair pulled up to an old kitchen table.

But he knew that eventually he would want to upgrade the equipment. So he con-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

“This furniture makes me feel at home again—and the timing of its arrival, just at the start of tax season, couldn’t be better. I may never want to leave home again,” CPA James Silverman says.

tacted Meredith Galvin, a May 2003 interior design graduate from Rochester Institute of Technology and a sales representative for Merkel Donohue Inc.

Together, the pair plotted out a working solution for Silverman’s office needs: attractive, high-quality furniture; a supportive task chair; and ample space for visiting clients.

After reviewing several manufacturers’ offerings, Silverman selected a suite of cherry furniture made by the Gunlocke Co., based in Wayland. His \$14,000 purchase included a desk and return with overhead cabinets, a credenza, a custom-built bookshelf, a task chair made by Paoli Inc. and two guest chairs. In addition, he ordered furniture for his downstairs workspace.

Now, armed with an attractive office accessible to clients by a separate entrance and featuring an adjoining bathroom—and having bade adieu to the makeshift kitchen table and lawn chair—Silverman finally feels at home. It is the final chapter, a happy one, to an otherwise traumatic experience.

“The fire was a devastating experience for my whole family, and by living out of boxes, I haven’t felt in control for so long,” Silverman says. “This furniture makes me feel at home again—and the timing of its arrival, just at the start of tax season, couldn’t be better. I may never want to leave home again.”

Debbie Waltzer is a Rochester-area freelance writer.