

The new island, spacious enough for entertaining, eliminates the need for an additional dining table.

A NEW HOME, *Brought* FROM THE *Old*

A West Des Moines remodel
for the people, by the people.

By Tracy Dickinson, Photography by Tim Abramowitz



Kevin and Joy Wilhelm are people people. They love entertaining, and their recently remodeled home in West Des Moines is proof of that. This “new” home brought forth from the old, to use Abraham Lincoln’s words, is a project “of the people, for the people, by the people”—a testament to the people in their lives and to the people who made the project happen.

The Wilhelms may not have lived in their home four score and seven years (they moved into their 1980s-era two-story in 1999), but they did build much of their lives there. Their daughter grew up in the house, and as she neared her final year of college, the Wilhelms began discussing the possibility of moving.

“We talked about looking for a different place,” Joy says. “We were about to be empty nesters, and we didn’t necessarily need this much space.”

But after checking out the real estate market, talking about what they really wanted from their home, and discussing the cost of moving, the Wilhelms had a realization.

“We love our neighborhood, our neighbors, our church,” Joy explains. “Everything is right here. So we thought, why not move but not move and make this house the house really we want.”

To accomplish that, the couple really did have to move—to their finished lower level—and put much of their furniture in storage during the remodel. Joy jokes that she was constantly trying to find her car keys because none of the usual places were there anymore. She also says they could never have survived such an extensive remodel if they hadn’t partnered with AIM Kitchen & Bath of Beavertdale.

“We had worked with AIM a few years ago when we redid the upstairs baths, and they were just a dream to work with,” she explains. “Alex is great about listening and translating what I’m saying into the design.”

Alex Marske, designer for AIM, says, “The floor plan is a fairly typical Des Moines two-story with a little more elbow room. But the kitchen felt closed in with all the dark cabinetry. Kevin and Joy wanted an elegant space that was open and worked for entertaining family and friends.”

This spread, clockwise from top left:

AIM incorporated Joy’s wish list in the perfect design with features like the bar with lighted cabinetry for glassware, a spacious pull-out pantry, and open shelving for Joy’s cookbooks. Even the range and under-counter microwave are evidence of design solutions—the dual-source range gave Joy the gas cooktop she wanted, and the countertops are free of clutter.

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New flooring throughout the main level gives the entire space a more open feel.

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—Joy Wilhelm

Joy's wish list included a gas range, eliminating the kitchen table area to expand the island for dining, and adding a wet bar for entertaining. Marske talked her through each of those items and more to help put that wish list into the perfect space that would work for their lives.

"Alex really walked me through each of those decisions, asking why I wanted those things and how I was going to use them to help me make the right choice. Like the wet bar—I was sure I wanted that. But he reminded me how much counter space I'd lose for a second sink when there's another one just a few feet away and how much it would cost for the additional plumbing, so we went with a dry bar instead. And he was right. I have everything right at my fingertips now—all my barware is right there, and I can fit all the drink service on the counter. It's perfect."

Though the new kitchen has the same square footage, it feels much larger now. White cabinetry, beveled subway tile, and light quartz countertops give a sense of elegant spaciousness, despite the much larger island. And the new wood flooring, extended throughout most of the main level of the home, anchors the space and prevents the white from appearing too stark.

Marske worked with Joy to select furnishings and fittings for other rooms as well, giving the entire main floor the feel of a new home without the move.

Slate gray porcelain tile to mimic stone replaced worn linoleum in the mudroom and offers a classy but low-maintenance transition from the garage to the kitchen. The family room received a new fireplace of stacked limestone, an eye-catching light fixture, and a whole new look.

Alex worked with Joy to transform the family room into a space she's fallen in love with.





The half-bath was too small for the chandelier Joy envisioned, so Alex created elegance with wall sconces, fixtures, and other touches.

“We went back and forth on that light fixture,” Marske says. “Everyone loved it, and once we got it in, we realized how perfect it was for the room.”

“We hadn’t originally planned to do the fireplace, but as we talked about what we wanted for the house, and with the new kitchen, we knew the fireplace would look even more dated. The finished room was just a surprise that I love, and I didn’t even know I wanted it,” Joy adds.

In addition to the completely remodeled kitchen and the new fireplace wall in the family room, the remaining rooms each received a fresh paint color. And Joy is putting the finishing touches on new decor throughout the home, with frequent consultations with Marske.

“I keep calling and texting him with pictures,” she laughs. “I’ll ask him, ‘What do you think about this? Is this going to work in here?’ And he gives me advice, and he’s always right!”

Joy says she and Kevin have a phase three project in mind—the master suite. But they want to live in their ‘new’ home for a while first. And when they’re ready, they’ll be calling Marske so they can work with the AIM team again.

“All our guys are great,” Marske says, “and they’re really one of the things that set us apart. We have our own crew, and they do more than just follow our plan. They understand the design and the thought process behind it. So when bumps come along like



New flooring and paint updated the living room, but the floor lamp—a true conversation piece—pulled the room together.

they do in every project, they help find ways to make the design work with the situation at hand.”

Brian Lyddon, who had headed the crew on the Wilhelms’ bathroom remodel, was so wonderful to work with, Joy said she nearly hugged him when he arrived for this project. His expertise was invaluable, even resulting in a larger pantry than the Wilhelms expected along the way.

“We knew there was ductwork behind that pantry wall, so we intended to install 36-inch-wide cabinetry on the outside, but the interior of the pantry was only going to have 24-inch-wide storage to accommodate the ductwork. Brian engineered a new path for the ductwork and gave us the full 36-inch-wide pantry,” Marske explains.

Joy says, “Everyone from AIM was just a dream to work with. They discovered a gas leak and fixed that. They discovered our dryer had been venting lint into the walls, and they fixed that. Brian treated it like it was his house. I won’t do another project without them. I’m not kidding. When we went on vacation, Brian even fed my cat.”

The people in their lives are the reason the Wilhelms chose to remodel rather than to move. Now they have the perfect entertaining space to show for it. And that is thanks to some other important people in their life, the people at AIM Kitchen & Bath. ■



The three-season room also got new flooring, which mimics the hardwood but offers the durability of a man-made product.