

A Private Place

A new home with a great backyard works beautifully for a Waukee family.

By Carol McGarvey, *Photography by* Tim Abramowitz

Ryan and Kate Johnson built their first home in Urbandale, but with a growing family, one factor was gnawing at them—they really wanted privacy. “I grew up on a farm in Belmond, and Ryan is from St. Ansgar,” Kate says. “What we really wanted for our kids was more private space, just what you have in a more rural setting.”

The couple bought a near-acre lot near Waukee in 2008 but didn’t build on it for three years. They met Colin King and Dean Vogel of K and V Homes at a home show that same year. “It was instant rapport,” Kate explains. “We developed our own house plan, a walkout ranch with an open plan, but just before we were to build, we decided we wanted to have a third baby. So that changed our plan and put everything on hold for a time. Colin was most understanding and never rushed us. He wanted to make sure that our finished home reflected our personalities and style.”

The family moved in during May 2012. They live in an area with neighbors, but they enjoy a property with woods, a creek, and a fire pit in the back.

The home is oriented to the back of the property; oversize windows let the family enjoy the changing seasons up close and personal. The three children—Ella, Mya, and Jett—can watch their “pets,” too, including all the deer, geese, and other critters that visit the creek bed.

Clockwise from top: A thoughtful process went into the building of this home near Waukee. • A fire pit and a creek bed are perfect for family time. • The deck and covered porch play to the private area behind the house.





Touch of charm

Starting right at the front door, visitors notice the charming addition of window seats throughout the home. Kate treats them as practical pieces of furniture. The one by the entry offers a spot to sit to pull on shoes or boots. The large one in the kitchen provides a spot for sitting, napping, and storing games and craft supplies. The one in the lower-level family room tucks away blankets and pillows for movie nights and slumber parties.

The main floor works as an inviting family center; the living room and kitchen open to each other. The focal point for the living room is a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace. Faux-wood beams lend a cozy feel to the space.

The large kitchen showcases cabinetry in birch chestnut with a black glaze, quartz counters, and gray subway tiles on the backsplash. The two-level island is Provence maple in amaretto crème. There are five rattan chair-stools pulled up to the counter. Nearby is a 71-inch custom round table that works for family dinners and craft projects.

Opposite: The open kitchen, with two tones of cabinetry, is a gathering place for the busy family. • **This page, top:** A large custom table works for meals and for craft time. • **Right:** The living room, next to the kitchen, expands the entertaining space for large gatherings. A floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace is the focal point.





Clockwise: The welcoming porch creates another eating and family area, with a mounted TV for watching sports and other events. • The laundry room is centrally located for efficiency. • Kate's office is set up with two work stations, one for work and one for family-related details. • A cubbie set-up near the back door keeps backpacks and coats organized.



Just off this space is a huge screened porch. "It really acts as another room for us," says Kate. "The first Christmas here, we had 70 people for a party, and it worked great. The house flows so well for large groups." The porch has another large dining table, along with a seating area and a weatherproof TV, perfect for watching sports.

Off the hallway leading to the garage and behind a kitchen are a walk-in pantry and mudroom, great for storing coats and backpacks. Nearby is Kate's efficient office with a wall of warm pearl-white cabinetry and two work centers. One is for family and school details; the other is her work center. She works full-time from home for the Iowa Department of Corrections.

Efficient laundry

Another touch of efficiency is the laundry room, vibrant in black and white floor tiles placed on point, along with bright lime green walls and "Sparkle" in letters on the wall. The pièce-de-resistance is the bank of pull-out hang-drying drawers. "We saw those in a K and V house and had to have them," says the busy mother. "They work beautifully."



Off the living room is a transition area with frosted French doors. It's a toy space now, but down the road it could be an office or den. Nearby is son Jett's colorful room, also with a window seat, built-in desk, and his own bathroom.

The master bedroom is a rich chocolate brown with crème trim for a crisp look. Lots of windows soak in the woodsy view beyond. Kate designed the master bath to be "spalike for me, but masculine for Ryan." The walk-in-shower has tile walls and a pebble-style floor. There's a deep soaking tub with jets. As with other areas in the home, Kate incorporated built-in shelves backed by beaded board for displaying items. A rectangular sink with square faucets offers a distinctive look, and there's frosted glass on the toilet room.

Clockwise from top left: The master bedroom has a serene and restful vibe. • Throughout the home, storage is built in, as with these shelves over the tub in the master bath. • The stone detail in the master shower gives a masculine touch. • The bath and bedroom for son Jett will work well with him as he gets older.



“Through the process, our families became and continue to be good friends.” —Colin King, K and V Homes



The lower-level family room with a stone fireplace draws the Johnsons together for movies and games. A bar area works well for serving snacks. A hidden space under the stairway is fun for playing and hiding.

A guest room and bath is near the two daughters' colorful rooms. And, just for whimsy and fun, a book shelf pass-through between the rooms allows the sisters to hand items back and forth. A Jill and Jill bathroom is between the girls' rooms.

Ryan's room

It's no surprise that Ryan, who owns Right Roofing and Siding, laughs that his favorite room in the house is the garage. "I have TV, radiant-heat flooring, and all my tools. I love it!" One detail he likes is the stairway from the back of the garage that goes down to the lower level and to the back of the house.

Ryan had certain preferences for outside details, and Kate had them for inside. Nevertheless, the building process went beautifully, he says. "We have the same taste, so it worked well. The home is ultraconvenient for our family." There are 3,200 square feet on the main level and 2,000 on the lower level.

Builder Colin King says, "This home was a joy to build for this family. We did some elevation changes to take advantage of the view, and it worked well to incorporate lots of details that make the house work for them. Through the process, our families became and continue to be good friends."

The mantra for this busy family is displayed on a sign: *Live for today and make it so beautiful that it's worth remembering.* ■

One More Thing...

Check out page 66 for a closer look at the many custom storage solutions incorporated into the Johnson's home.



Opposite, top: The lower level family room works for movie night and slumber parties. • Left: The bar area is great for serving treats and snacks. • This page, clockwise from top left: Two sisters are close to each other, but with separate rooms. • Shelving space in the family room is good for displaying photos. • A secret space is fun for hiding and playing.