

# a project well planned

## taking their time paid big dividends



*“Never cut a tree down in the wintertime. Never make a negative decision in the low time. Never make your most important decisions when you are in your worst moods. Wait. Be patient. The storm will pass. The spring will come.” —Robert H. Schuller*

For whatever reason, there are times when things just don't seem right. In the case of empty-nesters Twila and Dale that gnawing feeling lasted over a three year period as they struggled with the options of moving to a new home, building one, or renovating the home they built in 1980. What motivated them they could agree upon—they wanted more open, brighter space to accommodate a growing family. Yes, grandchildren were already in the picture.

What they struggled with was how to get there. To say that

Twila wasn't keen on relocating would be an understatement. In Dale's case, he had trouble justifying the expense of modifying their existing home. The decision in front of them was huge. It was a very stressful and taxing time for them—and it went on for years.

During these deliberations, the couple started working with Kevin Bollinger and his talented staff at Quality Design & Drafting Services (QD&DS) in Lititz. Over the years, they considered numerous design options. With Twila's eye on the meticulous details and Dale's eye on the bottom line, the staff



at QD&DS had a real challenge on their hands coming up with a plan that could satisfy both. Through their design creativity and the assistance of their 3-D photorealistic rendering services, QD&DS patiently worked with the couple. Through each step of the process, as they got closer and closer to what were to become the approved plans, the list of wants, needs, and dream items were refined into a transforming design. In the end, while considerably different from their initial thoughts, they approved plans that they both could get excited about.

## SPOTLIGHT

### project description

Type:	Additions and Major Renovations.
Contractor:	<b>Middle Creek Builders Inc.</b> (see ad on p. 35)
Designer:	Quality Design & Drafting Svcs., Ltd. (see ad p. 34)
Trade Partners:	Beiler's Woodworking, LLC (see ad p. 36) Bernell Burkholder LLC Building & Remodeling (see ad p. 48) Cloister's Flooring America (see ad p. 38) Gundrum's Electric (see ad p. 44) Harvey C. Achey Construction (see ad p. 51) Heritage Design Interiors Inc. (see ad p. 22) Martin Appliance (see ad p. 36) Martindale Propane (see ad p. 51) Melron Industries Inc. (see ad p. 42) Musselman Lumber Inc. (see ad p. 41) Natural Stoneworks (see ad p. 19) Quality Stone Veneer Inc. (see ad p. 46) Sauder Bros. Concrete Inc. (see ad p. 46) Shank Door Company (see ad p. 48) Yale Lighting Concepts & Design (see ad p. 44)
Scope:	<p>Additions included an extension to the existing great room with a gas fireplace, a front porch roof with columns, two stone chimneys, a sewing room, laundry room, mudroom entry, a 1st floor full bath with a tiled in shower, a custom kitchen with granite counter tops, a butlers pantry with custom wood shelving, a study with custom cabinetry, and a barrel vault ceiling with columns.</p> <p>Interior renovations included removing a centrally located chimney and center bearing wall to create an open floor plan, replacing the existing stair case to the 2nd floor with a new stair case to create open floor space, new overhead doors and installing a storage closet in the garage, flooring and painting in the master bedroom and master bathroom, raised panels and trim at the 2nd floor balcony, flooring, painting, stair railings and balusters in the existing finished basement.</p> <p>Exterior renovations included replacing the existing windows, siding, soffit, fascia, shutters and gutter. Adding Stucco and columns at the annex and adding stamped concrete sidewalks.</p>

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Considering how closely they would be working with the contractor and the estimated duration of the project (approximately 6-8 months), a strong personal connection was very important. At one of their final meetings with QD&DS, Kevin was finally asked if he could recommend a builder. Although the builder selection

process is ultimately the responsibility of the client, Kevin's years of experience and his quality business associates allow him to share insights and recommendations through his contractor referral program if necessary.

"Lancaster County has many fine and capable builders who also do remodeling...many of whom are business associates of ours" says Kevin. "Having family members also in the industry, I typically withhold recommendations on selecting a specific builder. Given their lack of success in finding a company that they were comfortable with and having been asked directly, I didn't hesitate to suggest Darryl's company, Middle Creek Builders. In addition to doing outstanding work, Darryl and his team have an impeccable customer service reputation. I thought it would be a good fit."

It wasn't. As you'll hear during the course of our interview, it was a GREAT fit!

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Although they gave no indication at their first meeting, Twila and Dale knew they found their guy—Darryl Bollinger, President of Middle Creek Builders, based in Ephrata. Both felt an immediate connection with Darryl which only solidified the glowing reports they were receiving from past clients of Middle Creek Builders, as well as community and church members.

Family owned, Middle Creek Builders was founded in 1974 by Walter Bollinger with sons Darryl and Duane joining the company in 1984 and 1994, respectively. Walter now serves as the company's Vice President while Duane serves as Secretary/Treasurer as well as a Project Manager during day-to-day operations. A grandson, Dalton, joined the company in 2012.

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To learn more about the project, we sat down with Darryl along with Twila and Dale in their beautifully renovated kitchen/dining area. True to her love for cooking, Twila graciously served the group a homemade peach cheese-

cake. As you would expect, the presentation was impeccable and the cheesecake, oh so delicious!

**Let's start off by giving us some history of your home... how old is it and how long have you been here?**

Twila: We built the house in 1980 which makes it 34 years.

Dale: In 1998, we added the wing for a master bedroom and bath. Other than that, we didn't make any changes to the original layout.

**What prompted you to do this project?**

Twila: Our family size is increasing and we wanted to be able to accommodate family, friends and guests more comfortably. Our two main goals were a larger and brighter kitchen and dining area to better entertain family and



(see our ad p. 22)

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(see our ad p. 19)

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friends. As it was, both areas were small and, because of their northern exposure, dark for most of the day. I love to cook but the congestion in the kitchen, especially when our kids were home, took some of the enjoyment out of it.

**Was any consideration given to buying a new home or having one built?**

Dale: Yes, we had that discussion for a couple of years before we came to a final conclusion. For at least two years before we started working with Kevin at Quality Design & Drafting Services, we were doing our own drawings but never came up with anything that was satisfactory. We discussed multiple options—building a new home or purchasing an existing home. After a myriad of discussions over the course of several years, in our hearts, we knew we desired to stay in our existing home.

**And why was that?**

Twila: For me, it was all about home. This has been our home from the beginning. We have roots here...it's where our children were raised. At this age, I just couldn't envision us picking up and starting elsewhere. This is home...always was and always will be.

Dale: I initially struggled with the idea of renovating primarily because I could not justify the investment. My farm office is located in an out-building



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behind our house, which is very convenient. In addition, Twila really enjoyed flower gardening in the landscaping that we had done on our property several years ago. By agreeing to make changes to our existing house, we would commit to stay here for the years to come. Once I worked through all that we finally agreed to proceed with our project plans.

**Tell us how you came upon Darryl and Middle Creek Builders.**

Dale: We met Darryl near the end of the initial planning phase.

Twila: Yes, for at least 3-5 years we were working with his brother, Kevin Bollinger at Quality Design who must have come up with nearly a dozen different set of plans for us to consider.

Dale: When we committed to renovate our existing house, we returned to Kevin at Quality Design & Drafting Services. We asked if he could recommend contractors that he believed would work well with our prospective project.

Twila: Having spent so much time developing and refining the plans it was very important that we didn't make a mistake selecting our contractor. I wanted to be certain that we selected someone with whom we felt comfortable—someone easy to work with who would be conscientious about meeting our goals. Since we didn't get a strong sense from any of the others, we turned to Kevin to see if he could recommend someone.



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Dale: Up until then, we didn't solicit referrals from Kevin. To his credit, he waited until we asked before he even mentioned his brother Darryl and Middle Creek.

Twila: At that point, we were very recep-

tive to giving Darryl a shot so we called his office and scheduled a meeting. The rest is history.

Dale: I agree. Although we didn't tell him at the time, we decided he was our guy after our first meeting.

I saw it immediately—Twila and Darryl just clicked.

Twila: This is true, but we also did our due diligence. We reviewed some of Middle Creek's past projects and we spoke to the homeowners. Based on what we heard, there wasn't even half of a negative comment. Everyone had great things to say about Middle Creek—how conscientious they are and with the quality of their work. They don't cut corners and you're always in the know of what their plans are. If they have a question, they ask the homeowner rather than just going ahead and doing it without consulting them.

We had done our homework and Middle Creek came through with flying colors. Our subsequent meetings with Darryl went exceedingly well and we were very, very impressed and pleased with what he had to present. Supplementing all that, church friends and acquaintances who knew Darryl on a personal level also spoke very highly of him. Needless to say, we felt very comfortable with our decision to hire Middle Creek Builders and to this day, that feeling has only grown stronger.

**Earlier you talked about how important it was to expand your kitchen. What you didn't mention was expanding your pantry—it's huge!**

Twila: Yes, it's big and it's incredible! It goes along with the line of entertaining and hosting. In the past, because of the limited storage space, I had kitchen-related items stored all over the place...in the basement, in the garage, in one of our out buildings, you name it. Preparing a large dinner was a real challenge. To have everything I need in one easily accessible area close to the kitchen is absolutely fabulous!

Dale: Although it worked out great, that pantry wasn't part of our original plans. I had originally intended to use that space for an interior stairway to the basement and remove the outside bilco door entrance from the patio. I think we made Twila a very happy woman and we saved some money in the process.

Twila: Yes, that was a great decision and so was the decision to open up the family room.

**Please explain to our readers what you did to open up the family room.**

Dale: Originally the only way to get into the family room was from the entrance by the front door. It was a separate room—partitioned off from the rest of the house.

Darryl: In the original plans, while several of the interior wall partitions were removed, the staircase was still enclosed by walls. We decided to remove the staircase walls and replace them with newel posts and railings. This allowed us to create more open space allowing a view of much of the first floor. This was very appealing to Twila and Dale in the open floor plan they were trying to create.

Twila: It's also great for those congregating in the kitchen and dining areas to have a view of the fireplace. It turned out to be an awesome feature.

**We understand that construction started in May and was finished in time for Thanksgiving. What can you tell us about that experience?**



Dale: Darryl set up a precise schedule. He was very conscientious of working to meet our township requirements. Once they started, things moved right along.

Twila: Since we were living in an RV on our property, we were able to keep in constant contact with the work crews.

Throughout the project, Darryl went out of his way to keep us informed of things...we were never in the dark as to what was going on. Before it was all over, Darryl and his team started to seem like family. Although I tried hard not to be in their way, I loved coming over to visit and seeing the transformation taking place.

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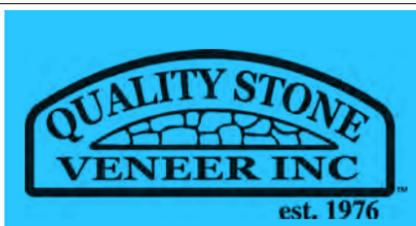
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Dale: The crew welcomed Twila and never hesitated to engage her in conversation while continuing to work on the project.

Darryl: We do strive hard to keep everyone working on schedule, but

it was also a benefit to have frequent communication with Twila and Dale. As you would expect, during the course of a renovation project there are options to weigh, and decisions to be made during the construction process. Having Dale and Twila available

on a daily basis for decision making kept things running smoothly.

**How did you find the condition of the job site during the construction phase?**

Twila: It was VERY impressive. They took great care in securing areas that were exposed and in sealing areas off where necessary. And without fail, before going home for the day, the crew had everything swept up and their tools were gathered and organized. It was incredible...and this happened every day! We hadn't expected them to be so thoughtful in this regard, so to actually see it day in and day out, it was very impressive. I think it spoke very highly to their character and their respect for us as homeowners.

**Supplementing the Middle Creek crew, there were a number of sub-contractors involved in the project. What was your experience with the team that Darryl put together?**

Dale: We communicated and were



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Dale: While everyone was very professional, you could tell that they had a great camaraderie. They were very respectful of each other—not just of us. It was impressive

and very reassuring that we had a great team.

Darryl: Thank you for the compliment! We are happy that you felt that way. In addition to having high quality technical skills, we look for subcontractors who are respectful to our customers and who have good communication skills. Those qualities mean a lot to us as we want to create a job site environment that allows the homeowner to feel comfortable visiting and spending time on site during the construction process.

**Given the nature of a remodeling project where you're actually working in someone's home compared to new home construction, I would think that trait is even more important.**

Darryl: It absolutely is. Renovation and remodeling projects usually have more homeowner involvement due to logistics. The homeowner is either still living onsite or close by. Also the interaction between the homeowners and a team member is generally more frequent therefore it is imperative to us that team members are professional, appropriate, and respectful in their interactions with the homeowner as well as with other team members.

Dale: We are deeply grateful to everyone who worked so diligently on our renovations.

Twila: We are very thankful for Anita Yoder's impeccable interior design

more directly involved with some of the crews more than others. In our experience, all of the crews were easy to work with. They were extremely patient and very skilled in their craft. They all did outstanding work.

Twila: They all showed great respect for us, for the property, and for what they were doing. They were all very conscientious, detail-oriented guys. We didn't see any corners being cut. I have nothing but great compliments and regards for Darryl and his entire team.



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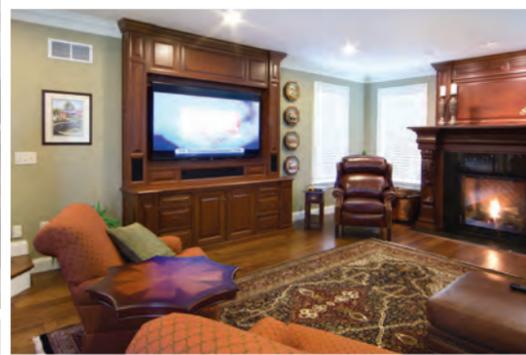
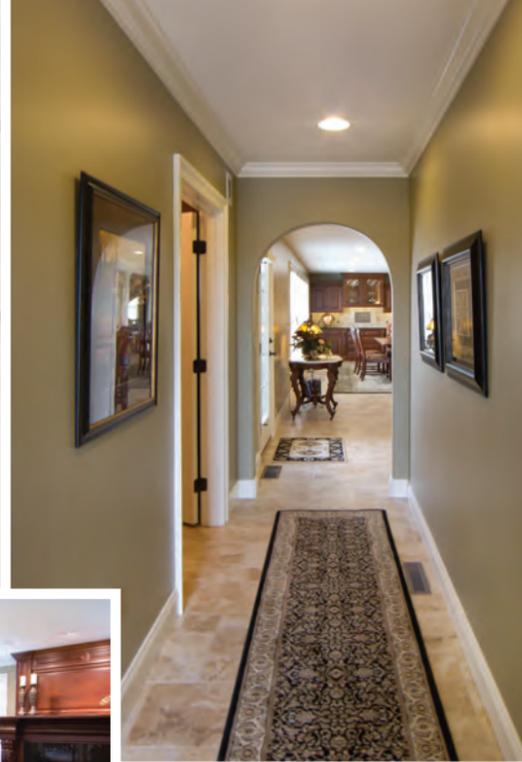
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ideas and her willingness to incorporate the old with the new. She quickly identified numerous items from our home that we are able to use in the new design. We also appreciate everyone's skillful, creative ideas and their willingness to work so hard for a wonderful end result—including the landscape designs of our sister-in-law, Lu Rohrer.

**Now that you've had a chance to live in your beautifully renovated home, how satisfied are you with everything?**

Twila: We are extremely happy with the way everything turned out. I just can't thank Darryl and the team at Middle Creek Builders enough. Everything was just so beautifully done—we absolutely love it!

Dale: I can't tell you the number of compliments we've received—including from complete strangers.

Twila: At social gatherings, at the grocery store, at church, people will come up to us and say "WOW, your house is beautiful". Of course, we immediately pass the credit along to Middle Creek Builders and all of the crews who worked on the renovations.

**Do you have any advice for homeowners contemplating a project?**

Twila: Yes, first off, call Darryl! As I mentioned earlier, when we did our research we discovered that Darryl Bollinger and Middle Creek Builders had an impeccable reputation. Having worked so closely with him during the course of our project, seeing the work that they do and the manner in which they do it, we can personally vouch for everything we heard. Middle Creek Builders did an outstanding job for us.

The only other piece of advice that comes to mind is something we almost missed out on. During the construction phase, Curtis Gundrum of Gundrum's Electric suggested that we consider installing a central vacuum system throughout the entire house. We did and it's absolutely awesome!

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**And if you had to do it over again, would you do anything differently?**

Dale: I don't remember either one of us ever having second thoughts on the renovations.

**Perhaps you can attribute that to great planning?**

Dale: I think the years we spent deliberating things certainly helped. It was frustrating at times, however, taking our time to consider our options

resulted in a genuine sense of satisfaction. Rather than rushing into decisions, we took our time. In addition to helping us avoid mistakes, I think the additional time helped us refine what we really wanted—what was really important to us.

Twila: Equally important, if not more, the additional time gave us the opportunity to be introduced to a wonderful builder. The wait was well worth it.

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