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**Cozy on
the Cove**

**Backyard Paradise
Your Dazzling Smile**

PHOTO BY BRUCE GLASS

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Cozy on the Cove

Living is breezy in this traditional lakeside charmer



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Photography:

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Architect: Robert Dame Designs

Builder: Christopher Sims Custom Homes

Bellacasa Design Associates

On occasion, Kristy and Brad Defenbaugh look up from a meal to find onlookers driving slowly past their home. "They'll notice that we see them and then they just kind of speed off," says Brad, with a chuckle. "It has happened a few times."

This drive-by interest is easily understood. The Defenbaugh home is an eye-catcher in Old Chicago brick and soft, earthy blue trim. The front breakfast/sunroom in horizontal white wallboards is particularly stunning, both for its architectural features and idyllic views.

"That's where we usually notice people driving by, when we're eating in there," Kristy says. "So if our eyes meet, sometimes we just smile and wave."

This is a friendly house for a friendly couple. Above all else, the Defenbaughs—including daughter Kayleigh who is often home during college breaks—wanted a home that is warm and relaxing for family and visitors. "We wanted things to be somewhat informal, not stuffy





at all," Brad explains. "Just really comfortable."

That goal started with the architecture. "Designing a home is a very personal journey for me, and the Defenbaughs were wonderful at conveying what they wanted," says architect Robert Dame. "Their home is a nice break from the generic arrangements of space. Their entire house is a welcome change."

The result of this client-architect collaboration is a home that embraces the family's privacy, yet provides ample space for entertaining. "One of the aspects of the house that I really enjoy is the fact that the master bedroom is on the second floor where there are incredible views of the water," Dame explains. "And downstairs they have public spaces like the billiard room and theater that flow from the family room, the nucleus of the home—not to mention all the wonderful outdoor spaces, balconies and porches. This is a home that can be enjoyed on all levels."

Literally and figuratively.

"We love this house," says Kristy, their dog, Toto, padding along for a tour. "We had a traditional house before that looked much more formal. We wanted to get away from that. Between the architect, builder and interior designer, we achieved the look and feel that we wanted."

Bellacasa Design Associates took the reins on interior design, pursuing a casual approach while still infiltrating certain formalities. "The Defenbaughs asked us for a French European influence but knowing that they didn't want an overly formal home helped guide the plan," says Kelly Welsh, lead designer on the project. "We incorporated some of the formality in the bones of the house itself. And the upholstered pieces had to be quite inviting."

The home is a welcoming haven of tactile fabrics with a palette of mellow

PREVIOUS PAGES: The Defenbaugh home in Old Chicago brick is striking with two wings handsomely encasing plenty of space for privacy and entertaining. Large windows and plenty of outdoor spaces capture wonderful views of the lake. ➔ A grand piano finds the perfect niche at the base of a gently curving staircase in the home's entry. ➔ Cozy, casual elegance defines the living room. A mellow palette of steely gray paneled walls and earthy fabrics makes the space serenely comfortable. Overhead vintage beams crisscrossing white ceiling boards add architectural interest.

THESE PAGES: The dining room with two matching chandeliers is a stunning space for entertaining. Muted tones carry the theme with hand-painted chairs and sideboard from the Palina Collection. ➔ The upstairs landing is a vision in symmetry with topiaries and sconces flanking this European scene. The whitewashed sideboard adds rustic flair.

"Their home is a nice break from the generic arrangements of space. Their entire house is a welcome change."

tones and accessories that are easy on the eye. Cushy linen sofas flank one another in a large family room with non-matching coffee tables adding interest to the arrangement. Steely gray walls over large block paneling offer a toned down feel. An antique rug upon sisal adds texture and substance as layering to the walnut floor. Crisscrossed vintage wood beams anchor the space over a white wood plank ceiling.

A gently winding back staircase framed by an archway is an architectural focal point, adding sculptural drama to the room. Two comfy suede chairs flank the fireplace that serves double-duty for the home's adjoining den.

A clever mix of floor materials adds character throughout. Pennsylvania blue slate adds contrast in a light and bright kitchen and den with a large built-in cabinet acting as a bridge to the two rooms.

"I had originally picked out very swirly, curly-cue French country cabinets. But Bellacasa walked me through it and came up with a better idea for the kitchen," Kristy says of the room's sleek, classic traditional European look. Light cabinetry, some with lit glass fronts, mix with marble and a copper range hood to complete the picture. "I like marble so much better than granite," says Kristy. "Much lighter and brighter. Harder to maintain, but I love the look."

Just off the kitchen to the front of the home is a phenomenal space with character to spare—the sunroom/breakfast room, a favorite place for dining, great conversation, taking in views of the lake (and waving to the occasional passerby). Terra-cotta tile floors in a herringbone pattern mix with horizontal white wallboards for a charming, casual elegance. White eyelet curtains with barely there green stitching

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THESE PAGES: This little piggy adds contrast in this light and bright kitchen. Sleek marble countertops, a copper range hood and simple curtains in a red and ivory print give the space a streamlined European feel. ➔ Who minds kitchen chores when greeted with this scene? Dappled sunlight bounces off a bouquet of fresh flowers next to the sink. ➔ An adorable breakfast/sunroom in a herringbone patterned terra-cotta tile and horizontal white wallboard offers spectacular views of the lake. Eyelet curtains with green stitching add charm, complementing the chair slipcovers.

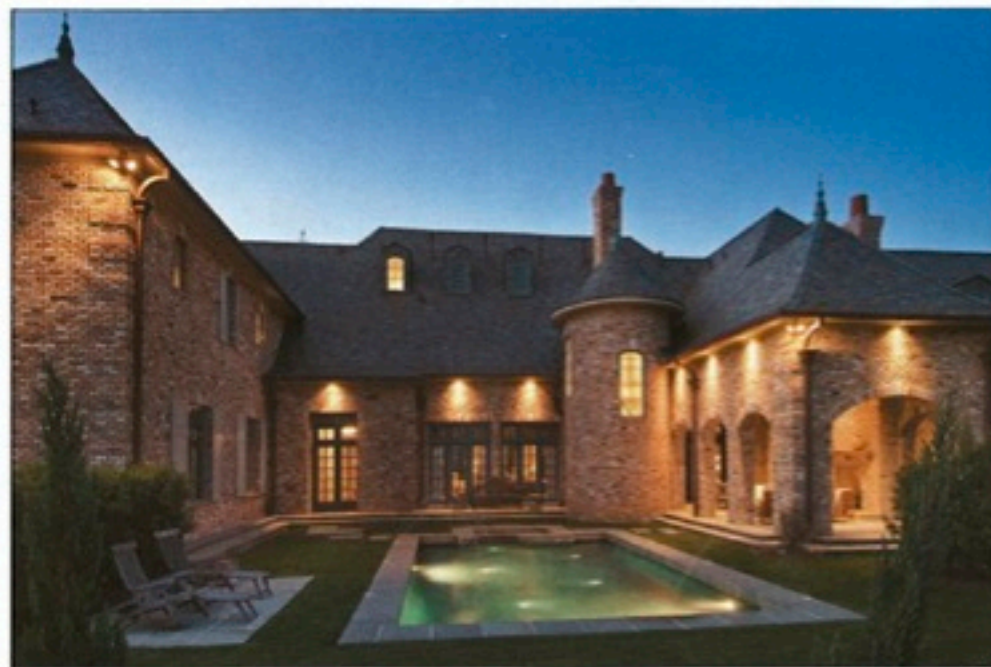


"We had a traditional house before that looked much more formal.
We wanted to get away from that."



THESE PAGES: A toned-down, hand-painted bed from the Patina Collection sets the mood for this peaceful retreat. The master was designed for upstairs views of the lake. ➔ Blue-gray tiles of varying shapes add substance to this clean bathroom design, awash in subtle tones. ➔ This upstairs gallery hallway is the perfect spot for family portraits and pictures of get-togethers.





Daughter Kayleigh relaxes with the family dog, Toto. ➔ Patios and porches galore surround a pool and beautiful grounds. The rounded section encompasses a unique back staircase, an interesting architectural element to the home. ➔ The family has plenty of outdoor spaces to frequent, including this great roofed-in patio. Here, a view from the den.



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add softness, coordinating with the chairs' casual slipcovers.

Connecting to the breakfast room through a butler's pantry, an expansive dining room makes a statement all its own with timeless wallpaper and two matching chandeliers that preen over a table that easily accommodates a large dinner party. Chairs and sideboard from the painted furniture Patina Collection soften this space against walnut floors. Long flowing floral curtains accented with tassels add an elegant touch.

On the opposite end of the house is Brad's domain, a study in vintage oak paneling. "I wanted it to have sort of a cigar club feel," he says of the space, definitely masculine in feel. It connects to a billiard room and theater room adorned in velvet green curtains and chairs. The room can be programmed for special ceiling effects—movie watching under a starry sky.

A beautiful curving staircase leads to an equally fetching upstairs where

a hallway serves as a gallery for treasured family pictures. "I'm so happy to have this space for them all," says Kristy who came up with the idea.

One end of the hallway offers an offshoot to a small office for Kristy, an exercise room and Kayleigh's bedroom, a sophisticated retreat in sky blue walls with blue and white striped carpeting, linen bedding and flowing floral drapes.

"Kayleigh was going for a New York hotel room type flair," explains Kristy, pointing out the white leather headboard and other streamlined features. "She knew the look she was going for and worked with Bellacasa to achieve it."

At the opposite end of the upstairs is the master retreat with framed views of the lake. The room continues the casual, elegant theme with vintage beams accenting a white wallboard ceiling. A hand-painted bed from the Patina Collection anchors this space with furnishings in creams, browns and earthy blues lending a casual tone.

Subdued wallpaper and soft gray-blue tiles in varying shapes define the master bathroom that appears to be sans shower if you don't know where to look. "It's kind of tucked in there, very private," says Kristy. "I think that's a clever use of space."

Clever also describes the many outdoor amenities to the home. Balconies and outdoor features including an expansive under-roof retreat off of the den add entertainment potential to an already remarkably visitor-friendly home.

Adding to the home's charm is a rooftop flying Pegasus weather vane that catches lakeside breezes. It is a sentimental symbol for this family who knows that corporate logo all too well as former Mobil employees. Brad's father and mother met while working there, as did Brad and Kristy.

No matter which way the wind blows, the Defenbaughs have found the perfect home for them. "It's a nice place to come home to," says Kristy. "I'm so glad we decided to build here." ●

Fort Bend

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