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Springfield Kitchen Makeover is Tops in 10-State Home Remodeling Competition

Transforming a circa-1970s kitchen into a French country style interior recently won Michael Nash Kitchens and Baths of Fairfax a Region Two "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) Grand Award from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Named "best kitchen in the \$30,000 to \$60,000" budget category, the design solution was selected from entries in 10 southern states ranging from Maryland to Florida. Earlier this year, the project took top honors from NARI's 500-member metro Washington, DC, chapter.

The comprehensive makeover is in the home of Jeffery and Meg Levine of Springfield, who have occupied their center-hall colonial since the early 1990s.

On learning that her kitchen was judged the best in such a wide geographic area, Meg Levine noted that she was "not that surprised."

"This contractor accomplished a lot with our budget," she observed. "The new space feels enormously expanded in every direction, yet we only borrowed a few feet from inside the house. It's magical."

The original 143 square-foot kitchen with family dining area presented a host of practical problems, Levine recalls, most

notably that it was too dark, all the appliances were in too small an area, there was inadequate storage space and poor circulation.

"It's funny," Levine reflects. "This was considered a modern kitchen, yet I couldn't open the doors to the dishwasher and the stove at the same time."

Adds Sonny Nazemian, chairman and CEO of Michael Nash Kitchens: "The original plan used space dividers, like the L-shaped countertop, to segment activity zones. Twenty years ago, people wanted lots of rooms—even small ones; now they want generous space, storage and comfort."

So what exactly did the Michael Nash team do to transform a dysfunctional kitchen into an award-winner? Consider:

- The existing kitchen's L-shaped counter, intended to give the cook privacy, actually made limited space even more cramped. The HVAC system, concealed in overhead casing, restricted cabinet height and reduced storage capacity. The Michael Nash solution—replacing the L-counter with a standalone island—forms flexible work triangles, yet still keeps through traffic away from the cook. The island also doubles as a two-seat lunch counter.

But what about the HVAC?

- To gain inches, the dining room door was shifted to the left. Eighteen inches by eight feet was borrowed from an adjacent, seldom-used living room, then shelled-in to create space for the refrigerator and a new wet bar. Heating and cooling ducts were re-routed behind the new walls. The door-shift creates a vertical surface for taller cabinets to the right of the stove. More storage everywhere.

- A small family room at the kitchen's opposite end features a pleasant brick back wall and hearth. Owing to its narrow door, however, the room is visually cut off from the rest of the house. The Levines sought cleaner sightlines, which called for enlarging the door. The plan: an archway,

five feet in width, which can be closed off by a barn door mounted on a cast iron rail. To make this happen, Michael Nash craftsman constructed a 430-pound Dutch-style barn door to owner specification. The crew then installed a pre-manufactured wrought-iron track and took several days assuring the alignment would support load requirements.

- To bring in the light, Michael Nash redesigned the home's east-facing rear elevation. A double French slider replaced the original single door. The window in the cook's station was relocated and enlarged. The result: "The whole area is warm and light-filled," Meg Levine allows. "The trees and the yard are now all around us. It's very peaceful."