

A family kitchen in time for the holidays

■ How master designer/remodeler Sonny Nazemian's award-winning plan revitalized a 60-year old home

BY JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

If the American kitchen isn't what it used to be, that's partly because the way it is used has changed dramatically.

In the past, tradition called for meals prepared out of view in the galley, and consumed in a formal space: the dining room. Custom held that someone unseen had organized the meals. 'What happened in the kitchen, stayed in the kitchen,' so to speak.

But now we're in the age of elegant-but-casual interactions. There's less ceremony. Homeowners seek less structure and - in a home - this can mean fewer walls.

These impulses become particularly apparent in the holiday season, when the extended family convenes, and what's prized is an "open plan" inside a sweeping visual continuum that is also zoned for privacy and easy socialization.

Creating that playful interactive space in a way that works for everyone often entails something of journey; especially when the existing house is over 60 years old.

Consider McLean homeowner Kevin Puzder's experience.

Several years ago, the Puzders - a young couple with two children - were living in far Prince William County, hoping to gain three hours a day by moving to a neighborhood closer to work. Eventually they purchased



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

A Cherrywood food prep island and dining counter directs traffic away from the cook's work station, yet makes it easy for guests to congregate. Topped with a granite counter surface and a prep sink, the plan offers an easy pivot to the six-burner gas stove.

a 2,400-square-foot "split-foyer" on a wooded lot south of McLean. The resurgent architectural style is now dubbed: Mid-century Modern, and is much in-demand when properly renovated.

Every bit a product of the era in which it was constructed (1962), the first-level floor plan to the newly purchased Puzder home unfolded as a series of small inter-connected rooms, starting at the front door.

To wit:

- There was a 60-square-foot galley kitchen immediately to the left of the foyer. An electric stove, a refrigerator, a short row of cabinets lined up on one wall; a sink, two windows, and an oven on the opposite wall.
- Entering the house from the foyer, one comes to 300 square

feet of conjoined living room/dining room. This multi-use "great room" was also accessible from a door on the other side of the galley.

- To the west, a family room with a large stone hearth - formerly a patio enclosure - boasts a kind of rustic charm and featured a large rear window with views of poplar and pine trees.

"Unfortunately, the house provided less living space than we had been used to," Kevin Puzder recalls. "We hoped that a completely new first floor plan - efficiently-designed - would make up the difference."

But the owner was also aware that rehabilitating a 60-year-old house would require a remodeler with solid older-home experience.

As the family settles in, Puz-

der begins researching ideas for a gourmet kitchen/ great room in earnest. This space will be centerpiece of the newly configured first floor plan.

Puzder talks with several contractors, but is attracted to Sonny Nazemian, founder and CEO of Michael Nash Design Build and Homes, on the strength of his extensive exposure to older homes, and reputation for creative solutions.

"It was clear that Sonny understood the technical considerations to remodeling an older property in ways that others didn't," Puzder says. "He pointed out immediately, for instance, that there was a structural wall between the kitchen and great room, and that removing it would require a precise engineering solution."

The change would entail removing the existing bearing wall



A decorative cook-top hood above the stove absorbs cooking scents. Homeowner Kevin Puzder says the vent allows him to explore cuisine that needs a 'higher heat' without concern for excess smoke.

and installing a steel I-beam mounted on a pair of vertical beams as the principal support for the home's second floor. A brick structural wall in the kitchen would, likewise, be dismantled.

Meanwhile, by rerouting kitchen HVAC vents, the designer eliminated the need for ceiling-flush bulk-heading, gaining the wall space needed for higher, more capacious storage cabinets.

"We've learned a lot of prac-

tical techniques that help homeowners gain living space without building an addition," Nazemian says. "These ideas expand a home improvement budget substantially."

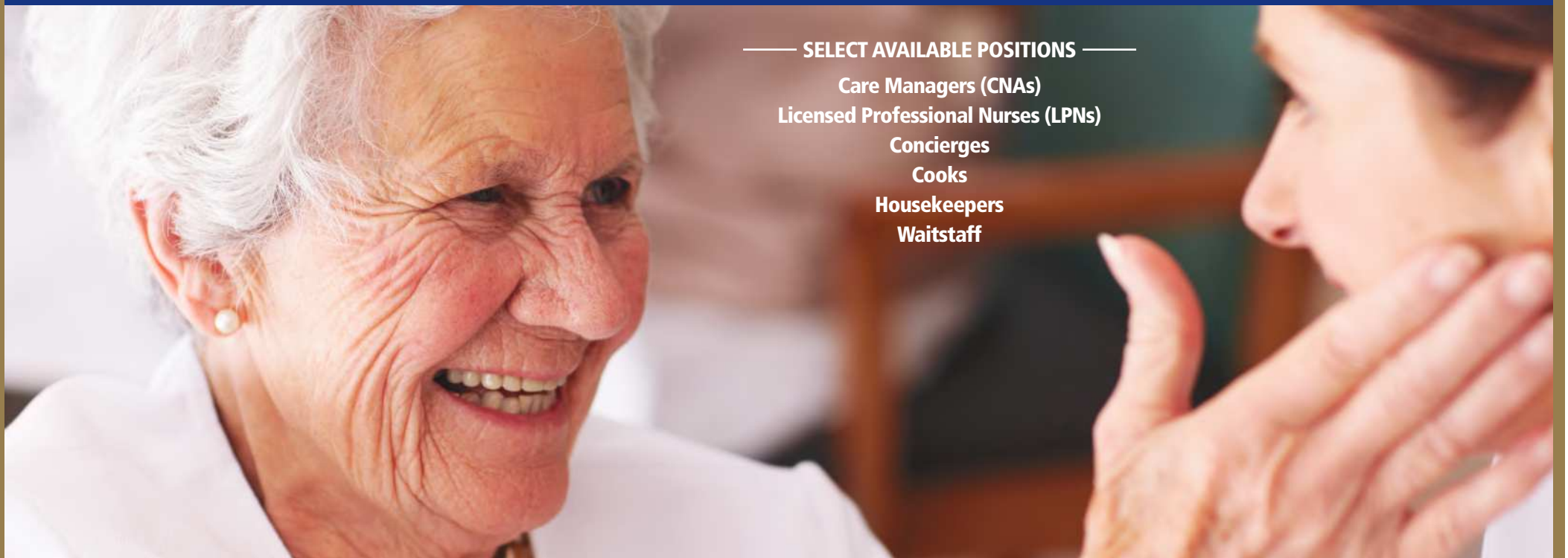
With major structural considerations resolved, attention now turned to the space plan, and a new interior design scheme.

"An open floor plan has to be developed thoughtfully," Nazem-

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HOMES

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ian says. “The finish work ideas are integral to a zoning strategy that aims to differentiate primary gathering areas within an otherwise expansive space. The detailing should reinforce a perception that the zones offer a degree of privacy, even though they are clearly visible to anyone in the room.”

To maximize floor space, the Nazemian plan makes adroit use of interior walls.

Moving around the periphery of the room, working counter surfaces in combination with custom-designed cabinetry provide ample support for food prep, service and storage without disrupting sightlines.

The clean lines and balanced elevations, in turn, present a uniform and understated interior design scheme, but also a footprint that preserves floor space where it’s needed.

Formal accents such as the glass-

facing corner cabinets and raised panel cabinet facings reinforce “traditional-style” design protocols, yet the colors are light and restful.

Bone white subway tile backslashes; plantation shutters; “distressed” wide plank oak floors – all icons of a classic American look – converge in all directions.

At 49 square feet (12’-by-4’), the cherry wood food prep island and four-stool dining counter is the primary focal point. Topped with a granite counter surface and a food prep sink (and equipped with a warming oven and dishwasher), the cook’s work triangle offers an easy pivot to the six-burner gas stove.

A decorative cook top hood keeps kitchen scents from dispersing. Puzder says the vent has freed him to explore cuisine that needs a “higher heat” process.

The new space also allows the young family to entertain more frequently.

“It works beautifully for eight to 10 people,” he says.

Further on, the butler’s pantry – adjacent to the new French

doors – is positioned as a serving station to the patio where the Puzders will spend more time as barbecuing season gets underway.

“There are so many lifestyle options available to us now,” he adds. “We’re really pleased with how the new space has turned out.”

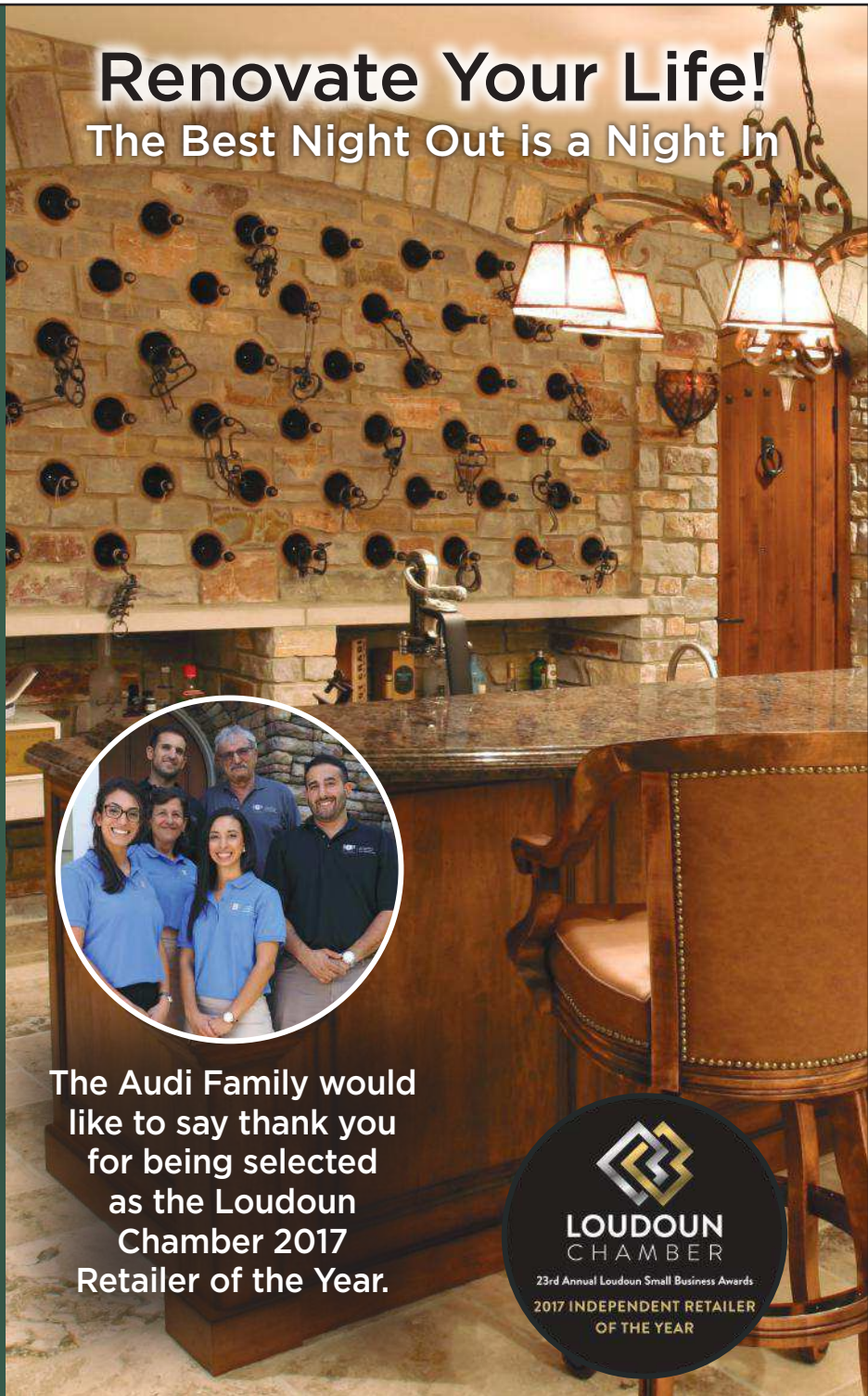
The home improvement was named a “Best in American Living” Winner by the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB). It also garnered a regional Chrysalis Award for the “Best Kitchen Remodel” in an 11-state area ranging from the District of Columbia to Florida.

For information call (703) 641-9800 or visit MichaelNash-Kitchens.com

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