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CELEBRATING THE ARTS | WINTER 2013





Photograph by Greg Hadley

HOME REMODELING

“Decade of Excellence”

REMODELING AWARD STRESSES CONSISTENCY OVER 10-YEAR PERIOD | BY JOHN BYRD

A decade is a long time in the lifespan of a remodeler. While northern Virginia boasts many companies that have plied their trade for a generation or more, the fact is that the remodeling business – like most enterprises based on contracts – tends to be perishable.

That said, one must marvel at the optimism when the industry's most prestigious purveyor of best-quality work introduces its first ever “Decade of Excellence” award. To win, according to Director Ken Kanline who developed the Chrysalis awards in 2000, a remodeler must have won at least one Chrysalis every year for the past decade.

“Performance consistency over time has become the critical variable in evaluating remodelers,” Kanline says. “The Decade of Excellence award gets past the question of whether a firm has performed well periodically, and introduces the more relevant long-term reliability issue. Our goal is to identify remodeling brands with staying power.”

How many firms in 12 southern states (ranging from Florida to Virginia to as far west as Texas) have actually received the award?

To date, just one: Michael Nash Design Build and Homes. The 30-year-old, full-service firm headed by president and CEO Sonny Nazemian has garnered at least

one Chrysalis annually since 2009. Moreover, the honors have been conferred in a cross-section of categories ranging from “whole house remodeling” to “additions” to “interiors” and “exteriors” – plus, “detached outbuildings,” “kitchens,” “bathrooms,” and “basements.” Adding rigor, the prize also measures the accomplishment within a specific price range (ie. “Best Kitchen Under \$50,000”). Of the awards captured by Michael Nash since 2009, nine have been national; 19 are category-best in the 12-state South Atlantic region

“This company's consistent level of success points to a concern for quality within the corporate culture that has made Michael Nash one of the best recognized remodelers in the nation,” Kanline observes. “It's also noteworthy that this acknowledgment comes at a time when many companies are still recovering from the slower economy of the past three years.”

A look at the range and diversity of Michael Nash's work in Fairfax County is also instructive. The remodeler doesn't specialize in any particular type of remodeling or price point; rather innovation and creativity are the prevailing constants, a fact the remodeler's clients readily acknowledge.

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—Sonny Nazemian



WHOLE HOUSE, BIG VIEW

“I interviewed several contractors regarding our remodeling goals, but they didn’t grasp the big picture” recalls Rima Bitar of McLean, who hired Michael Nash to renovate a 20-year-old, Mediterranean-style house that eventually won a string of top awards including (in 2017) a Chrysalis for “Best Whole House Remodel Under \$300,000.”

The house had “lots of potential,” as Bitar saw it – much of it unrealized. A particular problem was the sequence of rooms on the left side of the foyer.

“There was a great view of the pool from the rear of the house,” Bitar says. “But from the foyer one entered a living room on the left which revealed a doorway on the back wall linked to a rear office. A powder room in-between flanked right. Overall, the left side of the house was too dark from front to back.

To allow more natural light and visual continuum, the remodeler introduced a structural beam mounted on vertical supports mid-room and removed the obstructive bearing wall. The vertical supports were encased in visually-sympathetic recessed paneling.

Meanwhile, the entrance from the foyer was widened, and changed to an arch which reiterates existing window shapes.

Throughout, Nazemian advised on everything from structural issues to interior design fundamentals.

“Sonny asked me if I wanted the color undertones to be cool or warm,” Bitar says. “I then realized that cooler undertones would allow me to choose brighter colors as accents for some accessories. This helped us find an appropriate compositional balance – which made all the difference.”



GOURMET KITCHEN

Two years before (2016), Michael Nash won a regional Chrysalis for “Best Residential Kitchen \$75,000 to \$150,000.”

“I had been thinking about improving the kitchen ever since we bought the house three years before,” Great Falls homeowner Phillip Breddy says. “Since I like cooking, the restricted space was a problem – but then I didn’t like the kitchen’s aesthetics anyway, so we started gathering ideas.”

A chance visit to the Michael Nash showroom in Fairfax soon ignited Breddy’s still-formulating remodeling plans.

“There were lots of useful kitchen displays,” Breddy recalls. “Before we left, I scheduled an appointment with Sonny Nazemian.”

Once Breddy identified the professional-caliber stove and hood he wanted, the remodeler developed a space plan that called for shifting the rear elevation farther out onto the back deck. The change would accommodate a larger refrigerator and a substantial food preparation

This page top: 2017 National Chrysalis “Best Whole House Remodel Under \$300,000.00.” By eliminating a wet bar and relocating the powder room to a spot between the family room and the music room, the new floor plan better rationalizes existing square footage. The two-level fireplace (formerly stacked stone) was re-surfaced in grey-striped porcelain tile; the recessed niche over fireplace was designed to accommodate a flush-mount TV.

Above: 2016 Chrysalis “Best Residential Kitchen \$75,000-\$150,00.” The gourmet kitchen began with assessing square footage requirements for adding a 4-ft. x 8-ft. food prep island, a 6 burner gas range and a 72” refrigerator and freezer. Ultimately, the remodeler relocated the west-facing rear elevation four feet back onto a rear deck, adding over 150 feet of enclosed usable space.

Photographs by Greg Hadley



Page 43 and this page top: 2015 Chrysalis "Best Residential Exterior under \$100,000.00." Indoor-outdoor play space for a family of five integrates a covered porch with open air decking that features panoramic views of adjacent parkland. The stained decking and synthetic railing are mold-resistant. A mudroom behind the garage (right) helps kids clean-up before entering the house.

This page above: 2009 Chrysalis "Best Addition \$100,000-\$250,000." The new Georgian-style façade to a former patio home in Oakton includes a brick-surfaced porch, an Adam-style entry and a second level balcony with balustrades. Michael Nash resolved inherent site problems by deploying deep footings as foundation support, eliminating the need to excavate.

Photographs by June Stanich

island. It also allowed the designer to remove ceiling-flush bulkheads housing plumbing and electrical. The increased headroom provided space for taller cabinets – a welcome 20 percent increase in storage capacity.

Overall, the new plan unfolds "generously" in every direction, Breddy says. With the food prep island is one leg in a work triangle that includes a clean-up and the 6-burner gas range oven, the step-saving configuration facilitates all the essential cooking and clean-up tasks.

"It's a place where we can entertain," he adds. "And it works beautifully for that purpose. But it's also where the kids do homework while meals are being prepared."

FROM PATIO HOME TO SPACIOUS SOUTHERN COLONIAL

"I was looking for a larger master bedroom, a guest room... but also wanted a front porch and a foyer," Oakton's Gina Jones recalls. "The foyer was important in my childhood home (Huntsville, Alabama). The

foyer is where the house begins."

A practical problem, however, was the steeply sloping grade immediately outside the existing front door. The more Jones learned about her home's inherent site problems the more the search for new square footage became concentrated on the rear elevation.

It was at this juncture that Jones met Sonny Nazemian.

"We re-graded, leveled and re-compacted the whole front yard," the remodeler explains. "That may sound simple, but the site changes are carefully calibrated. This allowed us to specify deep footings for structural support, eliminating the need to excavate."

With the site prepared, Nazemian next concentrated on the addition itself, converting the existing front patio into a 14-ft. x 26-ft. footprint for a two-level enclosure.

The lower level now accommodates a spacious foyer with 10-ft. ceilings, a first-level guest room and a full bath. On the second level, the Michael Nash team co-opted one of three existing bedrooms to form a substantially larger master bedroom suite.

Best yet, the new plan permits a top item on her wish list: a 25-ft. x 6-ft. two-level front porch that, Jones says, evokes the welcoming facade of her childhood home.

The project so impressed other professionals that it won a Chrysalis (in 2009) for best "Addition in the \$100,000 to \$250,000" category. It also won a "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) award from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry,

"It's the details that make the house so cohesive," Gina Jones observes.

To give the eclectic architecture a unifying cast, the exterior elevations are clad in cedar shake and painted a vivid Wedgwood blue.

"It works beautifully," Jones says. "It feels like home."



Photographs by June Stanich

The changes dramatically improved the functioning of a comparatively tight footprint which also found square footage for a guest room suite. With its eye-catching glass-tile backsplash, pin-drop pendant lights and espresso cabinetry, the bar is an elegant jewel amidst a panorama of gray undertones set off by wide-plank engineered flooring.

The linear gas fireplace and floating hearth under the home theater screen are at the center of a warmly inviting niche well-suited for family gatherings.

