



The hill was the clincher. When Mary Anne and Peter Conway broached the subject of moving last year with their six children, 16-year old Michael put up the biggest hurdle – the next house needed to have a hill for snowboarding. Peter says, “We were driving around a corner to view this house for the first time and Mary Anne had just explained to him that no house is going to have a hill for snowboarding in the backyard when we saw that it really did have a hill. We bought it in the driveway.”

The Conways had lived in a bungalow on Codrington Street in the city of Barrie for only seven months when, after the newly-renovated house ended up on the Big Brothers Big Sisters Showcase of Homes, a real estate agent contacted them about an interested client. That house – which wasn't on the market – sold quickly and the hunt was on for a new family dwelling. Originally from Midhurst, Mary Anne says “The only reason we bought that bungalow was because we were driving the kids back and forth to Barrie all the time.” However, the move to Barrie didn't solve that particular problem, since their children still had friends, sports and school in Midhurst. *Continued on page 74*



FAMILY TIES

BY M. CAROLYN BLACK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

The kitchen and living room extend across the back of the home, located in Midhurst's Carson Ridge. Sophisticated furnishings with a touch of colour (deep fuchsia flowers and pillows) are used to create a room that's glamorous and inviting. LEFT: Peter (holding Louis), Michael, Brad, Mary Anne and Carson (in front) gather on the winding staircase in their new Midhurst home.



Mary Anne's brother Bob Graves, a partner in **Homes by DayCore**, had built a show home in **Carson Ridge** and when she mentioned their quick house sale he told them they should see it. "I think it was so easy to make the move because we know the quality of the homes DayCore produces and when we did look around it simply was the most house at the best value," Peter says.

The beautifully appointed 3,055 sq. ft., two-storey house – with an additional 1,000 sq. ft. in the basement – was perfect for the blended family of eight. The couple, plus Mary Anne's two boys and Peter's two boys and two girls, needed a house big enough for some privacy while offering lots of room for entertaining friends and family. Mary Anne says, "You know how many people say they love a bungalow? We love a two storey, even the kids like it better."

The sweeping staircase, by **Palermo Railings and Stairs**, leads down to the lushly-carpeted basement family room, which features a wall-mounted fireplace flickering beside the pool table, an investment the Conways are glad they made since it's proven very popular with the kids and their friends. Peter says, "When we first got it we weren't sure how much they would use it, but they haven't stopped."

The busy, kid-friendly household includes a Bichon Frise named Louis Vuitton – Louis, for short. Since the children all have active social lives, they must take turns hosting friends. Mary Anne says "Sometimes there

Continued on page 76

TOP: The basement is where the fun is. Peter and Mary Anne weren't sure about getting a pool table, but admit it was a wonderful purchase because the kids use it all the time. A new sectional sofa offers plenty of space for the family to relax. **BELOW:** Brad, Michael and Carson work on their pool skills. **OPPOSITE:** The view of the staircase from the basement looking up to the second floor.



will be nine kids in this house when they have their friends here and you don't want to say no (to sleepovers)." Peter deadpans: "I can say no," and they both laugh.

The Conways obviously love being surrounded by kids. They flew to Florida last year with the six children aged seven to 18 and Mary Anne smiles as she recalls herding the family through the airport and doing a head count once they boarded the plane. While they do a lot of entertaining and cooking at home, when they do go out for dinner they really like both Shirley's Bayside Grille and The Keg – for the food but also because both places are very family-friendly for their large group. "We love going out with the kids and the staff always gets a kick out of them, ordering baked garlic shrimp and baseball sirloin steaks, plus they're very well-mannered," Peter says.

The kitchen, where the couple likes to try out new recipes when they entertain, was designed, built and installed by Diane Smith of **Kitchen Art North**, and includes beautiful antique white cabinetry and a wood-topped island. Kitchen Art also made a walnut cabinet to house the family's beautiful Royal Doulton china. "A girlfriend of mine from the hockey team loved my last kitchen by Diane so she hired her for her own kitchen," Mary Anne says. "She's definitely someone I would recommend." They are equally pleased with their granite counters, designed and fabricated by **Di Pietra Design**.

Mary Anne really likes the separate and spacious laundry room upstairs. "Instead of having the laundry in the mudroom where the kids and everybody are walking through, we like having it in its own room," she says. The house is immaculate, no small feat with such a large family, and features like an enclosed laundry room help keep things neat, tidy and clutter-free.

Continued on page 79



The sophisticated style continues in the kitchen. Antique-white cabinetry, polished granite counters, mini-subway tiled backsplash and a wood-topped island make this kitchen a dream to cook and prep meals in. Mary Anne stores her fine china in a custom walnut cabinet. **LEFT:** Peter and Mary Anne Conway (middle) gather in the kitchen with the principals of Homes by DayCore, Bob and Linda Graves (far right and left) and Lou and Sandy Nitsopoulos (next to Bob). **OPPOSITE:** The elegant dining room has chocolate walls and neutral, comfortable seating for those special occasions.



The large master bedroom shares a double-sided fireplace by **Reliance-Yanch Heating & Air Conditioning** with the en suite, which includes a jet tub and a large glass shower by **Showers Plus**, a small independent company in Barrie. A chandelier featuring “bubble” lights from **Glass Lighting Gallery & Home Furnishings** glows above the tub.

Thirteen-year-old Bradley’s rep hockey schedule keeps the family on their toes, especially since Peter is the team manager. They say the key to making it all work is Mary Anne’s parents, Gord and Toni Graves. “The help my Mom and Dad give us is incredible,” she says. “My friends tell me how fabulous they are all the time. Everybody at the hockey rink knows them, they’re at every game and they’re so involved in our life – we like it that way. I have a wonderful Mom and Dad!” *Continued on page 80*

The large master en suite has a double-sided fireplace just above the tub and a large separate, glass-enclosed shower. His-and-her sinks in a long, granite-topped vanity provide plenty of space for those rushed mornings. **OPPOSITE:** The master suite is light, bright and inviting with mirrored bed-side tables topped with sparkling silver lamps. The duvet with bird-motif heralds the arrival of spring.



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Indeed, Mary Anne's father repainted the house interior just before they moved in. The main areas are White Down by Benjamin Moore while the accent wall in the foyer is Pale Avocado. "My Dad's not a painter by trade but he's quite good, he painted all the trim and walls." The flooring throughout, including the beautiful scraped dark wood floors, are from Irvine Carpet One Floor and Home.

The family is looking forward to spring. Peter says, "The backyard is going to be the construction project this spring as far as landscaping." Mary Anne adds that they'd like a large patio area for their frequent summertime entertaining with friends in the minor hockey community. The crest of the backyard hill meets forest and then opens onto a community park, one of many features of the ideal home location the active family intends to enjoy for years to come. **OH**



The boys' rooms are totally equipped, tidy and comfortable.





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