THE *home* TEAM

BY KATHLEEN DUNCAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Homebodies Dan and Nikki Cloutier agree spending time with their two young children is priority one. Fortunately, their 9,000 sq. ft. house, which sits majestically atop nearly an acre of immaculately landscaped hillside, is designed for luxurious living at any age.

Climbing from a quiet Innisfil crescent is a wide driveway lined with armour stone leading to an oversized triple garage. Pedestrians are accompanied by winding gardens up the broad stone staircase to a bold and lofty portico presiding over the grand scene.

Inside, the peaceful illusion is shattered by a family at play.

Despite the visible acoustic guitar cases that suggest a classic soundtrack to this elegant setting, Nikki admits to a heavy-metal penchant and a Metallica shirt stowed in one of two walk-in closets in the house's master suite. A kid-sized drum kit, for which two-year-old Kane shows an aptitude, sits near the basement walk-out to an expansive backyard lawn with perennial gardens and a built-in irrigation system. Fully fenced from the meadow beyond, a distant playground awaits.

The home was built in 2007 by **Dreamwood Homes**. *Continued on page 74*

The lovely cylindrical steel light fixture in the foyer is one of Nikki Cloutier's original designs. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The 9,000 sq. ft. home sits on an acre of professionally landscaped property. The family enjoys a fabulous, private backyard with an in-ground pool, gazebo, outdoor fireplace, a dining area and lots of additional room for play.

Back in the lower level of the house (which Nikki dubbed the "man cave"), a 15-foot sofa doesn't begin to dwarf this vast-yet-cosy room. It has high ceilings, slate flooring and walls adorned with framed sport jerseys (courtesy of Artistic Frameworks) recalling Dan's professional playing days.

Awash with natural light, the rec room also boasts a granite-topped wet bar, full-sized shuffleboard, poker and pool tables and two big-screen televisions for the game du jour.

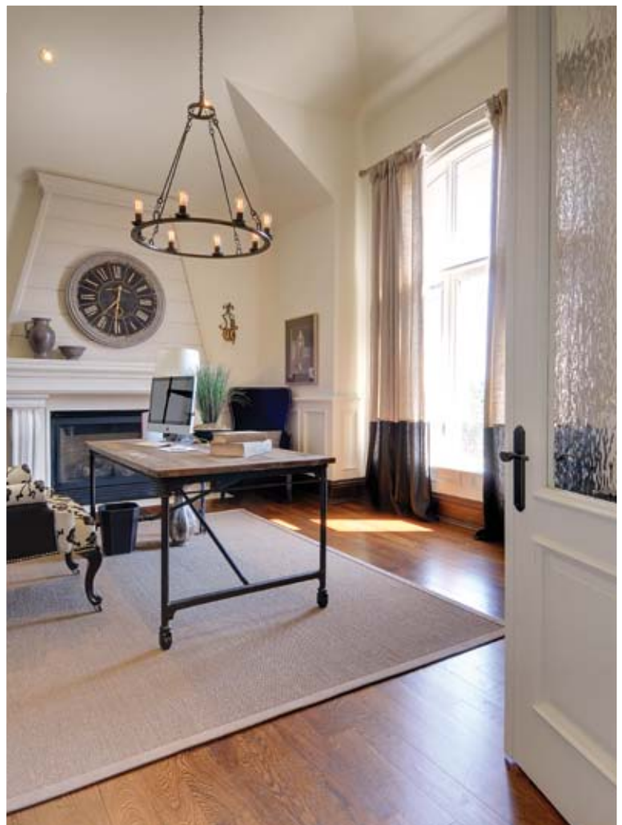
Vintage soda machines and an antique clock accent the area, courtesy of Nikki's father Allan Alexander, who collects and restores.

A fully wired home theatre (currently the children's playroom), gym and guest suite are also nearby.

"If there are friends over, it's down here or in the kitchen," Dan says. "They're my two favourite spots."

He recalls daughter Kali's last birthday party, when his space was reconfigured into a race track (scaled down for the pre-school self-propulsion set.) "Everybody brought their own cars and then the parents got involved," grins Dan. "It got competitive."

For her part, Nikki says most of her daily living happens on the main floor. She's particularly fond of the black-and-white dining room that offers a study in contrasts. Although the upholstered white chairs seem customized in place, they "have come across the continent with us – twice," reports Nikki, whose transient lifestyle is the norm among families with a resident elite athlete. *Continued on page 76*

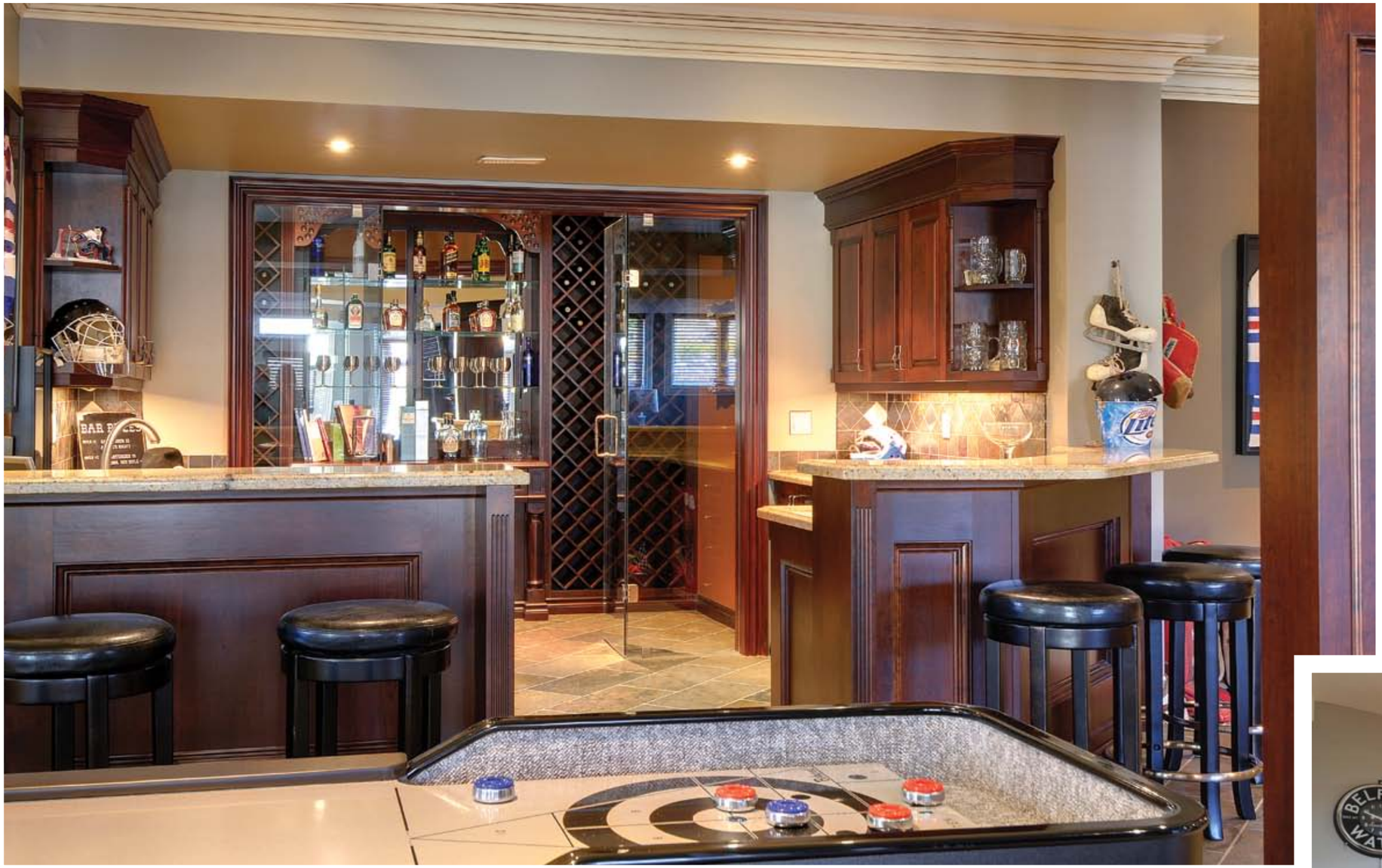


TOP LEFT: A vignette with light, life and art in the corner of the dining room highlights the simple elegance of Nikki's décor. **ABOVE:** Nikki Cloutier and her best friend and Realtor Vicki Schmidt relax in the upstairs sitting area. **RIGHT:** Dan Cloutier's office off the main foyer feature's Nikki's Modern Castle Ring fixture. **OPPOSITE:** The black and white dining room has a square table that seats eight comfortably in white upholstered Parsons chairs.

The formal eating area is flanked on one side by a butler's pantry passing to a French-inspired kitchen featuring a 15-foot granite-topped island, tumbled travertine floor tiles and a sun-drenched breakfast bay. On the other side of the dining room, French doors open onto the foyer mirroring the doors to the office opposite.

The foyer itself welcomes visitors through extra-tall wooden doors with detailed glass inserts and an arching transom, onto travertine tiles with granite inserts. High above, the rotunda ceiling features plaster mouldings. The grand entrance introduces a great room that can't be called anything else due to its sheer size. Its vaulted ceiling reaches a height of 24 feet at its peak, while soaring two-storey windows offer a peek at the roomy stone patio out back with an outdoor kitchen, gazebo and in-ground saltwater pool – where Kane enjoys one-on-one time with Dad while his sister is at school. *Continued on page 78*

The large great room has several strategically placed seating areas, including three full-size sofas that invite cosy conversation. A double-sided fireplace warms both the living area and the kitchen. **OPPOSITE TOP LEFT:** A lovely place setting in the sun-drenched breakfast nook. **OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT:** The French-inspired kitchen features a 15-foot granite-topped island. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT:** A double-sided fireplace separates the kitchen from the living area. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT:** The tree-art makes a statement in the great room.



Separated from the kitchen by a double-sided fireplace with a pre-cast stone mantel, the great room is where Kali performs ballet for her doting parents. To one side, an oak staircase with wrought-iron spindles winds to an open loft that in turn leads to three bedrooms – all with dramatic dormers and personality plus.

After moving into the five-year-old house three years ago, the Cloutiers enlisted **A.N.T. Construction** to make a few design changes, and **Steve Lynds** for some fresh paint. In the great room, the Clove Dust walls are now offset by Benjamin Moore's Monterey White trim. The entire house has benefited from Nikki's decorating decisions.

Preferring grand to grandiose, she searched for light fixtures to replace the existing ornate chandeliers. When she didn't find the size she needed in the style she wanted, she enlisted the help of a local metalsmith to create something new.

"I was originally going to do the entrance light in fabric, but it would have blocked all the light," Nikki recounts. "Then I saw the meshed steel and thought that was perfect. I wanted something industrial that was a little vintage." *Continued on page 82*

You can see why the basement is one of Dan's favourite places to hang out with friends. The bar area has a temperature-controlled walk-in wine cellar. ABOVE RIGHT: Nikki's father collects and restores vintage beverage machines. RIGHT: When you have to fold 'em there's always shuffleboard or pool to play in Dan's man cave.

The master suite offers a spacious place to rest and relax. The en suite is elegant with a separate area for his and hers. The master suite also has two walk-in closets.

RIGHT: Kali's room is a little girl's dream. **BOTTOM:** A guest room in the basement has a creative canopy by Nikki. **BELOW:** Kane's room has all his favourite things.

Starting with the fixture in the great room – which is six feet long, three-feet wide and three-and-a-half tall, she went on to outfit the house with 17 original designs that include chandeliers, pendants and two different sconces."Once I did the first few, I couldn't stop," says the former oncology nurse who retired to become a full-time mom. "Everything hanging in here is a prototype."

After a Collingwood interior designer spotted her creations at the shop and made an immediate order, a business was born. The online retailer **CloutLighting.ca** launched officially in May 2012 with one-of-a-kind pieces made to order by hand using old-school techniques and equipment.

"I saw a gap in the market and wanted to fill it," Nikki explains. "Every single light gets the same attention it would if it were going in my home."

A new line of lights may be on the horizon once she turns her designing eye on her family's new home. Having settled into their Innisfil hideaway with the intention of staying put, Nikki and Dan recently made the tough decision to list it with high-school friend and Mississauga-based realtor **Vicki Schmidt** of Re/Max.

The couple retains a Shanty Bay waterfront lot where they plan to build one day, but career opportunities call and this duo has no intention of having commuting time interfering with play time.

After all, this is a family where the kids come first. **OH**

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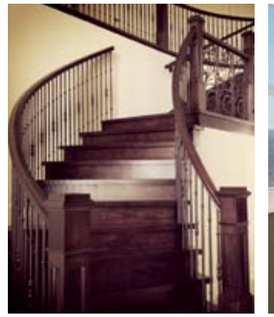

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