



# A YEAR-ROUND *Resort*

BY EILEEN ARGYRIS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

With the twin trends toward “staycations” and cocooning, what could be more inviting than a home that meets all your needs in every season? “We didn’t want a second home to look after, so we’re making our home a year-round getaway resort,” Jennifer Atkinson says.

Jennifer, her husband Tom Becker, their eight-year-old daughter, Ava, three cats and Flora, the Jack Russell terrier, enjoy life in their spacious home in the hills of Northumberland. The name of their street says it all – Grand View Drive.

From a commanding promontory, the Atkinson-Becker family enjoys matchless views over wooded ravines and southward to Lake Ontario. Outdoor decks invite relaxation and contemplation in the fresh country air.

Although the setting is rural, the family can be in downtown Cobourg – a thriving community of 18,000 – within minutes. They have all the advantages of country living and many of those of city living.

The family purchased the home, built in 1989, six years ago. It boasts a 3.2-acre lot and a ranch-style layout with 4,000 sq. ft. of space on the main floor and the same in the walk-out basement. The layout of the main floor is ideal for family living. There are four bedrooms in their own wing to the west of the main entrance. In the centre and to the east are the living room, dining room, solarium, kitchen and family room, all with large windows opening onto the wonderful views to the south.

Tom and Jennifer love entertaining and their home facilitates that, offering quiet and privacy for sleeping youngsters while adults enjoy music and conversation.

On purchase, Jennifer and Tom began customizing their home to their tastes. They began by ripping out broadloom and installing 2,000 sq. ft. of oak flooring to match existing floors in the kitchen and halls. Off came the floral wallpaper. They gutted the master bedroom and en suite to create their spacious bedroom, full bath and walk-in closet. The master bedroom and their daughter’s room offer walkouts to patios on the home’s south side. A fourth main-floor bedroom serves as a home office. *Continued on page 25*



Natural light streams into the formal dining room. A hall wall was replaced with custom open-lattice shelving, ideal for displaying favourite objects. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The front entrance opens into a wide hall that ends in a solarium on the south side of the home. **OPPOSITE MIDDLE:** From the exterior driveway, the main entry keeps secret the interior rooms with soaring ceilings filled with natural light. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Tom, Ava, and Jennifer (holding Flora the terrier) have created a year-round family oasis for their family.



**ABOVE:** The formal living room in the west wing is a peaceful retreat for reading and relaxing. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The open, lattice shelving separates a hallway to the east wing from the formal dining room. **RIGHT:** The dining room glows in natural light from south-facing windows, and opens to the main entry hall and solarium with views to the formal living room beyond.



A brilliant innovation was the removal of a solid wall that separated the dining room from a hall. In its place, craftsman **Pierre Moreault** of **Atelier Moulin-Noir** installed open shelving with walnut boxes set in the oaken rectangular openings, mimicking the pattern of the windows on the south wall. This screens the dining area from the hallway while still allowing light to penetrate, and provides a showcase for treasured ornaments.

Outside, contractor **Mike Crowe** replaced all the decking with practically indestructible South American hardwood, reinforced on the

underside with hemlock. Old cedar shingles were replaced with new asphalt shingles by **Boundy Roofing**. French doors in the kitchen and family room give direct access to the outdoor deck. Crowe also helped with a water problem, excavating around the foundation and sealing it, installing new drainage and retaining walls to create a weather-tight lower level and facilitate landscaping. **Superior Plumbing & Htg. Co. Ltd.** installed two new gas furnaces and central air conditioning. **Century Electric**, **Don Stacey Electric** and **DM Bickle Electric** undertook the various lighting and other electrical work. *Continued on page 26*



The custom-designed kitchen mixes wood with stainless steel for a warm, yet contemporary look. **BELOW:** A floor-to-ceiling stone treatment anchors the double-sided fireplace in the kitchen area. **BELOW CENTRE:** Ava creates artwork in the solarium. **BELOW LEFT:** A spacious family room lies on the other side of the double-sided fireplace.



**Neal Pope Carpentry Services Inc.**, made and installed all wooden cabinetry, fireplace mantel and dining bar in the kitchen as well as the cabinets and shelves in the family room. **Form & Function** designed and built cabinetry in the en suite bath and closet as well as the laundry room. **Acero Stainless** constructed the steel island, backsplash and cabinet glass surrounds, plus hearth and mantel in the family room. The double-sided gas fireplace from **Friendly Fires** opens into the dining area and the family room.

**Sonic Systems** installed the whole-house sound system.

The finished basement is home to a home theatre, rubber-floored gym, limestone-floored bathroom, recreation room and a hobby woodworking shop installed by Tom, for Tom, with help from **John Mensen Construction**. Mensen also did many of the improvements in the basement, which was "crudely finished" when Tom and Jennifer bought the house. *Continued on page 30*

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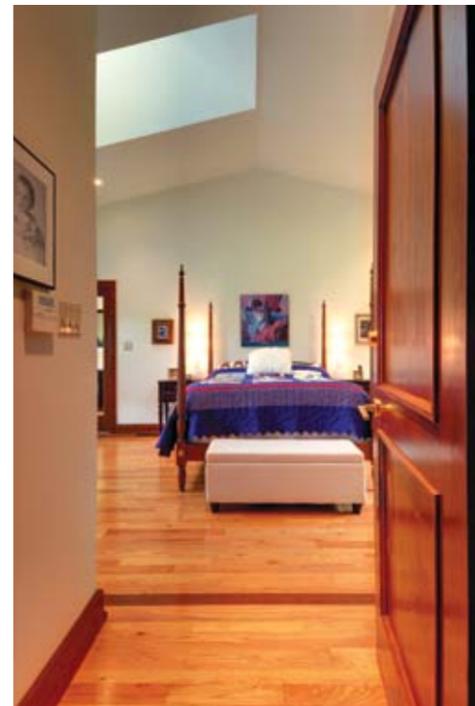
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**LEFT:** The master bedroom en suite is at the westernmost end of the home.  
**BELOW:** A large skylight bathes the master bedroom with sunshine.  
**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The master bedroom opens onto a private patio area.  
**BOTTOM LEFT:** Ava enjoys the sanctuary of her fun and colourful bedroom and private patio area.



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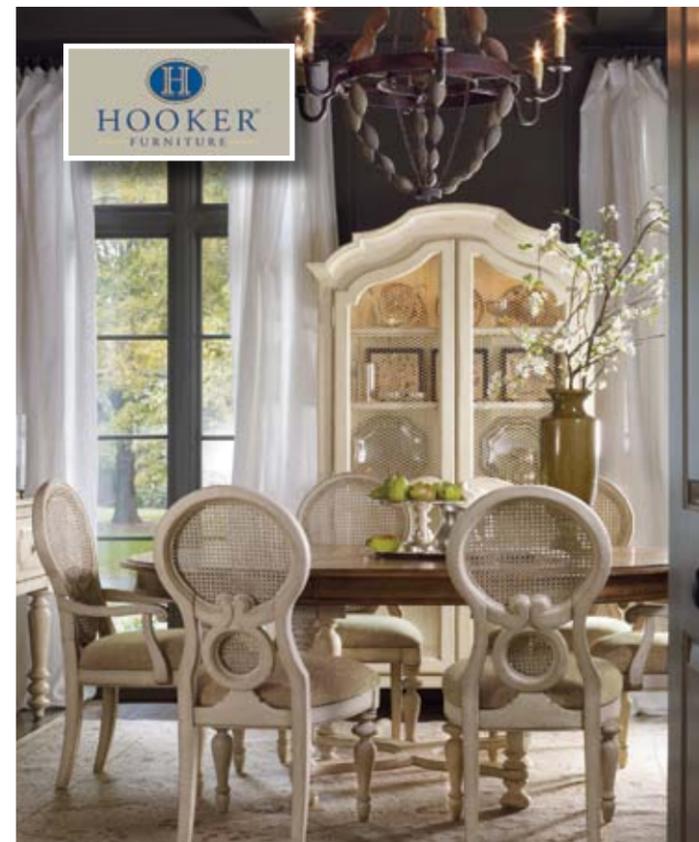
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Liz Rand Studio Design designed the kitchen and the double-sided fireplace, including the mantels, surrounds and over-mantel treatments. Laverne Lundy of Urban Loft sourced the bar stools and blinds in the kitchen and many other items throughout the house.

Outside, EastEnd Improvements added some Maibec factory-stained wood siding to the original wooden siding. The new well was bored by Herb Lang Well Drilling Ltd. Forest View Landscaping installed an outdoor fireplace and added other landscaping features on the scenic grounds that include a pond, a stream and two small waterfalls.

As well, Tom notes, "We've planted over 60 trees."

"I'm a little bit of a tree fanatic," says Jennifer. "I have a passion for all species of deciduous trees." Some of her rarer varieties include a Kentucky Coffee Tree, Eastern Redbud and sycamores, all labelled on stakes for educational purposes for Ava and her visiting friends.

In addition to being a devoted gardener, Jennifer is an avid photographer, whose work is seen throughout the home. Being a proud mom, she wanted OUR HOMES readers to know that the art on display in the family room's floating shelves was done by talented young Ava. The family is contemplating the installation of an outdoor pool next year. "It's been a bit of a money pit," Jennifer says of their home, "but we love it." **OH**



**RIGHT:** A custom-built stone fireplace is an important focal point on the exterior patio. **BELOW:** Windows on the south side of the home allow natural light to stream in and interior residents to look out over a panoramic vista.



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