

Renovators Ltd.

A quarterly newsletter building industry knowledge.

Fall, 2002

Creating a basement with flair

When winter weather sends you inside—head underground

Wisconsin winters can be extreme, so finding a cozy place away from the cold is a must. If your home has an unfinished basement, remodeling might be a great way to transform this commonly under-used space.

When considering a basement remodel, start by making a floor plan. As you do, be sure to mark the location of your furnace, washer and dryer, and any other large appliances. Take notes on:

- access to the basement from upstairs and outside;
- where plumbing is already located if you want an additional bathroom;
- where vertical support columns are located;

There are **many creative ways** to make your basement **light and airy**

- location of windows and doors;
- floor/ceiling/wall materials.

With constant contact with the earth, basements are vulnerable to dampness, making basement remodeling a bit more complex than first meets the eye. We'll help you take appropriate measures to ensure a room free of moisture.

Most basements have low ceilings and few windows. But this doesn't have to limit you. There are many creative ways to make your basement light and airy. Talk to us about the variety of wall and ceiling lighting options available. We'll help you make sure that appropriate electrical lines and outlets are provided from the beginning.

Here are some tricks-of-the-trade in making your underground space first class:

- Stay away from dark wood paneling and instead consider drywall painted in light tones to make the room brighter. Semi-gloss paint will generally reflect even more light into the room.

- Open up the visual space. Double-doors—even glass double interior doors—take away the typical cubicle look. Or, how about a rounded archway or pass-through area from one room into another.
- Check to see if existing windows can be enlarged. Or, consider installing a small boxed window for a mini-garden to grow herbs or start plant seedlings.
- Built-in bookcases and entertainment units add a richness and depth to a room. Light them with either interior lights or from the top to cast light upwards.
- Disguise vertical support beams, and horizontal ceiling pipes or floor joists by boxing them in. Or, you might decide to actually use popes and beams as interesting accents by painting them with bold colors or with subtle earth tones.

An unfinished basement is like a diamond in the rough—unexplored splendor awaiting your discovery!

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In the News

Rick Lawien has recently joined the Renovators Ltd. team of carpenters. He brings four years of experience in kitchen remodeling. Rick is married to Kari and they have a baby girl, Natalie.

Roxanne Jewell has joined the Renovators Ltd. team as an office assistant. In this role, Roxanne will act as the hub in this busy office, assisting in proposals and managing the office functions.

Roxanne comes to Renovators, Ltd. with 11 years experience working in engineering departments of large manufacturing firms.

This year's **Fall Home Improvement Show** at State Fair Park, September 13-15, was a major success. Thanks to all who stopped by!

KUDOS to you!

We take pride in the quality work and attention to detail we provide for you. Nothing shows us that you value this more than when you share our name with your family and friends. We want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation.

- **Diane Messar** thank you for referring **Kathy Winrich**.
- **Tom Feiza** thank you for referring **Bob Stuart**.
- **Dave Amaroso** thank you for referring **Celeste Lesch** and **John Ertl**.
- **Jully Sieglaff** thank you for referring **Michael** and **Kelly Press**.

10 ways to cut your gas bill

And other ideas for the winter months

Make the most of your energy dollar. Just follow these simple guidelines and enjoy lower gas bills this season.

- 1.** Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter. For each degree you raise your thermostat setting, your fuel bill climbs 3%. So dress accordingly. Consider slipping into a sweater before you crank up the temperature.
- 2.** Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as needed. A simple task like this and those in #3 could improve your systems' energy efficiency by 10%.
- 3.** Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- 4.** Bleed trapped air from hot-water radiators once or twice a season; if in doubt about how to perform this task, call a professional.
- 5.** Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- 6.** Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans wisely; in just 1 hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job. Try to keep the humidity level between 30% and 60%.
- 7.** During the heating season, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows. During the cooling season, keep the window coverings closed during the day to prevent solar gain.
- 8.** Close an unoccupied room that is isolated from the rest of the house, such as in a corner, and turn down the thermostat or turn off the heating for that room or zone. Some programmable thermostats now come with temperature zoning options. However, do not turn the heating off if it adversely affects the rest of your system. For example, if you heat your house with a heat pump, do not close the vents. Closing the vents could harm the heat pump.
- 9.** Consider installing double-pane windows with protective coating that reflects heat back into your home during winter. If such a retrofit is not in your budget, cover your windows with clear plastic film. At a typical cost of \$4 to \$6 per window, the film creates an insulating air pocket

When a high-efficiency furnace stops producing heat ...

Furnaces vented with plastic pipes can have simple but serious "no heat" problems in the winter. If snow or ice blocks the pipes, the furnace will not run. Keep the vent pipes clear, and check them if your furnace will not run. If pipes are packed with snow or frost, use a hair dryer to thaw out the build-up.

Heating and cooling adjustments ...

Warm air rises; cooler air sinks. Keep this principle in mind, and you'll realize why opening the correct air returns in winter and summer will provide better air distribution. This in turn allows more even temperatures in your home.

Forced air furnaces ...

When you use a forced air furnace for winter heating, you should use the *low* returns. This allows the furnace to take the cold air from the floor. The opposite is true in the summer. In the summer, open the high returns to allow the furnace to take the warmer air from the top of the room back to the air conditioning cooling coil in the furnace.

For a two-story home, you may also need to adjust the supply air for winter and summer. In the winter, warm air rises to the second floor so less heating is required there. In the summer, warm air still rises, and a hot attic adds even more heat, so you need greater cooling to the second floor than to the first.

Courtesy of Just Fix It by Tom Feiza

between the plastic and the window, reducing heat loss through windows by between 25% and 50%.

- 10.** Caulk and weather strip around exterior seams, cracks and openings. Pay extra attention around windows and at points where various exterior materials like wood, brick and vinyl siding meet. And on the inside, caulking and weather-strip-ping around windows and door frames will cut down on drafts.

Courtesy of the Department of Energy

Renovators Showcase

Taking the “everyday” and making it spectacular!



It started out as a pleasant, four bedroom Colonial, faithfully serving the Rezel’s as their family grew. With the children gone, their needs changed and so did the use of space.

Of the four bedrooms upstairs, they wanted to convert two into a master suite with a spacious bathroom. And, both Bill and Betsy Rezel had need of a home office.

The Rezel’s had a few ideas of what they wanted, and had even gone so far as getting a floor plan from another contractor before calling Renovators Ltd. We looked at the jobsite and drawings and then listened carefully to their needs. They knew they wanted someone who could take their ideas and make them a reality.

After careful analysis of their wants, needs and budget, we knew that there was a much better alternative to the design that they had. We went back to measure for the

new design and came up with a spectacular concept that was still within their budget.

We began by converting one bedroom into a large bathroom with a generous linen

closet. The new bathroom includes a whirlpool tub, separate shower stall and a long vanity with a single basin. The shower stall is oversized and enclosed with heavy glass panels, and includes a bench seat. Ceramic tile cover the walls and floor in the stall.

Using the remaining space, we created a large master bedroom complete with a horse-shoe shaped, walk-in closet. We

converted another bedroom into an office, partially opening one inside wall to allow natural light to filter in from the hall window. As a final touch, a 4-foot french door adjoins the office to the new master bedroom. The completed project gives the Rezel’s an updated and delightful second story to their home.

“It was incredible the way they worked with us. The quality of the workmanship was exceptional. They took our ideas and made them a reality!”

– Betsy Rezel



Cleaning fireplace doors ...

- Have you ever tried to clean the soot from glass fireplace windows? Tough, isn't it? Try using a cleaner specifically designed for removing soot and stains from fireplace glass, oven doors, and glass on wood-burning stoves.

Apply the product to the glass, allow it to work for a few minutes, and then wipe with a clean paper towel. To clean messy glass, you may need to do two applications. You can find the cleaner in fireplace stores.

Is it time to make the investment ...

- An investment in your home is seldom a risky venture. The real estate market has remained strong, with the values of homes steadily rising. The investment of a new basement family room, kitchen, or room addition could be your soundest investment. You receive an instant return on your investment with the gratification of your remodeled home that you will enjoy for years to come. And, its likely you will get a great return when you go to sell your home.

The stock market may be a bit shaky or sluggish right now, but your home value is as solid as the foundation it is built on. This is also a great time to refinance your home and take some of your equity to make those improvements you've been putting off. The cost of borrowing money is at an all time low. Don't miss out on the opportunity!

Extending the life of your water heater ...

- We don't often give much thought to our water heater, but it plays a crucial role in our homes. To extend the life of your water heater and prevent sediment from settling in the bottom, drain approximately 2 gallons of water from the unit every three months.

This newsletter is a forum to learn about new techniques, industry standards, methods and individual stories. If you have ideas, articles, photos, questions or a subject you would like to see published, for consideration please contact us at our office:

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inform our customers and build

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