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How to Create Your Dream Home

(ARA) - Among the clipped lawns and traditional style homes of Green Bay, a cozy log home nestled in the woods is a rarity indeed. Equally rare are the steps the owners have taken to protect their original retreat.

On a hot summer morning, David and Kathy Janczak opened their Green Bay home to visitors who share their passion for log home living. "This is the first time we've hosted an open house since renovating our log home," said Kathy, in the lodge-like great room where the family of five shared meals, celebrated holidays and created hand-made Christmas ornaments.

Nearly 30 years ago, the young couple dreamt of a log home of their own. David, an avid woodworker who had been studying log home construction for some time, promised his new bride Kathy that he would build her a dream home as a wedding gift.

On a 20-acre parcel of land, David diligently set out to fulfill his promise, with Kathy working beside him every step of the way. Completed in 1976, the full log home was an intimate 1,547 square feet. The great room, which was the heart of the home, remains intact today.

Local excitement over their home and many requests prompted David to craft similar log homes for other enthusiasts. This, in turn, created Wisconsin Log Homes Inc., which David continues to oversee today. Both the home and company has grown significantly over the years, a testament to America's love affair with rustic homes and the simple, comfortable feeling they generate.

While the 60-plus people toured and explored their recently remodeled home, David and Kathy eagerly shared their experiences with both full log and half log construction. As the visitors marveled over the fine craftsmanship and attention to detail, David educated them on the basics of log homes and energy efficiency, including explaining why he developed the Thermal-Log insulated half-log building system 30 years ago.

David says the spacious, yet unpretentious 5,600-square-foot hybrid home "Is a result of 30 years of ideas and experience in log home design and construction." Designed for entertaining as well as day-to-day living, the home showcases many progressive design elements, all while exuding traditional log home comfort and warmth.

The Janczak home was designed to be one with nature, both indoors and out. Strategically placed doors, windows and bump-outs maximize the surrounding view which includes a pond, wooded area and front water garden. A screen porch and wrap-around architecturally lit stamped concrete patio is the perfect place to relax during sunset at the end of a long day.

Indoors, the couple's love for natural materials is evident, incorporated into almost every design element. From the chocolate glazed ceramic tile on the floor to the handcrafted antler chandeliers, the space is saturated with various textures. David's trademark wormy wavy edge trim and custom gnarly railings give the log home a personal artistic touch not readily seen in the industry today.

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The custom kitchen designed by Kathy and the company's in-house interior designer shows how a modern working kitchen can flow effortlessly into an open floor plan typical of log home design. Character cherry cabinets topped with custom crown molding, state-of-the-art appliances cleverly tucked behind cabinet panels and a hand-scraped engineered hickory floor warmed with radiant floor heat are some of the few places where technology meets style in the Janczak home. The raised cabinet at the end of the island has a painted furniture look to it, complete with authentic antler pulls.

As the visitors split up and meandered from room to room, they began to share their ideas and own design inspirations with one another. Some were focused on the architectural elements while others eagerly discussed envisioned floor plans. "The trip to Green Bay was well worth it," one attendee noted. "This home gives us lots of ideas. The finished product shows much more than any catalog pictures."

Several visitors were fascinated with the Janczak's master bath which does not utilize a door. A strategically placed corner whirlpool tub with a mini-chandelier hanging above provides a spa-like view from the master bedroom. A partial wall separates the commode without closing in the space and a glass and tile walk-in shower is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. "This space was actually inspired by the Janczak's favorite Mexican retreat," Wisconsin Log Homes resident interior designer Stephanie Gauthier explained. "Beautiful design usually originates from things that we love. These are the elements that make your house a home and uniquely yours."

The groups were well rounded; some empty nesters, families, newlyweds and even a couple excited about planning a log-inspired bed and breakfast. "I love color and my husband loves structure," one wife commented in a boldly painted bedroom combined with a knotty pine ceiling and log accented walls. "I am so pleased to see that we can have both."

The Janczak's open house was a huge success and an inspiration to many. "We are planning another in the future for those who were unable to attend due to a limited number of reservations available," Kathy noted. "In the past we held design/build seminars at our headquarters', but seeing a completed home helps people better visualize what they can actually have."

For more information about designing and building log homes or to order Wisconsin Log Homes' comprehensive 156-page planning guide and DVD, log on to www.wisconsinloghomes.com, or call (800) 678-9107.

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