



Before Dining Room



New Study



Fireplace



Barb's Doors



Before Kitchen Photo



Kitchen Photo 1



Kitchen Photo 2

If you are serious about remodeling your home, and live in the Kansas City area, this is worth the read.

Behind Barb's Doors: A Case Study on an Award Winning RARE Remodel

As you approach the Murphy home, the seven-foot Arts and Crafts-inspired front door is your first indication the remodel you are about to see is an incredible combination of innovative design and skilled craftsmanship.

Built in 1993, Barb and Jeff Murphy's house was anything but old, but it just wasn't meeting the family's changing needs. Assuming a move was in their future, the Murphy's hit the pavement to tour model homes. After recovering from sticker shock, they reevaluated their current situation. Ideally located within walking distance of their schools and complemented by a landscaped backyard 15 years in the making, the family of five decided they had no desire to move. They did, however, have a desire to give new life to a home they already loved through remodeling.

Armed with ideas from model homes, they headed to the February 2007 Remodeling Home Show. They invited four remodeling firms to visit their home and provide estimates. Three of the firms returned with bids (one respectfully declined due to scheduling conflicts) but, according to the Murphy's, only one captured their needs: RARE Construction and its companion company, Rose Designs.

Husband and wife business owners Rae Person (RARE Construction) and Rose Middleton (Rose Designs) sat down with their teams to brainstorm concepts they felt would not only meet the Murphy's needs, but exceed them. *"We chose RARE because they truly listened to us. We really wanted the space to be something we—not the designer—were comfortable in. They came back with the most comprehensive estimate, along with unique ideas right off the bat. That was the beginning of a great relationship."*

■ *The Collaboration Begins*

"We had definitive design ideas going into the project," Barb said. "I would sketch them and send them to Sheila at Rose Designs. I'm sure she thought I shouldn't give up my day job, but she never said it out loud! Instead, she listened and we worked together on designs that we ended up loving." They maintained that great relationship throughout the formidable redesign, which encompassed the entire main floor, including the following:

The Murphy's credit part of the project's success to open and honest communication; *"RARE's superintendent, Paul, visited the job site regularly, and kept us in the loop regarding our schedule. We got to*

know him and his team very well, which made us a lot more comfortable with the traffic that was coming in and out of our house.”

■ *The Most Popular Room in the House*

“Everyone congregates in our kitchen, so we wanted an open, friendly area that fit our lifestyle. Our goal was two-fold: to modernize and organize. We updated with everything that is in style—tiered granite countertops, one-of-a-kind tile backsplash and built-in custom dark cherry accent cabinets that complement maple cabinetry.”

Incorporating a tiered granite countertop was more than a design element. *“We were all guilty of coming home and throwing everything on the island. It became a collection point for anything and everything. The new tiered peninsula countertop didn’t leave room for that, and we eliminated the clutter,” Barb explained. “However, we still needed a place for our daily essentials, so Sheila designed a small, built-in desk area, complete with a drawer that houses all of our electronics that require daily charging, among other things. Our cell phones and iPods, and their cords, are out of sight.”*

The Murphy’s take responsibility for changing the scope of the project as it progressed, and they appreciated RARE’s flexibility. “Sometimes we altered our plans because we changed our minds; other times, when we were stumped, Sheila’s recommendations hit the nail on the head. For example, we planned to simply refinish our existing kitchen cabinets and add just a few new ones. As it turned out, matching the stain and the style was not as simple—or inexpensive—as we thought. Sheila suggested going with all new cabinets, including a built-in pantry with roll-out shelves to help me stay more organized. The maple cabinets we chose add so much to our kitchen. Not only do we have a completely updated look, using cabinets with staggered heights and varying depths increased our storage space, we added dimension and style to the room.” Sheila proved herself to the Murphy’s once again when she pushed back on an idea they tossed around from other bidders.

“When you enter our kitchen from the family room area,” Barb explained, “our range isn’t centered. Other firms recommended we move the range a few feet to the left for uniformity, but Sheila disagreed. She felt the additional work and expense wouldn’t justify the result. That enhanced our trust factor even more because she proved she had our best interests—and our budget—in mind.”

The Murphy’s enjoy looking out the windows at their manicured back lawn from the kitchen table, but opening the back door typically meant one of the diners had to squeeze in or get up from the table to accommodate the opening and closing of the back door. RARE remedied this inconvenience by simply replacing the standard door with a French sliding door that incorporated more glass and expanded their view.

■ *Our Study: A Room for Everyone*

With three active boys, Barb and Jeff felt working from a study in the basement was simply too far away from all the “action” in their home. Rose Designs’ new floor plan restructured the Murphy’s seldom-used living room/dining room combination into two extraordinarily functional rooms. The dining room, next to the high-traffic kitchen, became the study.

RARE maximized space by installing a fireplace under a cut-out area for a flat screen TV. Crown molding, recessed can lighting and soft paint colors add to the warmth of the versatile room. Eight-foot tall, maple Arts and Crafts-style doors are topped with accent glass. Beautifully crafted, these doors ensure privacy when closed; opened, they extend the adjacent dining room for holiday dinners, cocktail parties or just a cool breeze from the open windows. “Barb’s Doors”—as she likes to refer to them—are perhaps the best example of the collaborative effort between Barb and Sheila.

"We love our study. It's definitely a room for everyone. In it, we work from home, read by a crackling fire, tackle homework with easy access to a parent's guidance, surf the Internet with nearby supervision and tune in to a favorite television show. And, most important, it shows our kids we're available and involved...and we're comfortable!"

- ***Through Barb's Doors...***

...is the dining room, an elegant, clean space that offers ample room for the Murphy family to dine formally or informally. A coordinating wall color and patterned carpet, along with 8-inch painted crown molding that complements that in the neighboring study, gives the room its own elegant character.

If eyes are the windows to a person's soul, then doors are the key to Barb Murphy's heart. The remodel wouldn't have been a success without the study doors and the new front door. Echoing the Arts and Crafts design theme, the front door, which appears wooden but is actually textured of fiberglass, is flanked by matching sidelights. A decorative oak panel extends the door set. Six-inch custom trim adds to the grandeur of the entryway.

RARE re-stained the existing hardwood floor in the kitchen and laid hardwoods in the study and on the staircase. Patterned carpet matching that in the dining room extends up the new staircase. Arts and Crafts-inspired newel posts and wrought iron spindles replaced the Murphy's dated pine posts and painted spindles, transforming the original staircase. Crown molding and trim throughout each room complement the floors, cabinets and doors, completing the re-design.

- ***The Family Room: Completing the Transformation***

The family room was the unexpected final piece of the project. *"We realized how hard it is to be satisfied when you've remodeled just a portion of your home. Our kitchen opens into our family room, and the original golden oak in the family room just interrupted the new flow. Plus, we weren't as space effective as we could be. RARE painted our original woodwork a dark coffee color and faux finished the inset panels above the fireplace, giving it a linen effect. Original bookshelves were augmented with custom built-ins to house our TV components and offer additional closed storage."*

- ***More Than Your Typical Garage***

The Murphy's not only tackled their living space but their garage as well, taking advantage of a spacious back yard which allowed them to construct a tandem fourth garage. While many homeowners construct an extra garage as storage for bikes, lawn mowers or a teenager's car, this new space was designed for a special purpose: a new home for Jeff's 1979 Olds Cutlass Supreme. His first car and his most prized possession, Jeff wanted a place where he could teach his boys how to work on it. RARE began by beefing up the concrete floor to support the weight of a future electric lift. They also designed an extraordinary beam system in the roof area that eliminated two support posts and made room for Jeff's workbench. RARE worked closely with the City of Olathe to approve extending the roofline to accommodate the innovative new design.

The Murphy's set realistic expectations early on. *"We knew any project of this magnitude would have challenges. How RARE handled those challenges is what really impressed us."* Barb and Jeff were pleased by the entire team's professionalism, as well as their commitment to standing behind their products and services.

With these projects complete, Jeff is content to sit back and enjoy his "new" home. Barb, on the other hand, is thinking about the master bath...