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# A MODEL FOR REMODELING

## *An Elkhorn Family Improvises During a Massive Makeover*

**T**alk about adapting. Since last August, the Minderman home (located west of 204th Street where Elkhorn meets horse country) has been in the throes of an overhaul. The scope of the project—from top to bottom, stem to stern—could send HGTV’s popular remodeling hosts gasping for breath.

Dr. David Minderman, a neonatologist at Methodist Women’s Hospital, his wife Maria, and their three children have spent the past year listening to a chorus of hammers, saws, and drills. They’ve stepped gingerly around torn-up floors and torn-down walls, reconfigured their living space three times, and have gotten to know managers at several nearby restaurants on a first-name basis.

Upgrades to the 25-year-old, two-story stone home began innocently enough.

“We knew when we bought the house five years ago that we would redo the kitchen,” Maria says. “It didn’t have enough natural light and the

appliances were outdated. The powder rooms and master bath, which are also on the first floor, needed work.”

One necessity led to another. Adding eight feet to the kitchen required doing the same to the basement. In addition, the natural stone fireplace in the living room malfunctioned and leaked. The main staircase, which curved at the bottom, called for a redesign to facilitate walking to the new patio door.

The Mindermans’ contractor, Greg Frazell of G. Lee Homes, understood the couple’s vision and mapped it all out, with one suggestion.

“Greg said it would be best to get the entire first floor and the partial basement remodel done all at once instead of in stages,” says Maria, who grew up on a farm in Honey Creek, Iowa. “So we brought everything we needed upstairs to the second floor. That’s where we lived for over seven months.” ▶



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◀ The five family members, including Olivia (15), Tristan (13), and Brooks (11), made do with one tub, a small plastic shower in a 5-by-8 foot bathroom, and a family room that doubled as David and Maria's bedroom.

Meals became Maria's great adventure.

A bar in a section of the basement not under construction became the family kitchen. Maria didn't have a stove, but she added a toaster oven, an electric skillet, and an air fryer to the bar's small refrigerator and even smaller sink. Mealtime may have been cramped, but it worked.

Then Maria got that familiar glint in her eye.

"What would it cost to paint the bar area and put in a new sink and a granite top?" she wondered.

It cost the family home-cooked meals.

With the makeshift kitchen suddenly out of commission and no sink to wash dishes, the Mindermans dined out during the last month-and-a-half of the first-floor renovation. Hy-Vee's Chinese buffet, Jimmy Johns, Chipotle

("the kids love anything with rice and chicken"), Mama's Pizza, and lettuce wraps at Greenbelly filled the void.

Construction crews came to the rescue of David and Maria's waistlines in mid-March. They unveiled the main floor, just in time to enter the home in the Remodel Omaha Tour, sponsored by the Metro Omaha Builders Association. The public came away impressed.

Sunlight pours through new windows into the kitchen, which now shares an open floor plan with the adjoining sitting room. The kitchen addition, with its separate entrance off the driveway, contains a huge pantry, laundry room, and desk.

Walls and cabinets match in pale gray, accented with white trim. The panel-ready refrigerator mimics the cabinets, its wooden doors painted to match and adorned with the same hardware.

The industrial stove's Carrara marble backsplash, with an arabesque pattern cut from antique mirror, adds an intricate and delicate touch. ▶



◀ The kitchen sink now rests inside a 10-foot-long center island, allowing the family to look into the sitting room and talk to each other or guests while cleaning up.

A dark-stained beam fashioned out of barn wood runs along the ceiling above the island. A single light pendant with smoked glass, weathered iron, and a huge throwback Edison bulb hangs over the island—just two of many eye-catching touches Maria discovered while working closely with Angie Hall, design consultant with G. Lee Homes.

“We have very similar tastes,” says Hall, who also serves as project coordinator. “Maria didn’t want anything trendy that would date the house in a short time. The look is classic and comfortable with touches of rustic.”

Normalcy lasted only until the end of the home tour. By early April, the entire second floor was shut down for a complete overhaul.

This time, the family set up three beds in the newly refurbished basement and dragged bedding, all the kids’ clothes, and the necessary electronics downstairs.

Did any family revolutions break out?

“My husband is a really easy-going person and the kids did really well,” Maria says. “But there were a few skirmishes about ‘mom and her stupid idea to remodel,’ after we had to stop sleepovers with their friends.”

True to her nurse’s training, Maria remains cool, calm, and loving, but holds fast to the plan.

“I keep telling them to remember our motto: ‘No crying until August 2018.’”

And if construction goes beyond that date?

Maria thinks for a minute before answering with typical wry humor, “Then, we’ll talk about it.”

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*Visit [omahasbuilder.com](http://omahasbuilder.com) for more information about the home’s contractor, G. Lee Homes.*



*Before*

