



A HEALTHY HOME

Not long after moving into a lovely old home in downtown Charlottesville, Kendall Cox became extremely sick. Turns out, she had developed a range of environmental sensitivities, including a severe allergy to mold, because her immune system was completely worn down from suffering for years with an undiagnosed case of Lyme disease. Kendall explains that after consulting several different doctors, they all came to the same conclusion: she had to move.

Older homes with crawl spaces in this climate often have moisture and mold problems. And new homes tend to be built with materials that can generate toxic gasses for a long time after construction. So, for people like Kendall, home buying can be a catch-22.

As she was relaying her story to good friends, the solution to the problem became apparent. Her friends lived on a large lot in Fifeville and offered to sell her a portion of it. She says, "I already knew more than a dozen people in the neighborhood. Fifeville already felt like home." After going through the necessary permit and zoning process, Kendall made plans to build her new house.

Kendall designed the layout of her new home herself, but when it came time to think about its construction, she turned to family friend Doug Lowe of Artisan Construction. Already well known for his commitment to environmentally friendly building practices, she knew he would also be willing to work with her environmental sensitivities. Kendall says, "There are a couple of construction companies in Charlottesville that have begun to specialize in healthy-building practices. However, I went with

Artisan because I knew I could trust Doug and work closely with him on the selection of materials."

Kendall explains that "healthy building" is the way of talking about non-toxic, human-friendly construction in the same way that "green" is the way of talking about environmentally friendly construction. She says, "People often confuse green with healthy. But sometimes, what's considered green is not necessarily healthy for humans. We had to be careful."

Lowe credits Kendall for doing much of the research regarding the special materials and construction methods he would need to use in her home's construction. You might think this means her home must be constructed with expensive and obscure materials, but not so. Lowe says that the methods he used in building Kendall's home are traditional, rather conventional construction practices. He says, "We used a blend of old framing techniques mixed with modern, readily-available materials. Everything was budget-friendly."

Each of the materials in Kendall's home was chosen after being closely analyzed according to its material safety data sheet. Wherever possible, the builders avoided products that could emit toxic vapors from formaldehyde and high volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOC levels tend to increase when they're in an indoor environment, since they're essentially trapped inside the building. Paint, paint thinner, adhesives, wallboards and many other materials typically used to construct homes can contain VOCs.



KENDALL'S SOOTHING PAINT PALETTE:

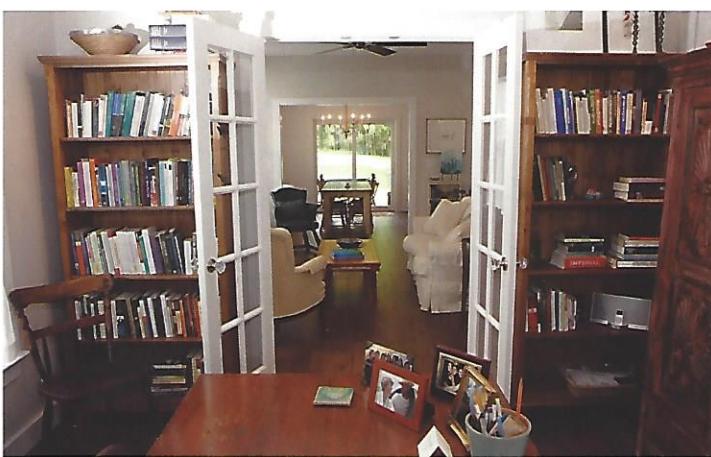
Main living room:
Balboa Mist (Benjamin Moore)

Trim throughout:
Decorator's White (Benjamin Moore)

Kitchen cabinets:
Fieldstone Gray (Benjamin Moore)

Bathrooms:
Creamy (Sherwin Williams)

Attic art studio:
Revere Pewter (Benjamin Moore)



So, for instance, Lowe and his team opted to use poplar boards for the subfloor rather than formaldehyde-laden plywood or chipboard. He says that they found that, in many cases, there are plenty of healthy construction alternatives available.

Also part of its healthy design, the home sits on a slab with a sophisticated drainage system under and around it, alleviating the possibility of having a moldy crawlspace or basement. Even the HVAC system was carefully chosen because of its deliberate fresh air intake and filtering system. Lowe says, "We don't live in a bubble, so if you can't remove an irritant completely, you add fresh air to it and dilute it."

During construction, Kendall also worked on her home's interior design. Throughout her home, there's an overall feeling of serenity. Kendall chose colors inspired by nature, reminiscent of sea glass and the sky on a cloud-filled day. Her color palette soothes and offers a restorative sense of calm.

All of these elements combined to create a beautiful, healthy home for Kendall. Because of the attentiveness to the materials and construction methods, Kendall's home, which was completed in December 2013, never had a strong "new house" smell. She's been breathing well ever since.

There's a breath of fresh air coursing through Fifeville, giving new life to this long-established neighborhood. This new generation of homeowners respects its predecessors and is making special efforts to preserve Fifeville's rich history so that it may be passed to those who will come after them. **H**



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