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## Perfect Concept

NBC-10's dream home finds its real-life owners in record time. *By Tara Behan*

When Charles Paquin and his wife, Kathleen, were looking for houses on the Main Line last winter, they kept inquiring about a certain one being built in Berwyn. And the answer from their realtor was always the same: "It's not on the market."

Yet every time the Paquins arrived from Virginia to look at properties, they'd pass the house, only fueling their desire. After seeing more than 70 properties, Charles finally landed the viewing he was after. And that was all it took. After all, this wasn't just any old Main Line manse. It was the NBC-10 Concept Home.

"I made a handshake deal with the builder during that initial visit," he says. "I knew when I walked through the house that it felt like home."

Al Greaves and Bob Birney, partners in Malvern's Welcome Home Builders, were five months into construction of the 9,000-square-foot, traditional center-hall when Paquin first visited last April. Greaves and Birney had been approached the previous year by TL Concepts, a Kansas-based company that brings together prestigious builders and top-rated television stations to showcase the most innovative products and designs in markets across the country. The home was open to the public for tours in October; proceeds from ticket sales benefited the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House.

No strangers to the industry, Greaves and Birney are 2005 and 2006 winners of the Chester County Homebuilders Association Pyramid Award for Custom Home of the Year. Meanwhile, Allison Forbes, owner of Forbes Design Consultants in Berwyn, joined the project as its sole interior designer. Along with her portfolio of beautiful work on the Main Line and elsewhere, Forbes' penthouse at The Setai in Miami's South Beach was named Best Suite by international design magazine *Wallpaper*.

Since both the builder and interior designer work in the area, they knew what their audience would expect in a multi-million-dollar home. "The idea of the concept home was to do fresh things and present new ideas that people hadn't seen in the commonplace market," says Forbes. "All the vendors and participants were really great about col-

laborating and implementing new ideas. This project really was a team effort by everyone involved."

Welcome Home Builders designed the home with architect Peter Batchelor. "We wanted to emulate the old Main Line mansions, but with all the amenities that go into a modern custom home," says Greaves of the design, which features spacious rooms, a second-floor laundry, a master suite, a study, a five-car garage and a spectacular turret staircase that descends from the third floor to the lower level.

Having complete freedom to fashion the interior of the home was definitely a new concept for Forbes. "I'd have to say it's more difficult when you don't have an actual client you're working with—mainly because in a showhouse like this, you're trying to please the masses," says Forbes. "When you have a client, they have certain likes and dislikes, and that's what leads the design."

To aide in her efforts, Forbes actually imagined the home with fictitious inhabitants. "I created a family with two daughters and a son," she says. "I kept the vision in mind throughout the design process."

That said, many of Forbes' Main Line clients are looking for the right balance between traditional and contemporary. "People today usually aren't strictly traditional; they like parts that are traditional and parts that are contemporary," she says. "Many have inherited antiques, but they don't want a lot of clutter in their rooms. So the goal is to create a mix of the old and new in clean, elegant rooms that are inviting to go into."

With its two islands, the kitchen is the focal point of the concept home's first floor. "When you're entertaining, everyone seems to gather around the island," says Forbes. "We created an entertainment island and a prep island with two distinct looks."

The former has a mahogany base, a granite countertop with a built-up edge and a drainage sink to chill wine or other beverages. With its solid beige countertop in Zodiaq quartz, the prep island's base compliments the white glazed finish of the cabinetry (from Sterling Kitchens in Exton). Zodiaq has become a popular choice among consumers

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because it comes in a wide variety of colors, looks similar to limestone and granite, and requires less maintenance. "It's a much more functional material," says Forbes. "It can't burn, and wine won't penetrate it."

Cabinets and crown molding extend to the top of the kitchen's 10-foot ceiling, and an adjacent breakfast area and family room expand the informal living spaces. Just off the kitchen is the mudroom—a must for today's busy families. Traditionally narrow and hallway-like, with hooks for coats and spaces for shoes, mudrooms continue to grow in size. The concept home's version has a wall of lockers to accommodate a family of five; a rounded bench; a desk; and extra storage closets for bulk purchases.

"The mudroom is more of an organization station for families," says Forbes. "A desk area is essential in this space for parents to keep schedules for their kids and other paperwork."

Upstairs, the master suite is a true retreat, with soothing yellow walls inspired by gorgeous yellow-and-blue bed linens from Ashton Whyte. For that signature mix of contemporary and traditional, an antique armoire and dresser offset white lacquer night tables on either side of the bed. A high-polish mahogany headboard features a traditional scallop design and chrome accent trim.

Beyond the French doors, a short hallway with his-and-hers walk-in closets leads to the master bathroom. The hallway's floor is lined with yellow Zodiac quartz tiles and a honey onyx mosaic in the center; the mosaic is also found on the base of the tub and in the shower. For Forbes, his-and-hers sinks were a must. "Since families are so busy, sometimes the only time they have to talk is in the morning in the bathroom when they're getting ready," she says. "They want to be in the same room together, but they have to have separate sinks."

No concept home would be complete without the latest in home automation. Brandon Hoishik of Hoishik Integrators in Spring City installed a touch panel in the kitchen that controls everything in the home, from lighting to temperature. "No part of the house is unaffected by technology," says Hoishik. "We take your daily routine and give you all the information and control you need."

A screen offers views from surveillance cameras in front of the house, so when the doorbell rings, you know who's there. Homeowners can access a CD collection from the panel and have favorite songs playing in every room of the

house; or they can check to make sure every door is shut (including the garage), adjust the temperature and turn off all lights. In the master bedroom, a "goodnight button" shuts off lights and TVs throughout the house and arms the security system. In the kitchen, a pad controls the lighting in the room with the touch of a button. "These technological conveniences makes living in a house this size much more manageable," says Hoishik.

Additional hi-tech highlights include a television in the master bathroom's mirror, a digital picture frame in the upstairs hallway and a server room on the lower level that "allows us to hide all the electronics in one centralized location, which gives a clean look throughout the house," Hoishik says.

With its game room and gym, the concept home's lower level was designed with recreation in mind. "I wanted that whole space to be a social room," says Welcome Home's Greaves. "The bar, the pool table and the TV are all interconnected."

In lieu of a theater room, Greaves opted for a front-projection TV with an 82-inch, disappearing screen that retracts into a built-in bookcase. "The screen was a great idea," says Greaves. "Everyone can stay together in one room. It's an additional family room."

There's also a lineup of three smaller plasma TVs perfect for viewing multiple sporting events, along with a dark gray sectional and two leather reclining chairs from Dane Décor. A contemporary horseshoe bar with a solid gray Corian top is a nice alternative to a more traditional pub-style setup. Just behind the bar, an impressive wine room can accommodate up to 850 bottles.

Not long after the NBC-10 Concept Home hosted its last visitors, the Paquins were rolling up the driveway with the moving trucks. They couldn't wait to settle into their new house—and can you really blame them?

"Every time we visited, we became more and more excited to see the progress the builders and Allison were making," says Charles Paquin. "We loved everything they did and wouldn't change a thing. We can't believe it's finally ours."

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