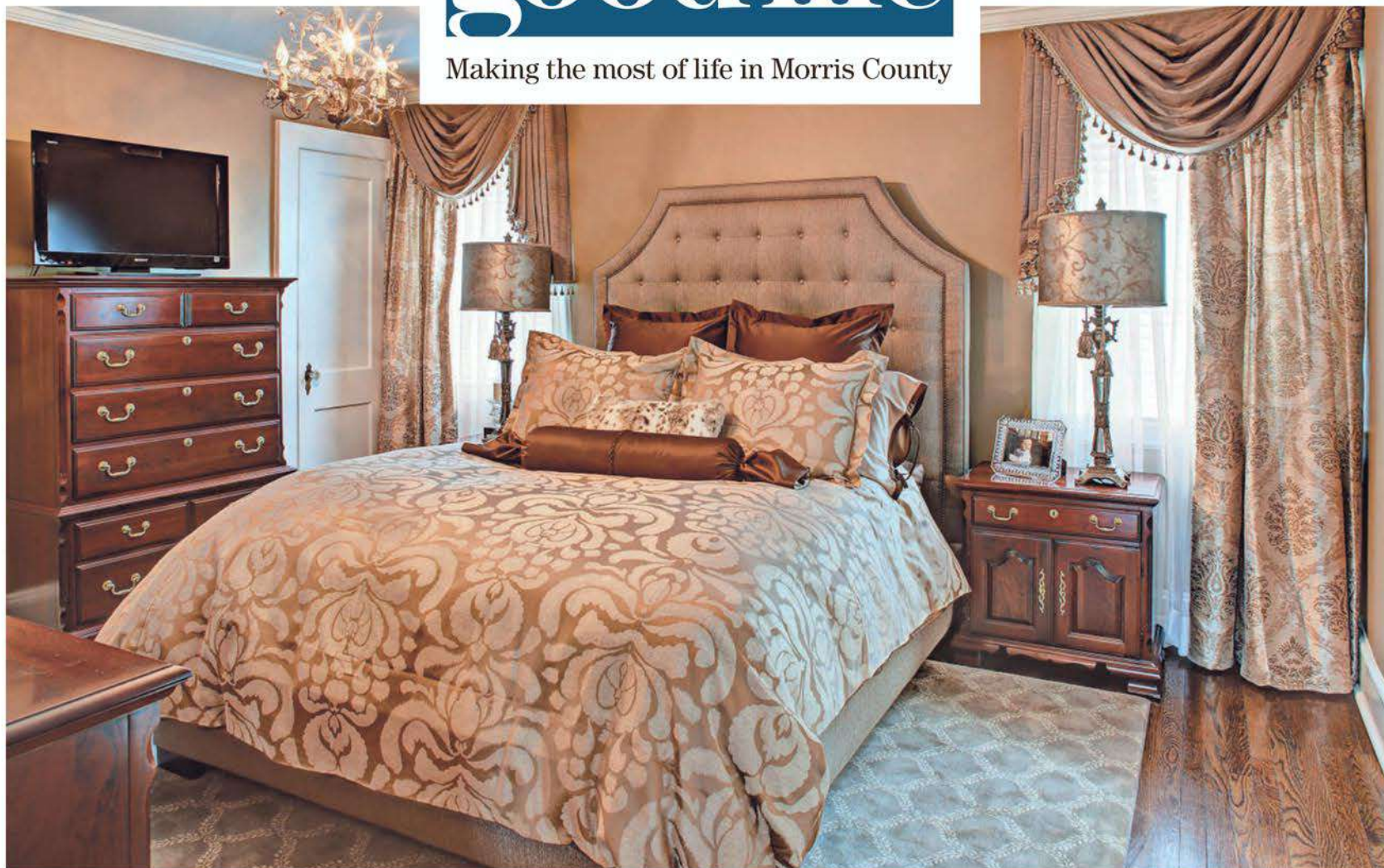


THURSDAY 10.01.15

the good life

Making the most of life in Morris County



COURTESY OF WING WONG FOR ARTISTRY INTERIORS

When showing a home for sale, making beds and using attractive linens will make prospective buyers want to sleep there.

Setting the stage

Local home staging experts offer their best tips for successfully selling your home

SUSAN BLOOM CORRESPONDENT

A service that's gained momentum in recent years, home staging refers to the process of preparing a home to make it optimally ready for sale in today's real estate marketplace. ♦ "Based on human psychology, every cell in someone's body is on red alert when they're assessing a home to buy and the impression that home makes will immediately determine whether the home is or isn't for that buyer," said Renae Jensen, owner of Hope-based home staging firm Design Harmony and Conscious Design magazine. "The process of home staging helps create a welcoming environment that will assist a new family in visualizing themselves in the home."

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COURTESY OF WING WONG FOR ARTISTRY INTERIORS

Make a great first impression in the foyer with a clean, open area and the use of mirrors, which bounce light back and make spaces look bigger.

the good life

This is your chance to own a piece of history

PAMELA MACKENZIE
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BERNARDSVILLE People who love American history and who appreciate the key role that New Jersey played in the American Revolution will be particularly interested in this four-bedroom home at 20 Childs Road in the borough. The original part of the home is believed to have been built around 1763, and a major addition was built in 1870. But throughout the centuries, the owners of the home have consistently sought to honor its historic nature and charm, preserving its three fireplaces, wide-plank oak floors, beamed ceilings and other features, according to listing agent Karen Tyrell of Keller Williams Townsquare Realty.

The main entrance opens to the 1870 addition. Here, the living room has its original oak floors, a brick fireplace with a wood surround and mantle. Overhead are beamed ceilings and below is a wide-plank oak-pegged floor. The paneling surrounding the fireplace covers the old baking oven. The current firebox most likely was built into the old, larger fireplace in about 1920, according to the owner.

Renovated in 2005, the kitchen features stained-maple and glass-front cabinets, Corian counters, two ovens and a full-length refrigerator. The den/family room also has beamed ceilings, oak flooring and a brick fireplace with a wood mantle. Other spaces on the main floor include a home office, the laundry and a full bath.



COURTESY OF KAREN TYRELL, KELLER WILLIAMS TOWN SQUARE REALTY

This historic four-bedroom home at 20 Childs Road in Bernardsville was recently reduced from a \$659,000 asking price to \$625,000.

inetry, Corian counters, two ovens and a full-length refrigerator.

The den/family room also has beamed ceilings, oak flooring and a brick fireplace with a wood mantle. Other spaces on the main floor include a home office, the laundry and a full bath.

The stairway and the entry way at the

original front door on what is now the side of the house still has its original 1763 wood paneling going up staircase, Tyrell said.

On the second floor of the addition is the master bedroom, with oak floors and an office. The other bedrooms have exposed timbers. The upstairs bathroom

has wainscoting and exposed beams.

The attic has a house fan. Other modern updates include 200 amp electrical service, a paving-stone driveway and a Bilco cellar door. The outside of the house is wood clapboard stained with oil-based stain, not paint.

An interesting past

The seller said the original house, which was four rooms with open garret above, was built by an unknown builder. The year "1763" was fingered into the plaster covering the chimney in the garret.

Deeds show that by 1814, members of the prominent Goble family owned the house. Robert Goble (1700 – 1783), was a judge in Morristown. The Continental Army also camped on other properties, not this one, owned by the Gobles.

A Tory spy named Aaron Wilde was caught by General Anthony Wayne and was hanged in Bernardsville, and this house is said to have played a role in his story. Local legend has it that his fiancée, Phyllis, the innkeeper's daughter, went insane and supposedly haunts the old library, which was the local tavern at the time. For more information, call Tyrell on her mobile, 201-310-7619, or at her office, 908-766-0085.

Send real estate news to Pam Mackenzie, pmackenz@gannettnj.com.

Staging

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It's an effective strategy, said Heather McManus, owner of Kinnelon-based Artistry Interiors and author of just-released book "Love Where You Live: Dream Homes Made Real."

"Anything you can do to help buyers see your house in its best light will come back to you," said McManus of the ability of home staging to raise the value of a home by as much as 5-15 percent or more, according to various industry studies.

"In addition to enabling homeowners to get at or near their asking price or potentially more, home staging typically helps homes sell more quickly," Jensen said, a proposition which can also hold value for the seller.

In an interview with the Daily Record, Jensen and McManus share their top tips and best practices for successfully staging a home for sale.

De-personalize

"You want to prepare a home so that it invites a prospective buyer to see their family in it, not yours, so you want to de-personalize the home without making it cold," Jensen said. "This means removing highly personal items like pictures and religious icons and bringing in things that are appealing to all humans, such as fresh flowers and attractive artwork."

Remove clutter

"Today's home buyers, particularly younger ones, don't like clutter — they like clean, open spaces, which becomes particularly important for those selling older homes," Jensen said. "The presence of clutter in the form of piles of old

shoes, loads of personal pictures, etc. makes buyers feel like they're invading the seller's space and can also indicate to a buyer that the seller doesn't want to or isn't ready to move, which can serve to block or stall the home-selling process. If you're moving, start packing to show that you're leaving and clear clutter," she said.

Neutralize

"Paint colors should be more neutral, soft and flowing to appeal to everyone so that the house feels expansive," Jensen said. "You can bring in touches of color, but let the house be neutral and let each room have one focal point, such as the fireplace in the living room or the bed in the bedroom covered with a cream bedspread and red pillows so that it pops." McManus agreed. "White walls are safe in that they go well with everything and people won't feel like they have to repaint right away, but they still prefer coffee-colored or another neutral-colored wall," McManus said. "By contrast, loud, bright paint colors can turn people off, as can wallpaper, which buyers might see as a project to remove and which become items they start knocking off the selling price."

Go green

"Today's home buyers are more sensible and energy-conscious, which translates to a willingness to go smaller and/or renovate," Jensen said. "They also have more of a respect and appreciation for energy-efficient and green design, desiring healthy homes that don't make them sick. As a result, green design and feng shui principles are really in today; buyers don't favor old carpets that potentially harbor mold or homes that don't breathe."

Think outside the home

Jensen said that by the time they view

the inside of the home, prospective buyers have already formed positive or negative opinions based on their experience outside. "You don't want to create negative impressions for buyers as they pull up to the house," Jensen said. "Cracked driveways, broken trees, unclear mailbox numbers, or peeling paint can all detract from the 'real estate bank account.' You also want to maximize the front door experience by ensuring that buyers are met with good lighting, a working doorbell, attractive landscaping, and the absence of cobwebs. 'Curb appeal' — not 'curb denial' — is the goal," she said.

Smell check

"The scent of a home is important and you need to be able to smell your house," Jensen said. "Do a 'smell check' or ask your realtor to do it for you, but pet odors, dampness in the basement, etc. need to be cleared." And while the use of highly-artificial scents isn't encouraged, "the smell of fresh baked goods and clean laundry are attractive," McManus said. "Sellers don't necessarily have time to bake for prospective buyers, but they can light candles."

Walk through

"Sellers become blind to things in their home after 10 days such that they know where light switches are and how not to bump into furniture. In other words, they lose the sense of how their house actually works — or doesn't," McManus said. "When you're staging, you need to see what your house looks like with fresh eyes — (or in) the eyes of a buyer."

Not-so-hidden factors

"Buyers will open closets to see the storage space available, but it will also tell them a little about the homeowner," McManus said. "Cheap lighting or poor maintenance will tell them the extent to

which sellers took care of, or invested in, the home and the seller mentality they might be dealing with."

Other checklist items

"Make sure that all beds are made, there are no dishes in the sink or clothes on the floor, areas are generally straightened up, and remove any traces of pets, such as dog toys or litter boxes," McManus said. In addition, "having furniture in the home is more appealing to buyers than having no furniture, so if you've already moved, consider renting furniture for a three-month period during the selling process to fill the space."

Make the investment

"Don't do more than the home value would justify, but I always tell sellers to consider investing one percent of the home's asking price on staging activities such as painting a few rooms or staining the deck," Jensen said. "These activities can add value to the home, make the highly emotional moving process easier for the seller, and help attract a new buyer who will love the home as much as the seller did."

Show us your beautiful home interior designs; email EAbreu@GannettNJ.com for a future story.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Design Harmony is located in Hope (Warren County) and can be reached at 908-797-5225 or visit www.designharmony.com.

Artistry Interiors is located at 64 Ricker Road in Kinnelon and can be reached at 862-812-1600 or visit www.artistry-interiors.com.



COURTESY OF RENAE JENSEN, DESIGN HARMONY

By making the bed, turning it, and updating some accessories during a staging makeover, this bedroom went from a negative to a positive.



COURTESY OF RENAE JENSEN, DESIGN HARMONY

A bedroom after a staging makeover.



COURTESY OF RENAE JENSEN, DESIGN HARMONY

Though large, this master bedroom didn't show well; removal of the outdated headboard, the addition of artwork, and the infusion of red and black accents made all the difference.



COURTESY OF RENAE JENSEN, DESIGN HARMONY

Master bedroom after staging.