

HOME & GARDEN

MONTHLY

Steps to greener living
Good Earth Home, Garden & Living Show
returns to fairgrounds Friday-Sunday

Family's passive solar home
shines with playful design.

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Home of creative ideas: birch plywood on ceiling; random shapes for loft railing; kid play zone under stairs; concrete floors painted red; and, below, custom maple bookshelves in the loft.

House of fun, winter sun

Family home designed for passive solar heating, “magical moments” of art and play.

By Kelly Fenley
Photos by Collin Andrew
SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Too bad Harry Potter didn't live here — he probably would have liked it under the stairs.

Fun spaces for kids, artful framing, whimsical windows and cozy streams of winter sunshine create lighthearted ambiance in Blake and Tabitha Andrews' custom home near Eugene.

The imaginative couple with three young sons had everyday “magical moments” in mind when hiring architect Will Dixon and father/son builders Jon and Jen Carroll to craft their 2,263-square-foot, two-level home with ample basement about five years ago.

Somewhat like a treehouse, the hilltop home, with window views from every room, peers out over oak savannas and a sparkling seasonal creek.

Frivolity comes into play under the stairs, where a little playhouse with bookshelves opens to a tiny crawl-ball cubby, and in other kid zones, too, like a durable hallway for shooting hoops and kicking soccer balls.

Yet dad Blake, a photographer by trade and the son of a sculptor, also had an eye for artful framing.

Rather than ordinary windows on the home's north-facing front side, Blake asked architect Dixon to consider a whimsical array of rectangular frames — something akin to what architect Le Corbusier did in the 1950s for



his Nôtre Dame du Haut chapel in France.

“When Blake dropped that idea for the home's front wall, I was definitely onboard,” says Dixon, who has long been enthralled with Le Corbusier's pioneering work in sculptural architecture.

Neither did Blake want an ordinary wall for the loft.

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Rather, he asked Dixon and builders Jon and Jen to design open wood railing in a random, Frank-Lloyd-Wrightish multitude of shapes and angles.

"They wanted us to push the envelope and come up with ideas," recalls Jon Carroll, who, along with son Jen, owns Greenleaf Design/Build in Eugene. "So we did."

Ingenuity can get tricky, though.

Rather than wood decking for the living room ceiling, the Andrewses chose to run decorative birch plywood

between the exposed laminated beams. Metal rivets hold the naturally stained cladding in place. "It feels sort of like a ship turned upside down," observes Travis Sheridan, who's on Dixon's staff.

Even the home's built-ins have custom artistic details, such as maple bookshelves with teensy little view windows in the loft upstairs. A window seat at the reverse stairway's midpoint landing summons reading time.

"We tried to keep the home sculptural," sums up Dixon, principal of Wil-

lard C. Dixon Architect, LLC in Eugene. "It has pieces of framing sculpture as you walk through. We had fun with the nooks and crannies."

Natural heating, cooling

High up on the home's due-south side, boxy clerestory windows capture passive solar warmth on winter days — at least when it's not too foggy or cloudy. Sunshine from a low angle in the sky absorbs into the living room's 4-inch-thick concrete slab floor, tinted

Cherokee red, for storing heat.

"The idea was to get as much sun radiating onto that slab — that thermal mass — as possible, and then get it back at evening time," Dixon says.

Come summer, the home's passive solar design works in reverse for natural cooling. The sun, now at a higher angle in the sky, does not shine directly through the windows. The Andrewses crank open the awning-style clerestory windows to vent indoor heat.

The home's open design prevents "landlocked" heat, Dixon says.

"It works amazingly well," lauds Tabitha in reference to the natural cooling. "I was hugely skeptical. I was like, 'Whatever, go for it,' because I really hate heat. I was thinking it would be nice to (enjoy) air conditioning for once in my life. But it really works."

In fact the home's electric bill averages just \$150 month, thanks also to big energy savers like a geothermal heat pump, solar heated water and a heat-recovery system for fresh air exchanges.

Good times roll

Energy savings even extend to stress levels in this home.

"Obviously their life is focused on their kids, says builder Jon Carroll. "We tried to craft a user friendly house that you didn't have to spend all day cleaning, but just enjoy your kids."

In the downstairs romper-room hallway, children Zane, 11, Leo, 9, and Emmett, 6 play ball to their heart's content.

Well, almost.

"I saw a golf ball in here one day, and I said, 'No golf balls!'" Tabitha says, wary of anything hard or small enough to break one of the hallway's small rectangular windows.

Dixon takes to heart anyplace in a home where children love to play.

"Kids don't really know why (a space is fun), but as adults, we're able to think about it on a deeper level," he continues. "If a kid is naturally drawn to a space, I want to know all about that space. I want to know why it's warm and inviting, and why it delights them."

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At the home show

Architecture questions, 5 cents

Will Dixon and his Eugene networking firm, Design Build Resource Group (DBRG), will again follow Lucy's lead and staff a "Architecture 5 Cents" booth at the Jan. 20-22 home show in Eugene. DBRG's booth numbers will be 317 and 416.

Home design, improvements

Architects, builders and dozens of home improvement contractors and firms may be visited in the home show's "Good Home" area. See directory, Page 6.



Courtesy of Blake Andrews



Kid play areas include hallway with basketball hoop; Blake and Tabitha with sons Zane, 11, Leo, 9, and Emmett, 6; high clerestory windows capture winter sunshine for passive solar warmth.



Cushy window seat at midpoint landing on reverse staircase is bathed in daylight for snuggling up with a book. Beneath the window seat is storage.