

style



In The Zone

When a Wilmette family moved into their new lakefront home, they wanted to design a space specifically for their children to do their homework. The result is a multifunctional computer and art room where the only limits are creativity.

By Sherry Thomas



SUSAN ELMASRY LOVES that her three children are artistic. When they lived in Chicago, the dining room table was constantly covered in poster board, colored pencils, paint brushes, scraps of drawing paper, and papier mache projects in progress.

It was a mother’s dream — until it came time to set the table for proper dinner.

“When we’d have meals, we’d have to pick it all up,” Elmasry explains. “I could see as the kids were getting older, having all of those projects on the table wasn’t going to work.”

So when the family moved to Wilmette in 2008 and hired Jeff Harting (of FGH Architects) to remodel their new lakefront home, Elmasry asked him to design what she refers to as “the homework zone.”

■ From painting projects to LEGO creations, these cubbies help keep a Wilmette family organized.





■ This space could be one of the most hard-working rooms in the house, serving as homework headquarters, art studio and computer network — sometimes all at the same time.

■ Jeff Harting of FGH Architects helped this Wilmette family with their whole-house remodel, which included the creation of what the homeowner refers to as “the homework zone.”

Located at the top of the stairs on the second floor, Harting designed a multipurpose space just for the kids to do their homework, create their art and use the computer.

“My husband was really resistant to that idea at first, but it has paid off,” Elmasry adds.

The room itself is not that large, but its functionality is very carefully planned. Three cubbies, one for each of the children, are lined along one wall. Computer stations are also set up there, and even when the French sliding doors are closed, the clear glass windows offer enough visibility for Mom or Dad to see what’s

on the screen.

Harting, who has designed several similar spaces for North Shore clients, says the most important thing to consider is how to create a space that will grow with the children.

“It has to be flexible,” he explains. “For this project, we wanted to build a counter wide enough for poster board and a space where they could do anything from putting a puzzle together to homework.”

And with so many budding artists in the family, a sink was essential. As were ceramic tile floors (for catching potential paint spills)

and good ventilation.

Each of the cubbies is customized to give clear definition of each child’s space, with shelving to house books, art and other supplies, based on each of their individual needs.

“Closets were also important, for games and art things,” says Elmasry. “When you think about all the art work that comes home from school, this gives them a place to store and display it.”

As for the dining room table, these days it remains perfectly set, waiting for the next family meal. 