



Irene

Irene is a write-brained Nashvillian-by-choice whose fondness for home design blessedly converges with her PR/marketing career. When not being strategically creative for clients nationwide, Irene can be found harmonizing with her songwriter hubby, organizing a closet, running on Belmont Boulevard or blogging at smallbizbigtime.com.

form meets function

A classically beautiful bathroom offers modern conveniences

What home design columnist would tour an immaculately renovated, early 19th century home—one of the oldest dwellings in historically posh Franklin, Tennessee—and end up writing a feature about just one bathroom in the whole place?

That would be me.

Yes, I recently toured The Saunders-Marshall-Wright house and can attest that the entire home has been wonderfully transformed into a modern dwelling—aesthetically true to its Federal-style roots yet comfortably configured for a 21st century

bathroom, carefully arranged to accommodate the needs of 12-year-old Davis, the son of owners Mark and Gayle Wright. Davis has cerebral palsy and is bound to a wheelchair. Finally, this well-designed room is proof that “accessible” and “special needs” needn’t equate to “clinical” and “unattractive.” It’s an immensely functional, absolutely beautiful bathroom that can inspire all of us to create spaces that are universally useable.

The Wrights partnered with builder Rob Tallman and interior designer Stephanie Gilboy to renovate the entire home, placing great attention on the bathroom that would be used by Davis. There would need to be wide clearances for his wheelchair, a harness lift to assist him in and out of the bathtub, grab bars by the toilet to offer stability, and so on. Because Gayle is constantly tending to Davis’ needs, she actually shares the master suite with her son, so the bathroom needed to provide amenities for her as well.

Suffice to say, Tallman and Gilboy outdid themselves in giving this all-important bathroom an “extreme makeover.” The space is as classically elegant as it is fully functional. Deep walnut cabinetry is offset by the clean swirls of honed marble that cover floors, counters and the tub deck. Brushed nickel hardware shines with generous doses of natural and ambient light. Thanks to Gilboy’s clever product sourcing, serviceable necessities blend so seamlessly and unobtrusively into the overall decor, most people would never realize the bathroom is designed for special needs.

Be sure to visit *Her Nashville’s* website to view surprising “before” pictures of this beautiful bathroom (you won’t believe the transformation!), as well as a full product source guide. ☞



family. I could write a novella paralleling the home’s prolific 200+ year history with its amazing, meticulous three-month renovation. But I only get 700-ish words for this column, and you’ve just got to know about this bathroom!

First, this is not one of those “spa-like areas that could house a family of 12” kind of bathrooms. The space is rather moderately proportioned, especially in contrast to the grand scale of the house that contains it. Every square inch is essential. Secondly, this is an accessible

1 A flush-to-floor shower, bedecked with tile trims and mosaics, anchors the corner of the bathroom. The heated tile floor and a towel warming rack offer extra comfort for Davis and mom Gayle.

2 Gilboy repurposed a Duravit tub originally designed for placement on a sundeck to be a handy solution for the Wright family. The top cover, intended to keep bath waters warm, serves as a changing table for Davis. The lift harness, grab bars and ADA-compliant sink are hardly noticed amongst the clean, fresh design of the room.

3 The entrance to the bath offers ease of navigation. The walk-in closet was reduced in size to provide more useable space in the room, and a custom cabinet vanity offers attractive, ample storage.

Universal Design: Creating Spaces with Everyone in Mind

Universal Design is an approach to architecture and interior design that ensures space configuration and material selection accommodates people of all ages and in any stage of life. It’s much more than just designing to meet ADA requirements. Universal Design, in its best and truest form, makes places livable, accessible and enjoyable for the long term. We call it “universal” design, but it’s really quite personal.

If you’re looking to remodel, think ahead about what your needs may be in the years to come. Eliminate steps when possible, minimize transitions into showers, widen doorways and choose cabinet heights that are reasonable. These measures will ensure your home is viable for you now and in the future.