

Children play big part in finding new home for Panos family

Finding the ideal home in a new city can be challenging, but for the family of Nick and Julie Panos, it turned out to be child's play.

Although they hadn't planned to tour the charming white colonial at 2308 Aldo Blvd., the residence met many of their requirements for a place to raise their daughters. Roza and Valya cinched the deal when they began to turn joyous somersaults on the lawn. "That's when we said, 'This is it!'," Julie remembers.

In the six years since that day, the home has evolved to fulfill its promise as a welcoming destination for friends and family members of all ages. "Nick had an eye when we first got the house that there would be a place for the girls to relax." Thanks to judicious renovation and an addition that extends the lines and style of the original 1918 structure, the Panos residence offers varied spaces for enjoying individual hobbies and for sharing good times with the family's frequent visitors.

"The home was well cared for," Julie notes, adding that the extensive hardwood floors were in excellent condition. "We found the date of installation — 1920 — under the wallpaper, and we couldn't believe it had held up so well." The kitchen, however, was in need of

a makeover, and "it underwent a major change" as soon as the family moved in.

A grand total of seven doors led into the room, leaving little space for cabinets or appliances. Two have since been absorbed into a more efficient and friendly design, which features an attractive island and rich, dark cabinets by Concord, who supplied the majority of the woodwork in the renovation.

A few steps away, Julie's office boasts a panoramic view of the sprawling backyard and its flourishing gardens — "still known as Mrs. Hunter's," Julie says. The dramatic picture windows reflect a 1950s influence that the family appreciates, though they have replaced the room's other elements from that decade, such as round cornices and a wedge-shaped table of blonde wood.

The dining room and the sitting room have traded places on either side of the entry hall, which opens onto a wide central staircase. The addition adjoins the dining room on the east side of the house, continuing the strong, rectangular elements both inside and out. A massive chimney of white brick dominates the front view, balanced by slender white columns on the "outdoor room" that leads to the backyard.

Known as the entertainment room, the addition features conversation areas, a baby grand

piano and a dramatic marble fireplace from Italy. "I'd have a fireplace in every room," Julie says, pointing out the marble hearth in the dining room and a third fireplace that will be installed in the sitting room. The family also is seeking the right location for a stunning piece of diamond glass, one of two that originally graced a cathedral and were given to them by a friend.

Upstairs, a spacious master suite includes a luxurious bath, generous walk-in closet, a laundry room and an office. A dressing room is in progress, and work continues on one of two additional baths. "There's still much to be done," Julie says. "It's just never-ending." Nick, "a fabulous cook," is currently creating a built-in kitchen for the outdoor room with a grill fit for a master chef. Julie accepts the new project philosophically. "We both enjoy doing this kind of thing, really getting our hands into it," she says.

They also take time to appreciate the fruits of their effort. "We really live in every room so it's hard to pick a favorite," she adds. "I come from a big, big family, and we are always entertaining. I grew up where the backyard was always filled." With a gracious home that embraces its distinctive garden setting, the Panos family has created a space that appeals to young hearts of all ages.

AT LEFT: The home's renovation was a drastic change when the family moved in. A major overhaul began and now the room features rich, dark cabinets by Concord and plenty of space to work.



AT LEFT: Nick and Julie Panos knew they had found the right home for their family at 2308 Aldo Blvd. when their two daughters, Roza and Valya, began turning somersaults on the yard.