

# HOME CONVERSION



Kathleen Tevnan sought better wheelchair access in her home and a better-integrated access solution. To accomplish this, Russ Glickman redesigned the sidewalk from the driveway, introduced a wider portico with a barrel vault ceiling and repositioned the lift for easier entry.

PHOTO BY TRISHA BOWER PHOTOGRAPHY

## ◆ Universal design solution converts retirees' center-hall colonial into wheelchair-friendly environment

BY JOHN BYRD  
HOME FRONTS NEWS

**HOW DOES A PERSON** with limited mobility live comfortably in a three-level center-hall colonial? That's the question that confronted Mike Tevnan, 63, and his wife, Kathleen, 56, when, nearing retirement, the Silver Spring couple learned that Kathleen would be confined to a wheelchair.

"Once my situation was diagnosed, we installed a platform lift in front of the house, and stair lift from the first floor to the second," said Kathleen. "Still, getting around the house—which was built in the 1940s—was really time consuming and awkward."

Fortunately, through trial and error, patience, and the eventual emergence of a universal design team of remodelers who could help them, the days of unnecessary obstacles are in the past—replaced by a new freedom to circulate, manage everyday chores and live life fully.

**Looking back, Kathleen** is a little astonished at the challenges she once confronted daily. For starters, just getting from the driveway to the ground-level lift an earlier contractor had installed near the front portico was a challenge. There wasn't enough space where the driveway intersects with the front walk for her van to drop the wheelchair lift; and the sidewalk itself was too narrow.

Moreover, to exit the platform lift at the front door, Kathleen had to turn 90 degrees in a severely restricted radius and push forward onto a concrete mat not much wider than the wheelchair itself.

Once inside the house, a stair lift provided the only access to the full bath on the second floor. And other logistical nightmares were everywhere. The bathroom was too narrow. The laundry was in the basement. For a while, she was sleeping in the living room.

"It was awful," she said. "Obviously the earlier access solutions hadn't worked well. Mike and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out the best path through the house, but it was hard to know what was best for my situation."

Then, she found Russ Glickman, an aging-in-place/special needs expert and president of Glickman Design Build in North Potomac, which specializes in designing and building residential renovations that meet the needs of homeowners. His name

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Before



After

PHOTOS BY RUSS GLICKMAN

Before this Silver Spring home was redesigned, Kathleen Tevnan, who uses a wheelchair, had to turn 90 degrees in a severely restricted radius and push forward onto a concrete mat not much wider than the wheelchair itself.

**DESIGN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10**

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surfaced from a list of recommended universal design specialists, and from her first interview with him, Kathleen recognized the potentials.

“Early on I learned that Russ’s son has a mobility challenge...so he’s addressed all the real-world issues in his own home life for many years,” said Kathleen. “And more importantly, I liked his process and his creativity. He was there to listen, study the situation and assemble the right team.”

Collaborative thinking was crucial to the project’s success. Glickman selected architects, engineers, interior designers and carpenters, and assembled and directed a team that had to rethink the entire plan—inside and out, top to bottom.

“Russ inspired others to think creatively,” said Kathleen. “The ideas would be flowing, and I began to realize that getting around my house was going to be a lot easier.”

To facilitate access from outside, Glickman redesigned the front walk, introduced a substantially wider front portico with a barrel-vault ceiling, and repositioned the platform lift for improved function and a more discrete relationship to the house.

The primary “built” component in

the new plan, though, is a two-level, 30-by-15-foot addition Glickman designed and constructed on the home’s rear elevation. A custom 3-by-4-foot elevator links the first floor to the spacious new master bedroom suite above.

The elevator opens directly into the master bedroom—tucked in next to his-and-her walk-in closets.

To create the bathroom, Glickman converted a former second-level bedroom, opening a structurally reinforced threshold through the former bearing wall. The door—set off by pocket doors—provides dedicated access from the bedroom.

The warmly textured master bathroom suite includes a roll-in shower designed for a waterproof wheelchair. Stone and granite flooring allow surfaces to get wet without the need for cleanup. There’s a vanity and toilet suited to Kathleen’s chair specifications.

The project’s aesthetics lend considerable satisfaction to the Tevnans.

“The new portico sets off the facade beautifully,” said Kathleen. “This is a neighborhood where people greet each other from the front porch, so I really like sitting out front and talking to the local kids. It just feels like home.”