

Daily Herald

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Crossword 5

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Home & Garden

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Can we help him
build a new deck?

Finding a great Father's Day gift can be a real challenge. But we need to get working — there's only a week to go.

Lucky the family with men who read or have other hobbies. A new book or newspaper subscription is a great idea, for example.

Inside
& OutWhat's new
for your nest

Tools are traditional gifts, but unless Dad really likes working with them and needs a new do-hinky, it seems comparable to giving Mom a new iron or toaster. Who is this gift really for?



How about a bouquet?

This is not as outrageous as it seems. You can pair it with another gift, says Jill Slater, designer for flowerpossibilities.com.

Then Dad will have the floral reminder of your affection to brighten his abode.

For example, isn't this a great way to present a new tie — knotted around a small vase?

If you have a garden, you can cut a few blooms for an



Thomas Reed of Barrington was the architect when Donna and Bill Howarth remodeled their Barrington Hills home, including this family area.

PHOTOS BY BOB CHWEDYK bchwedyk@dailyherald.com

Warm welcome

*A family-friendly
Barrington
country home
opens its doors
for charity*

BY DEBORAH DONOVAN

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It requires a lot of talent to take a house that everyone — including your husband — thinks should be torn down and turn it into a showplace.

Almost nine years ago, Donna and Bill Howarth were looking for a house on the water.

Bill didn't think they'd found it in the Barrington Hills bi-level with a distinctly canine odor and a spiral "Love Boat" staircase to the basement. Neither did the real estate agent they were working with or their architect.

"Just squint," said the woman with the vision. "We can work with this."

What Donna saw was the 5-acre lake that the property shares with a few neighbors. And she knew the house could be made livable.

Today it's much more than that, featured in photo spreads in Midwest Living and a current publication called Country Gardens, not to mention Crate & Barrel catalog shoots.

The unfussy, welcoming home that the couple's 21 grandchildren love to visit will be open for tours Friday and Saturday as part of the 7th Annual Barrington Country Garden & Antique Faire.

Donna's goal for the house was to make it look older and give it



This warm and charming potting room was part of a three-car garage. Donna Howarth credits Interiors II, another local firm, for helping with the home's design.

character.

This required more than adding antique cabinets and bright, curvy upholstered furniture.

"It's amazing," said her husband of 32 years. "I don't know where it comes from. She is probably the most talented person I have ever known. She's brilliant at logic and putting things together."

Donna completely rearranged the home's floor plan. For example, the kitchen was in the front of the house where neither cook nor guests could enjoy views of the lake.

Today almost every room overlooks the lake as well and features

If you go

What: 7th Annual Barrington Country Garden & Antique Faire

Benefits: Hands of Hope, which helps women and children in Africa.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 8:30 a.m. for people who buy early-shop tickets for Friday

Where: Free shuttle buses transport guests from 800 Hart Road (across from Barrington High School) to the garden locations

a warm vignette. For example, the long, rustic antique dining table stands near a dark, curved apothecary cabinet that Donna cleaned with lemon oil after Bill rescued it from a friend's barn.

Features: Tour three Barrington Hills estates. The faire at one of the properties includes 1 p.m. horticulture lectures, music and sale of antiques, refreshments and other items.

Tickets: \$50; \$75 to shop early on Friday.

Purchase: Call (847) 622-5201 or visit handsofhopeonline.org. Tickets are available at a few area businesses.

But it could be the potting area and family gathering space carved from a three-car garage that most strongly demonstrates Donna's

Welcome: Potting area doubles as family gathering space

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genius.

Those stone steps curving up to the kitchen could have been in a manor home for a century, but they were Donna's idea, executed by the mason who installed a fireplace on the opposite side of the garage.

She washes her garden vegetables in the copper sink with its antique wood apron that she bought on eBay.

Other touches include a long, primitive table where the grandchildren can do messy crafts or eat a holiday dinner when Donna's not potting plants or starting seeds.

Old barn beams wrap the huge steel one that Bill said they learned was definitely necessary to support the house. And four other antique beams march across the vaulted ceiling of the kitchen and living area.

During the summer, the family area in the old garage substitutes for a pool house. The Howarths had the pool installed where once there was a huge asphalt driveway.

One of the purposes of the garden around the pool is to help it blend in and look as natural as possible. Donna planned this with Milieu Design of Wheeling and Barrington.

Lavender gives a great



Warm vignettes can be found everywhere in the Howarth home.

scent, catmint and white peonies and hydrangea are abundant along with decorative grasses.

Farther out is the vegetable garden that is Donna's pride and joy.

Her list includes red and Yukon gold potatoes, four types of onions, leeks, peppers, collard greens, broccoli, asparagus, cucumbers, multiple pumpkins, tomatoes and pole beans. This year she's determined to outwit the deer and raccoons and grow some sweet corn, and she's trying okra.

"I'm so passionate about



PHOTOS BY BOB CHWEDYK/bchwedyk@dailyherald.com

The gardens are an important part of Donna and Bill Howarth's Barrington Hills home, which will be open Friday and Saturday as part of the Barrington Country Garden & Antique Faire.

fresh vegetables and herbs and cooking. I grow as many vegetables as I possibly can," Donna said.

She had an herb garden installed closer to the house because sometimes chemotherapy makes the farther walk seem impossible.

Seventeen years ago Donna was diagnosed with ovarian

cancer, and microscopic cancer in a blood test a decade ago means she will undergo courses of chemotherapy for the rest of her life.

"I've lost and grown my hair back six times" she said. "I've decided to keep it short. Bill says I'm always on time."

Inside the house, visitors

looks of it, but if you've ever rolled out a pie crust on this you know how nice it is to have that cool marble."

Fireplaces are another passion of the Howarths. The original ones in the living room and kitchen were trimmed with stone that Donna thought dated the house and with mirrors. Now they are both in walls of common clinker brick.

Another secret that Donna pointed out is that the interior walls were made extra thick to make the home seem older, a trick noticeable at the doorways.

The exterior was red brick that Donna had painted a soft white. That means the paint isn't thick, and the character of the brick shows through.

The nearby barn — also spruced up — is home to goats, sheep and chickens. And Donna and Bill are watching for cygnets to hatch in the swan nest on the lake.

The Howarths added two wings to the home — a master suite and a garage, but otherwise kept the original footprint.

"We lived in this mess," Donna said. "By living through the dirt and mess we figured out how it should go.

"We aren't very formal here. There's nothing to fuss with when the children come visit."

will notice the pine floor is stained very dark, treated with tung oil and distressed by daily life, which at one time included a dog.

The large kitchen island with the white marble top is also noteworthy.

"I saw it once in a house and admired her courage," she explained. "I just like the