

home

Make
it a
Woman's
Day

"It's impossible not to feel excited when you come into the new space," says Beth, here with husband Mike, and twin sons Aiden (left) and Christopher (right).

Room to Grow

Until the economy picks up, the too-small house that was Beth and Mike Hopkins's starter home will be their stay-put home. So *Woman's Day* sent designer Annie Selke to transform an unused basement into a playroom the whole family can spread out in.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNIE SCHLECHTER

five years ago, Beth and Mike Hopkins were thrilled to find an affordable small house in Suffield, CT. “We were both born and raised in New England and loved the charm of the area,” says Beth. “But the house was over 40 years old and had never been updated. Our plan was to put a lot of work into it and then trade up to something bigger.” They wasted no time getting started: “We closed on the house the day before my wedding shower, and a few hours later, Mike and I had already started ripping up linoleum and gutting a bathroom.”

Best-Laid Plans

Over the next two years, the couple added closets, removed walls, put down a walkway and rebuilt a porch. After twins Aiden and Christopher were born in February 2009, Beth quit her job. At around the same time, Mike lost his. He quickly found work selling life insurance, but because his salary is entirely commission-based, it’s wildly unpredictable. “We went from living pretty comfortably to worrying that we were going to lose our home,” says Beth.

Crowded House

Meanwhile, the boys—now rambunctious 3-year-olds—were growing and, well, being boys. “No matter how much I tidied up, there were always toys strewn everywhere,” says Beth. “My husband joked that it looked like we ran a day-care center.” The Hopkinses had definitely outgrown their ranch house, but there was no room in the budget for turning the huge unfinished basement into

a family room. “We’re big do-it-yourselfers, but this was just too large a project for us,” Beth admits. So when she saw a call for makeover candidates in *Woman’s Day*, she wrote in.

Problem Solved!

Enter Massachusetts-based designer Annie Selke, author of *Fresh American Spaces*, who added vibrancy to the new playroom with colorful furniture and accessories and bright paint. Her biggest challenge was to strike a balance between fun and functionality—and the result was a big hit with the whole family. “Seeing the boys get so excited to go down and play in their own little world has been wonderful for Mike and me,” says Beth. “After everything we’ve been through over the past few years, we needed this. It was a real blessing for us.”



“I wanted to make this room bright and fun for the kids but practical for the adults,” says Annie Selke (top left, with Beth).



BEFORE





↑ Use Space Wisely

Selke transformed a recessed area into a media center with custom shelving. Toys that once were scattered everywhere are now housed in durable plastic bins stored where the twins can grab them, while breakable items (the TV, framed photos) are placed out of their reach. The striped panel curtains slide shut in a jiffy to conceal it all. Mike, a true seat-of-his-pants handyman, figured out how to create the suspended ceiling by watching YouTube videos.



← Pick Hardworking Furnishings

In the large basement—designed for kids as well as adults—Selke placed a sectional sofa that acts as a room divider, creating zones for different activities. The coffee table has pullout drawers to house building blocks and games, and a ledge to keep small toys from rolling off the sides and getting lost under the couch. The indoor/outdoor area rug is water- and stain-resistant, so it can be cleaned easily when accidents happen.

ABOVE Dash & Albert Rug Company Rope Rug, \$770 for 6'x9'. La-Z-Boy Daphne Sectional, \$4,079 as shown. Pottery Barn Kids Activity Table & Cart Set, \$399. Pine Cone Hill Links and Hot House Floral pillows, \$144-\$154 each.

LEFT Benjamin Moore paint in Fruity Cocktail 147 (orange), \$37 per gallon. California Closets Shelving, \$2,600 as shown. LG Cinema Screen HDTV, \$1,950. Pine Cone Hill July Stripe fabric (curtains), \$41 per yard. IndustrialSupplies.com Schaefer Systems Totes, \$37 each. The Land of Nod Zig Zag Strapping Baskets, \$49 for 3. IKEA KASSETT boxes, \$4-\$5 for 2; and NYTTJA frames, \$3 for 2.



↑ Create “Managed Mischief”

Thanks to a framed magnetic whiteboard Selke mounted, Aiden and Christopher have a wall they’re allowed to draw on. An oversize beanbag acts as movable seat, stepstool and occasional soft landing spot for tired little boys.

ABOVE Home Depot Thrifty White Panel Board, \$12.98 for a 4'x8' piece. Overstock.com Cool Skin Kushy Bean Sack, \$132. IKEA MAMMUT stool, \$8; and art supplies, from \$1.50. Container Store Spot On! Magnets, from \$9 for 4.



↑ Make Room for Downtime

Against one wall, Selke placed two bookcases, whose height allows the boys to pull down their favorite books for Beth or Mike to read to them in quiet moments. Since, like most boys, the twins love things that go **vroom**, car and truck decals adorn the walls.

ABOVE Benjamin Moore paint in Chic Lime 396, \$37 per gallon. Pottery Barn Kids Cameron Bookcase, \$199. The Land of Nod Zig Zag Strapping Baskets, \$49 for 3. Overstock.com Cool Skin Kushy Bean Sack, \$132. Wallhogs Custom Decals, \$75 as shown.

GET THE LOOK

In her book, Selke outlines five design styles, including Everyday Exuberance, which she brought to life in the Hopkins family's basement. Here's how:

1 LIGHTEN UP. The basement had soft recessed lighting and few windows, so Selke brightened it by painting the ceiling white and bringing in white desks and tables. "I wanted to make what was once a very dark, dank place as cheerful as possible," she says.

2 GO BOLD. Mixing vibrant, eye-catching colors (like the peacock blue sofa and lime green and orange walls) "makes a room lively and exciting and encourages joy," says Selke. If you're hesitant to use bright hues on such a large scale, incorporate them in smaller doses on accent items like pillows, lamps and curtains.

3 PLAY WITH PATTERN. To tie everything together and add energy and interest, Selke dotted the space with striped curtains, floral pillows and zigzagged storage boxes that incorporate the wall and sofa colors.

↓ Encourage Creativity

Selke tucked an arts-and-crafts nook into a corner near the laundry room. The twins' new table has plenty of storage for their art supplies. A desktop paper roll lets them pull out a length, create a masterpiece, then tear it off for display. Bright orange foam tiles cover the poured-concrete floor so the boys won't get hurt if they fall.

BELOW Benjamin Moore paint in Blooming Grove 413 (green), \$37 per gallon. The Land of Nod Elementary Table, \$279. IKEA MALA Tabletop Paper Holder, \$7. FoamTiles.com $\frac{3}{4}$ " Soft Foam Tiles, \$2 per square foot.



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