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Architectural Designer
 Brian Stone

Carpenter
 Joe Norville

Members of:
 NARI DC Chapter
 Montgomery Co. Builders
 Association

Recent Awards:
 2004 Montgomery
 Co. Builders Assoc.

2003 Montgomery
 Co. Builders Assoc.

2002 NARI
 CotY Awards (2)

2002 Montgomery
 Co. Builders Assoc.
 Awards (4)

2001 Montgomery
 Co. Builders Assoc.
 Awards (4)

2001 NARI
 CotY Awards (2)

2000 NARI
 CotY Awards (4)

2000 Montgomery
 Co. Builders Awards (2)

1993 - 1999
 Multiple Awards



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BEFORE

A few of their favorite things

It is always nice to hear from clients who love their remodeling project, but a recent letter from a DC homeowner is destined to be framed.

A few of our favorite things:

- *Sitting on the porch and looking up through the high windows in the kitchen at the sky and trees*
- *The perfect cube of the room*
- *The way the porch is trimmed out so beautifully, especially the 4x4 pressure treated posts*
- *Your attitude that you will do what it takes to make everything right*
- *The 'transom' look of the 4x4 cedar on the porch*
- *The high ceiling that opens up the breakfast room and separates it from the old kitchen*
- *The extra effort you went to, ripping the thin pieces of cedar to hide the joist hangers*
- *Enjoying the light shining through the high windows*

- *Your always calm and positive attitude*
- *The trim out of the box bay window*
- *The use of lots of windows—so much light and breeze*
- *Your solution using lattice for the code issue of railing*
- *Your help on the layout of the cabinets with the pantry and broom closet, forming the separation between the kitchen and breakfast room*
- *The fine, very finished look of the screening under the porch*
- *Your delightful cheerfulness every morning*

The project that evoked such an enthusiastic response involved removing a drafty pantry area from a 70-year-old house, and adding 425 square feet to create an expanded kitchen area, new screened porch and basement storage.

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The project began with removing the existing one-story bump out at the rear of the home, taking care not to harm the azaleas and dogwood tree. A new entrance to the basement required removing existing masonry, door and steps.

The addition extends the kitchen area to include a breakfast nook. The Alexander Group helped the homeowners find a cabinet maker who was able to match the existing cabinets. Seven new strategically placed, aluminum clad true divided light wood double hung windows by Weathershield provide an abundance of natural light throughout the whole house.

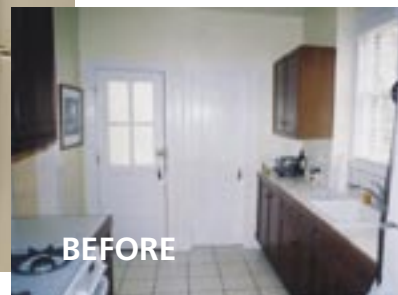
“My kitchen was so dark before and now I love all the light,” the homeowner said. “I had definite opinions about what I wanted, but I learned to listen to The Alexander Group’s ideas. They are an excellent judge of what will work best.”

The screened-in porch was the realization of a long-time dream of the homeowners.

“I’ve always dreamed of having a cup of coffee while overlooking a pretty back yard,” she said.

The new porch allows for privacy as well as a view. A cedar screen door and unique vertical grid cedar lattice panels provide interesting detail.

“We love this neighborhood and didn’t want to move,” explained the homeowner. By adding a small addition, the home is ready for another 70 years.



BEFORE

Featured product: Westinghouse “iCEBOX”

The kitchen has long been the hub of the home—where family gathers to share meals and reconnect after a long day—and now, with the advent of new technology, its role as hub takes on further meaning.

iCEBOX, the ultimate kitchen entertainment center, brings the Internet, television, CDs, DVDs, radio, and home video monitoring into the kitchen. Prepare dinner with a recipe from your favorite TV show or Web site; order groceries while checking your pantry; research your next family vacation over dessert; or log onto your children’s school to check assignments while supervising homework.

The new information center comes in two models: The FlipScreen, which mounts under a cabinet, or the CounterTop style. Both models feature:

- TV, FM radio, DVD and CD player
- Flat LCD screen for exceptional picture quality
- Wi-Fi, Internet-ready
- Easy-to-touch screen interface with stylus; eliminates the need for a mouse
- Washable and wireless keyboard and remote so spills are no problem
- 3-way speakers
- Home video monitoring function
- Only 24 pounds, approximately 24”x11”, 3.75” deep



Big box stores: Use with caution

Most remodelers have a love-hate relationship with the big box stores. They love the convenience of picking up a missing part or replacing a tool; they love how the store inspires homeowners to make changes in their houses; and they love the wide range of materials and appliances to review. But they hate it when a homeowner uses the big boxes to try to compare pricing, especially installed pricing.

“It’s apples and oranges to compare the big box installation pricing to a full service design/build firm’s pricing,” explains Alex Dean.

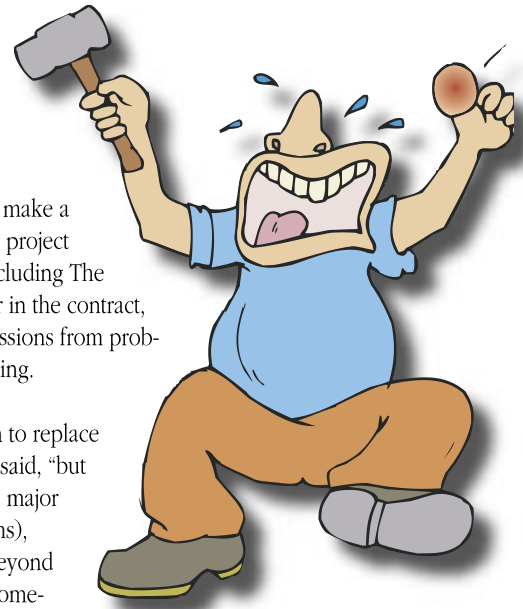
The large chains can certainly buy products and materials in bulk, allowing for discounting, but they do not employ full-time installers for the many products they sell including flooring, cabinets, carpeting etc. To meet the consumer demand for installation, the stores sub-contract the work to small operations, many of whom may not be able to sustain a business without the leads from the stores. In addition, service after the sale is a very weak point—ask any homeowner who ordered a product, only to find it wasn’t exactly right.

“It takes more than a hammer and ladder to run a successful remodeling company,” Alex said. “Many of the installed sales contractors either do not have a firmly established business, or they don’t want to invest the time and effort to win new business. It takes a considerable amount of investment to market to the type of clientele who want the level of service The Alexander Group provides.”

While Alex concedes that if a homeowner is planning a purchase from one of the chains, and installing the product himself, then the chains are an ideal source of materials and products. Beware of the level of service when it comes to anything outside the “box.” The return/replacement process may strain the most patient of homeowners.

Additionally, if a homeowner wants to make a purchase for inclusion in a remodeling project by a professional, most remodelers, including The Alexander Group, execute a disclaimer in the contract, protecting the remodeler from repercussions from problems, delays, poor quality or mis-ordering.

“Many homeowners are handy enough to replace a faucet or repair a screen door,” Alex said, “but when it comes to building an addition, major renovations (including kitchens or baths), there are so many issues to consider beyond the price of a sheet of plywood, that homeowners are better off to hire a professional contractor or remodeler.”



■ *"(The Alexander Group) finished our bathroom renovation last year, which turned our small fourth bedroom upstairs into a master bath. Alex is terrific on the design side. For example, to create the new bathroom, they needed to run pipes down through the end of the upstairs dining room wall. Alex designed a perfectly proportional tray ceiling in the dining room that accommodates the needed pipes and adds tremendously to the appearance of the room. Their Web site has a cool feature ...that (upon a mouse-over) shows the before picture and the finished work." JB*

Odds 'n ends...

Jonathan Hodge, design consultant, and Brian Stone, architectural designer, recently attended "An Evening with Sarah Susanka," architect and best-selling author of "Home By Design" and "The Not So Big" book series. The presentation explored ideas of how to enhance the beauty and functionality of homes through finely crafted design.

Jonathan Hodge and Steve Mayberry, construction manager, visited Marrokal Construction in San Diego to learn Marrokal's approach to customer service. From Jonathan and Steve's analysis, several points were incorporated into The Alexander Group's processes, such as having a professional cleaning service at the end of each project.

The Alexander Group recently won a 2004 Montgomery County Builders Award for Best Remodeling Project.

The recently announced Remodeling America program has been extended until July 30. Families in need are urged to submit a letter to The Alexander Group describing how a modest remodeling project would change their lives. For more information on the program, log onto RemodelingAmerica.org.



■ Visit our Web site: AlexanderGroup.net

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