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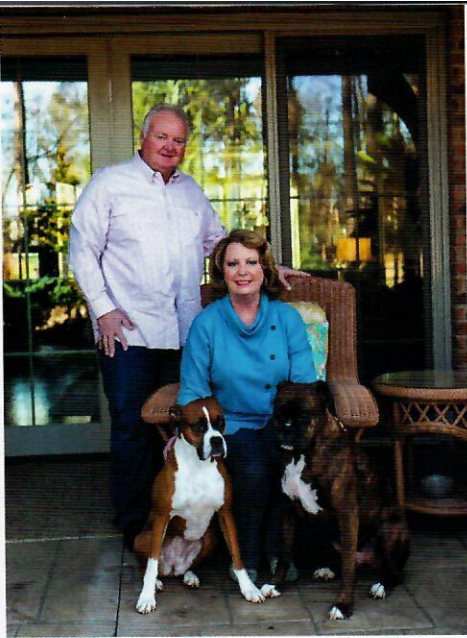
Denise and Jeff Carter
downsized in style
with Starr Miller's help



Denise Carter's craft room perfectly organizes everything she needs, as it offers a comforting space for creativity.

by Lori K. Tate
photography by Dustin Peck

Every home has a season. Some houses are perfect for couples just starting out, while others work well for families with children. The key is recognizing when your home doesn't work for you anymore and doing something about it. That's exactly what Denise and Jeff Carter of Stanley did, and the result is a cozy home that offers all they could ever want at this stage in their lives.



Jeff and Denise Carter are happy with how they chose to downsize.

to 30 [kids] there every weekend," remembers Jeff, who is a native of Charlotte.

Once their children were out on their own, the house felt huge. "There would be weeks that we wouldn't even go downstairs," remembers Denise. "It was not a house built for two people, and it's hard to keep up a house that big," adds Jeff.

Hence the decision to downsize. Luckily for the Carters, they had the inside track on a smaller home they loved. Their friends had built a home in Stanley but had plans to eventually move to Raleigh to be closer to their grandchild. When Denise and Jeff visited their friends in their

new home, they both loved it at first sight.

Soon Denise called her friend and told her that they were interested in the house. Long story short, everything worked out, and the Carters moved into the 4,200-square-foot home a year and a half ago. Their friends now happily live in Raleigh.

Making it their own

Though they loved the size and the open floor plan of the home, they needed to make it their own. For that, they turned to Starr Miller, president and principal designer at Starr Miller Interior Design, Inc. in Cornelius. Miller worked with the couple on their former residence, and Denise and Miller are also friends through the North Mecklenburg Woman's Club.

The main design focus was lightening the space, which was accomplished by painting

the interior of the home in a palette of light, soothing colors such as Antique White, Sea Salt, Comfort Gray, Grape Mist, Lemon Chiffon, Repose Gray and Stucco — all from Sherwin Williams.

The master suite exhibits this perfectly, as it offers a calm oasis with its custom bedding and headboard. The rug takes on a more contemporary tone but is muted to keep it in check. The crystal lamps that flank the bed were Denise's grandmother's. "We painted the gold bases cream and changed the shades to something a little more casual so it wasn't as formal," explains Miller. "It was a way to preserve them but not be so stuffy."

Denise, who grew up in Cornelius, painted two paintings of the lake to provide the lake view that they had

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enjoyed for so many years.

To continue the peaceful feeling, the bedroom opens up to the pool, where a waterfall flows and plush landscaping envelopes the space. The pool can also be accessed from the kitchen/living room area.

“The most important thing for me is that the grill and the pool were on the same level with the kitchen because at the other house, my outdoor kitchen and pool were down a level,” says Jeff.

A place for everything

Upstairs the smart use of space continues with a guest suite for their daughter’s family, including a nursery for their grandson, Lucas. Their son also has a guest room upstairs, but the main attraction is Denise’s craft room.

“This was a major man cave,”

says Miller of the space, which now touts light gray walls and a soft pink (White Dogwood) ceiling. “It was a Rubik’s Cube to get all of her things in there. She needed a desk for working, a desk for sewing. She needed a desk for painting and stamping. She needed to be able to sit and talk to friends.”

Dianna Lomangino, who works with Miller, worked up various designs before finding one that worked perfectly. A high craft table sits in the middle of the space fronted by a gray sleeper couch from Stickley Furniture. A hammered metal ottoman from World Market offers storage space and can easily be moved, while craft chest of drawers designed by Martha Stewart allow Denise to organize all of her craft supplies. In addition, a desk sits on each side of the room — one is where she works on her computer, and the other one is her sewing area.



The open dining room features a palette of soft colors that calm the senses.

The focal point of the room is a beach picture painted in bright shades of pink by Denise. Blackout shades were installed in case the room needs to accommodate guests. “My craft room is more functional here than it was at the other house because everything has its own place,” explains Denise.

“Storage was major for me, and this house has a lot of storage for Christmas,

Halloween, Thanksgiving, everything I entertain for. With Starr’s help, she helped me bring in storage,” says Denise, adding that a custom ottoman in the living room houses lots of blankets and toys.

“Denise makes decisions fast and knows what she wants,” adds Miller. “I love the way things go together in this house.”

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