



 JULIE BARNES

 LILLIAN LANE

CHIC AND CHEERFUL

Planning for Tasteful Family Whimsy

Designing and decorating a home can be complicated. There are competing tastes to consider if you don't live alone, budgets to balance and an endless array of furniture, fixtures, paint colours and accents to choose from. Throw kids into the mix and—if

they're old enough to form sentences—you have more opinions to contend with, and longevity to factor in.

For Jen Lapsiuk, a designer with Arbutus Properties, creating a tasteful kid-friendly home begins with forward thinking. "When I

am designing for kids, I take their age into consideration and go a little bit above it. I try not to design right for that moment because I know they'll be out of that stage quite quickly."

Jen kept this top of mind as she designed the cheerful

yet chic Arbutus showhome in The Meadows. Room by room, Jen balanced the needs of an imaginary family—it *is* a showhome after all. The layout and design were carefully rendered, ensuring the home appealed to both pint-sized provocateurs and their parents. ➤



Simpler, faster and cheaper than wallpaper, wall decals like these polka dots are easy to remove or change as your child grows up.



Picking a Paint Palette

"I like to start with a neutral palette and then add pops of colour," says Jen. "Then it's easy to change things over the years." Most of the walls in the home are white, but Jen has added colour with feature walls in the kids' rooms—dark teal in the girls' room and grey-blue in the boy's room. For the girls' room, Jen chose a dark teal feature wall and sprinkled it with mint- and fuchsia-coloured polka dot stickers to create dimension and a playful vibe. Wall decals like these are easy to remove or change as your child grows up.

Getting Creative

An open-air bonus room on the second floor was designed

for the whole family. The focal point of the space is a bold, black chalkboard wall.

"This is where we picture the family hanging out and just relaxing," says Jen. "I wanted to create a space for the kids to hang out too, and the chalkboard wall was the perfect way to let the kids get creative and it's easy to clean up. What kid doesn't want to draw on the wall?"

Not only is it a fun, artistic feature, it's also visually appealing, says Jen. "I love it because it looks nice too. I like the solid black wall—it adds a nice design element."

Jen added a desk in front of the chalk wall, and installed minimalist floating shelves

A little ceiling reinforcement makes a hanging chair and a rope ladder (shown on the next page) a fun and safe addition.



above. "The kids can do their artwork or homework at the desk." When selecting books to display, she chose ones with colourful covers that would coordinate with her design.

Encouraging Activity and Imagination

When Jen designed the two kids' rooms, she had a specific age range in mind for each. She envisioned a six- or seven-year-old boy in the bedroom where she created a mountain theme, complete with a custom climbing wall and rope ladder. "I know from having my own kids that they don't just sit still, they are busy. They're always trying to climb on things so I think having the climbing

wall is a huge bonus." As the child grows up, the climbing holds can be rearranged to make it more difficult. Once they outgrow it altogether, the board can be unscrewed from the wall, with only a few holes needing to be filled.

Across the hall is another children's bedroom. Here, Jen imagined four-year-old twin girls. She installed a whimsical wicker hanging chair in the corner. Draped with a faux sheepskin, it provides a perfectly cozy perch to read a book. The chair comfortably seats two small children, says Jen. "We put extra backing in the ceiling to reinforce the chair and for the hanging ladder in the boy's room." ➤

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The holds on the climbing wall can be rearranged in the future to make it more challenging as a child grows up. When it is ready to be removed it can be unscrewed from the wall, with only a few holes needing to be filled.

Adult-Approved Décor

Faux taxidermy has been popular in recent years, and Jen put a child-inspired spin on the trend by mounting a stuffed pink flamingo on the wall in the girls' room. "When I do my kids' designs, I like to create it so it's fun for them, but I also include décor or design elements that I like too," she says, pointing out the gold pineapple perched on a shelf and a woven wall hanging on an adjacent wall. "You can do that in a young kids' room—add décor items that speak to you."

Thoughtful Layout and Storage

Situating the family room on the second floor makes it

simpler to create a sophisticated adult space on the main floor, says Jen. Having toys out of sight also means less stress when company comes to visit.

"As a parent myself, I definitely like to keep my house looking a certain way, so having the living room downstairs and being able to keep it clean, and then having the kids' area upstairs, where everything is accessible for them, means the kids can be themselves and get crazy and you don't have to get upset," she says with a knowing laugh.

Not everyone is going to have an extra room for their kids to play in, aside from ➤



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their own bedrooms. “If you don’t have the room, you can carve out a corner and add a little table and chairs—a cute little area for them.” She recommends using labelled jars for their crayons, and labelled bins and decorative baskets for toys. “It helps the kids when they know where their toys go: ‘This is the Lego bin; this is for your stuffed animals.’ It keeps things tucked

away but easily accessible to the kids.”

Jen carries this method of organization into the mudrooms she designs. “We design our mudrooms based on a family and make sure we have enough hooks and cubbies for shoes, and lots of storage, because when the kids are in school there are backpacks, gloves, mitts and a lot of other stuff.” She likes

to line a shelf with baskets and label them so each child has their own space to store outdoor gear.

Forget ‘Picture-Perfect’

Trying to create a picture-perfect family home might just be the epitome of a fool’s errand. Jen thinks it’s a goal parents should ditch.

“Trying to make your home too perfect just doesn’t work

with kids,” she says. “I’ve learned from having my own kids that it can’t be perfect so I might as well work with it and create a space my kids are going to thrive in—a space they’re going to grow in, get creative in and be themselves in.” 

Julie Barnes

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