

Friendly Living Spaces



TAMARA REYNOLDS

BY WINSTON DAVIS

A dream house is a centerpiece of the American dream. We all have one, even if only in dream time. But the realities of MS have a way of intruding on dreams. Balance problems call for grab bars. Sitting to work (an essential energy conservation technique) may entail lowered counter tops and more. And if a large mobility device becomes part of one's life, the bathroom, kitchen, garage, and entrance may all need changes.

Suddenly, a comfortable living space becomes "medicalized" and the once friendly home screams "disabled" at every turn.

Universal Design to the rescue

Ten years ago, Denise Veazey moved back home to live with her parents in Cleveland, Tennessee. MS had taken a toll, ending her life in Atlanta, Georgia, and her marriage. But Denise is not the sort to stay down long. She was soon involved in building her own home.

"I was already using a cane and I knew I should plan for an unknown future," she told **InsideMS**. "But I also knew I wanted a home to be proud of, a home able-bodied people would admire." Before long, she was living in that new home and a new man had entered her life.

Jim Wille, an attorney by training, had formerly headed an Independent Living Center in Rockford, Illinois. After he and Denise married, another move was in store—to Hopkinsville, Kentucky, where

Jim took the helm of the Boys and Girls Club. The house Denise had built was so

attractive that they were able to sell it in short order—to a couple who did not have disabilities.

Jim introduced Denise to Universal Design, or UD, which means design to meet the needs, as Denise puts it, "of people from 10 to 110." UD concepts meshed with what she had learned while building her first house, plus her own sense of style and her determination to live well "no matter what this disease throws at me."

She and Jim found plans for a Universal Design home on the Internet. They then consulted a local architect, "to tweak the plans for our tastes and needs," she said.

You have to look closely to see "handicapped" features, although they are everywhere. "People who visit here are just amazed," Denise said. "They say 'I want a house like this'—and that's just the point."

Among other things, UD principles make a home safer and easier to clean, leaving Denise Veazey with time and energy to tutor kids in reading, serve as a hospital volunteer once a week, keep up with church activities, and conduct a thriving home business selling Mary Kay Cosmetics—all from the wheelchair that is now a permanent part of her life.

For a story about UD apartment living, plus references and Web sites for more about UD, see Sharon Brown's story on page 43. ■

Winston Davis is a frequent contributor to this magazine.



Wood flooring means stress-free rolling and cleaning. A powder room counter with open space below means anyone can sit to get up close and personal.

TAMARA REYNOLDS

