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## Turn home into castle

By Janice Denham  
Tuesday, November 6, 2007 10:24 PM CST

Some people, when spirits need a lift, buy a new sweater, listen to a favorite CD or set a date to talk with a favorite friend.

Others move furniture. And some need help to make all the pieces fit again.

"A lot of home projects get off-track when people don't do any research," says interior designer Patrice Barge-Munden. "The cost is more money, more mistakes."

She recommends thinking through the process more and makes suggestions in a decorating and remodeling organizer she sends off with clients and do-it-yourselfers. The sturdy pockets of a three-ring binder, called the Home Project File, is where she recommends they tuck away swatches, pictures snipped from magazines, samples, product information, measurements and prices.

Munden found gathering all the material in a shoebox had drawbacks. Like a kid's homework, it fell through a hole in the bottom. "This gives a person a sense of confidence," she says.

She has a current project with the Sulewski family – Julie and Paul and their daughters Lauren and Emily - who moved to Chesterfield two years ago.

Unlike the Cape Cod-style house they had before in a Chicago suburb, they jumped into a more modern style of home here with a pool and a newer neighborhood.

Julie Sulewski credits Munden with pulling together elements in work that now has moved upstairs to their daughters' bedrooms. Sulewski calls herself "kind of conservative," so the designer helped punch up her favored neutral tones. Then they moved forward to patch together a look the homeowner still wanted and had started with dynamic furniture.

Two conferences with a different decorator did not gel.

"She wasn't listening to what I said. I kind of put the brakes on for a while," Sulewski says. "I needed someone to work with my tastes and budget. I wasn't spending \$900 on a lamp."

She feels mutual trust is absolutely necessary when someone is helping foster ideas in a person's home. She found Munden through a painter.

"It sounds corny, but we talked 45 minutes by phone the first time and she hadn't even seen my house yet," Sulewski says. "It needs to be somebody who 'gets' your tastes and who won't be offended by your own ideas."

The biggest challenge was when Sulewski and her daughters went to Wisconsin for the summer.

"Before she left, we had chosen swatches, etc., and we did the painting while she was gone," Munden says.

The Home Project File, they both feel, helped keep them on track. They spoke weekly while they were apart. She packed it with ideas from which decisions were made. Now that rooms are painted, new curtains installed and accent pieces moved, its thin contents include only the selected swatches and colors.

Munden also gained her client's trust by being present while painters worked. So how did Sulewski feel when she first saw the rooms?

"I felt this is what I wanted," she says.



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