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A MODERN HOME ON THE PRAIRIE

By Katie Mills Giorgio

Photos by John Richard for Allan Custom Homes

Dick and Kate Minette have only been living in their new home since May. But the home is so wonderfully reflective of their personalities and lifestyle that it seems they've been there much longer.

The 3,500-square-foot, three bedroom, two-and-a-half bath home — on a wooded lot in a developing neighborhood in southeast Cedar Rapids — gives visitors a prairie-style impression from the façade. But one step through the front door and the home's modern, yet comfortable flair takes over. "I wanted a contemporary look but not a hard edge. We were not trying to emulate a 100-year-old home," says Ms. Minette, referring to the couple's previous home in an older southeast Cedar Rapids neighborhood.

"This house is certainly not cookie cutter," Mr. Minette adds.

"It's our aesthetic."

The Minettes started thinking about moving more than a year ago, but hadn't planned to build. They did, however, have a clipping from a newspaper of a home they would love to live in.

"We're at a point in our lives when we know exactly what we want," Ms. Minette says, so they began looking at lots to build on. After finding the lot and selecting Paul Brundell, President of Allan Custom Homes, as builder and contractor, things moved quickly. The Minettes broke ground in October 2010 and moved in this May, one week ahead of schedule.

They attribute the success of their home building project to working with Mr. Brundell, who took their newspaper clipping and created their dream home.

"Dick and Kate had a good handle on what they wanted so I worked to optimize the design to fit around their needs and life-



style,” says Mr. Brundell.

Lori Wiles of Lori Wiles Design was brought in for interior design. She worked very closely with Ms. Minette to pull together the home’s distinctive style. The two looked for modern lines and stayed focused on function, personality and fun.

“We wanted to have fun making the selections,” says Ms. Minette. “There was a joy about it that continues beyond the building process.”

Ms. Wiles worked to honor the Minette’s individuality through the home’s soft and livable contemporary design.

“Dick and Kate both have tons of character and personality,” she says. Ms. Minette, for example, is very forward thinking and gravitates toward horizontal lines, says Ms. Wiles, so horizontal lines are constantly reinforced in the design. “There’s a feeling of being able to move from space to space without distraction,” Ms. Wiles adds.

There’s an obvious joy the four collaborators had in working together on this home.

“Working with Paul and Lori was truly part of the fun,” says Ms. Minette.

And Ms. Wiles goes so far as to say it’s

the most efficient home building team she’s been a part of in her nearly 20 years of experience. The team’s effectiveness is due to constant communication, made possible by Mr. Brundell’s use of Co-construct, a software program that contains all the plans and designs, budget and messaging on every aspect of the project and allows communication between builder, designer and homeowners.

“This allowed me to be part of the day-to-day dialogue and respond to questions throughout the process,” says Ms. Minette.

Perhaps it’s the influence of her work at Pearson, but Ms. Minette says building their home was an educational experience for her and her husband.

“We both wanted to learn something from this project. We’d seen it start from nothing and it was fun to envision things,” she says. “The whole process was absolutely amazing.”

Visitors to the Minette home will likely be amazed at the results of their work as well. The great room and kitchen area attract much attention.

“People are blown away by the fireplace,” says Ms. Minette. Created from sea



stone, it stretches from floor to ceiling in the great room. In the kitchen a floating glass countertop on the center island seems to defy laws of physics. These and other elements of the home show the Minette’s willingness to push the design envelope.

“It’s exciting to have clients that think outside the box,” says Ms. Wiles.

Just off the dining area is a spacious screened porch that Ms. Minette has found to be a favorite spot.

“This home was laid out to take full advantage of the green space and the woods,”

she says. “We wanted this to be wide open. We eat every meal we can out here.”

The home’s relationship with nature can truly be felt when walking into the master suite as well. Large commercial windows offer a view that makes it feel like the outdoors are an extension of their home.

“When I walk in here and take in all the gray and green and the outside, I just love that feeling,” says Ms. Minette. She looks forward to seeing how the view changes with the seasons.

Artwork is another prominent feature. There are art display nooks built into the kitchen cabinetry. A large work by Priscilla Steele hangs in the entryway — in a space actually designed to accommodate the piece. A John Beckelman work makes itself at home in master bedroom. The Minettes’ art collection is displayed all over the home. Ms. Wiles says it was important to incorporate things that were meaningful to the couple.

“There is a story in every piece of art,” she says. “It’s how they value the people in their life and reflect on where they’ve been. It helps the home reflect their values of community.”

Of course, there were several other factors that went into the building and design process. The home incorporates universal design elements, as the Minettes want to live in this home as they get older.

“This whole house is thought through,” says Mr. Brundell. “We were forward thinking about potential use at some time.”

The Minettes were also considerate of the environment.

“We were very intent on being as sustainable as we could be,” says Ms. Minette. The home features geothermal heating and cooling and led lighting, for example. And they were conscious of doing their purchasing all throughout the Corridor.

The old doors used in the basement, are a prime example. Mr. Minette found the five white doors at ReStore in Iowa City. “They were perfect,” says Ms. Minette, “and everyone who visits comments on those doors.” The doors — a nod to Mr. Minette’s sentimental, history-loving personality — complemented the look of the bloft, that’s basement loft, the Minette, Brundell, Wiles team created on the lower level of the home.

“The basement took on a life of its own,” says Ms. Minette. “We really didn’t anticipate the basement being what it is.” It features an exposed ceiling, sealed concrete floors, exposed beams — a very industrial look that uses materials in their pure form, says Ms. Wiles, yet is still a comfortable and inviting space.

The Minettes have done a fair amount of entertaining in the few weeks since moving in. The layout and design of the home were purposefully created to allow for it.

“I want family and friends to be here and be comfortable,” says Ms. Minette. “We worked to make sure we had plenty of seating.”

With all the seating Mr. Minette says he’s not yet quite sure of his favorite spot in his new home.

“I’m enjoying watching this house develop a personality, but I haven’t sat in all the places yet to decide which one likes me best.” Q

