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When Ken and Kim Fess decided to remodel their basement, they were pleasantly surprised at how pain-free the experience was with Advanced Contracting Inc. based in Round Hill, Va. Ken, who is an ex-army officer, has moved extensively throughout his career so this wasn't the first home that they have remodeled.

### CHOOSING A REMODELER

When they first decided to remodel their basement they contemplated what design/build firm they should use. A good friend of Kim's had recently remodeled her kitchen and her friend was very happy with her remodeler. "We were very impressed with their work when we saw their remodeled kitchen. We had also just recently remodeled other areas in our house and I wasn't overly happy with the remodelers we had used in the past," Ken said. "We had some work done on the exterior of our house and tried Advanced Contracting, and we were happy with their work, so when we decided to remodel the basement, we asked them."

The existing basement was partial to unfinished. "We wanted to completely strip the existing basement; all that was left were the outside walls," Ken said. Before the remodel, the basement consisted of a game room, a utility room, an office, a full bath, and shop area. "There was a lot of un-used space and we wanted space where we could entertain." According to Advanced Contracting Inc. Vice President, Designer, and specification writer Randy Iacone, CR, CKBR, they had to completely gut the existing basement, including the stairs leading down there. "Everything was taken out; electrical, plumbing, everything went," he said.

Ultimately, they were seeking the full remodel to include a wine cellar, a steam shower bathroom, a craft room, a family room with an egress, and a spare bedroom with a Murphy bed. About four months of research was done before the project began. "We wanted to make sure that we did everything right," Randy said. The electrical plan for this remodel was extremely extensive and in the end includes custom recessed lighting along with "structured

# BASEMENT REMODELING: GETTING IT RIGHT

wiring,” which provides music, internet, phone, and video for each space independently. Additionally, it was important to the homeowners that the remodel was energy efficient. “All of the lights and fixtures throughout the remodel were endeavored by Advanced Contracting to be energy efficient,” Ken said.

## CUSTOM WINE CELLAR

Ken, who collects wine from all over the world, wanted a specifically designed wine cellar that was up to code by the wine industry standards and requirements. Believe it or not, the beautiful 1,200-plus bottle wine cellar was once a dark and damp crawl space. The area was dug out by hand. “It required considerable excavation,” Randy says. “About 142 cubic yards of dirt had to be removed and we had to underpin the foundation.” In the end, the foundation wall was cut open to create this custom room any wine connoisseur would be proud to have in his home.

The wine cellar includes warm-colored ceramic tile, custom low-voltage recessed lighting, red wood wine racks, and an old-world plaster finish on the walls and ceiling. “The guidelines are so specific that you really have to be careful with the lighting so it doesn’t get too warm in there,” Randy said. Due to the demand for custom conditions in the room, a mini-split cooling system was also installed. “The room is very well insulated to keep out humidity,” Randy said. The room is sealed and insulated by a Therma-Tru door.

Project Manager Gary Fernandez, CLC, said the wine cellar turned out great. “During the construction, it was my biggest concern. It was time consuming to dig out the crawl space, and we had to move forward with other areas at the same time. But in the end it turned out to be exactly what they wanted; and that’s what we strive for.”

## FULL BATHROOM REMODEL

The existing bathroom was small and dark and was really outdated. “The bathroom was a decent size, so it had a lot of potential,” Randy says. Ken and Kim work out frequently, so they really wanted a steam shower to use after exercising and a nicer updated bathroom.



Advanced Contracting enlarged the space to accommodate a new steam shower, which is seven feet long by four feet wide and has benches at both ends. “I was able to fit a toilet compartment room for them with a door and still work with the existing floor plan,” Randy said. “Ultimately, I wanted to give them more room for the steam shower and it resulted in a space that two people can comfortably sit in.”

The tile technicians Gary Fernandez, CLC, and JR Hansen, CRC, meticulously installed the green jade river rock that adorns the floor and curb of the shower. “They really went out of their way to make sure it was what we wanted,” Ken said. “Kim wanted the tile laid a certain way, so they literally drew how they were going to lay the tile before it was placed and made sure it was what she wanted.”

The Grohe rain head is centered in the shower stall along with three body sprays each centered over a bench. A Kohler hand-held shower faucet is provided for easy rinsing. The steam shower includes a frameless one-half inch tempered glass, with a brushed nickel c-pull handle. A

tapered ceiling with recessed lights and the oval wall mirror add the finishing touches to this beautiful bathroom retreat. “The lighting in this space was key,” Randy says. “It turned out well with the recessed lighting; we specially spaced them for the environment.”

## SPECIALIZED CRAFT ROOM

Kim is really into doing crafts including stain glass, pottery, and quilting to name a few. She wanted the space to maintain her hobbies. What started out as a room with cinder block walls, a cement floor, exposed plumbing, and electrical turned into a magnificent craft room. The room consists of ceiling-height Maple cabinetry with simple door hardware. One base cabinet is mobile and provides ease for Kim to move around as needed.

“Having an island with storage was really important to her,” Gary said. However, due to the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) requirements, there really wasn’t enough space to have a permanent island in the room. “The result was that we constructed one that is on castor wheels and you can store



# BASEMENT REMODELING: GETTING IT RIGHT

it under the custom “counter” when it’s not being used. And, it’s up to code according to NKBA requirements.”

They chose a laminate countertop since the room is used for crafting and the product was a better fit for the budget. Additionally, the electrical plan had to be the perfect plan for this often-used space.

The recessed lighting provides intense light yet the fluorescent bulbs helps keep the space from overheating. “Lighting is so important when you are constructing a room for this specific purpose. You want to keep good color retention; so 11 to 12 fluorescent lights are in this room. We decided to go with fluorescent because these lights don’t get hot,” Randy said. Chrome-finished recessed lighting trim was used as well, so more light reflects off of the metal.

A durable laminate floor was used for the space. To complete this room, a sink and faucet were installed. The washer and dryer sit in a closet in the back of the room.

## CREATIVE SPACES

Using all of the space available was a big priority for Ken and Kim. “Before the remodel there was so much wasted space down there,” Ken said. Advanced Contracting Inc. came up with some very unique ideas to accommodate their needs.

For example, at the bottom of the staircase, the designer creatively planned this unused space for a lighted niche. It provides a unique area where the family can display their prized chess pieces. “It turned out pretty cool,” Gary said. “The way the lighting comes down on the glass shelves looks really nice.” Additionally, the homeowners didn’t like the hallway by the stairs. “We softened the corners of the walls in this area so it wasn’t so angular,” Randy said. Another unique touch is that a media closet was made beneath the stairs. “Ken is into electronics, and this was the only space left for his needs,” he said.

## FROM START TO COMPLETION

The total 1,500 square-foot remodel took about four months. As far as designing

the details, the family pretty much knew what they wanted, so it was up to Advanced Contracting to do it right. “We did a considerable amount of research before starting this project,” Randy said. “Extensive research had to be done to make sure that we were up-to-code and we double checked all of the requirements for the wine cellar. But it was worth it. The project was done on time and on budget.”

According to the family, all of the pre-planning paid off. “I was really impressed with Advanced Contracting,” Ken says. “I have done quite a bit of remodeling in this house and in past homes over the years, and they were the best remodelers that I’ve ever worked with.”

**Source for this Article:**  
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