Fixer upper
Couple flips shabby home into house of their dreams

Photos & Story by Allison Evans
The Crittenden Press

It took two years of blood, sweat – and even a few tears – for Michael and Jackie Wood to reach the vision they had for a small, run-down home purchased out of foreclosure.

Location drew the young Crittenden County couple to the property on Levias Road. It certainly was neither the flooded basement nor storm-damaged roof. They found holes in the bathroom ceiling and kitchen, and vandalism had left basement windows in shambles. The sight of the molded siding, sunken roof and deplorable interior didn’t scare the couple away either. This wasn’t their first real estate flip. They knew going in what to expect.

They purchased their first fixer upper in Colorado while Michael was enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. Sadly, with the crash of the housing market in 2008, they sold it for the purchase price and felt fortunate. It didn’t deter them from trying again upon returning to Kentucky. They fared much better when they flipped a home in Livingston County, doubling their money upon its sale.

Then they turned their sights to the house in the Levias community near Michael’s family, living across the road in a double-wide while waiting for the bank to release their next project from foreclosure. As they fixed up the mobile home they were living in, they looked out their front door at the 1,500-square-foot home that was in desperate need of … well, everything. It turned out to be a complete gut job, starting with a basement full of water from storm damage, busted pipes and months of neglect.

When they finally were cleared to purchase the early 1990s home from the bank, the couple – with three children under age 9 at the
Just when winter thaws out and people are anxious to enjoy the blooming flowers and lush green lawns of spring, pesky pests can appear and impact comfort levels and safety.

Many pests resume their levels of activity as spring draws closer and temperatures warm up. The presence of these insects and rodents may cause problems in and around a home, which makes it essential to recognize them and take action. The following are some of the more common spring pests and how to remedy infestations.

- **Pavement ants**: Pavement ants are some of the most common pests residents encounter inside and outside of their homes. These ants are light brown to black with appendages that are lighter than the rest of their bodies. Small in stature, pavement ants have parallel lines on their heads and thorax, according to pest extermination company Orkin. Although pavement ants nest outdoors, they can enter homes through small crevices in search of food scraps. Large colonies may not disappear until treatment is introduced. Keep foods in tightly sealed containers, clear counters and floors of crumbs, and address water sources, such as leaks. Pesticides may be needed in extreme conditions.

- **Fleas**: Fleas are tiny, jumping pests that must find a host upon which to live. As ectoparasites, they feed on blood while living on the bodies of living hosts. Pets can bring fleas inside the yard and home in warm weather. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, flea larvae develop more quickly at higher temperatures. At normal room temperatures, the entire life cycle of a flea is about 18 days. Several flea control products are available to control fleas on cats and dogs. There also may be powders and sprays to alleviate flea infestations in the home. Vacuuming is also very effective in killing larvae in the carpet and at picking up adults.

- **Wasps**: An errant wasp, hornet or yellow jacket may have survived winter and ridden out the colder temperatures within a home. Once the weather warms, queens will begin to look for places to lay eggs and establish colonies. Treating areas where wasps are seen entering and leaving the home is key. Seal holes as soon as possible.

Although wasps help control other insect populations, their painful stings and potentially aggressive nature can make them challenging to have around a home. If a nest is found, hire a professional to remove it. Spiders: Many spiders are not harmful enough to humans and pets to be much of a problem. In fact, spiders can be helpful to have around to control the populations of other insects. Still, many homeowners would prefer these web-slinging friends remain outdoors. Therefore, sealing cracks in a home’s foundation and repairing small openings around windows and doors can help keep spiders out. Also, alleviating moisture issues in basements, garages or attics may keep out other bugs that would be prey to spiders. Homeowners can take the steps necessary to cut down on pests in and around their homes.

In the springtime, with warmer weather, pesky insects like ants (above) can appear and impact comfort levels and pests like wasps and spiders can affect safety.

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From ants to wasps, pest control rite of springtime

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**Bathrooms going high-tech**

**METRO SERVICES** Technology is infiltrating every room of the house. Many new home buyers are millennials, and this tech savvy demographic craves technical innovations. 

A recent survey by Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate indicates 77 percent of Generation X and Y home buyers want their homes equipped with the latest capabilities; they have grown accustomed to. Many of these involve smart innovations, including those that can transform one of the most private rooms in the house — the bathroom.

Automated homeathe- rite rooms and Wc-found ed home security systems have become the norm, but what tech improvements are available to make the powder room more in touch with today’s digital lifestyle? According to the National Bathroom Resource, the bathroom rooms have the most potential of any rooms to be improved with technology. The following are just some of the bathroom gadgets an owner can use that one should resist before going on a frenzy. 

**Automatic faucets:** In- stead of having to blast the volume on the portable phone, tablet or computer. This enables those who are in the mood to enjoy a luxurious experience with the data wirelessly to a phone, tablet or computer. Air baths are convenient, including those that can slice turf, edge gardens and cut through roots. These toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands, air dryers to clean and sanitize. Self-cleaning toilets help busy professionals save time and are ideal for those who always want their bowls as clean as possible. And if you desire extra comfort, bidet and warmers are available, while LED lights can make a cleanest restroom visits easier.

Soaking tubs: As fast as humans have used to plant shrubs and trees as well as to excavate areas in a landscape. A rake can be used to clear the ground, remove thatch and loosen soil from a lawn and level soil in a garden. In addition, rakes can make nighttime rest- room visits easier.

**Shovel:** A rounded- blade digging shovel is handy to blade digging shovel is handy to have around because of its versatility. Floor models can also be used for kitchen, tubless designs have been replaced with streamlined soaking tubs. Tubs come with different features, including chromatherapy, which employs colored lights to enhance mood. Air baths are controlled electronically and provide different levels of immersion for those who are skipping the hot tub.

Round out these innovations with automated lights, chilled medicine cabinets and the aroma of your choice. If you want your bathroom to indeed become a technological spa. Sometimes, the path to your dreams begins with a pair of sympathetic ears. At Farmer’s Bank and Trust, we treat you as our most important asset because if you succeed in your plans, so do we. So tell us your story and we’ll be sure to listen.

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**Rake, pruners, hole tools of gardening trade**

Gardening attracts new dozen years after year. Urban dwellers can spend more on gardening supplies than any other demographic, even millennials are getting into the gardening band- wagon. A 2016 National Gardening Survey from the National Gardening Market Research Company found the average amount spent on backyard or frontyard gardening projects exceeded $40 per household. More than $36 billion was spent in 2015, and the vast majority of the 6 million “new” gardening households belonged to millennials. When it comes to outfit- ting a gardening shed, gar- deners will want to be without certain tools and gear.

- **Hand tools:** Hand tools, such as garden fork and trowel, are essential for working with flower pots or containers. They will sickle, root and tubers. When it comes to outfit- ting a gardening shed, gar- deners will want to be without certain tools and gear.

- **Hose:** Choose a high- pressure hose that is light- weight and durable, as hoses will always be neces- sary.

- **Pruners:** Sharpened gear. Without certain tools and gear. They will sickle, root and tubers. When it comes to outfit- ting a gardening shed, gar- deners will want to be without certain tools and gear.

- **Edging spade:** This flat- bladed edging spade is built to help keep public rest- rooms more hygienic for users. The same technology can be used in home bath- rooms to control water waste and keep faucets and sinks from becoming in- fested with germs. In addi- tion, faucets with built-in timers can be programmed to set tasks for brushing teeth or washing your face.

- **Musical shower:** In- stead of having to blast the volume on the portable phone, tablet or computer. Air baths are convenient, including those that can slice turf, edge gardens and cut through roots. These toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands, air dryers to clean and sanitize. Self-cleaning toilets help busy professionals save time and are ideal for those who always want their bowls as clean as possible. And if you desire extra comfort, bidet and warmers are available, while LED lights can make a cleanest restroom visits easier.

- **High-tech toilets:** Some toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands and air dryers to clean and sanitize. Self-cleaning toilets help busy professionals save time and are ideal for those who always want their bowls as clean as possible. And if you desire extra comfort, bidet and warmers are available, while LED lights can make a cleanest restroom visits easier.

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**MARION-SALEM-HENDERSON-MADISONVILLE**
The arrival of a new season can be an exciting time. Homeowners may have renewed vigor to start home renovation projects or even tackle some cleaning and organization tasks. Before the weather starts to warm up too much, homeowners may want to evaluate their home cooling needs and ensure that all equipment is in good working order.

Prepare HVAC system for increasing temps

Home plumbing systems are designed to handle heavy usage. When everything is working as it should, toilets flush, showers drain properly, and sinks empty of water in a snap. But when a clog is present in a system, water can quickly backup. There are various techniques to clear clogged drains. Minor clogs may be cleared without the help of a plumber or even any tools. More significant blockages will require more elbow grease.

The first step to clearing a clog is to locate the problem. Drainage issues that affect a particular sink or toilet may be isolated to that fixture. Clogs that are present throughout the house may be indicative of a larger problem in the plumbing that is directing waste away from the house and into the sewer system.

Sometimes a clog can be fixed by pouring boiling hot water or a combination of baking soda and vinegar down the drain. If that doesn’t help, move on to a plunger, advise the experts at This Old House. By creating pressure within the pipes, a plunger can dislodge whatever is causing the backup if the clog seems to be firmly down the drain, hair or grime may have become trapped.

An auger, often referred to as a “plumber’s snake,” can be inserted into the drain to remove the grime and free up the water flow. Homeowners without access to an auger can try to fish the clog out of the drain with a wire hanger. If dogs cannot be alleviated, drain taps may need to be acceded. Those who do not know their way around pipes and wrenches should hire a professional.
After bringing home a bubbly baby boy or girl, it can be hard for parents to imagine that a day will come when their kids are off to college and then onto their own apartment or house. After spending decades nurturing and caring for children, parents are then left with a suddenly quiet house and probably much more time to spare. If saying goodbye to the kids also means extra house, there’s the option to downsize or make that extra space more useful. Homeowners who choose to stay put can renovate vacant rooms into spaces that meet their newfound needs.

- Hobby haven: If you’ve always meant to set up a crafting room, home-brewing station or an artist’s studio, now is an ideal time to do just that. Figure out which supplies you will need and begin remodeling that former bedroom into a new sanctuary for leisure interests.

- Guest suite: If you’ve never had a spare bedroom to entertain guests, a child’s former bedroom can fit the bill. It may not be that difficult to transform such a space into relaxing and inviting rooms for overnight guests. Be sure there is at least a queen-sized bed and a dresser or chest of drawers to stash belongings. Select paint colors and linens in neutral tones so the room will be inviting to guests.

- Living room redo: When there’s an entire soccer team coming over to hang out, that large sectional sofa or modular seating may be ideal. Now that the kids are out of the house and their friends are no longer coming over for movie night, living room space can be made more intimate with small-scale seating. A small sofa and two comfortable chairs may be a more fitting option.

- At-home gym: Save on gym membership fees by building a mini studio right at home. Choose one of the larger bedrooms and then fill it with some fitness equipment, such as an elliptical trainer, a bench press bench and some free weights. Store rolled-up mats in the closet for yoga or Pilates sessions.

- Expanded bathroom: If space has always been at a premium in the bathroom, borrow area from an empty bedroom and turn it into a spa by installing a soaking tub separate from the shower, and fill the room with other amenities.

- Home office: Working from home a few days a week may be more plausible when nearing retirement, as it will be a smoother transition from heading to the office each day to spending more time at home. Turn a bedroom or den into an office space with a new desk and bookshelves.

An empty nest can be a bittersweet experience, but parents can make such situations work for them by transforming their homes to better reflect their current needs.
Many homeowners associate plumbing problems with how their homes appear as beautiful and welcoming as possible. Excessive renovations may be high on homeowners’ to-do lists, and landscaping is often a key component of these projects. When planning gardens, homeowners may benefit by considering more than just flowers and shrubs while giving thought to other elements that can breathe vitality into their landscape designs. Water features can do just that, as such features provide more than just visual appeal.

- Aesthetic appeal: Water elements stand out against the greenery and foliage and can be used to create focal points around the garden or yard. A single fountain can draw the eye, while a trickling stream or waterfall can deliver water to various spots in the landscape.

- Soothing sound: Rain drops on a rooftop or water falling on a stone slab evoke pleasant feelings of harmony and relaxation. Water features can be designed so that gentle sound clings to home, further enhancing the ambiance.

- Brings texture: Water has its own unique and fluid texture that can provide a stark contrast to blades of grass or the hard lines of architectural elements, such as pergolas or retaining walls. A pond or fountain can soften lines.

- Soothing water fountain may help to relax your mind.

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- Enhance the natural ecosystem: Water features can attract wildlife to a property. Both may visit to take a quick sip, and dragonflies are sure to dart and hover over the shimmering ripples. Inviting natural wildlife to the yard can add hours of entertainment by enjoying the animals and insects.

- Remotely benefit areas: Rather than fighting with the landscape, home owners can adapt. An area of the yard prone to soggy conditions or flooding can be transformed into a pond or waterfall to work with natural surroundings.

- Foster a passion: Many people turn to water features so they can explore the hobby of maintaining outdoor aquariums. Koi ponds are relatively easy to install and maintain, and the vibrant fish add visual appeal.

- Add a personal touch: Water features are as unique as the homeowners who create them. To set landscaping apart from neighbors’ homes, homeowners can add fountains, ponds or flowing water elements to their properties. Decorative water features also can be included with pools and spas to help make these mundane recreational areas seem like they were carved right out of the natural landscape.

- Water features can take landscapes to the next level with sounds, texture, movement, and beauty.

Plumbing problems can lead to costly fixes

- No homeowner wants to be confronted with plumbing problems, which many associate with costly repairs and water damage. But many plumbing problems are preventable if homeowners take the time to learn about them and make the effort to stop them before they become something more.

- Clogged kitchens sink: Kitchen sinks get used quite a bit in the average home, and what makes it so is the sink can contribute to plumbing problems. Avoid pouring greasy, greasy, cooking oil or fat down the kitchen sink, as these substances can cling to the pipes and lead to a backed up sink and a messy situation. Discard thick liquids and sauces in the trash instead of the sink. Periodically turn the faucet on as hot as it can go and run it for a few minutes to dislodge anything that might have stuck to the pipes.

- Clogged shower drain: The pipes in the shower drain/hair trap can easily become clogged as well. The main culprit when shower drains get clogged is hair that catches any hair you and others might shed while you are bathing. Instruct each person to remove their hair from the drain upon getting out of the shower. If you suspect the drain might already be on its way to clogging, use a wet/dry vac to remove any hair that might have started piling up in the pipes.

- Washing machines: Few homeowners think to periodically inspect their washing machines, but normal wear and tear on washing machines can slowly build up, potentially leading to flooding if felt neglected. Periodically inspect hoses for cracks and other damage, replacing them if they look especially vulnerable.

- Water heaters: Water heaters also can produce plumbing problems if homeowners don’t keep an eye on them. Rusty tank fittings on water heaters are a warning sign that the heater might need some repairs. While liquid unchecked, water can cause flooding that produces significant water damage, and water heaters may need to be replaced, which can be very expensive. If you detect any problems with your heater, call in a plumber to confirm if anything is amiss and address the problem.

Water features offer multitude of benefits to garden landscapes

- If anything is awry and additional investigation is needed, call in a plumber to confirm problems with your heater, expensive. If you detect any problems with your heater, call in a plumber to confirm if anything is amiss and address the problem.

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Earthworms can be seen as bait for fishing, or as a meal for robins. However, many of these items can be advantageous, garnering benefit from the worm's by-products, such as castings and excreta. Earthworms can be a boon to landscapes because they can improve soil quality, reduce the need for chemical fertilizers, and provide food for wildlife.

Worms can be seen as a resource for gardening, as their casts contain nutrients that can be used to amend soil. However, it is important to understand the potential risks associated with using earthworms, such as the introduction of diseases and the spread of invasive species. Despite these concerns, earthworms can be an important part of a healthy, sustainable ecosystem.
Prepare for elderly guests

Homeowners may find themselves caring for senior guests several times throughout a typical year. These occasions can be wonderful opportunities for making memories, but homeowners may need to take certain precautions to ensure that guests are safe and comfortable. This may involve making some minor modifications around the home.

- Mobility and comfort needs for seniors may differ from those necessary to accommodate other guests. Meeting the needs of senior guests may involve any of the following:
  - Make sure pathways leading to and from the home are level, cleared, and easy to see.
  - If possible, add a ramp over stairs that lead to the front door. Ensure that any mats are secured with nonslip material.
  - Consider replacing round doorknobs and other hardware with lever-action pulls.

Minor modifications involving some organizational tools can be made to make television viewing easier for overnight senior guests. 

- Pull up excess furniture if a guest will be using a wheelchair.
- Redesign handrails are sturdy.
- If possible, add a sign that can be placed unobtrusively near the bathroom.
- Incorporate a sink in the laundry room to make bathing or showering easier for overnight guests.

- If there are different options that can fit into corners or shallow areas. These are a great option for keeping doors or other laundry essentials nearby.
- Clean design reduces clutter. Simple, clean designs can be an asset in a laundry room. If budget and space permit, cabinetry built into the design will help keep items out of sight in the laundry room.

- Cabinets hung directly above the appliances can store detergent, bleach and fabric softener. Use cabinets elsewhere in the room as catch-alls for cleaning supplies used in various offices around the house.
- Incorporate a sink in the design. Some elderly laundry room setups have a step-up to drain the changed water from the washing machine.

Laundry room design tips

- Employ vertical space. Floor space may be at a premium in a laundry room, especially for those who want to devote as much space as possible to bulky washer and dryer units. Therefore, utilizing wall space is key. Wall hooks, broom, and other organizational tools to store items on the wall. Shelves can be tucked into just about any space, and there are different options that can fit into corners or shallow areas. These are a great option for keeping doors or other laundry essentials nearby.
- Make sure pathways leading to and from the home are level, cleared, and easy to see.

- Keep lighting in mind. Lighting can be important in the laundry room. Rely on task lighting, under-cabinet strip lighting and overhead lights as needed for efficiency. Laundry room design can maximize the space available and make it more convenient to launder and sort clothes.

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Michael and Jackie Wood spent two years turning a home in disrepair on Levias Road into a 3,200-square-foot dream home. A series of photos (starting at top) show the home before and after, including the kitchen, bathroom and rear of the house. Below, after the remodel, (from top) a custom-designed metal railing stands around the basement steps that emerged from the remodel, the dining room allows the family of five to sit together for meals and a basement bathroom has a kid-friendly design for the couple’s three young children.

time – began the project, serving as general contractors, laborers and consultants.

After Michael finished a shift as an electrician at a Calvert City plant, he would spend several hours on the house before catching a short night’s sleep – nearly every day for 24 months.

“Our friends stopped asking us to do things. We didn’t go on vacation; all we did was work on the house,” Jackie said.

And they worked on it in every sense of the word. They built a two-car garage, framing and raising the walls on their own. They even hung the trusses with the help of a front-end loader. They knocked down walls, relocated the front door, ripped up tile, installed new heating and air and electrical and laid the decking for a new roof.

The only thing the two didn’t do was finish the roof and hang the gutters.

Once the basement was dry, they stained the concrete, hung dry wall and painted to create a family room, three bedrooms and a full bath in an area that once looked more like a pond filled with floating abandoned baby toys and personal items from the previous owner.

Achieving the vision they and to double the square footage took time, but now they have a modern ranch style home and countless stories about the trials and tribulations of an amazing renovation.

“I was reluctant in the beginning, he had to convince me,” Jackie said about the project.

They used a blow torch to heat up the tile floor throughout the main level before it could be scraped up.

“There was no duct work in the basement, and we had to use acid and special cleaners and wear respira-
to clean the basement floor before we stained it,” Michael explains. “And we moved the laundry room upstairs, built a 40-foot deck out back and added a front porch.”

Virtually no stone was left unturned, and the couple takes pride in their labors. While Michael was at his job, Jackie was laying a good portion of the three-quarter-inch, hand-scraped birch hardwood throughout the main floor.

It helps that Michael has the skill and willingness to tackle any project, including a walk-in tile shower with concrete seat, poured concrete countertops and a new kitchen/table top made from reclaimed wood that Jackie bought at a Paducah salvage store.

Michael’s step-father, Pat Guess, a pipefitter, custom designed a metal railing around the exposed basement steps that emerged from the remodel. The painted black metal rails give the entrance a modern vibe.

“I can’t say enough about Fredonia Valley Bank,” Jackie said. “It took us a lot longer than a year, but they would come out periodically to see that we were making progress. It did take us about two years.”

What advice would they give other couples considering flipping a house or hand-crafting a dream home?

Have patience, Jackie says.

Michael agrees, but also says to add a 10-percent contingency to materials. Otherwise, you might be shocked in the long run.

Technology played a big role in Michael’s ability to meet the job’s required skill set, he said.

“I looked up the building code on a lot of things. Used Google a lot.”

Fixer

Continued from Page 1B

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New Ky. law makes calling 811 before dig more critical

With the arrival of warm weather, homeowners, contractors and others are getting outside to work on projects that have been on hold through the winters. This increase in excavation activity is usually accompanied by an increase in the number of incidents of damage to underground utility facilities.

In 2017, according to data compiled by the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC), there were 6,742 dangerous dig-in incidents in the state. About 60 percent of these landowners called 811 service, but it also can pose a danger of severe injury or death. Like every other state, Kentucky has a statewide 811 call-before-dig program that is enforced by the PSC. A failure to call 811 or failure to use an 811-ordered line can lead to electrocution, natural gas explosions or fires. At least 20 percent of incidents in Kentucky resulted in a location being missed.

A new law (Senate Bill 61) enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly and signed by Gov. Matt Bevin gives the PSC the authority to enforce existing provisions in Kentucky statutes that are intended to protect natural gas and hazardous liquids pipelines. The PSC will investigate incidents of damage to pipelines to determine whether a location was not requested by 811 and/or properly marked. The PSC will assess the extent of the damage and assign a monetary value to the damages.

The new law makes it illegal to perform excavation to call 811 in Kentucky unless the area is marked so that excavation can proceed safely. That will allow ample time to locate utilities before a project begins.

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Don’t get scammed — Find qualified contractor for home remodel

Most remodelling not recovered in resale

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METRO SERVICES

Of the 29 projects it studied for its 2017 “Cost vs. Value” Report, remodeling maga- zine found that the average payback in resale value was 5.6 percent to 7.4 percent those projects ranged from suitcases, two-story additions, models, upscale master value on expensive projects year percentage increases in expensive projects as well. Their investments on some state market has helped homeowners recoup more of their associated costs is the relatively low sticker price of the projects. But a recovering real es- tate market has helped homeowners recoup more of their investments on some expensive projects as well. For example, the 2017 report saw the biggest year-over- year percentage increase in value on expensive projects like upscale bathrooms re- models, upscale master suites, two-story additions, grand entrance modifications, and family room additions. The increase in value on these projects ranged from 5.6 percent to 7.4 percent from a year earlier.

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