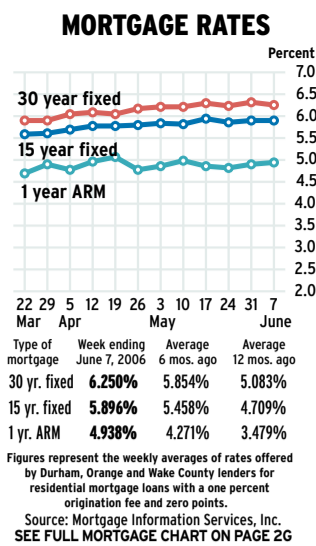




See the KB Home ad on page 3 of today's section.



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newsobserver.com/realestate

NEW HOME COMMUNITY



Tucked between a greenway belt and the 4th fairway of Treyburn Country Club, discover the attached homes of Greenview Place. Built by Kemp Harris, the floorplans of Greenview Place offer first floor master suites and two-car garages.

See Greenview Place in the New Home Community profile, page 6G.

MR. HANDYPERSON

Readers respond with tips, advice, tales of woe

BY MARK HETTS
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Readers: This week Mr. HandyPerson will share some letters from readers in response to earlier columns.

A few months back, Mr. HP gleefully presented a column of brief letters from readers describing most embarrassing or worst home repair and improvement stories (i.e., serious learning experiences).

Here's one more he couldn't fit into that column, but it definitely was a contender. Please feel free to send in your tales of various home repair disasters anytime. Eventually, Mr. HP will do another "boo-boo column." With luck, we can learn from each other's mistakes (after we stop laughing or cringing) along with our own. Names and places of origin will not be identified.

Dear Mr. HandyPerson: We have an old-fashioned fuse box in our home. I blew a fuse when I ran the clothes dryer and air conditioner at the same time. I've resolved to not blow any more fuses by running the two appliances at the same time.

But more important, I will not try to remove the blown fuse by hand before shutting off the electricity leading to the circuit. And I will definitely not try to remove the same fuse with a screwdriver before shutting off the electricity leading to the circuit. Ouch! - Chicago

Dear Ouch: Glad to know you survived to tell the tale. There are probably a good number of people who have done something similar, but they weren't able to send a letter to Mr. HP because, well, let's just not think about that.

Dear Mr. HandyPerson: I would like to tell you a story related to your statement that you "coerce houseguests to squeegee and wipe down the shower."

Over 15 years ago, I moved into my fiance's home just two weeks prior to our wedding. His home having been a bachelor pad, I immediately set forth new

BY CHRISTA GALA
CORRESPONDENT

If you're a real estate junkie and enjoy keeping your finger on the pulse of the industry, you may have heard the term "universal design" from time to time. The truth is, you're likely to keep hearing it. What does this term mean and how will it affect the design of future homes and buildings?

Basically, universal design means designing homes and environments in such a way that they're accessible to the greatest number of people without using specialized design or adaptation, at least that's the definition according to N.C. State University's Center for Universal Design Web site.

Licensed real estate broker Jan Morgavan puts it this way: "In simple terms, it's design that makes sense." Last fall, Morgavan founded Real Estate UD Inc., a company that promotes homes built with universal design elements. The company's Web site is one of the first in the area to exclusively list UD homes for sale.

Easy access

A universally designed home might include entryways without steps, lever door handles instead of doorknobs, wide doorways and passageways and light switches at accessible heights.



Many people might think these types of features are only for older folks or people who are disabled. While it's true the aging baby boomer population is looking for homes that will change with their needs, a home with UD characteristics makes living easier for everyone, regardless of age or condition.

NCSU's Center for Universal Design points out that stepless entries are safer

in icy weather, perfect for strollers and bicycles, and they make it easier to carry in groceries.

Morgavan elaborates: "Universal Design brings into the mainstream more usable design in home construction. The use of UD features and products in home construction translates into comfortable

Kohler makes bath fixtures with universal design elements, like the grab bars and an open shower with lever faucet, pictured to the right of the toilet.

WWW.KOHLER.COM

SEE DESIGN, PAGE 4G



Part of an entire family of universally designed GE kitchen appliances, the dishwasher above left is elevated to reduce bending and improve access, and the sink raises and lowers at the push of a button. Above right, the GE oven has a convenient pull-out counter below for easy transfer of dishes.

WWW.GEAPPLIANCES.COM



UD DEFINED

A few characteristics that define universal design

- Lever door handles
- Large openings in doors
- Stepless entries
- Covered overhang for weather protection
- Key function areas located on an accessible level (kitchen, bath, bedroom)
- Wide hallways
- Switches and controls located at accessible heights
- Wall reinforcements in the bathrooms (for grab bars that may be needed in the future)
- Easy-to-use appliances-front load washer and dryer and cooktops with front controls
- Power door operators
- Flush thresholds at all doorways

For more information on the components of universal design, visit NCSU's Center for Universal Design at www.design.ncsu.edu/cud.

FEATURE HOME

Equestrian estate of unmatched beauty near RTP



5925 Farmpond Road, Apex
3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths
over 5,000 sq. ft.
\$1,675,000

Exterior: Over 9 gorgeous acres; all brick; huge two-tier deck with built-in hot tub; riding ring, four-stall barn, stocked pond with fountain, professional landscaping, lighting throughout grounds.

First floor: Formal living and dining rooms, cathedral ceilings, Brazilian cherry floors, master suite, guest suite, family room w/built-ins; laundry room/office with cabinets/desk, sunroom.

Kitchen: Gourmet kitchen, granite counters, desk, stainless-steel appliances, custom cabinetry with undermount lighting.

Second floor: Teen's dream; one bedroom, but could be two or three; currently set up as media and bonus rooms; full bath has built-in speakers; plenty of storage, loft at top of stairs, neutral colors, window seats, huge closets.

Extras: Custom estate home built in 2000, minutes from RTP, RDU and Green Hope High School; long, elegant drive to house; four garages, studio space above; no detail left untouched.

Contact: The Donegan/Mervine Team, Dara (919) 796-5336; Robin, (919) 414-4085; Fonville Morisey Realty; www.TheDMTeam.com.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

OPEN HOUSE

Luxurious home on golf-course lot in MacGregor



101 Lochinvar Court, Cary
MacGregor Downs
5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths
\$930,000 .77 acre

First floor: Beautiful hardwood floors, large family room with fireplace and built-ins, guest room and bath on first floor.

Kitchen/dining: Gourmet kitchen renovated with custom cabinets, convection ovens, granite countertops, white brick wine alcove with cooler; eat-in kitchen and separate formal dining room.

Master suite: Second floor, beautifully enhanced by white brick masonry fireplace, sitting area and private balcony overlooking golf course; completely remodeled master bath with huge walk-in closet.

Second floor: Four more bedrooms, all of generous size.

Exterior: 95% brick, beautiful deck and balconies overlooking golf course; two-car side-load garage, circular driveway.

Extras: Finished basement area with mini-kitchen; room with bath; large entertainment area with fireplace, walk-in storage.

Open house: Today, 1 to 4 p.m.

Contact: Kelly Cobb, Fonville Morisey Realty; 859-8889.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

DESIGN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1G

living for as many people as possible without the need for any expensive solutions.”

Morgavan, who is also a web developer, decided to launch Real Estate UD after working in a position where she learned how to design accessible websites for the disabled community.

“I looked around and didn’t see this market being served very well—bringing the Universal Design element into the consumer marketplace. That was the impetus for bringing this company into existence and the Web site,” Morgavan says.

In order to list a home on Morgavan’s site it must meet several minimum requirements regarding universal design standards. Potential buyers can search via city, zip code and state.

“The activity on the site is growing daily,” says Morgavan, pointing out the site is still new and a work in progress. “As the word gets out about the company, we’re anticipating those numbers to grow even more.”

Life on the first floor

One universally designed feature — a first-floor master bedroom — has long been a coveted home feature, one most people didn’t realize was UD-inspired. Mary Wilson recently bought a home in the Ethan’s Glen community in Northern Wake County. The first-floor master, something she didn’t have in her previous home, is one of her favorite things, even though she’s nowhere near retirement age. In fact, she and her husband are recently married and, combining households, they have six people in the home.

“With four children, we felt it was important to have our own ‘retreat,’ so to speak,” says Wilson. “Our home has five bedrooms and a bonus room, so in the evening, the kids can go up to their own little world, and we can relax in our adult world.”

And while privacy is a great thing, that’s not Wilson’s favorite element of having her bedroom on the main floor.

“First and foremost, I like the sheer convenience of a first-floor master,” says Wilson. “I don’t know if it’s just me or if it’s the norm, but I am constantly going into our bedroom for something, so having it so close makes it that much easier.”

“Second is the privacy it allows us. When it’s time to call it a night, we love the fact that we are downstairs. I believe it also gives the children a better sense of independence. They actually need to make an effort to come speak with us if they need to, and I believe there are times when they decide what they need to speak with us about is simply not important enough to track downstairs. So the end result is potentially figuring something out for themselves, which, in my book, is a great thing.”

Although not universally designed as a whole, Wilson’s house also has lever door handles, in-



Kohler makes a sleek modern bath vanity with sink and drawers that has an open area below for knee space to use with a bench or wheel chair.

WWW.KOHLER.COM

dicating that some builders are slowly mainstreaming these designs.

“When you are carrying groceries or have young children who sometimes have a hard time turning a knob far enough to actually accomplish the task, it’s just another convenience. And in this busy world, we cannot have too many conveniences,” says Wilson.

A smart purchase

If you still think the prevalence of universal design has nothing to do with you, consider it a wise investment for the future.

Morgavan says when some people are considering purchasing a home as an investment, they anticipate the country’s changing demographics. And they should.

The Baby Boomer generation is so large, it simply can’t be overlooked when determining economic impact. Typically categorized as those Americans born between 1946 and 1964, the Baby Boomer generation is currently 77 million strong, making up nearly 28 percent of the nation’s population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and Met Life’s Mature Market Institute. And this year, the first Boomers celebrated their 60th birthdays. Morgavan says that as the Boomers retire, it’s logical to predict that the need and demand for universally designed homes will increase.

“The UD homes offer a measure of safety especially if it’s important for a homeowner to pre-

vent falls that may result in a disabling condition,” says Morgavan. “The homes can be a money-saver by reducing the time spent living in an expensive housing arrangement or can delay having to move to a home that better accommodates their needs.

“The interest in UD homes can vary,” she continues. “Some people may see an immediate need, like older households or families with a disabled member. There are also some people that plan for a need they may have in the future by investing in a UD home. Buying a UD home helps people to avoid the cost and effort of remodeling down the road if the need arises.”

Morgavan also points out that some people, although in good health, may have a condition that makes them a little less mobile than others, like arthritis. In that case, a universally designed home can serve as a preventive measure, meaning there are no steps to trip on, for example.

For Morgavan, her new business is a way to blend two passions—one for real estate and another for helping people.

“I wanted to bring to the consumer market a way for people who have disabilities to actually look for a home,” she says. “It came out of designing accessible websites, being a web developer and understanding how to design websites for everybody including those in the disabled community.”

If you’re interested in perusing UD homes in your area, visit Morgavan’s Web site at www.realestateud.com.

HANDY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1G

house rules, including the squeegeeing of the shower.

The night before our wedding, my fiance’s brother came to stay at our house. I was busy, harried, and was getting ready to stay at an inn with my girlfriends for the night. So I left the future brother-in-law a note detailing the squeegee procedure, and I went on my way to the rehearsal dinner.

The wedding proceeded the next afternoon, followed by the reception. The best man (the aforementioned brother) made a short toast. Then my maid of honor made a long, beautiful speech and recited a well-loved poem, to a great round of applause. Not to be outdone, the brother decided to take a second shot at the toasting. By this time he was quite “toasted” himself. He started by telling endless, long-winded stories about my husband as a baby and soon no one was paying attention.

But all of a sudden he started to talk about me — how he barely knew me and how he was “losing a brother.” Then he said that I was a clean freak and that I had left him a note about cleaning up the shower. This was my wedding! My friends and family were horrified.

The marriage ended five years later. My bathroom, meanwhile, is pristine. — Darlene, Eau Claire, Wis.

Dear Darlene: Mr. HP provided a made-up name and hometown for you to discourage some potentially unpleasant calls or comments from your ex-laws, your ex-husband or his brother.

To shield himself from such things, Mr. HP is also going to let your tale stand on its own, and he eschews further comment.

Dear Mr. HandyPerson: Regarding broken lightbulb removal, here is an upgrade to your use of needle-nosed pliers (placing the jaws inside and opening the pliers wide). Since this means metal-against-metal, there could be a lot of slippage. I wrap a rubber band around the jaws first before inserting and spreading, and thus have much greater leverage. — Art, Chicago

Dear Art: Thanks, Mr. HP will give this a try when next faced with a broken, stuck lightbulb.

Dear Mr. HandyPerson: The reader who advised you to use hot water for clear ice cubes may be right. Consider that hot water is used by Zambonis to resurface ice rinks. Try it, and give us a report, please. — Jean, Chicago

Dear Jean: Mr. HandyPerson accepted your challenge, got on his Zamboni, and resurfaced an ice rink with hot water. It clearly worked and worked clearly, so he thinks that should settle this issue once and for all, thanks.

Mr. HandyPerson wants to hear of home repair matters that are troubling you, interesting questions, funny experiences and useful tips you might want to share with other readers. Write to: Mr. HandyPerson, c/o Universal Press Syndicate, 4520 Main Street, Kansas City, Mo. 64111.