



CAPS Connection



Summer 2004

North Carolina Contractor wins Chrysalis Award for Universal Design

When Dave Mackowski, CGR, CAPS, president of Quality Design & Construction in Raleigh, NC, embarked on a universal design project renovating an attic into an office/guest bedroom with an accessible bathroom and kitchenette, he was proud to help a disabled homeowner live more independently. But with all good deeds come awards, literally.

This year, Mackowski and his company Quality Design & Construction were honored with the Chrysalis Award for best project in the universal design category in the southern regional competition. Not a small

feat, considering Mackowski's project was put up against more than 300 various remodeling projects from 16 states.

"The purpose of the awards is to identify remodeling companies who are the best at what they do," says Ken Kanline, director of the awards. "While David Mackowski's reputation as a true professional was established years ago, we are always pleased when companies, like his, participate in the Chrysalis Awards. Winning awards in multiple categories is difficult to do but they have accomplished this by winning awards in numerous categories including Remodeler of the Year for the South. Not only does this speak to their versatility, but to their commitment to quality on every project."

When interviewed about his award, Mackowski said that after earning his CAPS designation in 2002, this was a special honor to receive the award in the universal design category. He says the key to the success of this project was communication.

And having good communication between the homeowner, Mackowski and his team became crucial during the project



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as they discovered interesting challenges along the build. The project consisted of creating an office/guest bedroom with accessible bathroom and "summer" kitchen in the walk-up attic of the disabled

homeowner's ranch-style house.

"The homeowner wanted a place where she could work and not have to go up and down the stairs and a place for her guests to visit comfortably and have their own space," says Mackowski.

The first step was installing a chair glide for the homeowner so she could watch the progress and input her needs when building the bathroom and kitchenette. While the build seemed relatively normal, the team quickly found that this attic was anything but normal for what the homeowner wanted to create.

Before any construction in the attic could begin, the team had to reconstruct the floor because what was used as a floor would not hold the weight of bedroom furniture. Then the team had to extend the rafters for proper insulation. While doing this, they discovered the front roof had a dip to it, so they had to readjust the roofing system by jacking everything in place; then run a string line to measure and cut to size the rafters.

Once the roof system was in place, the team replaced the gable vents with casement windows and installed three skylights that were controlled by remote control so the homeowner could open and close the skylight.

While the start of the project was a little rocky, Mackowski said the team did have some "fun" with the project. "The project became fun when we started work on the bathroom," Mackowski said. "We had to adjust the sink and plumbing just right so the homeowner would be able to wheel right into the shower and over to the sink and be able to utilize the mirror which we added pivots to so anyone using the bathroom could adjust it to their height."

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installing the shower floor, the team lined the interior of the bathroom with plywood and then added the drywall. By doing this, the grab bars were drilled into the plywood allowing for universal anchor points which added more security to grab bars.

"The client played a very active role in building the bathroom," said Mackowski. "She gave us excellent direction on what she needed in height and the number of grab bars she needed to safely move from her wheelchair to the shower seat."

After installing the backer board, the team coated the backer board with a 20mil thick waterproof membrane and

using her master bathroom attached to her bedroom downstairs, she now uses the upstairs shower all of the time."

It was that added touch and more that made this project an award-winning build. Mackowski and crew added pre-finished hardwood floors in the main area to ensure that the transfer between tile and hardwood and the carpeted stairs and hardwood was an even grade with no bumps or thresholds for the wheelchair to maneuver.

The team also added a kitchenette to the room that was set to ADA height with a refrigerator, sink and microwave. In

ed a self-contained liv- sealed grout to keep the shower from ever leaking.

"By coating the backer board and using the water-sealed grout we ensured the client would not have to worry about water getting behind the tiles causing them to have to be replaced in the future," said Mackowski. "Our homeowner loves her bathroom. Instead of

essence, they created a self-contained living area.

"This project was special to us. We enjoyed working with the client and helping her to live independently," said Mackowski. "To also win a Chrysalis for this project just makes the whole experience more memorable."

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The curbless shower was probably the easiest part of the project because the floor joisting of the attic allowed for a natural slope toward the drain. After

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