



# @HOME WITH DAVE

A BI-MONTHLY REAL ESTATE REPORT FROM DAVE BENDER, REALTOR, GRI  
MOVING MOUNTAINS TO SELL YOUR HOUSE - EVERY DAY!

February 2007

## A Tale of Buying...and Remodeling

In the summer of 2005, I had the pleasure of working with a young couple, Jay and Francesca. They had been living in a townhouse in Poolesville and wanted a larger single-family home. They also knew they wanted to stay in Poolesville, if possible, due its small-town feel.

Founded in the early 1700's, Poolesville offers a sense of history and rural living, both within a 45-minute drive to DC. As I tell my clients, people choose to live in Poolesville because they want to, not because of convenience or proximity to work. We had been looking for a few weeks when Jay and Francesca told me a house down the street from their current home had just come on the market. It was a small, contemporary-style single-family home, built in 1972 on a great corner lot.

We immediately ratified the contract and bought the property. While we knew the home needed fixing up, it was not until the home inspection that we realized just how much the previous owner had neglected the house. Well...Jay and Francesca had a vision of what this home could be, so once the ink had begun to dry on the closing documents, they started converting it into their "dream house."

When I paid the family a visit in December, I was so stunned at the amount of work completed and how much the home had changed that I thought readers of my newsletter would enjoy hearing the details of their adventure. What follows is an interview with Jay and Francesca and a few pictures. To see the full series of photos in color, visit [remodel.davebenderhomes.com](http://remodel.davebenderhomes.com).

### Introduction:

Our remodeling project can be divided into two parts: (1) upgrading the current portion of the home, and (2) building an addition. The addition adds about 1,000 square feet of living space on two levels. Downstairs



**BEFORE:** Above, the original exterior of our house was a dark red.



**AFTER:** Below, house was recovered with a low-maintenance stucco.

we are adding a laundry room, a nice size bedroom, and an office. Upstairs we added a new master suite, master bath, and walk-in closets. Since we built cathedral ceilings in the new section, we were able to fit a storage area above the walk-in closet.

### What made you decide to do this as opposed to moving to a home that already had everything you were looking for?

That's a good question! First, as far as the addition goes, we couldn't find something in our price range that had the space we needed. When we saw this house, however, we were happy with its location, the lot size, and the contemporary, high-ceiling structure, and we knew that we (i.e. Jay—I'm only the zealous, low-skills labor) were capable of, and would enjoy, making most of the home improvements ourselves. Lastly, we knew that we could never afford the level of upgrades (like custom wood work, tiles, slate raised patio, granite countertops, and travertine floors in the bathrooms) that we wanted to install if we had to pay for the labor to do them (especially being in Montgomery county, where everything is rather expensive).

**Q: Was a designer involved?** No.

**Q: What were you aiming to achieve? More space? Upgrades? Better layout?**

Definitely more space and a lot of upgrades.

Continued from front page

**Q: How did you choose an architect? What were you looking for in an architect or draftsman?**

We designed the addition ourselves to begin with. We used a software product called Punch Home Design Platinum ([www.punchsoftware.com](http://www.punchsoftware.com), retail \$100). It was useful, however we found that it had lots of software bugs and caused us some major technical problems. As a result, we caution anyone who might consider using the product.

Eventually, we looked for an architect to do the drawings and perhaps give us suggestions. After we learned how much it would have cost us, though, we ended up only hiring a draftsman.



**BEFORE:** Our kitchen, above.



**AFTER:** Two views of our remodeled kitchen, above and left. We switched from white formica to granite and natural wood. We also got rid of the hanging spider plants!

**Q: Did you work with a contractor, or did you hire the individual professionals on your own, e.g., electrician, carpenter, drywall, windows, appliances, painter, etc? What did you do yourself and what did you have a professional do?**

To upgrade the old part of the house, we hired a local contractor to work with us at the beginning of the re-siding (one outside wall), fix the carport (which was rotten as well), rebuild the fireplace, and redo part of the roof projects, so that we could learn what we didn't know already. Then we did all the rest ourselves. That included the re-siding and reinsulating of the house, roofing, redoing the kitchen entirely, repainting the entire house, laying hardwood floors in the living room and dining room, recarpeting the family room and the bedrooms, installing custom woodwork around the

front door and between the dining room and the kitchen, building a slate raised patio outside the dining room, and fencing in the yard.

On the new addition, we hired a builder through contacts provided by Dave Bender (Jay worked as the general contractor) to lay the foundation and do block work and the main framing of the addition. We also hired a plumber for the new master bath and laundry room and professionals to do all the sheetrock work in the master bedroom, bathroom, and walk-in closet.

Here's what we did on our own: roofing (we were pros by that time!), installing all the windows, fine tuning the framing, building the drainage system, and completing all the electrical work (Jay passed the county exam so he could do the electrical work himself); we left connecting the main box to the pros. We are planning the do all the inside work, too (painting, tiling, putting the hardwood floor down, carpeting downstairs, installing doors, window trims, baseboards, etc...).



**BEFORE:** The front entryway, below.



**AFTER:** The entryway has a more sophisticated look. Notice that the spider plants and wall stripes have disappeared.

**Q: Where did you store your furniture and where did you live during construction? How was the process while also having two small children?**

We redid the interior of the "old" house before moving in. All the rest of the work on the original part of the house was done while living in it, but since it was mostly exterior work, it didn't interfere too much with our daily life (with the exception of a few days when we had to live without the front wall—the opening was just barely closed by a plastic sheet and the kids found it hilarious to try to run outside using the fireplace opening as a door). As for the addition, it was designed to be completely independent from the original house (two doorways, one per floor, connect the old with the

new), so construction really didn't affect our daily life. This was actually a great plus of the design; otherwise it might have become a serious headache.

**Q: What was the worst decision? Any regrets?**

The addition was going to be built right where our utilities—gas, phone, electric, and cable services—entered the home, so we had to move their point of entry to another spot. Our mistake was vastly misjudging the time and effort involved in getting this done. It took us two to three months longer to accomplish than we anticipated, and cost quite a bit more. In hindsight, since we couldn't start the addition until the utility changes were complete, we should have spent more time at the beginning of the project planning this move to avoid all the frustration and wasted weeks.

**Q: What advice would you give to anyone contemplating a major renovation/remodeling?**

It always takes longer than you think and probably will cost more too!

Advice: the more research you do before starting, the better. Also, be very detailed and explicit when writing contracts with contractors.



For more photos go to [remodel.davebenderhomes.com](http://remodel.davebenderhomes.com).



**BEFORE:**  
The living room, above.

**AFTER:**  
The living room was completed in time for Christmas. The spider plants are gone for good.

**Q: How much longer do you think it will take to finish? Is this what you expected?**

We probably have another few months of weekend work (we still have to do almost all the interior work in the addition), but because the addition is a completely separate space, that doesn't bother us much. Life in the older part of the house is pretty comfortable right now and...the heating bills are very, very reasonable.

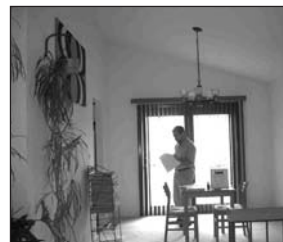
Contact Dave at 240.912.2712 for a free market analysis of your home!

**Q: How has the value of your house changed compared to other homes in the neighborhood?**

We don't really know. It has surely increased, but we wouldn't know for sure of how much (our realtor Dave Bender may be able to answer that). Our fear is that maybe we overbuilt for our neighborhood, but we are going to stay for a long time and enjoy all these upgrades, so that is not a big problem.

\*\*\*\*\*

On a final note, we would like to mention how pleased we were with our association with Dave. He was always professional, and was truly concerned with helping us find the property we were interested in (as opposed to other agents who seemed more concerned with convincing us to like properties convenient for them to show or sell). We were particularly impressed and surprised with Dave's willingness to help us well after the sell was complete.



**BEFORE:**  
Our dining room, above.



**AFTER:**  
The dining room is more inviting.

For more photos go to [remodel.davebenderhomes.com](http://remodel.davebenderhomes.com).

Jay & Francesca can be reached at [flieniken@physast.uga.edu](mailto:flieniken@physast.uga.edu). They would welcome your comments or questions.



Dave Bender, GRI, is licensed in MD and VA

**ABOUT DAVE:** *Raised in Northern VA, Dave moved to Montgomery County, MD in 1988. He and his wife Jean and daughter Jenna, a 9th grader at Northwest High School, live in Kingsview Village, where Dave is an active member of the Homeowner Association Board of Directors. When not selling homes, Dave enjoys cycling, football, reading, and spending time with family and friends.*



**DAVE BENDER, REALTOR**

RE/MAX Realty Group  
6 Montgomery Village Ave.  
Suite 200  
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

301.258.7757, x712 (Office)  
240.731.5970 (Cell)  
dave@davebenderhomes.com



**PRSR STD**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Suburban, MD**  
**Permit No. 6511**

**FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:**

Frustrated with what's out on the housing market? Learn how a young couple bought a house *WITH POSSIBILITIES* and set out to transform it into just what they needed.

PLEASE NOTE: If your home is currently listed with another broker, this is not a solicitation of that listing.



# @HOME WITH DAVE

**A BI-MONTHLY REAL ESTATE REPORT FROM DAVE BENDER, REALTOR, GRI**  
**MOVING MOUNTAINS TO SELL YOUR HOUSE - EVERY DAY!**



## Listings

**TO BETTER SERVE MY CLIENTS:**

**24-HOUR RECORDED INFORMATION HOTLINE!**

Enter Ad # to hear property description.

Call 800.359.0301 anytime – 24/7.



**IMMACULATE 2-BR, 2-BA**  
condo for independent seniors  
(62 yrs. and older),  
24-hr. security, underground  
parking  
**11924 Darnestown Rd.,**  
**N. Potomac/Gaithersburg**  
**\$349,900**  
(Ad #2021)



**BEAUTIFULLY MAINTAINED**  
5 BR, 3 FB, built in '91,  
3 finished levels on  
over 3/4-acre lot  
**17037 Tom Fox Ave.,**  
**Poolesville**  
**\$664,900**  
(Ad #2001)



**CLASSIC COLONIAL W/ATTACHED GARAGE**  
4 BR, 2FB, gourmet kitchen, wood floors,  
very large master suite, 3 finished levels  
**17707 Cricket Hill Dr., Germantown**  
**\$699,996**  
(Ad #1001)



**9422 Amboy Rd., Montgomery Village**  
**\$379,900**



**13 Honey Brook Circle, Gaithersburg**  
**\$340,000**