

DEEPER THAN DECORATING

**Former Bank One
technology expert
Diana Garber
balances home
energies with
feng shui principles.**

by Teresa Woodard

Photography by Michael A. Foley/Rycus Assoc.

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The master bedroom addition in the home of Dan Evans, former CEO of Bob Evans Farms, reflects a palette of white, gray and metallic tones to offset the space's negative energy.

Many interior designers ogle over the latest wall coverings or luxe embroidered fabrics. They may even design a room around an inspirational fabric swatch or wallpaper sample. Not Diana Garber. Her feng shui designs evolve from a deeper level. Using Chinese time cycles, the Earth's magnetic compass points and feng shui's mathematical formulas, she analyzes a home's energy or "chi," in feng shui terminology, then recommends designs to enhance its energy flow.

"Manage your environment consciously or it unconsciously manages you," she advises her clients. And for those who take Garber's advice, they share testimonies of remission from advanced-stage cancer, conception after years of barrenness, financial prosperity and marriage recovery.

"I am a believer," says her client Debra Winterick, an interior designer who was looking for a feng shui consultant when she recently reconnected with a friend from high school and moved from Florida to her friend's home in Powell. "It makes me smile because it's working," she says. After adopting feng shui principles in the renovation of a 22-year-old home in the exclusive Loch Lomond development, Winterick says her friend's prostate cancer PSA levels were undetectable.

Garber shares a similar personal story, saying she learned 30 years ago that her environment's negative energy was impacting her health. Eventually she found that her business skills as vice president of information technologies at the former Bank One gave her credibility in helping feng shui clients problem solve, set goals and quantify results so that they could redesign their space.

Prior to studying feng shui, though, Garber had several miscarriages, lost two newborns and underwent 19 major surgeries, including two that were life threatening. She began exploring alternative wellness options when she felt that traditional medicine wasn't working. After applying feng shui

principles, she says she experienced the greatest results.

At friends' urging, Garber continued her feng shui studies and began plans to transition from her corporate job to a fulltime consulting business. First-time clients are often skeptical, she admits. She starts by debunking several misconceptions about classical feng shui. "It's not a religion or superstition," she says. "My skeptics turn into my biggest fans."

"I do think there's something to it, even though scientifically it may not be proven," says Dr. Marian Giles, who worked with Garber at Ohio State University's Center for Integrative Medicine where Garber was a feng shui practitioner from 2005 to 2006. While Giles currently works for Take Care Health at the Scotts Wellness Center in Marysville, she explains that patients can become victims of their lives, and feng shui can be a vehicle for them to take charge of their health.

Garber started working with the Loch Lomond home last spring when the couple was pursuing second opinions on the homeowner's cancer treatment, working on their renewed relationship after recovering from broken ones and building toward financial freedom. In preparing an evaluation of the home, Garber considered its time cycles and space. She began her evaluation with the year the house was built. She says these numbers feed into the Flying Stars discipline of feng shui, which identifies repeatable patterns in trends and history.

Next, she considered the space, specifically the magnetic forces of the house based on its compass directions. After looking at all factors, Garber presented the couple with a 100-page report and some surprising revelations about the home's history. Winterick says Garber's confirmation of the home's history convinced her partner to move forward with the action plan. No doubt, it was welcomed after being told by his doctors just months earlier that nothing else could be done for his cancer.



Fire elements, such as the red ceiling, were added to the study of this Loch Lomond home in southern Delaware County.



Interior walls of this Dublin area home were repainted and carpeting replaced as a gray palette was used to encourage a more cohesive energy flow.

Winterick says they did the easy things first. "The others are a work in progress," she says. An initial project was decluttering the garage located in the northwest corner of the home. The house's open foyer and front rooms all required more metal elements to counter the spaces' negative energy. Here, Winterick added a mirror with a gold metallic frame, a metal bird cage, metal clocks and a gold-finished coffee table. In the southeastern first-floor study and second-floor master bedroom, she applied fire elements and colors. The bedroom was painted terra cotta while the study's grid-beamed ceiling is now deep red. Next up are the kitchen, great room, pool area and landscaping.

Dan and Temmy Evans share a similar story. "Do I understand all of the energies?" asks Dan, retired CEO of Bob Evans Farms in an interview last summer. "No, but I see the results." After adopting feng shui principles in the redesign of his historic Canal Winchester home, Evans says his seizure disorder improved markedly for 10 years before his most recent seizure. Not long ago, the Evanses turned to Garber to assist with a master suite addition.

Working with architect R. Karl Smith, home builder Craig Johnston and decorator Mary Shipley, Garber recommended the best day to begin the project and advised on the addition's location, which was along the home's east side to take advantage of the dwelling's best energy. While Temmy initially requested wood beams and a Western-style décor in earth tones, Garber recommended avoiding wood beams in a bedroom saying they apply negative downward energy that can trouble sleepers' rest. She also proposed a twist to the Western theme with a white, gray and metallic palette to offset the home's negative energy. In addition, they incorporated several other feng shui principles which include raising a bed and eliminating any underneath storage to maximize energy flow, adding operable bathroom windows to remove stale energy, whitewashing the room's brick wall and incorporating metallic finishes in the bathroom tile and cabinets.

"I've had sleep problems since I was a kid," Temmy says. "Now I sleep so sound."

As she's learned more about feng shui, Temmy says she's gained a greater awareness for a space's energy flow and has even applied feng shui principles to stall assignments for their prize-winning horses and color choices for horse show tack and apparel.

Garber says not all houses involve extensive renovations.

"For us, it was relatively simple," says Dublin homeowner Meredith Liepelt, a marketing consultant. After living with her family of four in their home for six years, she says they wanted a plan to update the 13-year-old brick structure using feng shui principles.

She says Garber's analysis reported that the home needed more metals. Garber recommended basic changes like repainting the interior walls and updating the carpet using a palette of grays and metallic finishes for a more cohesive flow of energy from room to room. She also suggested accessorizing with water elements, including a blue glass vase with an image of three abstract fish. For the future, Garber advised more involved changes such as updating the home's kitchen counters with granite, removing the fireplace's hearth and replacing its surrounding brick with limestone.

After adopting these changes in phases, Liepelt says the family is benefiting from the improved energy flow. She says she is no longer as overwhelmed with paperwork from her business and her kids' school. She also says there's more peace in the home, the kids are fighting less and her small business consulting practice has had its best year.

Garber is optimistic about the future of feng shui in the United States. She says we are entering a cycle of renewed interest in the environment—including the home environment—and that people are renewing a relationship to the earth. "We are coming back to the wisdom," she says. "We are asking how can I relate to and interact with my environment so I can honor it and it honors me." ■