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PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

Louisiana inspiration

An extended family pitches in to design and build an Acadian-style cottage in Heber Springs with breathtaking views and amenities to please a crowd



The fire pit, surrounded by lush landscaping, was one of Dave's requests, and the family enjoys spending time out there year-round.

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TEXT: SHARON MOSLEY PHOTOGRAPHY: NANCY NOLAN STYLING: MANDY KEENER

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: The Allmendingers' location on the Little Red River appeals Dave's fly-fishing habit, while also providing wildlife watching and breathtaking views. Built-in window seats are a feature seen throughout the home, offering plenty of seating for a crowd and storage underneath. The entrance hall combines many details inspired by the Acadian cottages of Louisiana, like brick flooring, stained French doors with a transom window above and the wrought-iron chandelier.



HEBER SPRINGS WAS Dave and Jan Allmendinger's home away from home for nearly 25 years, but to accommodate their growing brood of grandkids, as well as friends, it became apparent that they needed more space than their Eden Isle condo could provide. "Dave had taken up fly fishing on the Little Red River," Jan says, "and he would go every weekend in all kinds of weather." Eventually Dave convinced Jan to visit the river with him. "When I got on that river and saw Sugar Loaf Mountain, I was hooked," she says. "It was one of the most beautiful, peaceful spots I have ever seen, just breathtaking."

Dave and Jan searched diligently for the perfect home with the perfect view, eventually purchasing two undeveloped lots in a gated community. "Build was a scary word to me," Jan admits, but thankfully the entire family pitched in. "The home was built with one constant thought process," Dave says. "We wanted a place where our family and friends could relax, be themselves, nurture relationships and begin to fall in love with the outdoors."

BELOW LEFT: Jan knew she wanted plenty of nooks and crannies for storage in her mud room, and she and Krista planned it to accommodate plenty of fishing gear and other outdoor necessities. **BELOW RIGHT:** In the kitchen, an overall cream hue creates a calming environment, while wood beams, a brick backsplash and bead board details accent the space.



Jan's and Dave's daughter, Krista Lewis, also played a major role in the home's design. After graduating with an interior design degree at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Krista relocated to Louisiana with her husband Dan. "We made many trips to visit her," Jan says, "and we came to love the style of the area's homes. There were lots of porches, tall ceilings and open spaces, yet so many nooks and crannies. It was a casual graciousness to me."

The Allmendingers enlisted the help of an architect in Baton Rouge to put their plan for a primitive-style Acadian cottage down on paper, and Gary Xiques of Birdsong Builders took on the construction. Rather fortuitously, during this time, Krista and her family moved to Little Rock, and she was enlisted to put her expertise to work. "From planning the kitchen window view of Sugar Loaf Mountain to orienting the house on the property, Krista and Jan have been the leaders," Dave says. "I was told I could be in charge of the dock and the deck. That was it. I did get my outdoor kitchen and fire pit, and naturally the dock was completed long before the house."

Details give the home an Acadian feeling, from plank pine and brick floors to French doors with transoms, beamed ceilings and thick mouldings. Additionally, Krista and her parents took plenty of time selecting the perfect plumbing fixtures, floor materials and fabrics for each room. The iron lighting fixtures also reflect the rustic French Country-style that runs throughout.

Krista personalized the home with her parents' accessories and artwork, even framing some of her dad's childhood puzzles and botanical prints to place on the walls of the upstairs media room. Making the indoors and outdoors work together was also key. "The backyard and the views were the main priority," Krista says. The raised front porches were constructed on a foundation of brick piers with large rough-hewn beams overhead holding up a hipped roof. Gallery porches in the front and back of the house provide the perfect place for taking in the views of Sugar Loaf Mountain and the river. "The entire back of the house is basically a wall of windows," Krista says. "When you're sitting in the living room, it almost feels like a tree house thanks to the bird's eye view." The completed home can sleep 18, assuring space for friends and family with special features, such as the window seat in the first floor family room, which can be used as seating for a dining table that folds out. "We want people to come and enjoy this wonderful place with us," says Jan. [web](#)

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Designed with the grandchildren in mind, the upstairs bunk room has a fun, youthful color scheme and built-in beds, each with their own reading light, with roll-out trundle beds below. The media room's built-in sofa doubles as an extra bed, and the room is equipped with lots of kid-friendly extras, like a snack station with a refrigerator, and a large selection of movies and games. Dave, who is famous for his ribs and smoked chicken, designed the cooking pavilion as a separate covered structure a few steps from the kitchen porch, so it can be used in any weather.

