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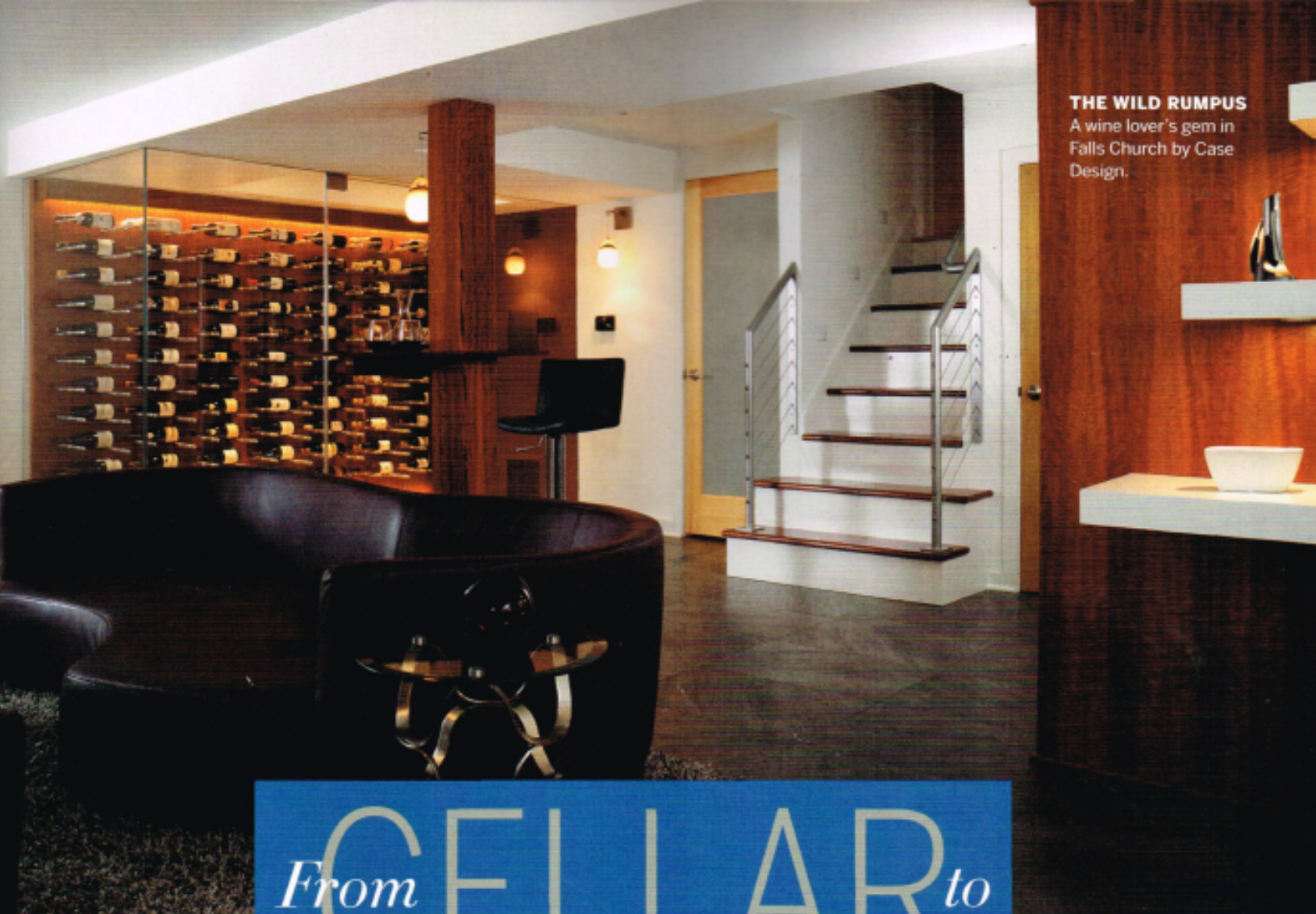
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THE WILD RUMPUS

A wine lover's gem in Falls Church by Case Design.



From CELLAR to STELLAR

Design professionals elevate yesterday's basements to today's next-level living spaces. BY JENNIFER SHAPIRA

THE DAYS OF sending the kids down to an unfinished basement to play video games—out of sight and out of mind—are long gone. Homeowners want hangout spaces with their hobbies and interests at the forefront, for themselves and to keep tabs on their kids. Those dated, old-school cellar spaces are now hidden gems revealed by a flight of stairs.

"It's almost like people are using basements as an escape from the rest of the house. They kind of treat it like a retreat or a getaway," says George Kall, president of Metro Building and Remodeling Group, based in Ashburn. Although the basement is less public, it's an extension of the home, says Kall. The lower level gets finished with all the pomp of the rest of the home. Sometimes, even more so. "You want to be able to land a plane in your basement if you had to," jokes Kall, who lives a stone's throw from Dulles

Airport. "The more natural light or recessed lights we add, the less it feels like a basement."

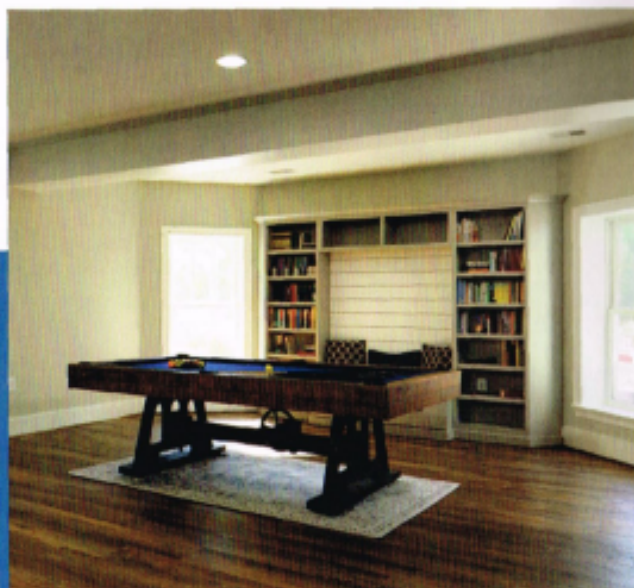
One of Kall's recent projects in Ashburn features a glass-enclosed lab, modeled after an Apple store, that doubles as a home office for the cybersecurity expert homeowner and a play area for

the kids' LEGO assembly. Kall turned a load-bearing wall into a post at the wet bar, providing a view to the adjacent movie screen. Formal reclining theater-style seats were tossed; slouchy couches made the space casual.

Allie Mann, a designer and senior interiors specialist at Case Design in Falls Church, embraced a homeowner's sleek, modern aesthetic to transform a basement into a wine lover's gem. In fact, she refers to the project—a stylishly lit glass chamber that exhibits the collection of garnet- and ruby-colored bottles—as a "jewel box." Suspended horizontally on pegs, the bottles can be placed three deep. Making clever use of a load-bearing beam, Mann

DOWN AND OUT

Right and below:
Ashburn basement
by Metro Building and
Remodeling. Center:
Wine cellar by Winn
Design + Build.



created a sipping ledge veneered in the rich-toned sapele wood she used throughout. A merlot seating area sets the scene for intimate gatherings or tastings, says Mann.

At a split-level home in Arlington, a whole-house remodel had a couple of empty nesters thinking about how to maximize their lower level. According to Jason Hampel, co-owner of Moss Building & Design in Chantilly, in addition to the husband's Zen home office, the wife wanted a dedicated home for their books. Hampel created a whimsical book nook with cool blue walls and brick-red French doors. "The wine cellar, the library, the home theater—these are not integral to daily life. When you have friends over, you walk through the family room to get to the 'cool' room," says Hampel. "Not really to show off. It's just interesting. I think whimsical is the perfect word because it's not practical at all. But it is fun. And a basement is a place where you can have a fun room or fun

"A basement is a place where you can have a fun room or fun things without taking space away from the practical."

—Jason Hampel

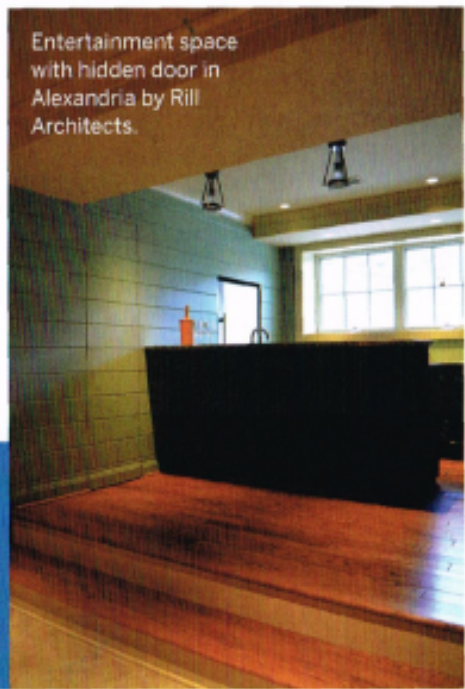


things without taking space away from the practical."

Proving that no space is too small for a good design, Michael Winn, owner of Winn Design + Build in Falls Church, installed a trio of rooms in an Arlington basement. The house dates back to the 1940s, but the couple loved the location and had no interest in moving. Winn turned their dingy, low-ceilinged basement into a bright gym. He emphasizes the importance of calculating the

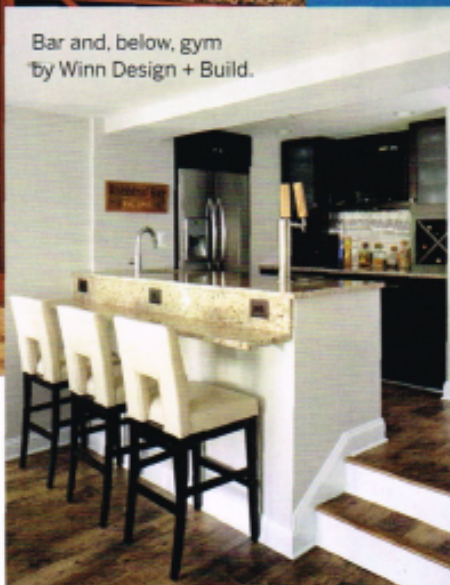


Entertainment space
with hidden door in
Alexandria by Rill
Architects.





Bar and, below, gym
by Winn Design + Build.



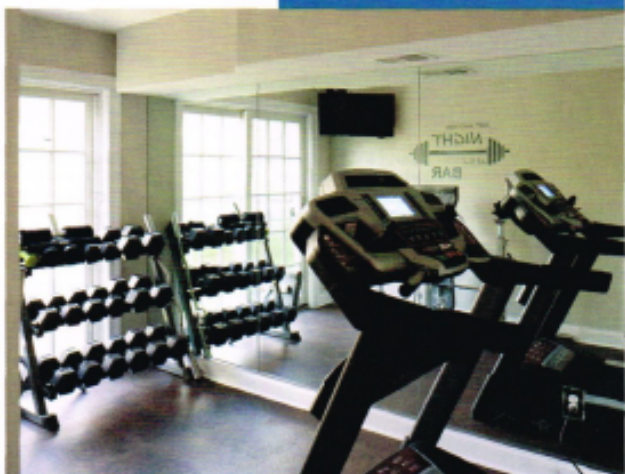
Book nook in Arlington by
Moss Building & Design.



ceiling height in home gyms so the user can incline a treadmill, swing kettlebells, or bounce on a trampoline. Interlocking gym tiles on the floor allow for dropped weights. The neighboring space is a light-filled, cushy lounge that doubles as a guest room. A petite, well-appointed bar rounds out the entertaining space.

For one home he designed in Alexandria, Jim Rill created an entertainment space with a hidden door. Another features a basement swimming pool with a current for a more effective workout. The space also includes a sauna and hot tub. Rill, principal at Rill Architects in Bethesda, Maryland, likens the space to an entertainment room, albeit one where you can sink into a hot tub while you catch up on TV shows or set the mood with music. Rill cautions that these indulgences should have their own HVAC to avoid "the moisture of the pool mixing with the rest of the house." He adds, "Insulation is important. Materials are important: tile floors, wood walls, wood ceilings. Products that work well with moisture."

There are other concerns when working on a basement remodel. For example, getting new furniture or fitness equipment into the space can be



challenging. In some cases, the homeowners have already done the heavy lifting; weight machines and treadmills might already be stationed at the lower level. Once work starts, they're sheathed in plastic and moved around until their final resting place is realized. Other homeowners can use newly installed egress windows or doors as handy pass-throughs for oversized items. "Most people have access to get materials in," says Kall. He has maneuvered a shuffleboard, a number of support beams, and even a wood bar top through windows during basement build-outs, avoiding the challenge of carrying them through the house and down the stairs.

For the jewel box wine cellar, Mann reconfigured a maze of doors and walls to open the space, but she kept the existing door from the adjoining garage, which eased trucking in materials. However, she says, if a wall poses an obstacle, a temporary fix might be to cut it back. Then, "come back and fill it in after you get the larger items or equipment down there," she says. As for the rest of the home, homeowners want their basements to have "open visibility and connectedness," Mann says. "We wanted it to feel like you were in any sort of regular-level living space aboveground." And in this jewel box, that's reason enough to raise a glass. +