

*"I'M NOT A CRIER,
BUT I CRIED.
I WAS SO PROUD
OF WHAT WE
HAD CREATED."*

MARY CULLINANE, HOMEOWNER
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PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM WESTPHALEN

THE GREAT ROOM — in a home designed to keep the homeowner close to her best friend and her family — evokes a traditional Vermont barn, with structural steel beams instead of timbers. On the south-facing gable end, 12-foot-wide glass doors slide into the wall to access a wooden deck (FACING PAGE). Sited to take advantage of passive solar heat, the building is also superinsulated, wrapped in 4 inches of rigid foam.



FAMILY OF **FRIENDS**



In a small Vermont town, a modern barn is designed for a modern extended household

WRITTEN BY KATHLEEN JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHED BY JIM WESTPHALEN



◀ **THE FIREPLACE IS** a central design element, a request of homeowner Mary Cullinane. She chose a Stuv wood-burning stove from Belgium with a pull-down tempered-glass front. A hinged pine door hides a flat-screen TV.

▶ **THE KITCHEN “DISAPPEARS** into the house,” says Cullinane, who doesn’t cook much for herself. With a basket-weave front and walnut top, the custom-made island is “more like a piece of furniture,” she says.

Mary Cullinane and Stacey Rainey met in 2006, when both women were working as managers for Microsoft. Among other projects, they worked together to plan and develop the School of the Future, a Microsoft-supported public high school in Philadelphia. They also became the closest of friends.

Over the next 12 years, Rainey and her husband, Cort Boulanger, had three children (Callan, 10, Tilly, 8, and Mac, 3). Cullinane, who is single, says that during that time they became a tightknit “friend family,” spending holidays and vacations together, including skiing

and hiking in Vermont and even traveling to Italy. So in 2012, when Rainey and Boulanger decided to move from Boston to Weybridge, a rural town near Middlebury, Vermont, it seemed possible that “Mar-Mar,” as Rainey’s children call Cullinane, might someday join them.

Someday came in February 2016, when Cullinane bought almost 11 acres of undeveloped land just three-tenths of a mile up the road in Weybridge. “I was driving up to Vermont from my New York and Boston apartments all of the time,” she says. “It was crazy. I adore those kids, and I wanted to be able to witness their milestones and watch them grow into the people they will become.”

Cullinane hired Joan Heaton of Joan Heaton Architects in Bristol,





CULLINANE'S LOFT BEDROOM is simple (TOP LEFT) with built-in storage for clothing and a glass railing for unimpeded views. The master bath (TOP RIGHT), tucked under an eave, gets plenty of natural light from a skylight. Callan, Mac, and Tilly (ABOVE) are right at home in their custom-made bunks. From the entryway (LEFT), a staircase supported by a single steel beam leads to the loft, which sits above the compact kitchen.

Vermont, to design and Silver Maple Construction in New Haven, Vermont, to build a home on the property. First intended to be a vacation getaway, it soon became Cullinane's primary residence.

Cullinane immediately delivered two documents to Heaton — a design brief that summarized her personal story, her goals for the home, and her priorities; and a PowerPoint presentation with ideas for floor plans and examples of details, such as flooring and finishes, that she liked and disliked. "It was the most thoroughly documented research folder I'd ever seen," says Heaton, laughing. Cullinane also set an ambitious timetable: They would break ground by Memorial Day and she'd move in on Labor Day.

Cullinane wanted a home that would evoke the Vermont lifestyle and vernacular while also integrating four key features: two — a swimming pool and an alcove for built-in bunk beds for sleepovers — for the kids, and two — wine storage and a fireplace — for herself.

She and Heaton quickly settled on a basic Vermont barn form, updated with structural steel beams instead of traditional wood timbers. With large expanses of glass on the south- and west-facing walls, the house is sited to take advantage of passive solar energy for heating, while offering long views over the rolling countryside to the distant Adirondack Mountains of New York. The unassuming exterior is clad in horizontal cedar siding with a standing-seam metal roof.

Beneath a gable end, a pivot door opens to a mudroom with a tile floor and a wooden bench made from a cherry slab. An open staircase supported by a single steel stringer, echoing the steel beams in the great room, leads to the loft bedroom and master bath. The mudroom space also contains a "wet" bathroom with a rain-style shower head — for guests and kids — and a laundry closet with a stacked washer and dryer.

Just past the entrance, the space opens to a light-filled great room with 13-foot-high walls and a vaulted 22-foot-high ceiling. At one end,



STONE RETAINING WALLS anchor the house on the 11-acre site, which includes a firepit, pool, outdoor kitchen, horseshoe pit, and 120-yard, par-3 golf hole.

tucked under the bedroom loft, is an open kitchen that “disappears into the house,” says Cullinane. “I don’t cook a lot for myself, but I do like to entertain.” With that in mind, the Liebherr refrigerator and Bertazzoni stove are small and narrow, and the island, with its ash basket-weave front and walnut top, looks more artisanal than utilitarian. The nearby wine cellar is a work of art, a temperature-controlled glass enclosure with racks and pins that hold bottles sideways for easy label viewing.

“An incredible amount of design went into solving each and every one of Mary’s goals,” says Heaton. “Hopefully, it doesn’t show. This project was a lot of fun.” The most ingenious solution to a wish-list item may be the kids’ “bedroom,” four cozy bunk beds hidden behind barn doors. “Each detail is a drawing in my file,” says Heaton, “... the railings, ladders, and cubbies for their reading lights and books.” And it’s not just for show: The kids spend the night with Cullinane almost once a week and often stop by on their way to or from school.

As planned, the house was finished by summer’s end. Sean Flynn, Silver Maple’s lead contractor, called Cullinane and told her to drive up.

“I was carrying Mac, and Callan and Tilly were right behind me, along with Cort and Stacey,” she says. “Sean opened the door, and Tilly went running to her bunk bed, and the kids were laughing and giggling. ... I’m not a crier, but I cried. I was so proud of what we had created.”

Cullinane and Rainey are now collaborating on another project — they’ve launched Community Barn Ventures, a consulting firm aimed at helping entrepreneurs and growing businesses succeed, “as well as to support the community in which we live and work,” says Cullinane.

“My whole life has been about my career. I’ve moved a lot for my jobs,” she says. “But I feel at home here. The kids are one of my greatest gifts. It’s a nice little world we’ve made.” ■

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