

feature

The sleek dining set paired with a rustic chandelier and plaid accent pillows speaks to the modern farmhouse design.



OFF-SEASON *serenity*



A large round mirror and console table provide a welcoming vignette and add balance to the spacious entryway. **TOP RIGHT:** Sandi's curated choice of lighting and accent pieces meld seamlessly to create warmth and mirror the homeowners' organic sense of style.

STORY **JANET WHITE BARDWELL**
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For professional athletes and their families, finding a private, calm place away from the game – and an escape from the demands of constant travel and public life – is not just a luxury, it's a necessity.

Shortly after an Ontario born-and-raised National Hockey League player and his wife purchased a country estate in the Kitchener/Waterloo area, they reached out to **Sandi Duclos**, owner of **Sandi Loreen Duclos Interiors**, to use her talented touch to transform their new house into a relaxed, serene modern-farmhouse-style home where they could enjoy the off-season with family and friends.

The couple, who spend 10 months of the year in a different province, knew that finding the right designer who could understand their vision and confidently manage the project with hands-off homeowners would be a game changer.

Continued on page 108



Textured pillows and contoured lines lend an air of serenity and comfort. **BELOW:** Dark wood built-ins and a matching fireplace mantel provide visual interest and storage while highlighting the stonework. **RIGHT:** Lighting is a story in the house. In the dining room a rustic candle chandelier gives a nod to the farmhouse look, while softening the modern furniture.



Sandi – who has owned her design firm for more than 20 years and also works as a designer of interior and exterior living spaces at furniture manufacturer **Hauser** – was more than up to the task and considered the request both an honour and a challenge. An honour because her mother was a huge NHL fan and would have been thrilled that she was helping to make a hockey player and his family comfortable in their home, and a challenge because modern farmhouse style was not quite in her design wheelhouse. “My style is more classic, so this was an interesting challenge for me, which I enjoyed.”

The homeowners were happy with the house itself; the bones are solid and it features the natural yet refined finishes that reflect their organic, understated style. Light beams through large windows at perfect spots throughout the day to set the scene for warmth. But the house did not feel like home. “They had some furniture in place but were unhappy because the house did not feel complete,” says Sandi. “My objective was to make the space feel like home for them by bringing in finishing pieces.”

Sandi began her styling transformation on the spacious and open-concept main level.



This is a warm and cosy spot for a night in or for entertaining friends and family. **BELOW RIGHT:** Sandi placed potted plants in strategic places to bring the outdoors in, adding colour to the neutral palette.

While it is wonderful to have a lot of space to work with, homeowners can often feel the home does not seem “finished,” she says. Her finishing process began with enhancing the gorgeous wood entry door and large front entryway with a hallway vignette that complemented the scale of the space. A sizeable console from Restoration Hardware offered an anchoring base, and a large round mirror and side lamps with textured rope accents, both from **Accents for Living**, provided a rustic simplicity that created the casually luxurious welcome the homeowners were looking for.

Sandi emphasizes the importance of vignettes when pulling in and grounding large spaces. “To make big spaces feel more intimate the key is to create vignettes in the right spots that invite warmth and interest.”

Décor items and lamps from **Cornerstone Home Interiors** add warmth and casual elegance to the living and dining rooms and complement the homeowners’ existing furniture. Comfy sofa cushions and a throw blanket with natural chunky texture from **The Art of Home** provide visual appeal.

In the dining room, a neutral grey area rug from **Alexanian Carpet & Flooring** frames the existing dining table and chairs and creates a welcoming home base for comfortable gatherings and meals with family and friends. Florals by **Pink Poppi** bring the outdoors inside and complete the natural atmosphere. *Continued on page 111*



feature

“FOR THE TWO MONTHS THEY SPEND ON THIS ESTATE I WANTED TO ENSURE THEY HAD A HAPPY PLACE TO UNWIND, RECHARGE AND FEEL AT HOME.”

White cabinetry in the kitchen is warmed by the island's earthy countertop and the basket weave on the bar stools.



TOP LEFT: Another stunning light fixture – a modern treatment this time juxtaposed with relaxed slip-covered chairs and a traditional pedestal table. **ABOVE:** The open-concept kitchen/living room transitions seamlessly and makes for easy family living. **FAR LEFT:** The smell of fresh-baked pastries calls the family to breakfast. **LEFT:** The white kitchen cabinetry sets a clean and serene backdrop for efficient food prep and easy traffic flow.

Transitioning into the main-level master suite, this casual farmhouse style with a modern twist evolves seamlessly into romantic luxe. Sandi admits that while the entire project was a pleasure, the process of creating the master bedroom stands out as a favourite.

Brody Enterprises Inc. created a fresh neutral backdrop by applying **Benjamin Moore** Ballet White to the large bedroom. The homeowners, while not on site during the transformation, were involved in the choices and there was a fluid back-and-forth with Sandi in the decision-making process. When she provided the homeowners with choices, the designer often correctly predicted what they would choose, until it came to the master suite. “When deciding on the chairs

in the master bedroom, I gave them a number of choices and I assumed they would go with a more relaxed option that was reflected in the rest of the home. But they chose pieces that were more classic and formal. It shocked me – and they look really great.”

That choice sparked a style reminiscent of old Hollywood, and the contrast of the formal chairs against the snuggle-worthy bed linens from Accents for Living and textured wool area rug from Alexanian Carpet & Flooring created a unique version of casually glamorous. The result equally encourages a pair of heels as much as it does a comfy robe. A tufted ottoman and reindeer hide just steps away invite an intimate fireside chat. *Continued on page 112*

feature

The master bathroom exudes spa-like serenity. Stone tiles on the wall blend with farmhouse accents in the rest of the house. **RIGHT:** Contemporary lines in this cased vanity in the master bedroom are a sleek contrast to more rustic choices in the rest of the house. **BELOW:** A tin pot with greenery lends a playful, rustic touch in the en suite. **BELOW RIGHT:** An authentic hide on the floor adds a touch of sultry glam.



As all designers and home décor enthusiasts know, effective lighting can shift any room from stark to serene. Sandi had the bedroom rewired by **Electrically Speaking Inc.** to allow two stunning chandeliers to hang from the ceiling on either side of the bed, creating a dramatic and sultry atmosphere. “These are very high-end pieces and they frame the bed beautifully,” she says.

Continued on page 114





FAR LEFT: The master bedroom required custom bedside tables and large accent pieces to suit the scale of the room. **LEFT:** Designer Sandi Duclos made this family retreat the oasis they imagined. **BELOW:** A large ottoman by the fire in the master suite invites a late-night chat or quiet read.



A tufted ottoman and reindeer hide just steps away invite an intimate fireside chat.

Custom pieces played an important role in bringing Sandi's vision to life. The bedroom itself was so large that finding pieces that would be the correct scale for the size of the room was essential. Custom bedside dressers from **Chervin Kitchen & Bath**, and a custom oversize bedroom mirror from **Framing & Art Centre Waterloo** create a feeling of warmth and luxe coziness in this sizable space.

The homeowners were so delighted with Sandi's work that they have subsequently hired her for several projects, including decorating their home for the holidays, and designing the couple's (first!) nursery.

"Every job has an emotional connection; it always goes far beyond the design portion," says Sandi. "For 10 months of the year this couple lives a very busy and public life. For the two months they spend on this estate I wanted to ensure they had a happy place to unwind, recharge and feel at home." **OH**