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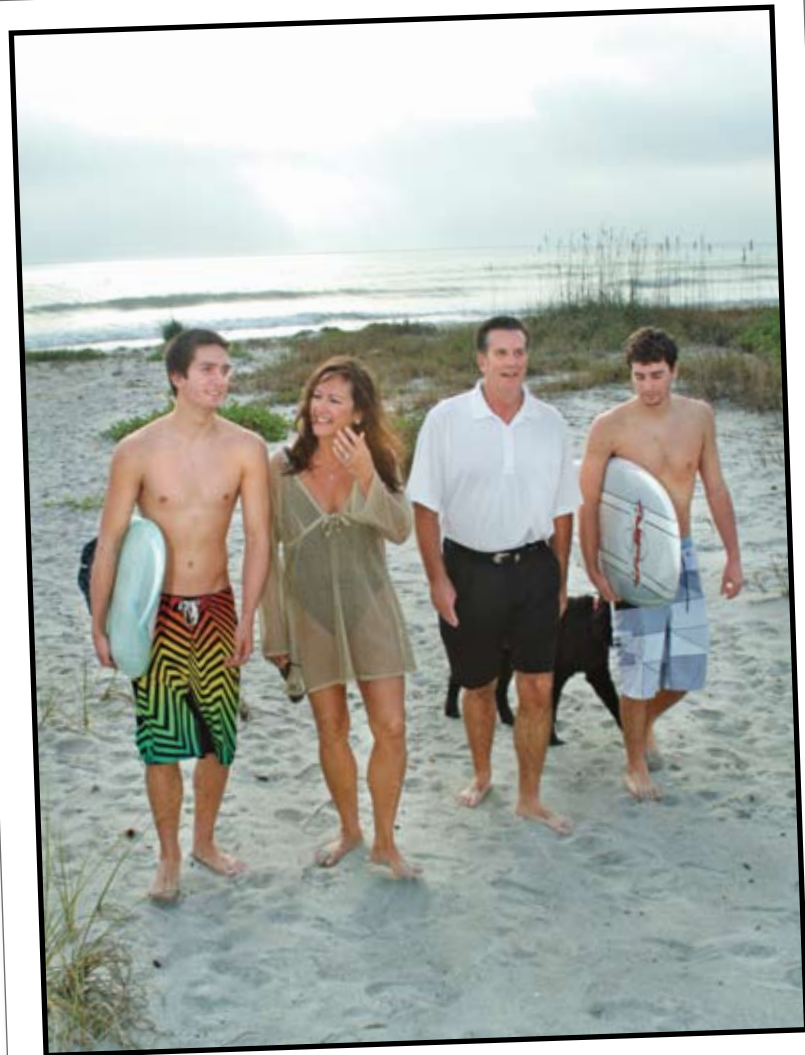
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Seaside Style

Couple's move into retirement dream home happens a little earlier than planned

Story by **Anne Straub**

Photography by **Rob Downey**



Jody and Michael Kelly with their sons, Tyler and Spencer, can walk just a few steps from their backyard to enjoy the beach and ocean outside their newly renovated home in Cocoa Beach.





Above: A Mediterranean-style heavy front door with iron grillwork greets visitors to the Kellys' home.

Jody and Michael Kelly always expected to retire to Cocoa Beach, the funky beach town they fell in love with years ago.

With two of their four children still in high school, the move from Dallas seemed a few years away. But when you find the place you know you're meant to be, you don't argue.

"It just happened a little earlier than retirement," said Jody Kelly, enjoying her newly renovated oceanfront home.

The family relocated from Texas last year, quickly acclimating to Florida life. Their former home was on a lake, so the family gravitates toward water activities. But Dallas couldn't offer this: Michael is a boogie boarder, and sons Tyler and Spencer enjoy surfing.

A former swimmer, Jody Kelly confesses she's now more of a suntanner. "I'm just more about reading a book and relaxing and watching them have fun," said Kelly. The couple also have a daughter, Megan, a senior at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers and son, Jeff who lives in Dallas with his wife, Lauren.

Before Dallas, they lived in Atlanta and Tampa, but always chose Cocoa Beach as a vacation spot. They bought a condo in the city five years ago, and started scoping out oceanfront property for an eventual move.

Although Jody Kelly has spent her career in real estate, it was Michael who kept up the hunt. When he persuaded her

"When you find the place you know you're meant to be, you don't argue." - JODY KELLY

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Above: A tiki hut in the home's backyard provides a perfect view of the dunes and surf.

to check out a listing he'd found, she didn't expect it to come to anything. She was wrong. "I just walked in and knew, 'This is it,'" she remembered.

Still, what she saw then and what visitors see now are very different. The couple embarked on a four-month renovation that raised the ceilings, expanded the back wall of the home and added living space over the garage for the boys. The house went from 2,200 square feet of living space to more than 3,200.

The original living space had a boxy feel, she said, with small rooms and low ceilings – some just 7 feet. The couple hired Charles Boyd Construction to effect the transformation.

"They wanted that beach feel to the house," said Boyd, who overcame structural challenges to open the floor plan. The renovation included removing a load-bearing wall to expand

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the living space. For structural integrity, he added beams to the ceiling and left columns to support the second floor. The columns, and a decorative screen, now help distinguish the sitting and dining areas in the open room.

The couple converted the porch area to an eat-in space by the kitchen.

Tray ceilings do more than add interest to the new space: They solved the problem of raising the ceilings to 9 feet, while accommodating duct work for the air conditioning system. Boyd removed the former set of stairs and redid the



stairway to open up the space. Key subcontractors on the job included carpenter Billy Forsythe and plumber Tom Walker.

The work included modernizing wiring and plumbing, so the home ended up with up-to-date functionality as well as style.

The renovation became a family affair. They kept the original oak hardwood floors on the second floor, which Jody helped refinish with a distressed texture. An added benefit: A 15-pound weight loss. “I need to find another remodeling project,” she joked.

Above: Jody Kelly completed the tile backsplash in the kitchen, which features vanilla cream cabinetry and granite countertops. The couple converted a porch area to an eat-in space next to the kitchen, right.

“I just walked in and knew, ‘This is it.’ ”
– JODY KELLY



Above: A pineapple sink adds a tropical touch to the master bathroom. *Right:* Surfboards and other decorative touches accentuate the beach motif in the boys' bedroom.



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Above: A carved wooden screen with a colorful parrot continues the tropical theme of the home beside the living room. **Left:** Although much of the home's interior was renovated, the couple kept the original oak hardwood floors on the second floor, including the master bedroom.

She also completed the tile backsplash in the kitchen. Tyler laid slate on the second-story side deck. Slate also covers the main balcony off the second-floor bedrooms. "We're out here every day," she said.

If not on the balcony, the family can enjoy beach life in their backyard. The area already featured pavers, a firepit and tiki hut, offering move-in ready Florida living with a view of the dunes and surf.

Previous family homes featured an Old World décor, a style Jody married with a beach theme for the Cocoa Beach home. "I didn't want to totally let that go," she said of the more formal look. But oceanfront living called for

"I pinch myself every now and then while I'm doing the dishes. I can't believe we got our dream." – JODY KELLY



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Above: A crystal chandelier, inset, makes a dramatic statement over the dining room table. *Far right:* The Kellys' daughter can return home from breaks at college to a bright and spacious second-floor bedroom with an oceanfront deck.



lightening up a bit.

She took a cue from glass ball ornaments she found in a Cocoa Village shop in the exact blue and green sea glass hues she'd imagined for the color scheme. The ornaments sit in the kitchen in a glass jar filled with sand and starfish, setting a beach tone.

That's picked up throughout the home, which includes shelves adorned with candles set in jars with sand and shells. A carved wooden screen continues the tropical side of the theme with a colorful parrot design. A green glass bottle sits on a window sill.

Living room furniture is white leather, and the kitchen is done in



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vanilla cream cabinetry and granite. The home's exterior is all beach, with green-painted stucco topped by a metal roof.

Popular decorating motifs of Old World style are represented. The heavy front door with iron grillwork definitely leans Mediterranean. Kitchen cabinet hardware is in a fleur-de-lis design. Monkeys scramble up a floor lamp, while the see-no-evil monkey trio adorns a hanging lamp over the eat-in kitchen table. A crystal chandelier makes a dramatic statement over the dining room table.

Pineapples, a symbol of Southern hospitality, also make appearances, including as cutouts on the back of kitchen barstools.

Some design coups were happy accidents. Not knowing where to place an oversized rounded chair, the couple set it between the living room and kitchen for the time being. "We just dropped it there, and everybody sits there," Jody said.

They kept the original flagstone wall in just one room, which now serves as Michael's office.

Work wrapped up in November, just in time for the Kellys to host a holiday meal – and she means, just in time. The kitchen cabinets were delivered on Monday, and she served a flawless Thanksgiving dinner that Thursday.

The move came sooner than expected, but the change has been positive.

"I pinch myself every now and then while I'm doing the dishes. I can't believe we got our dream," Jody Kelly said. ■

Above: Second-floor view of the family's backyard, which features pavers, a firepit, tiki hut and colorful chairs from which to take in the gorgeous view.

