

HYDE PARK • EAST WALNUT HILLS • MT. LOOKOUT

BEST

MAGAZINE

Issue No. 16
Est. 2005



6 GREAT HOMES AND THE INTERESTING PEOPLE WHO BRING THEM TO LIFE



inside BEST

Established 2005

Featuring 131 Families...So Far

Issue 16: Hyde Park • East Walnut Hills • Mt. Lookout

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www.bestmagazinecincinnati.com

Editorial Director
MARIANNE SANDHAGE
mariannesandhage@zoomtown.com

Photographers
REBECCA WORPLE
owenemma.com

CRAIG THOMPSON
craigthompsonphoto.com

CATHY & MARK LYONS
mail@lyonsphotography.com

Designer
STEPHEN SULLIVAN
steveco@fuse.net

About Best

Best Magazine is published 3X each year: January, May and September. Its editorial focus is on featuring families in their homes: who they are, what they do, what they like. Its advertising focus is to present products/services most likely desired by its readers and provided by Cincinnati's top businesses. The location topic of each issue changes from issue to issue.

If you would like to nominate a family for inclusion in *Best*, or tell us about a business you would like to see advertise with us, call us at 513-708-3849.

Distribution of Best

Each issue of *Best* is mailed to 10,500 selected homeowners living primarily on Cincinnati's eastside. Single copies are available for \$7 each through Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Rookwood, and by mail from the publisher.

Accuracy

Being human beings, we are far from perfect. While every reasonable effort was made to be accurate and clear, we apologize now if something got past us. We appreciate your understanding.

Coming Up Next in Best

June 2010: *Being Green in Cincinnati*, a special edition of *Best*

September 2010: *The Dogs & Their People of Greater Cincinnati*

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Maverick Productions, Inc.
41 Locust Hill Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45245
Tel. 513-708-3849
email: maverickproductions@zoomtown.com

Publisher / Writer
DOUGLAS E. SANDHAGE

Tel. 513-708-3849 / dougsandhage@zoomtown.com
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...and Everything in its Place

Julie Bell of Mt. Lookout

Story By Doug Sandhage / Photos by Cathy & Mark Lyons





Above: The crispness of black and white against textured grass cloth wallpaper gives Julie Bell's master bedroom a Southampton feel. Below: Wall pocket bouquets adorn the wing chair headboard that welcomes guests to Julie Bell's Mt. Lookout home. "I love mixing neutrals with crisp whites," says Julie.

Julie Bell wasn't always so neat. Or so says her Mom, who lives with Julie's Dad, Bob, in a well-decorated two-story, empty-nester club home in the Fairport suburb of Rochester, New York.

In the early '60s and '70s, Julie, her parents, two brothers and a sister went from house to house to house all over the country, the result of frequent transfers from Bob's marketing work at Eastman Kodak. In all, about eight moves.

So why is this important to telling Julie Bell's story, a mild-mannered interior designer living just a few blocks from Mt. Lookout Square? Because one look at the exterior of her home styled in English Country, or inside any of the rooms, is the perfect Kodak moment: everything is in its place, the kind of setting that any photographer can only dream about if shooting for *Architectural Digest*. The design is not stuffy, but comfortable. Julie demonstrates by taking her shoes off and curling up on the couch as if to take in an evening with friends, or just to sit back and watch movies.

Julie designed this home. Oh yeah, and her Mom and Dad's too. Since 2003, she and Nancy Paul have owned and operated Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell, headquartered in Montgomery.

Julie graduated from the University of Kentucky, majoring in interior design. She knew what she wanted to do when she





Above: Julie Bell's English Country dining room is embellished with ball gown style embroidered floral on silk draperies, and a crystal chandelier – a perfect combination of casual elegance, she says. "The rug is one of the first things I bought for the house. It makes my heart go pitter-patter." **Left:** A Ralph Lauren striped wool rug anchors Julie Bell's cozy-comfortable great room. Custom iron drapery rods, made locally, are a featured signature in Julie Bell's work as an interior designer.

enrolled and she never wavered. On summer breaks, she worked for King's Island as a survey taker asking guests their thoughts about pricing, the rides, and anything else of marketing interest to the amusement park's managers. This experience, says Mom Dorothy, helped her gain confidence in working with the public.

With her college degree in hand, she moved back to Rochester to her parent's home and worked in a furniture store as a designer. But Julie grew restless and when the family decided to move to Dallas (another job transfer), this was one too many for her. She instead moved to Cincinnati on her own, buying a home in Heritage Green, a Mercurio Homes development located in Symmes Township. Interestingly she stayed in the same place for 17 years and worked for Zicka Homes for 10 of those years.



MacKenzie-Childs accents add a touch of whimsy to this European style kitchen. The countertops are a combination of wood and granite. A subtle mix of stains and glazes enhance the look of the cabinetry crafted by J&N Distribution and Design.

During that time she designed the interiors for hundreds of homes, including 30-plus for more than 10 consecutive Cincinnati Homearama home shows. If you use Homearama's estimates that more than 100,000 people visited each show during its heyday, that would mean more than a million people have seen Julie's work.

Designing so many properties got Julie to thinking that she needed something new herself – a new home, a new lifestyle, a new community. In 2007 she contracted with John Hueber Homes to build her stone-and-brick-faced, 2,650 sq. ft. ranch on a small lot in Mt. Lookout. Hueber's influence can be seen clearly on the exterior, as well as the home's commitment to green energy, but inside it is ALL JULIE. "I love what I do. I have a great business partner. I am friends with most of my clients," says Julie. While she says that her clients' wishes are always primary in the work she does for them – "it's about what *they want*," her personal tastes lean toward the comfortable, casual side of living. She says she is seeing a significant move away from "McMansion" living, to smaller, less formal styles. At any given time, she says, she usually has

about 30 clients in her portfolio.

When not working, Julie says she loves to entertain with close friends, read novels, and cook. "When cooking, I love to just create something, but I'm not an 'exact' type of person. I like theme parties, particularly Italian." One particularly popular plan with friends is to get everyone together in a room, give each a meal plan assignment, send everyone out to buy the goods (usually to Findlay Market), then have everyone come back and cook it together.

Back to Mom. Dorothy Bell says that Julie's personality and temperament are primary reasons why she is successful in interior design. "She likes people; she interacts well with them. Am I a proud parent? Yes I am."

Who Did It?

The following businesses were identified by Julie Bell as having been significantly involved in the home's architecture, design and/or landscaping in recent years:

Interior Design: Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell.

Builder: John Hueber Homes



Impromptu gatherings and casual dinners are frequent for Julie Bell and friends. Guests on this night included Michelle Bowman, Julie White, Tricia Smith, Marc Hueber and Andy Hueber.

Julie Bell Gone Green

While being green may not necessarily mean that you know everything about being environmentally correct, one thing usually stands out: There is more green in your pocketbook when you've done it.

By Julie Bell's computations, her newly built LEED certified home in Mt. Lookout will mean savings of no less than \$150,000 over the next 15 years. And that's in real dollars.

For starters: The City of Cincinnati has awarded her a 100 percent tax abatement for the next 15 years on the value of her home.

Add in energy savings and, more importantly, add in *the feeling that what you've done was the right thing to do*, and the total reward is nothing short of fantastic. It makes sense to go green.

When Julie contracted in 2007 with John Hueber Homes to build on an empty lot in Mt. Lookout, she learned of the city's unusual tax abatement offer, designed to lure new homeowners to the city, and to build on the city's going-green promotions (some say Cincinnati is among the green leaders in the U.S.). The rules were fairly simple: build within the city limits and have the house be LEED certified. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and it includes a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). There are four LEED ratings: certified, silver, gold and platinum (the latter being the highest rating). The higher the level, the more green features are in the home.

Julie's home was awarded a certified level in 2008. All homes go through rigorous testing to insure they meet LEED specifications.

Marc Hueber, superintendent for John Hueber Homes, said they have now completed five LEED-certified homes in the city, and one each in Loveland and Montgomery are under construction. Three more are in design/development. One of the five in the city, a Hyde Park home completed in 2007, was the first LEED-certified home in the state of Ohio.

Hueber notes that while his company has been proactive in talking to new homeowners about going green, they are coming to the table "asking about it. It's now more of a household term," he says. "The more people are learning about it, the more they see it as financially attainable." This has been especially true in the city because of the abatement program, he adds. The minimum LEED-certified level, says Hueber, will add about three to five percent to the cost of the home.

According to Hueber, the Bell home was awarded LEED points primarily for its use of recycled content; low-flow water fixtures; upgraded insulation; because of its close proximity to personal services; and its location on developed land, meaning less need for additional infrastructure. Points are also given to the amount of waste on construction materials (less waste, more points).

For Hueber Homes, Marc says the city's tax abatement program has "been a blessing" given the downturn in the building industry. "It sure is helping through the hard times."

For more on green, see *Being Green in Cincinnati*, a special edition of *Best Magazine* to be published in early summer 2010.



There is little to Julie Bell's Mt. Lookout home that is wasted space. Compact and cozy is what she wanted from builder John Hueber Homes. Just a few steps from the French doors that lead from her living room to a patio is her English garden and 12' X 24' cocktail pool. The patio features a limestone floor, a bead board ceiling, and a gas fireplace.

about me

My occupation is

Interior Designer/Co-Owner of Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell, headquartered in Montgomery.

For fun, I

"Work in the garden." Julie's backyard is adjacent to a ground-level porch complete with a limestone floor, a bead-board ceiling, and a gas fireplace. A 12' X 24' cocktail pool is framed with an English garden "wild look," not manicured, she says. Julie also enjoys walking the neighborhood, usually two to three miles a day.

For travel, I

"Go to anyplace in Europe." For nearly every one of the last 15 years, she has been to France or Italy. She enjoys the wine, architecture, art and history. She highly recommends reading *Europe Through the Back Door*, a travel guide. Her dream is to spend a month in Provence, a region of southeastern France on the Mediterranean adjacent to Italy, or to do an African safari. "I am obsessed with lions," not knowing quite sure why, but muses that one of her favorite movies of all time was the 1966 film *Born Free*.

For faith, I

"Attend Christ the King church" in Mt. Lookout and can usually be seen at Saturday night Mass.

My 15 minutes of fame...

"This is it (the *Best Magazine* interview)."

My Sunday morning routine is to

"Work around the house."

I eat out at

"Nada, and Stone Creek in Montgomery." Favorite wine is Pinot Noir and favorite source is The Wine Merchant in Hyde Park.

My personal design tastes are

"Pretty casual, comfortable, livable; not ostentatious."

I volunteer for

"CASA ProKids." CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. ProKids is Hamilton County's CASA volunteer program, founded in 1981 by the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, the Cincinnati Bar Association, and the Junior League of Cincinnati. Each CASA volunteer is assigned to a foster child, making sure the child's needs are met, that the child is safe, and helping each child move into a safe, permanent and nurturing home. Julie has been a CASA volunteer for nine years and has been assigned two brothers for all of those years.

Best advice I learned from my Mom & Dad

"The importance of integrity and strong ethics." Julie adds that Mom Dorothy is "best known (in the family) as Mother Teresa." Both parents, she stresses, have been great examples of how to live right.



The biggest skill to being an interior designer

"Do more listening than talking to your clients." It's what the homeowner wants, not the designer, she cautions. Julie's company, Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell, has been recognized as being the "design firm of choice for 33 of the homes" featured over 10 years in Homearama.

On Being Green, it

"Feels good to know that you are being environmentally responsible." And to be green means having more "green in your pocketbook," she says. Her home is LEED certified for its green features. As a result, the home, which is now more energy efficient, earned a 100 percent tax abatement from the City of Cincinnati for 15 years, in total saving her more than \$150,000.

Having good friends means having a

"Total support system in good times as well as bad. I feel blessed and lucky that I have so many close friends who have always been there for me." Good friend Nancy J. Young, who is also a business associate and former neighbor when they lived in the same development for 18 years, says Julie's "talents transition to her personal life, where Julie is a gourmet cook and gracious hostess at dinner parties held in her own thoughtfully designed and tastefully appointed home. It's awesome for me to witness her interior design expertise and boundless energy...time and time again."