

A Gem on Gem Lake







Southview helps Gem Lake homeowners transform back yard into entertaining oasis.





BY LAUREN PAHMEIER PHOTOS BY TROY THIES

After building four custom homes, Gary and Deanna Tangwall definitely had experience turning their wish lists into reality. But after they built and moved into their latest home on Gem Lake, they left their back yard mostly untouched. There was a pool and a little landscaping, but the Tangwalls always intended to renovate the space for additional entertaining. A few years of waiting turned into 12, and in fall 2016, the family finally decided to create the back yard they always wanted.



“We used to have a cabin up north for 20 years, and we sold that a number of years ago,” Gary Tangwall says. “Basically, the goal was having everything here in our back yard, so there’s no need to go anywhere else.”

The Tangwalls turned to Josh Koller with Southview Design to design and build their perfect backyard getaway.

While the Tangwalls already had an in-ground pool

and added a sport court in 2013 for their active family, including two teenage sons, they wanted to enhance the area for relaxing with friends and family. Since they love to host parties and get-togethers for various occasions, the Tangwalls wanted the main focus of the design to be an outdoor kitchen and living space.

“That’s something that’s very trendy right now,” Koller says of the expanded outdoor living room concept.



As food and drinks are often an important aspect of hosting get-togethers, the Tangwalls decided to add several elements to make cooking and serving easier. A grill is the centerpiece, but several outlets make other appliances possible. Two refrigerators create storage space for perishable ingredients, dishes and drinks, and two countertops provide generous preparation space.

A living room area is incorporated between the kitchen's two countertop spaces. A couch and two rockers provide a place for guests to mingle with and observe those who are preparing the food, while also giving them the best view of the flat-screen TV and the closest seat to the fireplace perpendicular to the bars.



A large wooden pergola covers the space, complete with a ceiling fan to keep the family cool during the summer months.

Although the living room provides some seating for guests, the Tangwalls wanted many more seating options: One of the countertops is at bar height, with a few barstools, and a few extra chairs on the patio between the sport court and the pergola allows guests to watch the action. Chaises next to the pool let people sunbathe and dry off after a dip. Seats surrounding a fire table, enclosed by a concrete half wall let even more friends and family members gather around a fire at night. Yet another smaller pergola attached to the back of the home gives guests a different view of the pool, as well as the flowers and Gem Lake behind it.



To complement the various outdoor living spaces, the Tangwalls installed a sound system that can play different music in the separate areas of the yard.

“The flexibility where someone could be listening to country music in the pool, and somebody could be listening to hard rock out at the sport court worked out pretty nice,” Gary Tangwall says.

Koller found himself focusing on connecting the wide range of elements in the back yard through intentional design. Although he doesn’t usually create designs with as much hardscaping, the Tangwalls requested as much uninterrupted entertaining space as possible. For example, to



accommodate that, an original raised planter separating the pool area from the living room was removed so people could move from area to area without dodging a bed of plants and woodchips.

To tie everything together, Koller kept sight lines open between the sport court and the outdoor living room by using a see-through glass fireplace. He placed the flat-screen TV just above it — at a height that people in the pool could still watch the TV — for a sporting event or for movie nights.

Additionally, Koller also used the blue stone underneath the pergola in other parts or sections of the hardscape for cohesiveness.



“We did some inlays with the blue stone from the firepit, and some inlays around the pavers of the pool,” Koller says. “Given the fact that we wanted to have this massive patio, I think we broke it up the best we could with the different products.”

The overall result? Family and friends can now spend time enjoying the weather, whether it’s in the summer surrounding the pool or cozied up to the fireplace when it’s cooler. And they don’t need to go up north for their favorite



activities.

“I just love in the morning when I water my plants, looking at it all ... it’s amazing the transformation that was made,” Deanna Tangwall says.

“We call this our own little resort,” Gary Tangwall agrees.

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