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# Storage

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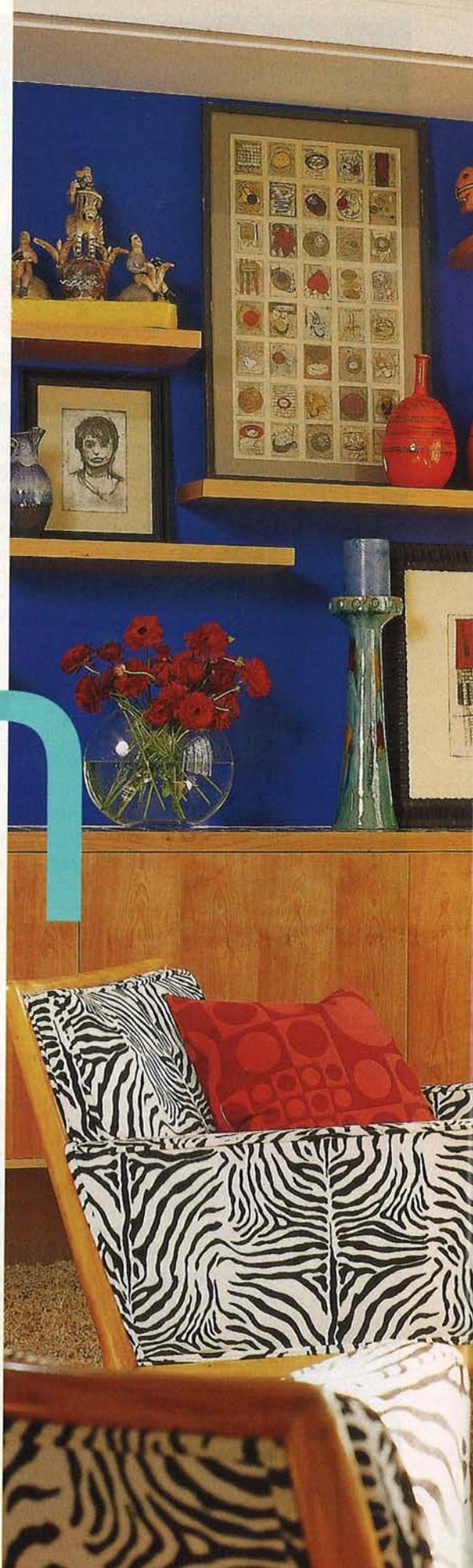
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# making every inch count

Thoughtful planning and clever fixes  
transform the “most  
ordinary split-level ever” into a  
storage-rich home—without adding  
a single inch to its footprint.





The ottoman/coffee table in the family room was designed by homeowner Phil Schneider. Envisioned as the perfect spot to watch football, the benchlike design has a rotating top with an upholstered side for feet and a hardwood side for snacks.



A

my and Phil Schneider loved the Prairie-style exterior renovation their 1954 split-level underwent more than a decade ago, but they were less than enamored with their suburban Chicago home's dark, boxy interior. "It was the most ordinary split-level ever," Amy says, "but we love the neighborhood." Unfortunately, the Schneiders and their two young daughters struggled to find places for their everyday possessions and favorite collections of art, books, snow globes, lava lamps, and more.

Inspired by the *Not So Big House* book series, the Schneiders wanted to find architectural storage solutions without enlarging their substantial 4,000-square-foot home. "We wanted to live in every inch of the house," Amy says. Eventually, the Schneiders reconnected with Morgante Wilson Architects, the firm responsible for the exterior renovation, and began exploring ways to freshen the interior with modern, colorful, and user-friendly storage.

Architect Fred Wilson opened the dated floor plan by removing walls, enlarging passageways, and combining spaces. With each change to the floor plan, Wilson and the Schneiders incorporated well-designed, easy-to-use storage solutions and built-in furnishings. "I think these guys would tend toward clutter, so we made an effort to create storage that would be easier for

**Paint and new glass shelves** transform the dining room's traditional, basic built-ins into a sassy mod-style wall unit, *above*.

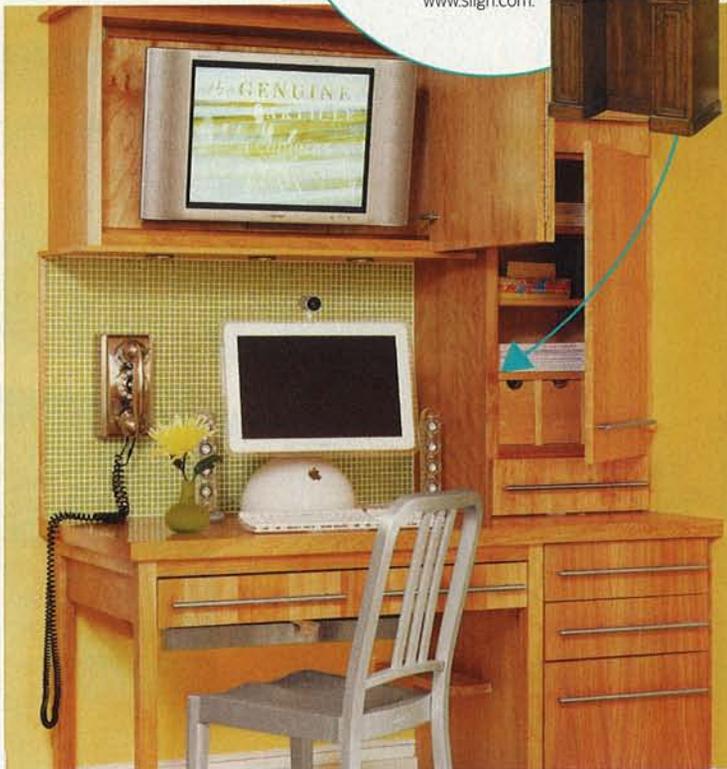
● **Glass-front upper cabinets** installed on top of a wall of windows, *opposite top*, create displaylike storage without sacrificing natural light. A slim upper band of closed cabinets capitalizes on underused space.

● **Thick passageways** between rooms, *opposite left*, include built-in bookshelves and display space. ● **The kitchen communication center**, *opposite right*, features a computer and a flat-panel television on an articulated arm that can be concealed behind bifold doors.



### OFF THE RACK

Family communication centers from Sligh are available in styles, sizes, and finishes to match a range of interiors. Each center features a laptop docking station, a charging area for multiple electronic devices, and old-school tackboards for leaving memos. \$2,944-\$3,294. [www.sligh.com](http://www.sligh.com).







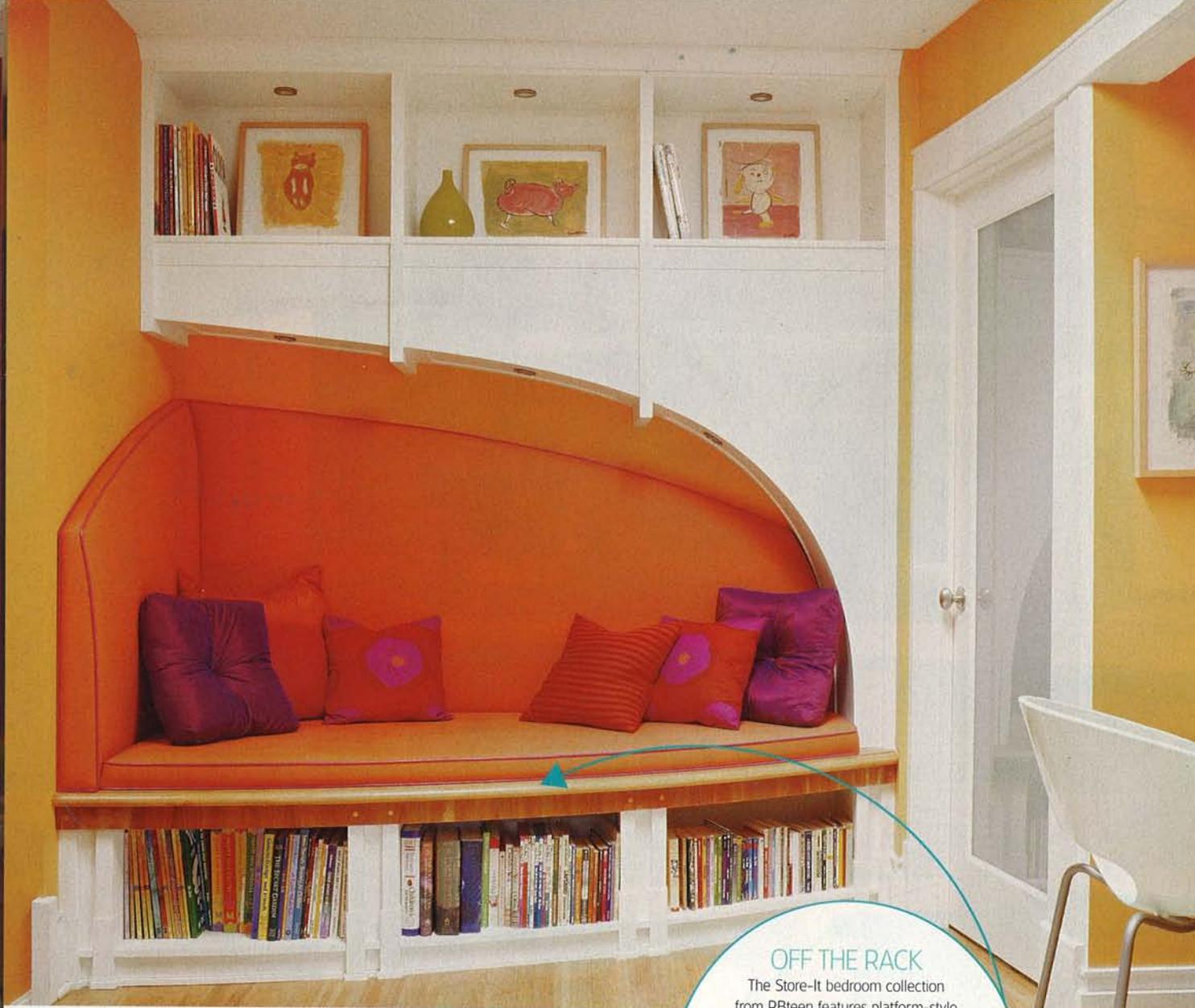
## OFF THE RACK

Consoles and bookcases from Blue Fish Home's Primativa collection combine streamlined aesthetics with rustic finishes, including a new weathered wash, *below right*. Beautiful from all angles,

the pieces can function as room dividers. Beginning at \$1,500. 770/509-8472; [www.bluefishhome.com](http://www.bluefishhome.com).



**A partial wall and bookcase unit, *opposite***, bridges the kitchen and sitting room and holds cookbooks, magazines, and the children's essential toys (in color-coded bins). ● **Red birch banquette seating** in the kitchen, *top*, was selected for its cozy 1950s feel. Homeowner Amy Schneider says the design enables the family to "cram a million people into the kitchen" while the cook prepares or presents a meal. The freestanding red birch table was also custom-made to maximize seating. ● **Drawers under the bench** hold place mats and napkins. "They're designed to be kid-accessible, so whoever's job it is to set the table can dig right in," Amy says.



## OFF THE RACK

The Store-It bedroom collection from PBteen features platform-style beds in twin, full, and queen sizes, as well as headboard hutches and wrap-around bookcase/storage units. The queen-size

Ultimate Super Bed Set, right, is available in white or espresso finish. \$2,399 as shown; 866/472-8336; [www.pbteen.com](http://www.pbteen.com).



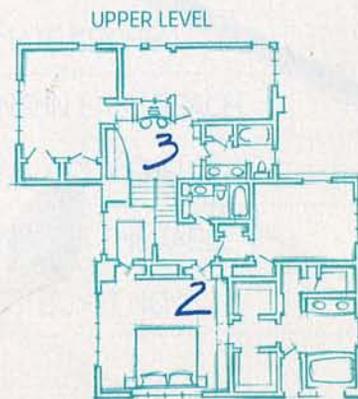
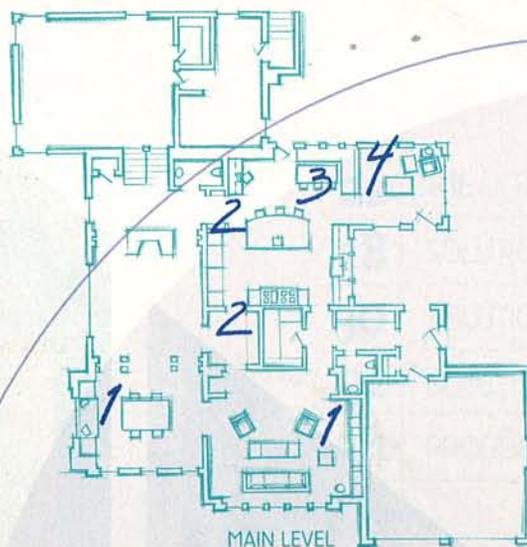
them to put things away," Wilson says, pointing out new open storage that includes widened ledges for drinks and snacks in the sitting and family rooms and abundant shelving for frequently used dishware and glasses. "Anytime we had an opportunity, we added doors and drawers," Wilson says, noting the inconspicuous addition of drawers to the kitchen banquette and dining room window seat. "There's not really any dead space anywhere." Wilson even added a drawer to the hardworking kitchen island to hold a pet bed for the Schneiders' feline friends.

To capitalize on the available space, Wilson flanked passageways between rooms with thin built-in bookcases. "You'll find a similar feature in as many places as we could work it in," Wilson says. Similarly, a 10x10-foot landing that could easily have been forgotten was transformed into a light-filled homework lounge. In the master bedroom, a grid of built-in bookcases lines a wall. "I suppose you could say they lost some square footage by thickening the doorway, but really all we did was shorten the entry hallway. It's a different way to look at the same space," Wilson says.

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Writer Brian Kramer Field Editor Hilary Rose Photographer Janet M. Mackie

The homework lounge on the landing outside Amy and Phil's daughters' relatively small bedrooms, *opposite*, packs function into a once-forgotten space. Book storage wraps under and above a curvy built-in couch that comfortably accommodates two young readers or one catnapping adult. • The computer nook, *below*, occupies a sliver of space between the bedroom doors. An interior window pulls natural light from one bedroom. Sized for a "pilot and copilot" while surfing the Internet, the space can be reconfigured as the girls grow up. • 12-inch-deep bookcases in the master bedroom, *below right*, are perfect for passionate readers. For visual interest, architect Fred Wilson designed a notched cubby at the top of the units.



## IN THE ZONE

Clever tricks make the most of limited square footage.

### 1 wrap

Lining entire walls with bookcases, cabinets, or open shelving may have sacrificed strips of square feet but resulted in abundant new storage.

### 2 widen

18- to 24-inch-wide passageways display books and collections in open shelves and store electronics and less-used appliances in lower, closed compartments.

### 3 sit

More than mere structures to hold stuff, upholstered tops on window seats, banquettes, and the custom coffee table serve as inviting spots to kick back.

### 4 divide

Islands and partial walls separate spaces (and offer loads of space to stash stuff). But at 30–36 inches tall, these features still allow casual interaction.

