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The Great Outdoors

Homeowners are creating comfortable and inviting living spaces outside

By Christopher Yasiejko

Look out the sliding glass doors in Tom Dever's house and you'll see what appears to be a living room with one wall of fieldstone and a pergola with white framework as a ceiling.



Special to The News Journal/JASON MINTO
Charles and Karen Powers of Middletown have furnished the area around their pool with items that wouldn't look out of place indoors.



The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON
ABOVE: This cast-aluminum firepit with a foot-wide ledge is a top seller at Casual Marketplace.

LEFT: Katie (center) and Jimmy Dever with friend Kyle Grentz (left) on the deck re-designed by their architect father Tom.

The News Journal/GINGER WALL

There are suggestions of other walls – 18-inch-high stone borders capped with cast concrete in a terra-cotta shade that picks up a color in the stones – but Dever's intention for the construction project was to replace the drab deck with a functional, attractive outdoor living space.

“It was important to make it something that would contribute to the feel of the house as a whole,” says Dever, who lives with his wife and three children in Thornton, PA.

Whether with a few well-placed chairs and a coffee table or with an elaborate backyard fireplace – the focal point of Dever’s setup – outdoor living spaces are becoming more an extension of the home.

As president of Dever Architects, Dever is working on The Promenade at Middletown, a large, mixed-use property. In 1981, he designed and built his home. He expanded it as he expanded his family, but their deck – “a featureless plane of pressure-treated wood” that he says was “typical of the early ‘80s” – would bake in the sun and didn’t get much use.

They planted a couple of trees, which over time have provided some shade. With the help of a landscape architect, Dever designed and built the space that benefits from that shade.

The room-like area accounts for about a quarter of the deck’s 1,100 square feet. The stainless steel exterior gas fireplace is its jewel. A flick of the remote control sets flames jumping.

Dever’s sister-in-law, an interior designer, suggested the Summer Classics furniture – a double reclining chaise, a sofa, a chair and ottoman and a coffee table.

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