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HILLSBOROUGH HOMES & CLASSIFIED

**Brad and Monica
Culpepper's retreat**

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FRONT PORCH



JANET ZINK

REAL ESTATE NEWS

Chamber honors builder

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS: New Millennial Homes, a builder that specializes in affordable homes on in-fill lots, received a Small Business of the Year Award from the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce.

Entries were judged on commitment to ethical business practices, growth, community involvement and workplace culture.

Since Michael Shrenk established New Millennial in 1998, it has grown faster than an air potato vine. Two years ago, it grossed \$8.5-million, and this year, Shrenk expects it to gross \$20-million.

After focusing on Hillsborough County, New Millennial is getting ready to move aggressively into Pinellas and Pasco counties.

The homes typically have three bedrooms, are about 1,200 square feet and sell for less than \$150,000.

THE LATEST MODEL: Nohl Crest Homes recently opened its Warwick estate model at the Enclave, a gated village in Arbor Greene in Tampa.

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A renovation fit for a brood

■ A five-bedroom house fits the growing needs of former Bucs player Brad Culpepper, his wife and three young children.

By JANET ZINK
Times Correspondent

DAVIS ISLANDS — Brad and Monica Culpepper have three children age 5 and younger. They say so repeatedly, like a mantra. It explains their hectic lives and the renovation of their Davis Islands home.

Their young brood led them to choose this 5,000-square-foot house in the first place. It has five bedrooms and a good-sized yard.

When the couple first looked at the house just over a year ago, that was all it had, says Brad Culpepper, who played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 1994 until 1999, when he was traded to the Chicago Bears.

He retired from football at the end of the 2000 season. Culpepper began working as a personal injury lawyer for Morgan, Colling and Gilbert after earning his law degree in December 2001 from the University of Florida, where he also studied history and met Monica, a homecoming queen.

The Culpeppers have been married 10 years. Brad says they fell in love with Tampa during the years he played for the Bucs. The house on Davis Islands has the South Tampa location they wanted. It's also close to a grocery store and ice cream shop.

Previous owners had started renovating the 80-year-old, Mediterranean-style home, but stopped in the middle of the process, leaving much of the house gutted.

Brad walks through the house and likens the various rooms to a racquetball court, a sauna and a doghouse.

"This place was a dump," he says bluntly. "People thought I was an idiot to buy it."

There was literally no kitchen, and the back rooms were a maze of tiny spaces.

But the price was right, and the Culpeppers called on Tampa designer Tom Lamb and asked if he thought they could realize their family-friendly vision. He gave them the thumbs-up, and the transformation began.

Three major walls were ripped out to create a



Exterior lights brighten the Culpeppers' Mediterranean-style home. Previous owners had started renovating the 80-year-old home, but stopped in the middle of the process, leaving much of the house gutted.



Times photos — STEFANIE BOYAR

Brad and Monica Culpepper and children Honor, 10 months; Judge, 2½; and Rex, 5, gather in the kitchen. It was designed to transition easily from everyday needs to entertaining.

great room, with the kitchen separated from the living area by a series of arches and columns.

"This is where we live," Brad says.

Two French doors open to the pool area, which eventually will include a gazebo with a

kitchen and bathroom.

Lamb also suggested adding a balcony with a view of the pool off the master bedroom, and putting hand-painted Mexican tile on the risers of the staircase leading to the second floor.

"The house was not filled with wonderful detail," Lamb says. "But I knew given what they wanted and the size of the rooms that we could make it wonderful."

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Renovation

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Lamb added lots of wrought iron, refinished the oak floors, saved the black and white marble tile in the bathrooms and installed Mexican tile in the great room.

The home has virtually no formal rooms.

Instead, the kitchen and family rooms were designed to easily transition from everyday living to entertaining spaces. The refrigerator, freezer and two dishwashers are hidden behind cabinet fronts. What Brad calls an "appliance garage" — a cupboard door that opens much like a garage door — conceals the coffee maker, toaster, blender and can opener. Two pillars slide out to reveal spice racks.

Granite brightened with sparkly blue flecks tops the counters and two kitchen islands. One island holds two warming drawers and another holds two cooling drawers — one filled with beer and the other filled with soft drinks.

The refectory table in the kitchen — crafted from the porch of a former mayor of Columbus, Ohio — seats up to 15 people, which is often necessary in this house.

"Last Sunday I wasn't planning on cooking and I ended up with 11 people here for dinner," says Monica. The warmth of the house — and, no doubt, the couple — seems to compel friends to drop in.

In the mud room off the kitchen, Monica "duplicated the Buccaneers locker system," with cubbies for each of the five members of the family. The play room, with built-in cabinets to conceal the toys, has a vinyl floor that looks like wood to make clean-up after art projects or juice-box spills a breeze.

A stairway leads from the playroom to the guest quarters, which is decorated in Tommy Bahama style, Brad says. Sea grass floor coverings, a paddle fan, rattan bed and tropical linens accomplish the look.

The old dining room, just inside the front door, was turned into a game room with a pool table, dart board and juke box. The walls were painted to look like dark red leather, and a window seat and wide wood shutters were installed. Here, the Culpeppers installed their one major nod to football — a life-size portrait of Brad in his Buccaneers uniform painted by Steve Hol-



Times photo — STEFANIE BOYAR

A former dining room in the house became a game room. It features a new window seat lined with pillows and a life-size painting by Steve Holland of Brad Culpepper during his days as a Tampa Bay Buccaneer.

land, who has also created commissioned works of Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan.

"Brad has all of his football stuff in his office," Monica says.

Each of the family members' bedrooms has a distinct look. The master bedroom is neo-classical, with lots of marble in the bathroom, a garden tub framed with columns, rich blue carpeting, and blue and gold upholstery and linens.

Honor, the Culpepper's 10-month-old daughter, has a room fit for a princess. The walls are two tones of light purple, and flowers, hearts, crowns and silver-glitter magic wands painted onto the walls match the fabric of an antique bench. A crystal chandelier was moved from the formal dining room to Honor's room.

Five-year-old Rex's room has a patriotic theme, with American-flag bed spreads, tin stars hanging on the walls and the preamble to the Constitution painted around the walls of the room just above the chair rail.

Judge, 2½, sleeps in a room that

looks like a lodge, with a bed made of logs, antique lanterns for light, a deer painted on one wall and a family of raccoons crawling across a tree branch painted on another.

The Culpeppers are avid antique collectors. They took nearly a dozen trips to Atlanta and trolled antique shops in Florida to collect furnishings and accessories for the home. Their finds include a desk chair built in 1898 for Brad's office; an oversized gilt-framed, 1870s French mirror that leans against a wall in the master bedroom; and several leaded glass windows.

They bought 120-year-old hinges to hold up the custom-made front door, and in Mount Dora scored two late 19th century wood doors with oval windows that open to the driveway and pool area.

"I love beautiful things," Monica says. "I want it to be beautiful so I enjoy being home because I spend so much time here."

And then, she invokes the mantra: "But with three children 5 and under, it's got to be functional."