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Thanks to clever remodeling, the Rucci children—from left, Nate, 1½; Grace, 8; and Ava, 5—now enjoy their own bedrooms as well as this upstairs playroom.

Growing Up

KIDS' NEEDS CAME FIRST WHEN BARBARA AND DAVID RUCCI REVAMPED THEIR HOME.

BY MIKE BUTLER PHOTOS MICHAEL PARTENIO STYLING KIM FREEMAN PRODUCED BY STACY KUNSTEL



Architects don't often see "playroom," "art room," and "side door/mudroom" at the top of clients' wish lists. But those priorities made perfect sense to Barbara Rucci, a graphic artist and mother of three, as she and her husband David renovated their 1930 Cape Cod-style house in Connecticut. "I can't go anywhere without six legs following me," Barbara jokes. "That's natural. Kids want to be where you are. Instead of fighting that, I decided to make a little base for them in each room."

The living room is a good example of what Barbara means. The kids can open a cupboard at the side of the fireplace and pull out floor pillows, books, and toys and—because of the open floor plan—still be under mom's watchful

eyes in the kitchen or dining room. Polished wood floors, white-painted beaded-board paneling, and slipcovered furniture give living areas a beach-cottage ambience that fits the home's architecture style. "It's very cozy, very casual," says Barbara.

Barbara figured she'd be lucky to squeeze in a third bedroom upstairs, but architect David Dumas found room for a fourth by maximizing space above the new garage, kitchen, and existing sunroom. Dormers create dramatic sloped ceilings and interesting alcoves for the kids to sleep and play under.

"When I was growing up," says Barbara, "my house had slanted ceilings and secret places. It felt safe and warm. I wanted that for my kids."

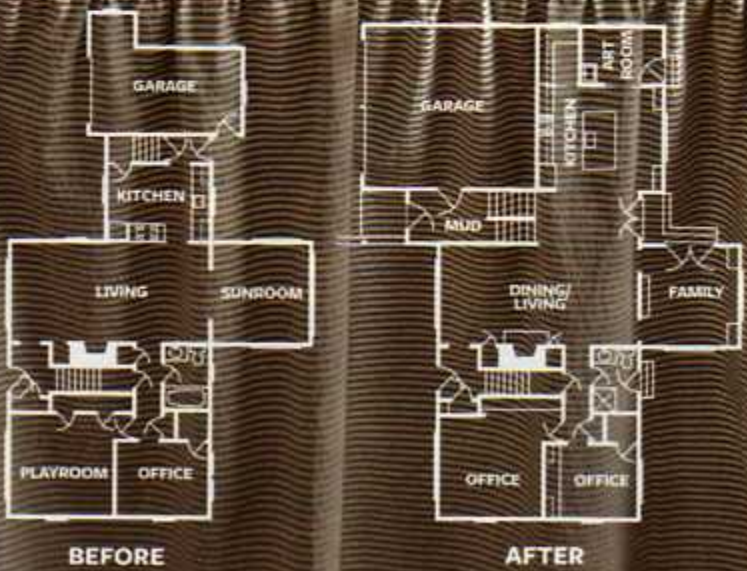


Above: "We wanted to stay on our street," Barbara says. "It's old-fashioned and there are lots of kids."

In the living room, opposite and below, built-in cupboards and a bench with a flip-up lid for storage serve as instant activity areas for the children. Bright red pillows enliven the otherwise neutral room.

A colorful painting done by Barbara's father spices up the dining area, left. Barbara added a soft, feminine touch with ruffled seersucker chair covers.





The Ruccis found room to grow by knocking down the garage and creating a larger kitchen in that space, plus the art room and pantry. The new footprint provides the foundation for the upstairs playroom and extra bedrooms.

