



Serene surroundings

Barn begins new life as guesthouse, yoga retreat

By Glen Young
 Photos by Molly Hauxwell Currier

There is a saying that many hands make for light work. Karen Glorio Luther's Burt Lake barn renovation might not necessarily have been light work, but nonetheless many hands, both friends and professionals, helped that work along, and helped turn a simple barn into something so much more.

Some people might have accepted that barn as the quintessential utility building. However, Glorio Luther, an Ann Arbor area lawyer, initially imagined the structure repurposed into a guesthouse to accommodate her large and close-knit family. The result is Cedars Edge, part guesthouse, part yoga studio, all comfort.

"I have a big family, and so I would have a family reunion up here," while at the same time she recognized "the barn was

getting older and needed some renovation," she explains. "We needed extra room for overflow," which explains why her first thought was "to add a bedroom and a bathroom."

Conversations with friends soon helped Glorio Luther refine her first plans, however.

One of those friends is Eltsa Magni of Yogando Retreats in Northville. Magni hosts yoga retreats in Michigan, as well



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as in Italy. Recognizing the barn's serene surroundings, "We came up with this idea of doing retreats up here; we thought it could be the perfect place; it's so peaceful and calm," Glorio Luther explains. The first yoga retreat is in February 2019.

Next, Glorio Luther enlisted the expertise of Harbor Springs builder Brett Bandt, who put her in touch with Edgewater Design Group president Stephanie Baldwin. Together, Glorio Luther says, "We came up with the design to add a couple more bedrooms and the living space and the yoga studio."

"Have you ever worked on a barn before," Bandt remembers Glorio Luther asking as they began their collaboration.

Soon Bandt and his crew set to work and the result is "we turned it into a full-blown guesthouse," he says with satisfaction.

Bandt says the improvements maintain the barn's basic structure, as well as its utility.

"We built this house right up against the old barn," he explains, indicating the additional living space that now comprises the northwest edge of the structure.

Throughout, there are sweeping views of the wooded property



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just down a winding drive from the main house on Glorio Luther's property, which sits on the shores of Burt Lake outside Alanson.

The guesthouse sleeps up to 14 in custom constructed bunk beds, and features a yoga room, while still providing the ample space for storage of the original structure.

Interior designer Donna Brown of Dazzling Designs in Northville, and Jim Morris of J.W. Morris Kitchen and Bath in Harbor Springs, also contributed significant assistance to the project. The wide-open kitchen features a large granite island, as well as built-in Jenn-Air appliances, along with plenty of cabinet space. The spacious great room offers wide views of the surrounding countryside, as well as a wood burning stone fireplace fitted with a mantel crafted from a tree that came from the property.

There are other well-executed design features. Paintings of the landscapes just outside the barn, for example, done by John LeDuc of LeDuc Creative in Ann Arbor, hang on walls in the great room.

Bandi and Glorio Luther call the combination of wood and metal and tile "rustic industrial." Bandi says, "We integrated beams so they look structural."

Utilizing repurposed barnwood that he found at an Em-






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Elisa Magni
Cell: 734 812 3594
info@yogandoretreats.com
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met County tear down, Bandi's crew cut channels in the beams, then placed them along existing drywall edges and corners so the beams reinforce that rustic look.

Bandi says the one tricky aspect of the work was accounting for the location's high water table. Marshy surroundings mean drainage is critical, and he says, "We had to put in quite a system of drainage" to keep the structure dry. This means a block foundation reaching down four feet.

Some of the other industrial-looking features include the steel cable railing along the stairwell to the second floor, as well as corrugated metal on the bathroom vanities. Porcelain tile floors feature a wood grain, keeping with the home's overall upscale rustic look. Custom barnwood doors with antique pewter hardware add to the look.

Emmet Brick and Block provided materials for the stone fireplace in the great room, while TJ Marble and Granite provided the kitchen granite, and Weld-Tech Unlimited of Cheboygan provided metal welding for the stairwell railing.

Through the entire design and construction process, Bandi says, "Everyone wanted to be here when (Glorio Luther) visited," he says of his crew of craftsmen and carpenters, because, "We can build the most amazing things if the customers let us," he says, adding "and she let us."

Glorio Luther is thrilled with the result and looks forward to enjoying the property as much as possible. She says she plans to spend more and more time at the property, because, "I've always thought this was my piece of heaven."

For information about Yogando Yoga retreats at Cedars Edge, visit www.yogandoretreats.com.

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