

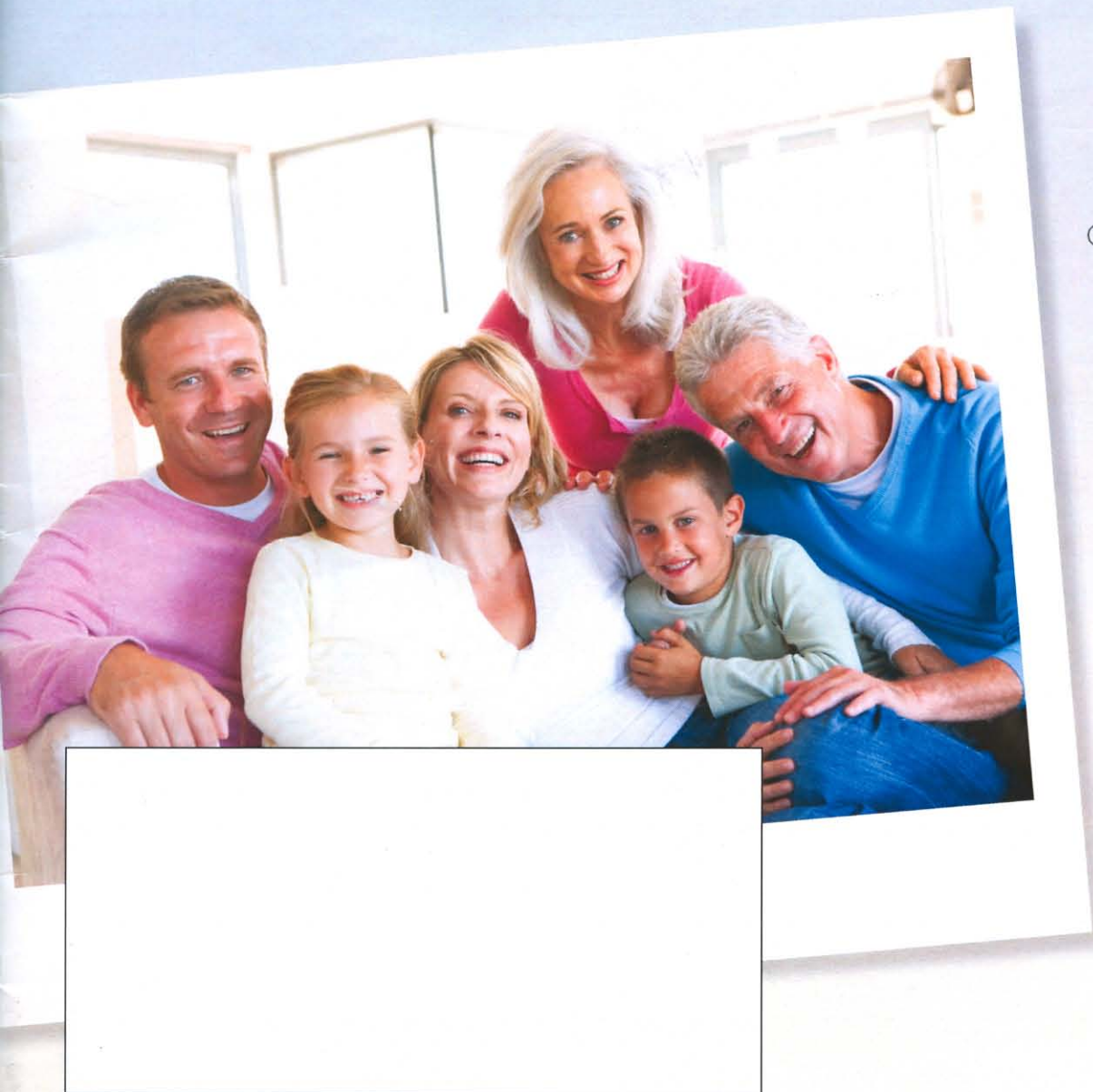
NEWSLEAK

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Smart Planning in the Bathroom Creates Designs for Every Generation

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Smart Planning in the Bathroom Creates Designs for Every Generation

By Linda Jennings



There's no doubt that multi-generational design is one of the fastest growing trends in today's housing industry. As more and more people discover the benefits that smart planning affords to those of all age groups and abilities, a rising demand is emerging for products that combine style and safety, beauty and comfort, practicality and versatility.

Multi-generational design need not be a foreign concept. It is, after all, what good design should be. Multi-generational design has applications throughout the house but is particularly important in the bathroom. A well-thought-out bathroom can easily accommodate the needs of young children, older adults and those with disabilities. And while there are many practical considerations that play an important role in the design process, including safety, space constraints, comfort and ease of use, being "sensible" doesn't mean the bathroom has to look utilitarian. Quite the opposite, in fact. Manufacturers of bath products are now finding new ways to infuse style into what was once a strictly institutional area of bathroom design. The results are something style-savvy consumers would want to have in their home, even without the added bonus of multi-generational benefits.

How to Define the Multi-Gen Family

The U.S. Census defines a multi-generational household as one having at least three related people living together who are from three generations. Perhaps the most well-known example is that of the Obama family, when First Lady Michelle Obama's mother moved into the White House to help care for her granddaughters. Many Americans are creating similar living situations in their own homes. According to government figures, the number of multi-generational households increased 40 percent over 10 years, from 3 million in 1990 to 4.2 million in 2000. The number of parents over age 65 moving in with adult children increased by 62 percent between 2000 and 2007.

The reasons behind this growing trend are varied. New immigrants may choose to follow cultural traditions of living with extend-

ed family. Rising housing costs make it more economical for families to share housing expenses. Many seniors opt to live with family members instead of living in a retirement center. And finally, middle-aged adults find themselves in the "sandwich generation" as they live with and care for both their children and their aging parents.

The Phenomenon of Aging in Place

According to a recent study by AARP, 89 percent of Americans over age 50 intend to remain in their own homes for as long as they possibly can, a phenomenon known as "aging in place." People want to know that they will be able to live comfortably and independently in their homes and are looking to make the smart choices now that can make all the difference later.

Multi-generational design is intended to benefit everyone, not just the elderly or physically challenged. It strives to be accessible and comfortable over an extended period of time for every member of the household.

Industry insiders are gearing up to accommodate this trend, which is expected to increase exponentially over the next several decades. The oldest Baby Boomers will celebrate their 65th birthdays in 2011. According to government projections, by 2030 nearly 26 percent of the U.S. population will be age 65 or older, compared with just 17 percent today. This is creating a change in the profile of the typical American family. A survey from AARP reported that the number of multi-generational households has grown from 5 million in 2000 to 6.2 million in 2008. Nearly a quarter of Baby Boomers expect that their parents or in-laws will move in with them – and half of those who anticipate that living arrangement are excited about it. Experts predict that four-generation households

will become more common as more Baby Boomers reach maturity and life expectancy increases.

Meeting the Demand

Growing numbers of builders are unveiling revamped home designs that include "mother-in-law apartments" or small suites with private entrances, bathrooms and



tal or wall-mounted sinks, choosing non-slip flooring or installing a zero-threshold shower with built-in bench. Another idea is to install a tub with a wide surround or ledge that bathers can sit on and swing their legs around to enter and exit the tub, rather than having to step over and into a traditional tub. Small changes can make a big difference, such as hand-held sprayer attachments and showers with double-wide doors. Strategically placed grab bars can greatly increase the safety of showers and tubs, and many are styled to coordinate with other bathroom hardware for a seamless design plan.

Buy Once, Buy Right

With the current state of the economy, people have begun to think long-term when it comes to their homes. Some people are incorporating multi-generational design features in their new homes right from the very beginning. Other people are deciding to stay where they are and remodel their homes because moving to a new house as needs change is no longer a viable option. The bottom line is that homeowners are carefully considering how their purchasing decisions will affect their future. ●

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nificant editors and journalists in the consumer home market, identifying trends and providing newsworthy products. Based in Sarasota, Fla., her agency represents the most progressive manufacturers in the kitchen and bath industry.

Jennings is a member of the DPHA.

MTI Whirlpools Leads the Way with Innovative Shower Designs

As the idea of multi-generational design gains acceptance among consumers, an increasing number of manufacturers are addressing this trend with inventive new product lines. MTI Whirlpools, a member of DPHA, is a leader in this area. The company offers an extensive assortment of stylish showers and tubs that can easily accommodate the needs of an extended family or the physically challenged.



MTI currently offers more than 50 shower bases in different sizes, shapes and materials, including seven different seated configurations. Many feature a low-profile, multiple-threshold design for versatile installation and easy entrance. When a zero-threshold entrance is required, the shower trays may be recessed into the floor for even greater ease of access. Clean, modern lines create a sleek look, while optional extras like teak shower trays create a spa-like environment. A coordinating teak seat provides secure seating when needed and folds away for easy storage.



Complementing MTI's extensive assortment of shower bases are frameless shower enclosures with a headerless design. When spacious access to the shower is a consideration, MTI enclosures can assist. For example, one enclosure offered mates with a 48" x 48" dual threshold shower base. Two doors that meet at one corner open a full 180 degree each to provide a spacious French-door-like entrance to the shower, offering both beauty and practicality. MTI's largest base of 72" x 42" can be equipped with one or more sides of glass enclosure for a wonderful feeling of open spaciousness. A large pivoting door provides access. Or, if space is a consideration, select a wider access two-sided enclosure from MTI's Teutonic Series,

which features sliding glass doors that glide effortlessly with rollers along an overhead stainless steel rail to provide easy, wide entrance to the shower.