

Developers and homeowners are building man caves and women's retreats with TV/video equipment and other amenities.



Jeff Ruppenthal/SUNDAY NEWS PHOTOS

The man cave in Kenny Myers' Lancaster Township home is a football shrine to his favorite team, the Philadelphia Eagles.

CAVING IN

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Nine years ago, on a lark, Charter Homes & Neighborhoods included a "man cave" in one of its Millcreek model houses.

"It was our attempt at humor," said Charter President Rob Bowman, who saw the male sanctuary "as a place to smoke cigars."

But because it turned out to be on the cutting edge of a trend, the room — featuring lounge chairs, three flat-screen TVs, a stereo system and its own balcony — garnered national attention, he said.

Today, man caves are so popular there are websites and a TV show devoted to them. But since Charter built its first one, the idea has evolved, with women's retreats becoming more commonplace as well.

ManCaveSite.org defines a man cave as "a dedicated area of a house, such as a basement, workshop or garage, where a man can be alone or socialize with his friends." The website's self-described goal is to give "cave dwellers" a place to showcase their own spaces, share ideas and find resources.

There's even a TV show dedicated to the topic — "Man Caves" on the DIY Network, hosted by contractor Jason Cameron and former NFL defensive lineman Tony Siragusa.

A poll conducted within the past few years by the online home improvement site ServiceMagic.com found that 40 percent of respondents already had a man cave, while 13 percent reported that the room was in the construction or planning phase.

Even Lancaster Barnstormers mascot Cylo has a man cave to retreat to — an orange shed in Clipper Magazine Stadium's kids play area.

Barnstormers spokeswoman Pam Denlinger said Cylo signs autographs there. It's a place where he "can go, sit down, relax and meet his

fans," she said.

The man cave in Kenny Myers' Lancaster Township home is the definition of a football shrine. Dedicated to the Philadelphia Eagles, his basement room was once showcased on CNN.

Myers said he added the man cave when his kitchen was being remodeled, as a sort of gift to himself. It boasts a large flat-screen TV; theater-style chairs with cup-holders; wall-to-wall carpeting with the Birds' logo; a lighted replica of Lincoln Financial Field; and display cases with an assortment of memorabilia.

Myers said his wife, Annette, will use the man cave occasionally, but it's mostly a hangout for him and their sons, K.J., 9, Kerek, 6, and Koby, 3, as they bond over football.

He related this amusing story: Koby recently found his mother watching "Oprah" in the cave and requested that she go upstairs.

When she asked why, Koby replied, "This TV is just for football, Mom!"

West Hempfield Township resident Anthony Eby said he had his house built with space in the basement set aside for a man cave.

Finished in the summer of 2009, the area features a 7.1 surround-sound system, a 96-inch front-projection TV, tiered theater seating for eight, a wet bar (with beer on tap) and a half-bath. There's also a 40-inch TV by the bar and a 19-inch TV in the bathroom, Eby said, so no one has to miss a single play.

He said the man cave can accommodate 30-35 people for a Super Bowl party.

But the room isn't just for him, Eby said. "The whole family uses it. My son [Logan, 3] loves going down there."

Bowman said Charter now builds man caves that are really for the entire family, with video and TV equipment a fundamental component.

Charter has a model in one of its Harrisburg communities boasting a home theater that seats 10 — complete with movie posters — along with a full kitchen, he said.

Larry Wisdom, president of Keystone Custom Homes, said the builder is not only conscious of the need for men to relax in

their own space, but for women to do so as well.

As for males, "not much has changed since the cave days," he said, except for the invention of electronics. So Keystone man caves are constructed to accommodate a big-screen TV; cold beer ("the colder and closer the better"); and video games like Wii, Wisdom said. Plus, there has to be room for the guy's "posse," he said.

For women, accomplished at multitasking, the approach is very different, Wisdom said. They want a sanctuary that's "part spa, part studio, part dressing room and part study," he said. It's an area ideal for reading a book, taking a bubble bath, pursuing a hobby or even running a business, Wisdom said.

And the woman "looks for a place where the colors and furnishings give her a sense of tranquility," he said. A man, on the other hand, "doesn't care about the colors in his cave,"

Wisdom said.

Charter also is adding women's retreats to some of its homes. They tend to feature softer colors, juice bars rather than wet bars, and can be set up as a craft room, spa room or office, Bowman said.

"People really connect" with the idea of a woman's retreat, said Rebecca Fowler, Charter's director of communication.

Charter's Parade of Homes entry this year featured such a room — situated over the garage and accessed by a private staircase — with yoga mats, a wet bar with wine chiller, a shower, and a TV area with comfy couches.

Katie House, who purchased the home, turned it into more of an office, "but it's still my retreat," she said.

"It's totally my own place." ■



The Philadelphia Eagles' logo and framed jerseys lead to this man cave.



Koby Myers stands in front of the Brian Westbrook Fathead.