



HEALTHY CHILD

A Chicago showhouse demonstrates how anyone can



HALSTEAD™
Quarry Collection™
© Cambria 2010

HEALTHY HOME

create a healthier (and more beautiful) home

Photography by Bob Coscarelli
Styled by Diane Ewing

OVERLEAF: The Healthy Home kitchen features numerous environmentally-friendly design elements, including GREENGUARD-certified Cambria countertops, low-VOC paints and stains on the cabinets, furniture made without added chemicals and lighting fixtures manufactured within 30 miles of the house.

By Reed Richardson



Whether your home more closely resembles a quiet sanctuary or a three-ring circus, there is one role we all want our homes to play—that of security blanket. These days, that means more than just safety; whether or not our homes are healthy has become increasingly important as well. What exactly constitutes a “healthy” home can be confusing and overwhelming, however. That’s where the Healthy Home showhouse comes in: It was designed to make those decisions both visible and simple. Created by Healthy Child Healthy World, a Chicago-based nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting cleaner, greener and healthier indoor environments, the house was designed using the latest green technology and healthy materials to show families they can create a home that’s not only safe, but stylish as well.

From pesticides lurking in our manicured lawns, to chemicals from plastics leaching into our food, to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from paints, stains and sealers filling the air we breathe, no one can afford to assume that their home is always a healthy place to live. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that indoor pollutants can be two to five times higher than those outdoors—a sobering statistic when you consider that people spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors.

The genesis of Healthy Child Healthy World began nearly twenty years ago, when founders Nancy and James Chuda sadly and unexpectedly lost their four-year-old daughter, Colette, to cancer. Convinced the disease was the result of some kind of environmental exposure, the Chudas have dedicated their lives to sponsoring scientific studies on environmental risks to children, research that eventually linked Colette’s cancer to Nancy’s exposure to pesticides while pregnant.

Victoria Di Iorio, Healthy Child Healthy World’s education outreach coordinator, decided there would be no better way to educate people about how to create a healthier home than to build one from scratch, using the healthiest materials and processes both indoors and out. Last fall, that idea came to fruition when Healthy Child Healthy World opened the doors to the Healthy Home showhouse.

This five-bedroom, 5,800-square-foot house in suburban Chicago is the first home in the country to be built according to the GREENGUARD Environmental Institute’s Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) standards for residential construction. In addition, an advisory board of six experts in environmental design drew up new Healthy Interiors Guidelines to guide the selection of the home’s design elements and furnishings. During the home’s six-month-long exhibition period, the Healthy Home hosted numerous public tours, builder forums and educational visits from design and architectural industry groups, spreading the word about how to make homes healthier.

✎ The kitchen's energy-saving induction range, *left*, and vent hood are Energy-Star-rated; the backsplash tiles from Ann Sacks, *below*, are made from recycled materials. Cambria countertops were used in the kitchen and pantry, *right*. Benjamin Moore's zero-VOC Natura paints were used throughout the house, including the rich red in the sitting room, *below right*.



terms to know

VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS Organic chemicals such as formaldehyde, acetone, and isopropyl alcohol that are widely used in thousands of household products, from paints and lacquers to industrial glues and adhesives to cleaning supplies. According to the EPA, VOCs have been linked to both short- and long-term adverse health effects, such as eye, nose and throat irritation, headaches, nausea, and liver, kidney and nervous system damage. For more information on VOCs, go to www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html.

GREENGUARD A nonprofit environmental institute founded in 2001, GREENGUARD advocates for better indoor air quality and reduced exposure to chemicals and pollutants through the promotion of healthy, sustainable building standards. GREENGUARD also certifies products (such as Cambria) for low chemical emissions, testing for more than 10,000 chemicals to ensure that products are safe and healthy for indoor environments. Visit www.greenguard.org.

OFF-GAS This is the process by which VOCs slowly evaporate into the air from solid and liquid products. In some cases, off-gassing can continue virtually undetected for years after a product is purchased and installed, exposing consumers to ongoing health risks.



✦ This children's playroom, *above*, features a multicolor pinstriped, natural-fiber area rug, which adds warmth to the room without worries of chemical off-gassing from the glues used to install wall-to-wall carpets.

The Chicago-based Susan Fredman Design Group designed the home's interiors and furnishings. "We approached this as if we were designing a traditional home for a family with children," says Fredman designer Ruth Delf. "We wanted to create a feeling of luxury and comfort and not have it be the typical granola-style design you see in a lot of green homes." The Healthy Home project features pesticide-free landscaping outside the house and natural and untreated materials inside it, with a particular emphasis on minimizing the amount of chemicals, stains and glues on furnishings, and choosing low and no-VOC paints and finishes.

When it came time to choose countertop surfaces for the home, Di Iorio says the one product that satisfied all of their rigorous criteria was Cambria. "It really is the best of the best. Not only is it GREENGUARD-certified safe for food preparation, its manufacturing process is environmentally responsible, and it's made here in the United States. The fact that Cambria never needs a sealer eliminates any worries about VOCs, a huge plus for a healthy home." Co-designer Kathy Hoffman notes that she normally doesn't choose just one product for all the countertop surfaces in a home. "Because of all the choices Cambria affords designers in terms of colors, edge profiles,

5 EASY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW

» For more information, visit www.healthychild.org/5steps.

- 1 Avoid pesticides. Eliminate pesticides from your lawn care to lessen exposure to chemicals that have been linked to diseases such as asthma and some forms of cancer. Take off your shoes when you come inside the house, to avoid tracking in pesticide and pollutant residues.
- 2 Use nontoxic products. Try using homemade cleansers made from vinegar and baking soda, or green alternatives to harsh cleansers. And look for products like Cambria, which don't require chemical cleansers or sealants to maintain them.
- 3 Improve indoor air quality. Take a few minutes each day to open your home's windows, even in winter, for better ventilation. Adding more houseplants to your home will also help recycle stale air.
- 4 Eat whole foods. Create a wholesome diet built around simple, unprocessed foods that are free of preservatives, pesticides and hormones.
- 5 Be choosy about containers. Avoid plastic food and drink containers, which can leach chemicals into your food, especially when microwaving. Instead, try to serve, store and reheat foods and beverages using glass or stainless steel products.

backsplash designs and stone patterns, we had no problem using it throughout the entire house,” she explains. “It really is the perfect example of a product that is green, healthy and beautiful.”

The house isn't just about new or high-tech materials, however; it also features many antiques. “They are obviously green because it's reusing something already made,” explains Hoffman. “Plus, you know that any paint or stains used on them have long since off-gassed. They can add a feeling of style and age that you don't always find in newer homes.” She also points out the use of area rugs, which add warmth to a room without the concerns about adhesives that often accompany wall-to-wall carpet installation. “The rugs we chose were not only luxurious,” she says, “they were also green and healthy, made from all-natural wool and silk and colored using vegetable dyes.”

In other words, you really can have it all, says Delf. “The message here is that there are lots of stylish, healthy and green choices out there that anyone can use in their next home project or renovation.” Perhaps the best proof of this are the things one didn't notice in the Healthy Home: “It was really refreshing to walk into a new home and not smell any chemical odors from paints, glues or stains,” notes Hoffman. “During tours of the home, we specifically had to point out the green features because they didn't intrude on the overall design. It just felt like a warm, comfortable family home.” Make that a warm, comfortable and healthy family home. **ES**

✧ The ultra-deep, overflowing Kohler SOK bathtub, which is WaterSense certified, is ensconced within a luxurious tub surround of Cambria quartz.



DESIGNING A HEALTHIER HOME

» When updating or designing a kitchen, look for energy-efficient and healthy products like Energy Star appliances, WaterSense faucets, and nonporous, GREENGUARD-certified countertop surfaces such as Cambria.

» For an alternative to paints, stains and conventional wallpaper, try natural wall coverings such as grass, hemp or clay. These can give a room a cozy, earthy feel and are chemical-free. If you paint walls or stain kitchen cabinets, choose a product that is low- to no-VOC or low-formaldehyde.

» Reclaimed hardwood floors—also with a low- or no-VOC finish—will last a century or more and can be resanded and refinished as needed.

» Choose window treatments made from organic fabrics that allow in plenty of natural light to reduce energy costs. But consider pairing them with heavier, interlined curtains that can be used during the cold winter months to retain heat.

» New, low-e windows will save energy and reduce heating and cooling costs, but they can make a house so airtight that you don't get enough fresh ventilation. Consider investing in an ERV—energy recovery ventilation system—to bring in fresh air and improve indoor air quality. A screened-in porch also offers well-ventilated living space naturally.

» Basements should be waterproofed, with regular use of a dehumidifier to prevent the buildup of toxic mold.

» Visit www.healthyhome2010.com and click on “Products” and “Resources” for detailed listings and explanations of all the healthy products and materials used in the showhouse. Keep up with the latest research and resources at www.healthychild.org.

