Confidence in DESIGN
When Jeff Sawyer of TrueNorth Construction bought an abandoned 1940s ranch home in Marlborough, he wasn’t ready to show it off. “My first thought was ‘I cannot show my mom this house!’” he recalls. “I actually wouldn’t let her see it until I demoed the interior. I took 16 dumpsters of construction debris and trash out of it. It was so bad, the previous owner painted around pictures instead of taking them down.” Extensive renovation included restoration of tongue-and-groove flooring, creation of an accent wall of bricks recycled from the former fireplace, and the addition of a master bedroom suite with exposed wood beams. Then Sawyer topped it off with a kitchen filled with custom cabinetry, granite countertops and floating wood shelves. End result? An attractive open-plan home that’s truly mom-worthy.

—Catriona Branca

**AS SEEN IN**

**PROJECT OF NOTE**

**AN ABANDONED RANCH HOME IS CONVERTED INTO A BELOVED MODERN FARMHOUSE**

**How big is the house?** The total square footage is 1,450; the finished basement is 240. The first floor is made up of a kitchen, dining room, family room, three bedrooms and one bathroom. The basement has a laundry room, gym and sports room.

**Why not build bigger/higher?** I added the master off the back, but did not want a large house. I try to keep my life simple—a large house didn’t make sense for my lifestyle. I also thought that the modern farmhouse ranch would fit the neighborhood and the lake better than a large two-story house.

**How far is the house from Lake Terramuggus?** Lake T is less than a quarter mile from the house. I fell in love with the lake when I was training for an Ironman Triathlon. It allows no gas-powered boats so it is very clean. My section of neighborhood has beach rights to a private beach/picnic area. I am usually on my paddleboard a few times a week.

**Tell me about the tongue-and-groove flooring.** The floors are the original pine sub-floor. The hardwoods were not salvageable, so I had to nail down all the existing nails, then I sanded and stained the boards. Everyone thought I was crazy for doing it, but it’s the first thing people notice when they come in.

**Where did you get that porthole for the office window?** It’s from Brimfield Antique Show. My theme for this house was modern farmhouse/lake house, that is why you will see nautical objects throughout the house. I built a lot of the items—the dining room table, the table on the deck, the concrete table on the deck and all of the planter boxes—or purchased them at flea markets or at places like Brimfield.

**Why did you choose the black window frames?** Black windows give the elevations of the house depth, especially with a white house. Inside, I installed 90 percent shiplap painted white, so I like the idea of the black windows creating a statement there as well. Windows are like jewelry—why not add more visual interest?

**I love the laundry chute idea.** The laundry chute is a small door in the master bedroom, it goes down to the basement and laundry lands in a basket. I keep putting laundry down it, but it never comes back up clean!

**Why did you use stone around the foundation?** We went with the larger river rock around most of the landscaping; we felt like it fit the lake house feel.

**Is there a garage?** There was one with the original house but it burned down 10 years ago. I will probably add a small one over the next few years.

**What’s your favorite thing about this project?** I love that I was able to reuse stuff like the plank flooring or the brick from the chimney as an accent wall in the hallway. But my most favorite thing about this project is that my dad and I worked together on it, so it just feels like home.