



Hit the Bullseye. . .

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT



Feature Articles

Creating Space to Move

Mobility Makeover Magic

By Elisha Bury



Photo By Todd Duncan

RENOVATED ROOM: Kitchen

The list of renovations to make a kitchen accessible may seem as grueling as a grocery list for a family of 12. Fortunately, the principles of universal design can help clients rethink spaces to create a user-friendly kitchen.

An important element of kitchen restructuring is space. An open floor plan is the best way to create the space needed to allow enough room for a wheelchair to maneuver. Arranging appliances conveniently close together, in the order of meal preparation, will open up the space as well as reduce the amount of maneuvering room needed when cooking.

[Food Network Revamps Kitchen with](#)

[Universal Design](#)

Lowered counters and sinks allow people to reach these areas from a seated position. "Lowering countertops or providing an eating space is something we look at without redoing the whole kitchen," says Bill Morrell, who operates Adaptive Installations in Seattle. Also, "access under kitchen sinks is a problem," he says. "So, if someone can roll up and do the dishes (that helps). (We) cut out the floor and kitchen cabinet below the kitchen sink and lower the cabinet."

In addition, a side-by-side refrigerator provides access to the freezer, and a cooktop with front controls prevents reaching over hot burners. "We usually find more of a need for front-mounted controls, especially the exhaust fan or the light," says Nathan

FAST FACT: Want to design a dream kitchen? Check out HGTV's online kitchen design tool at

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Colburn, VP of Accessible Systems, Inc., Littleton, Colo. <http://design.hgtv.com/kitchen/> will put the controls in back so you do have to reach over a hot burner to adjust them." Other upgrades to consider include an under-counter microwave, a wall oven and recessed space below the cooktop.

Installing pull-out cabinets — that is, cabinets with shelves that pull out like drawers — makes items at the back of cabinets easy to reach. "One of the simple things we can do without lowering shelves is (add) pull-out drawers," says Morrell. "In a cabinet, for example, you can have pull-outs for pots and pans ... so someone in a wheelchair can access that."

Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D., speaker, writer and mobility user, is in the process of building a universal design home to meet her accessibility needs. The Universal Design Living Laboratory, Columbus, Ohio, will incorporate many of these elements including ample knee space, pull-out shelves, and lowered cabinets, counters and cooktop. For Rossetti, safety is an important factor in the redesign.

"The oven will have a right side hinge instead of a bottom hinge to be safer for me to put things in and out and have access to the full oven," she says. "The cooktop is going to be awesome with the in-counter steamer with a pot filler right there at the sink. So, I never have to haul a pot of water either hot or cold across my lap anymore through the kitchen. I can fill the pot right there, cook noodles right there in the steamer for pastas or to cook rice. And then it drains right there at the cooktop. ... And likewise I can cook soups and actually see the pots. Before I couldn't see inside the pot. I'd just be stirring. ... Now the cooktop's low enough that I'll be able to see my food. It's much safer for me. I won't have to wear safety glasses when I stir fry anymore. Because when you're at the wrong level for frying food and your eyes are right there at the cooktop, suddenly you have to wear glasses when you're frying anything because it gets back in your face."

[Kitchen Accessibility Checklist](#)

Rossetti will incorporate KraftMaid Passport Series cabinets (universal design cabinets, 888-562-7744, www.kraftmaid.com) that feature a 9" toe kick to enable her to get closer to the cabinet despite the footrest on her chair.

[Stock Your Kitchen: Products That Work](#)

Stock Your Kitchen: Products That Work

While renovations in the kitchen are less about mobility and more about making room for mobility, some mobility products might make getting around a little easier. Here are some that work:

- Open Up Jar Opener by ActiveForever, facilitates jar opening for those with limited hand dexterity; (800) 377-8033, www.activeforever.com
- EasyStand Evolv by Altimate Medical, a stander available with 32 different options; (800) 342-8968, www.easystand.com
- GE bottom-freezer refrigerator by GE, offers a side-by-side refrigerator and a bottom drawer freezer without the need for wide clearance for doors; (800) 626-2000, www.geappliances.com
- New Bug by Innovation In Motion, a stroller with three interchangeable bases, including an elevating feeding base; (800) 327-0681, www.mobility-usa.com

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 - EZ Reacher by Sammons Preston Rolyan, a featherweight aluminum reacher with a powerful, secure grip; (800) 323-5547, www.sammonspreston.com
 - Seat2Go by Wenzelite Re/hab, padded positioning seat supports children while sitting on the floor, at the table or at play; (877) 224-0946, www.drivemedical.com
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Food Network Revamps Kitchen with Universal Design

On Memorial Day, Food Network aired an episode of "Kitchen Accomplished" that featured a kitchen redesign for a woman with a spinal cord injury and her family. The design team set out to incorporate universal design into the new kitchen.

Starting with the sink, the team added a roll-in cabinet to enable a wheelchair to slide easily beneath the sink, and also included a shallower sink for easier dish washing. The appliances — including a new side-by-side refrigerator — were arranged in a convenient "triangle" to improve the work flow and to open up floor space for turning a wheelchair. New cabinets incorporated elements of universal design, with pull-out shelves and a lazy Susan to make it easy to reach the back of cabinets, and a drop-down cutting board for safe food preparation at wheelchair level. A mirror was placed above the stove so a wheelchair user can see inside pots when cooking.

A large eat-in counter, added at waist height, provided a large work space for preparing meals — and also a place for a dishwasher and numerous drawers for storage. Interlocking granite tiles, a low-cost alternative to granite for a polished look, also allowed for a smoother space for maneuvering a wheelchair.

The final touch was an automatic door opener from the garage with a remote control that attaches right to the wheelchair. Now hands-free entry is a breeze!

For more great information on other kitchen redesigns and programming, go to www.foodnetwork.com/food/show_ka.

Kitchen Accessibility Checklist

The following checklist was prepared by Easter Seals and Century 21 to address easy access housing. Accessible kitchens should have these elements:

- Range with front controls
- Countertop range
- Lowered wall oven (32"-42")
- Side-by-side refrigerator
- Varying countertop and cabinet heights
- Counters with pull-out cutting boards
- Dishwasher with front controls

For more information, visit www.easterseals.com/easyaccess.

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