

HAMMER DOWN

Shark-themed room earns an award, A6



SKANEATELES TO BROADWAY

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STRONG START

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Sarah Jean Condon, Skaneateles Journal

Students arrive at Waterman Primary School in Skaneateles Sept. 3.

Skaneateles students, parents, teachers, principals prepare for another year

Tom Maguire
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SKANEATELES | At 7 a.m. Sept. 3, Skaneateles Middle School was hushed. The air was fresh, and it was easy to picture the summertime activities that everyone gave up in order to, as one eighth-grader said, "get

back in the groove!"

Then came the energetic early arrivals: the bicyclists. Then, the influx: the teachers, popping up as if their arrivals were staggered. At last: the yellow buses and pupils dashing over the grassy median in the parking lot.

A tremendous chattering

arose as a bottleneck briefly formed at the entrance. Then the doors closed and the sound was suddenly gone, absorbed by the hallways that had finally come back to life.

Parents were left to mingle and stare red-eyed at the entrance, as if waiting for a messenger to emerge and announce that everything was OK and they could wipe the tears and go home.

Similar scenes played out at the high school, State Street

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See more back-to-school content on page B2

Intermediate School and Waterman Primary School.

Superintendent Kenneth Slentz, chatting with parents at the sunny entrance to Waterman School, summarized the powerful emotions of the day.

See First Day, A6

According to both the resolution and a draft form of the law, the measure is referred to as "A Local Law Amending the Town Code of the Town of Skaneateles to define when an application before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals will be deemed to be abandoned."

Part of the draft states that the law's purpose is to assure that applications for special permits, site plan approval, variances and amendments are pursued and considered in a timely manner to allow for sound zoning and planning decision-making.

Under the proposed law, any application that has not been

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ARCHITECTURE

East Lake Road house wins design award for Skaneateles architect Andy Ramsgard



This home on East Lake Road in Spafford was inspired by the East Lake movement of 19th century architecture and detail. It has four bedrooms, plus the guest bedroom. The builder was Kevin Rich Construction. The architect, Andy Ramsgard, says, "We build people's dreams."

September 06, 2014 6:00 am • [Tom Maguire | tom.maguire@lee.net](#)

SKANEATELES | Skaneateles Lake finally got its hammerhead shark, thanks to the architectural cleverness of Andy Ramsgard.

The brownish hammerhead with the white underbelly hangs from a ceiling at an award-winning lake home. Around the shark, shafts of white light beam down like sun rays boring holes in the ocean.

"What happens is you come down the staircase and this hammerhead shark is facing you, so you're like, 'Wow, wait a minute,'" Ramsgard said.

That's pretty much what the voting public said about the entire house in a recent contest. Last month, Ramsgard Architectural Design took second place in the Architech's Challenge, sponsored by Marvin Windows.

The contest, for projects completed between 2012 and 2013, was broken up into two portions: juried and the people's choice. Ramsgard's submission was for the home on East Lake Road, just before Five Mile Point in Spafford.

It was similar to "American Idol" rules: People vote online. After almost 90,000 votes in Round 5, Ramsgard finished No. 2.

"It was pretty amazing to me to place second, or anything, really," Ramsgard said in his design studio on East Genesee Street. "We don't really typically submit for competitions. But, we were told about it, so we decided, why not?"

Any boater passing by the house for the first time would do a double take. Ramsgard described it as a shingle-style house that was prevalent around 1900. The Transitional style was a diversion from the American Colonial design.

The lake house was created to be more casual, "which really lends itself well to a camp, a place where people want to relax, let their hair down," Ramsgard said.

The style probably gained its biggest popularity through the 1920s, and it has been emulated ever since, with its "very sweeping, casual lines. It's sort of identified by sweeping forms and curved shapes," Ramsgard said.

The 3,500-square-foot house is "very cozy, and spaces are scaled more architecturally to the family," he said. "It's not a pretentious, ostentatious style, but it makes for lots of nooks and crannies that are comfortable inside."

The house, which is home to a family with three boys, includes a lot of built-in window seats and inglenooks. There are four bedrooms, plus the guest bedroom.

According to the Marvin Windows and Doors website, "Key elements in the design were to create open, light and airy spaces as well as maximizing the beautiful vistas of the lake and to create an aesthetic that was in context with the traditional architecture of the community. The project was inspired by the East Lake movement of 19th century architecture and detail, but with sweeping views, a more open floor plan and the essence of a contemporary lifestyle."

Ramsgard attributed the people's choice award to "appealing aesthetically overall to people's sense of place and home. One of the things that we tell our clients a lot over time is that houses are built every day, but homes take a lifetime of experience to create. So our architecture sets the stage and our designs set the stage for those family memories to happen."

The hammerhead room contains a game room, pool table and a bar area, as well as the shark itself, which was given to the family by some friends who caught it in the ocean and didn't know what to do with it.

"It's not like a tuna. You can't put it on the wall," Ramsgard said. "We made it into a light fixture as you come down the staircase. And we took wine bottles, some of their favorite used wine bottles, took giant fish hooks through the corks of the bottles and suspended lights inside the wine bottles, going around like he was trying to hook the shark, trying to bait the shark with the wine bottles. It was really pretty neat."

The whimsical touch is evident, too, in the library, which has a vaulted clapboard ceiling. Because Ramsgard considers a ceiling to be the fifth wall, he had to do something special with it. He considered the fact that the homeowners appreciate the lake and the classic wooden boats on the lake. Ramsgard designed the ceiling to "look like the hull of an old Chris-Craft boat, if you looked at it upside down." The library also features built-in bookcases and beautiful woodwork.

Ramsgard also believes in teamwork. He considers building a house to be 50 percent his ideas and 50 percent the client's.

“The client brings the idea, and then we wrap architecture around their idea,” he said. “Everything should not be in their face. They should come and go, 'Oh, I didn't see that before.' Always try and bring another level to the design, so that there's always something to discover.”

Ramsgard also believes in grace and style. A small balcony extends from the master bedroom on the second floor. On the north side of the west-facing house is a screened porch with a fireplace. The walk-out lower level has “a grotto sort of feel.”

At the north and south ends of the home are two staircases that seem like “arms that reach out around you.” The staircases, he said, nestle into the grade and sort of hug the landscape, which is very hilly.

There is more than a floor of elevation change between the lake side and the street side. Over the distance of the house, there is probably 50-60 feet of vertical elevation change where Ramsgard had to nestle the house into the grade.

“And when you hunker the house down in like that, it gives it a really cozy feel,” he said.

On the south end is an octagonal form, with a small cupola above it. The octagonal form contains one large great room that contains the kitchen and an alcove. Above the kitchen, in the small cupola, is the breakfast room.

The kitchen is in the great room because, “let's face it, everybody winds up being in the kitchen,” Ramsgard said. “So we like to bring the kitchen out to where the people are and it really makes it conducive to gathering the family and friends.”

“Our clients don't come to us and say, Copy what you did before,” Ramsgard said. “We create unique buildings that are a reflection of their personality. That's what we try to do.”

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