

home

Wood paneling lines the interior of Loriann Schmidt's South Salem dome home.

FAR RIGHT: The master bedroom is shown in Schmidt's new geodesic home.



South Salem Dome Home

NEW HOME NOTED NOT
JUST FOR ITS SHAPE BUT ITS ENVIRONMENTALLY
FRIENDLY TOUCHES

BY MARION BARNES

PHOTOS BY TIMOTHY J. GONZALEZ



Living in a geodesic dome

has many positive aspects, including environmentally friendly construction, efficiency and novelty. But still, it takes a certain kind of person to live in one.

"We're geeks," says homeowner Loriann Schmidt, 45, with a laugh. "Who else but a geek would have a house like this, full of math?"

In fact, a focus on geometry seems to be a trend for the Schmidts; the previous home Schmidt shared with her husband, Erich, and son, James, was an octagon ("One room had nine walls").

The family sited the dome home on a 3-acre parcel off Croisan Creek Road in South Salem, saving the plot from the high-density, 12-home construction plan it seemed fated for.

The dome structure, which was erected using a color-coded kit by Natural Spaces Domes in Minnesota, is complemented by a tower on the right side that accommodates the internal staircase. Jane Honbeck of An Architect's Atelier in Independence served as architect on the project, and she admits being surprised initially by the Schmidts' vision.

"I said, 'Really?'" Honbeck says. But she knew the family personally and acknowledged the idea fit their personalities. "Still, I had to do some additional research. It was a challenge."

After interviewing multiple candidates, the Schmidts found a willing general contractor who was "jazzed" about the challenge: Nick Olsen of Olsen Homes & Renovations in Salem.

The overall plan called for a three-bedroom, three-bathroom home with 33-foot-tall ceilings at the pinnacle and about 2,800 square feet of living space. Locally sourced, environmentally friendly components were a must, Schmidt says.

To get up to speed on the unique building approach, the framing team went to a dome-building 101 class at Natural Spaces. The acceleration was quick: The dome was framed in five hours on "Dome Day" in August 2011.

"It was both very structured and yet had a great deal of improvisation," Schmidt says. "The thing I loved the most about the people on this project was that they didn't mind scratching their heads."

There are plenty of angles in the home to keep subcontractors running for their trigonometry books, particularly framer and finish carpenter Travis Knuth.

"I've never really built a round house before," he says with a chuckle. "It was exciting to do something different. I'd love to do another one, now that I understand a bit more about it."

Inside, the finished home offers visual appeal at every turn. Starting with the oversized knotty alder front door and continuing to the stunning tigerwood stairs, the beauty of wood is on display. The interior of the dome features nearly a linear mile of

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 28]

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bob Robison, Travis Knuth and Mike Angell work on Loriann Schmidt's new geodesic dome home.

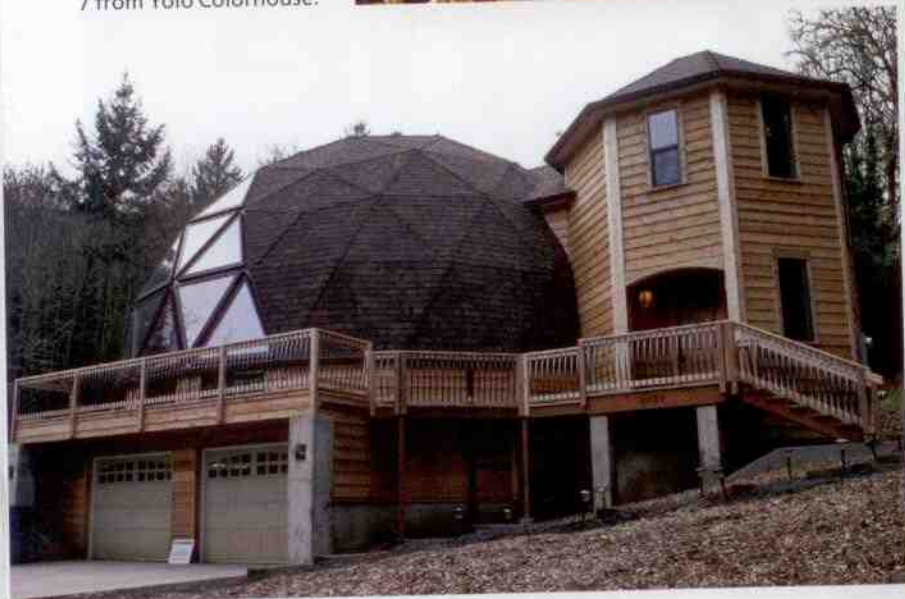
Children play in one of the rooms.

Wood paneling lines the interior of the home.

A curved staircase leads to the upstairs. The wall is painted with Leaf No. 7 from Yolo Colorhouse.



CHERIE RENAE PHOTOGRAPHY



Northwest Douglas fir.

Slate floors with whimsical insets greet visitors in the foyer, and the subtle wall color is "Leaf No. 7" from Portland paint company Yolo Colorhouse.

Triangle windows cover the east-facing part of the dome. The view of the family's acreage and stream is such that adding window coverings could be a crime. Loriann Schmidt is not too worried about privacy.

"The moonlight is very nice," she says.

Other highlights downstairs include Art and Crafts-style fixtures and accents, bamboo countertops in the kitchen and recycled granite under the bar. Schmidt chose and acquired most of the fixtures, door pulls, tile and other finishing touches in the home. She shopped extensively online for deeply discounted items and even rented a storage unit to hold all the treasures until

the contractors were ready to install them in the house.

The gentle climb of the tower stairs ends in an arched doorway into the dome and the loft that overlooks the first floor. It's in this part of the house that the acoustics are most notable.

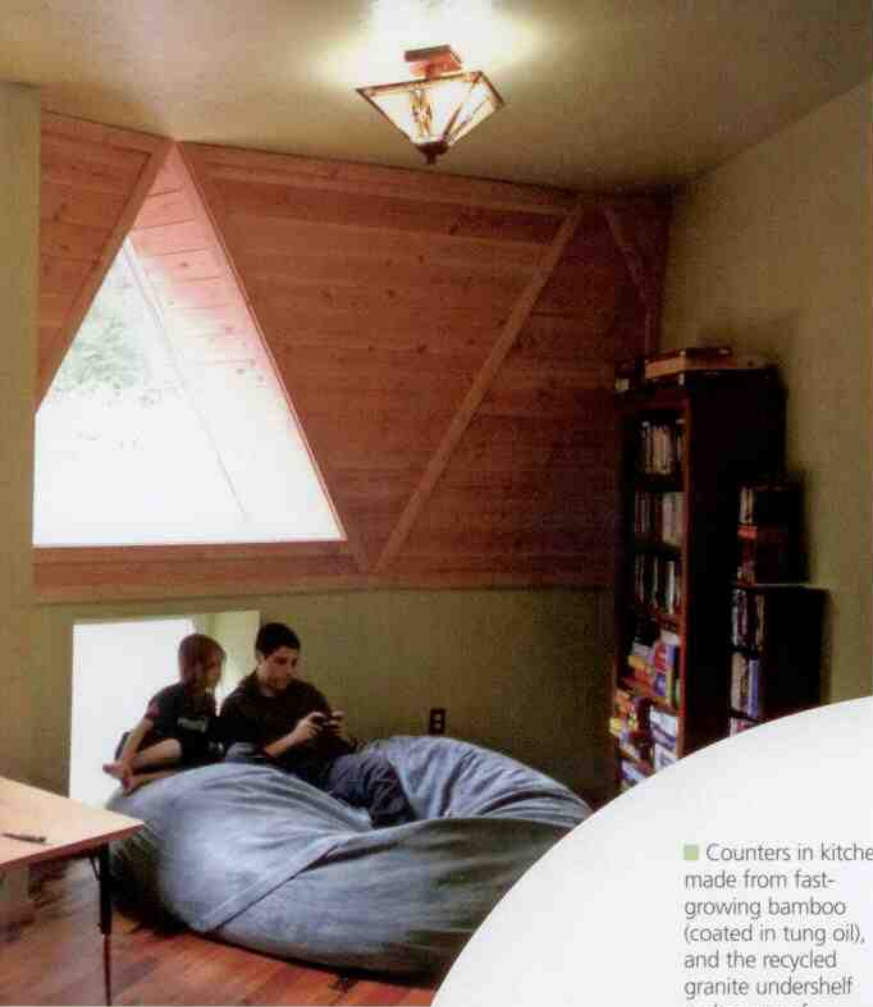
"If there is any downside to the dome, it's that it's very echo-y," Schmidt says. "That's been the biggest adjustment. There are no secrets in the dome."

In fact, the family plans to take advantage of the unique acoustics by hosting performances by the Willamette Master Chorus as well as chamber music and violin soloists.

"There's a 'sweet spot' on the bottom floor," Schmidt explains. "That's where we will have people perform. The sound just fills the space."

That positive approach is crucial to living in a dome.

"You have to be flexible about



**ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY/
LOCALLY SOURCED
ASPECTS OF THE HOME**

room layout," she says. "We don't have any square rooms except the pantry."

She's also thrilled to teach others about the advantages of building such a unique home. She says she doesn't mind the "looky-loos" who come up the driveway to take a peek at the structure.

"I just want to sell people on the idea and concept," she says.

The home was featured on the cover of "Dome Times" magazine, and Schmidt joined Facebook purely so she could put progress updates and photos on her page for those following the project. On the day the struts for the structure were erected, a group of homeschooled students came out for a real-time geodesic dome lesson.

"There was and still is a lot of excitement," she says.

And not just among geeks.

- Solid knotty alder front door by OrePac, headquartered in Wilsonville.
- Structure walls are 15 inches thick and contain 8 inches of closed-cell foam made from soy and recycled plastic bottles.
- Tigerwood in entryway is Forest Stewardship Council-certified from Brazil, meaning it is responsibly forested.
- Douglas fir lining dome interior is from Winthrop, Wash.
- Yolo Colorhouse paint is no-VOC, nontoxic paint available at Lowe's from the Portland company.
- Home has passive solar heating and low-E windows. The minisplit system for heating and cool is ductless and zone controlled.
- Counters in kitchen made from fast-growing bamboo (coated in tung oil), and the recycled granite undershelf makes use of remnants from the granite countertop industry.
- Induction stove in kitchen uses magnets to heat.
- Backsplash in kitchen features natural onyx with granite accents.
- Laundry room floor is Marmoleum, a natural, organic material made in part of linseed oil.
- Toilets are dual-flush, saving water with every flush.
- Recycled-glass tiles on bathroom countertops.
- Tigerwood and other woods coated with Poly Whey polyurethane, which is water-based and low-VOC.
- Schmidt says domes require 30 percent fewer building materials than traditional box homes.

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