



The Davis family looks out of a second-floor window of the playhouse.

Playhouse a big hit for family



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

The interior rooms of the playhouse are finished and there is electricity. The staircase leads to a finished second floor.



Morgan Davis, 4, stands on the porch with her brother, Colin.



The Davis family - Colleen, Steven, Morgan and Colin - sit on the porch of the two-story playhouse.

FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Post Correspondent

DALLAS - When Steven Davis first framed out the front wall of his children's backyard playhouse, his wife Colleen was in awe of the amount of wood and materials, and the height of the structure.

"I think we're in trouble," she said.

That certainly isn't the case now.

"Today, we'll find people wandering around in our backyard, even taking pictures, of the playhouse," says Davis, who lives with his family on Pinecrest Avenue. The impressive structure is approximately 20 feet high and includes electricity, insulation, siding, and a winding staircase.

Davis and his wife began the three-year project by checking out the usual backyard pre-made playhouses at local retail outlets.

"There were some nice Amish ones for around \$7,000 or \$8,000," Davis said of the structures that were out of the family's price range.

In 2002, the Davis couple looked ahead to the day when their then 1-year-old daughter Morgan could play and have tea parties with Davis's mother "Grandma Meme," who frequently visited the house. She passed away last summer.

"My daughter loves to dress up, have tea parties, and sweep the floor," said Davis.

So Davis searched the Internet and found Web sites that sold some beautiful two-story children's playhouses, all assembled. Some even had electricity, but were priced between \$50,000 and \$100,000. "That's what people pay for their own houses," said Davis.

Undaunted, Davis continued his search. He found a company that sold blueprints for a two-story shed/playhouse. The only problem was that Davis - who is a nurse - had little carpentry or construction ability.

"I never built anything," he said. "Well, I had put studs up for a wall. I remember calling the (playhouse) company and the guy started laughing. He said he thought if I could stud a wall, I could build this playhouse. But I might have some problems with the roof and the staircase."

The plans came in the mail with no dimensions or specifications. So, Davis sought help from his brother, Matthew, and his wife's uncle, Robert Davis - a contractor by trade - who finished the roof by working weekends over a three-month period.

"The roof was a little complicated with four peaks and dormers," said Steven Davis. Meanwhile he trenched the backyard for the electrical underground wiring, installed insulation, put on the siding, put in the windows, refurbished old doors, and completely finished the inside of this fairytale playhouse.

Today the two-story, 15-by-11-foot playhouse is a testament to Davis's persistence and frugality. He cut apart 14 sheets of damaged drywall and bought scrap material on sale. His

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Colin Davis walks through the front door of his family's playhouse in Dallas.