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# ALL TOGETHER The Schulte living room lives up to its name for a family of six. NOW

Text by **Kimberly Winter Stern** | Photos by **Matt Kocourek** | Location: **Stilwell**

Pretty but practical. That was Courtney and Matt Schulte's request of interior designers Jill Tran and Carmen Thomas of Tran + Thomas Design Studio when it came time to tackle the living room renovation of their Stilwell home.

"We have a crazy family of six, including a baby not yet a year, and a two-, four- and six-year-old," Courtney laughs. "And nothing here is precious — we use the house. We are active."

With the room's soaring 25-foot ceilings and a

must-have black and white palette from the owners, co-designers Jill and Carmen's task was formidable: Transform a large, impersonal space into a warm, inviting room that could host everything from family movie night to adult cocktail hour. Luckily the duo was familiar with the Schulte clan, having designed the couple's previous home in Johnson County.

"We knew Courtney and Matt wouldn't trade fashionable living for strictly utility," Jill says. "And [Courtney] loves sparkle but nothing over-the-top."



First up for overhauling the clunky un-homey box-like space was to install 12-inch-thick crown molding to bring the room to scale. Custom built-in cabinets for storing games and puzzles were designed to flank the fireplace, which was widened and reconfigured from the original to make it a focal point.

"The room's big solution, other than Carmen's idea to create the illusion of a ceiling with the trim, was to redesign the wimpy fireplace — which was too small for the size of the space — into something rich, a statement," Jill says. A metallic silver Romo wallcovering was used on the fireplace, fulfilling Courtney's desire for touches of glamour to accent the room.

Instead of a massive chandelier hanging from the ceiling, Courtney chose three Arteriors fixtures offset and at varying heights. A pair of black and gold sconces, each measuring more than 4 feet, was installed on either side of the fireplace. "I love the glow they cast at night," Courtney says. "They're striking but are workhorses, too."

The comfortable 42-inch-high sectional piled with plenty of decorative pillows and a Tran + Thomas-designed ottoman accommodate the family, while bowls of popcorn, along with two oversized black leather chairs, anchor the room.

"Everything in here is stable, on four solid legs," Jill says. "It's engineered for normal family living."

A silver leaf table and 137-inch-tall luxe pewter satin drapes bearing the outline of a floral print offer a feminine counterpoint to some of the space's more masculine features. Courtney loves the fluffy pinkish-hued ribbon rug that helps soften and delineate the space.

"Just like everything in this living room, the rug is kid-friendly," she says, admitting that the room has been tested with sodas and wine. "I don't allow a lot of colored beverages in here, though."

Courtney says that Jill and Carmen surpassed expectations with a renovation that celebrates clean design, a serene space and also serves as an oasis for a busy lifestyle.

"It suits our family," she says, adding that she can watch the kids' activity from the kitchen. "And this can morph into a room for our friends, too, where we enjoy a glass of wine and conversation." ●

