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SPRING HOME & DESIGN

**HOW A TEAM
OF GARDENERS
FULFILLS
AN ARTIST'S
SURREAL
VISION, YEAR
AFTER YEAR**

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Designer Ariana Criticos helped personalize the vice president's residence for the Pences. The sunroom is a favorite of Karen Pence.



SPRING HOME & DESIGN

AT HOME WITH HISTORY

With curtains, paint and even a beehive, the Pences put their stamp on the vice president's residence

STORY
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The official residence of the vice president, an 1893 Victorian home on a leafy hill, has always been a more laid-back place to live than the fancy digs at the White House a few miles away.

Vice President Pence and wife Karen, and grown children Michael, Charlotte and Audrey, are the seventh family to inhabit the 33-room house on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory in Northwest Washington. A year in, they have put their own spin on it.

For the Pences, this includes painting the dining room matte blue to match existing chair fabric chosen by Marilyn Quayle, hanging a few Karen Pence watercolors and adding a crystal ball to the library coffee table. Also new: a beehive.

Their pets, an important part of their life, are feeling at home, Karen Pence told me on a February morning as she gave me a tour. I'd already noticed the trail of dog toys — an ear of corn, a hedgehog and a well-chewed duck — by the back door. Harley, the energetic Australian shepherd, swims laps with her in the heated pool and joins basketball games on a court that doubles as a special-event staging area. The Pences installed this with a logo from the 1986 movie "Hoo-siers," removable if the next vice president is not from Indiana. Hazel the cat has fresh catnip from the garden. Marlon Bundo, a.k.a. BOTUS (Bunny of the United States), lives upstairs. The black and white rabbit is a social media star (@marlonbundo has more than 32,000 Insta-



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From left: Karen Pence with social media star Marlon Bundo, who lives upstairs; the dining room's matte blue wall color matches the chair fabric chosen by Marilyn Quayle.

gram followers) and is the subject of a children's book written by Charlotte and illustrated by Karen Pence.

Karen got to work on the house right after the election, calling interior designer Arlene Critzos of Interior Concepts in Annapolis, who had decorated a friend's home. "Karen Pence is an artist and is very good at deciphering tones," Critzos says. "Her taste is traditional, and she wanted to respect the American antiques in the house."

The Pences were moving from the official Indiana governor's residence, where they didn't have much furniture of their own. "We sold our house when Mike became governor," Pence says. "We had to start fresh here." Private funds from the Vice President's Residence Foundation pay for furnishings and decorating, and there's a warehouse of things to choose from.

First priority was upstairs, so the family had a place to sleep on Inauguration Day: the master bedroom, bedrooms for Charlotte and Audrey, plus one for Michael and wife Sarah. There's a guest room with twin beds that Pence calls the "boyfriend room." Downstairs, Pence went for traditional, formal window treatments. Paintings were chosen from several places, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The Bidens' contemporary white curtains in the dining room were replaced with more elaborate tassel-trimmed silks. The library, where the vice president hosts small meetings and Bible study, has books by former vice presidents and spouses and ceramic pots made by Joan Mondale. The sunroom is a favorite, "I like to lie down here and read on a Sunday afternoon," Karen Pence says.

They added to the official china collection: Indiana china painters created 100 salad/dessert plates decorated with the 50 state flowers. They coordinate with the blue and gold Lenox china chosen by the Bidens.

The house is still a work in progress and always will be. "There's a sense that you share something with all the families that have lived here," Pence says. "That's the part of it that is such an honor for me." ■

Jura Koncius covers style, home and design for The Washington Post. To comment on this story, email wpmagazine@washpost.com or visit washingtonpost.com/magazine.



From top: The Pences' basketball court doubles as an event staging area. The Hoosiers logo is removable. The living room features down-filled upholstery, and taupe and gold silk curtains.