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# FITNESS FOR KIDS

... And ideas for the  
parents who love 'em.

**THIS ISSUE:** Midwest Farmers Market is the new area venue!  
St. Joseph River Bike Adventures.



## DESIGNING KID'S ROOMS

**A** child's imagination is an endless fountain of creativity. To keep the ideas flowing, try creating an environment that provokes wonder, excitement and encouragement. Creativity is key when designing a room to spark that imagination. I recently spoke with interior designer Erik Kolacz, creative director and co-owner of Contrast Design Group. You might know him from his time competing on the popular Bravo show, "Top Design."

"With proper planning and execution, there are so many things you can do with a kid's room. The great thing about kids is they will tell you exactly what they want. If you get down on their level, it's just a matter of time before they open up."

As a child grows, so should their environment. According to Erik, the most important aspect of designing for kids is size. "Make sure the scale of the room is child-friendly. The furniture is not going to be the same size for a five year old as for an adult. A lot of adults disregard that and think kids will grow into it. But if a room is designed for a child, it should be for a child."

He also includes lighting techniques into all of his designs. "Lighting can be very stimulating. It's really important to have different levels of light in a room, such as lamp light, ceiling light and desk light. Decorative lighting works great in a kid's room. There's so much technology out there now, it can be so easy and subtle,

*Continued on next page ...*



TO SPARK

Erik Kolacz, creative director and co-owner of Contrast Design Group.



# *Imagination*

but very successful. Even when making a nightlight you can be creative with it."

Some ideas he shares include using color-changing LED lights to make stars on the ceiling, putting a light inside a hanging airplane or simply using ambient light behind soffits. With visual elements, he suggests painting the door to a connecting bathroom to look like an outhouse, using branches as drapery rods or painting the inside of a closet to look as if you're inside a gazebo. "There should always be something to touch, something to do, things that open." And get away from those white walls. "There can never be too much saturated color in a kid's room," he says.

And don't forget that hidden spot that all kids desperately want. "Kids want their own private space, somewhere for them to go and figure things out. In all of my designs, I try to have something where a kid can have their secrets, like a little door under the bed. It's obviously there, but no one's supposed to know it's there. If you give them something secret, a place that's just theirs, they get very excited about that."

The most important issue that Erik stresses with any room is safety. "Do the practical stuff; round the corners, cap the screws, shave the splinters. You always want to think ahead to what could happen."

Ideas can be found most anywhere. According to Erik, "Target is doing a great job producing a children's line that's really creative and offers a lot of different things."

Locally-owned businesses such as The Natural Way, offer a more specific variety for those who are designing for kids. There you can get everything from beds that resemble castles and caravans to child-sized benches and rocking chairs, hand-painted toy chests with a variety of themes and even stuffed turtles that when turned on, shine constellations onto the ceiling, diagram book included, for that future astronomer.

When designing with children in mind, Erik says, "The biggest challenge is to remember to get out of your head that you're an adult and they're a kid. Every adult starts off doing a kid's room by doing it for them. Always keep in mind that you're designing for the little one and not for yourself. Give kids what they want."

building *Homes* ... not houses



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