**A perfect home for Aging-in-Place by Diane McLaren Kulkarni**

When my husband, Suresh Kulkarni retired in 2003, he decided to build a new home to accommodate his aging mother who was having trouble with the many stairs in our tri-level house. She was able to live comfortably in our new house until she passed away at the age of 96 in 2012. When we moved in, I knew that we would also be aging in the new place and it is from that perspective that I share my experience.

Suresh, a retired rocket scientist and Josh, our son-in-law who works as an architect and lives next door to us, designed the house according to ADA guidelines with LED safety lights, wide hallways, wide doorways, counters at comfort height, and grab bars in the over-size showers, the tub in the basement and by the high toilets. The walk-in showers have a short step into them, but they are constructed in such a way that that step can be removed for easy wheel chair access. In each shower and tub, the interior lighting of the spaces is very bright, which was a huge improvement from our former home.

Having the grab bars by the high toilets and in the showers has also been extremely helpful since with two medications I am taking, dizziness can be a problem during the night. The LED night lights everywhere has also been a wise decision. I am comfortable moving about at night without having to use a flashlight or turn on overhead lights.

We have a lower level with 8-foot ceilings that includes a family room, three guest rooms, two bathrooms, a craft room, and a TV viewing area.  All the stair treads are wide with a comfortable rise. The foresight by Suresh and Josh for our our own aging was creating the possibility of adding a stair lift for access to and from the lower level area. They also made sure that the three main rooms facing each had full-size windows looking out onto a patio/rock garden area with several kinds of ground cover that bloomed from spring through fall. Therefore, the lower level is full of light as are the rooms upstairs. Sunshine in all our living areas and the perfect addition of wall colors throughout the house, selected by our daughter, Sharmila, continually lifts our spirits. For 2-3 months every winter, we have an inversion in our area that makes the outside gloomy and gray for days on end, but with the windows bringing in full light and also the right interior lighting, we get through that time.

One of the best things Suresh did for access to the house was to build a ramp with a handrail from the garage to the kitchen level. There are two steps into the kitchen from a different direction. This enabled my mother in-law easy access when she got out of the car. I have also found it to be very helpful in my mid-70s, especially when carrying groceries into the house.

With an open-concept kitchen/dining/ family room and an extended 8-foot comfort-height island, I have enjoyed this area of the house for study, and making the crafts I enjoy. It also an excellent walking space during snow, ice and cold when it's dangerous to walk outside. Suresh has created the perfect kitchen for his Indian cooking, giving parties, and easy-cleanup. He loves working in the yard every day possible. He finds pleasure in  planting, harvesting, cooking, freezing, and sharing his many vegetables with family, friends, and the Community Pantry.

He has created a library for my books and a place to work on our computer projects. When considering an ideal home for aging,I feel that quality of life would be a casualty without some space for similar interests. In a home tailored for the elderly, having the option for an additional room or two as well as access to the fresh air and sunshine and a place to plant and harvest a few veggies would be ideal.