

# THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR



## A warming trend

**More homeowners are putting a new face on their fireplace**

By Abe Aamidor

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**W**hen Stevan and Patricia Richards decided to make improvements to their home earlier this year, they focused on their fireplace, the mantel and the surround.

"We decided that the (original) fireplace was just too small," said Stevan Richards, Plainfield. "It wasn't attractive enough and didn't have enough presence."

Working with Godby Hearth and Home, they installed a new fireplace box, replaced the ceramic tile surround and went with a smaller mantel. The cost: about \$3,330.

Area dealers say fireplace upgrades are popular, and don't necessarily require a lot of money. Even the current mortgage loan crisis seems to be helping business as people decide to stay in their existing homes.

Brian Adams, president of Godby

Hearth and Home, says people upgrade fireplaces for one of two reasons: aesthetics or efficiency.

"If it has any brass on the fireplace, it's dated," said Adams. "But I wouldn't be surprised if antique brass is back in another five years."

Brick is also out, but stone surrounds are in. And extending the size of the hearth is on the upswing.

"The new concept is 'face and hearth,'" said Steve Gray of Steve Gray Renovations.

"That means they may have an old brick fireplace and we might remove the bricks and replace that with stone. We might enlarge the hearth, too."

Westfield resident Donna Fleck, a customer of Gray, had her old fireplace torn up last year, both for efficiency and aesthetics, she said.

"Pretty much everything was ripped out," said Fleck. "The (brick) fireplace was ripped off. We added stone and made a hearth. It's pretty big; you can sit on it."

The flue was repaired at the same time, and some tricky electrical wiring was run through the new mantel.

Gray estimates the work cost about \$15,000; the fee was wrapped into some other renovations also done to the house.

"We tried to make it look rustic," Fleck said about her fireplace. "We live out in the woods."

★ Call Star reporter Abe Aamidor at (317) 444-6472.

### \$300 or less

» You can paint a brick surround for less than \$50. Lots of design experts say white enamel looks good on fireplaces. If repainting a wooden mantel, match the color of other wood trim in the house.

» If you don't want to actually use your fireplace, but still want the look, insert fake logs with a light bulb in back. Also, try an aluminum and glass fireplace door; bright copper is "out" these days.

### \$1,000 or less

» A vented gas fireplace can be installed rather cheaply, assuming you already have gas lines in the house. It's cleaner and more efficient than burning wood.

» Replace a damaged or dated tile hearth with slate, granite or stone.

### \$5,000 or less

» Tear off the facing or surround, and install a completely new façade, and maybe also enlarge the firebox and install a new mantel.

» Replace a brick surround with stone, or a wood mantel with granite or limestone.

» Box in the existing brick or stone with drywall, then paint.

### More than \$5,000

» Update the look with an antique fireplace surround, preferably ornately carved marble or rare wood.

» Face the fireplace with exotic stone or elaborate custom millwork.

— The Star and Associated Press

+ **INSIDE:** Safety tips, Page E4.