

reachingout



your guide to living with MS

volume 1, issue 1

**The Shopping!
The Parties!
The Bills!**

**Getting Ready
for the
Holidays**

**Building a Team
to Fight MS**

**Make Your
Home Work
For You**

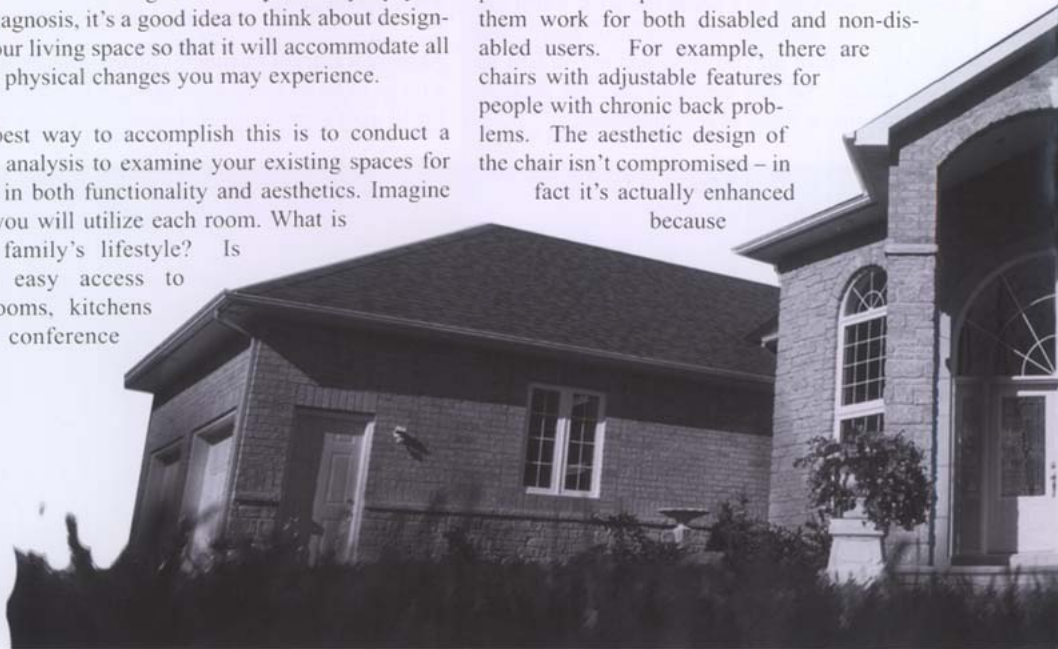
making your home work for you

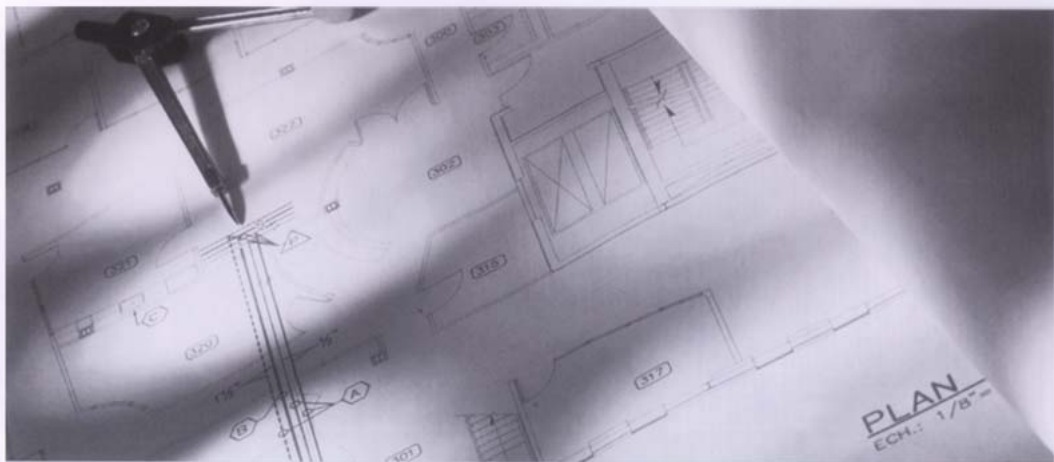
Having a home that allows you to live independently and safely is a concern for everyone living with a disability. Whether you are born with a disability, develop a condition later in life that alters the way you are able to use your living space, or trying to prepare for the changes that may accompany your MS diagnosis, it's a good idea to think about designing your living space so that it will accommodate all of the physical changes you may experience.

The best way to accomplish this is to conduct a needs analysis to examine your existing spaces for flaws in both functionality and aesthetics. Imagine how you will utilize each room. What is your family's lifestyle? Is there easy access to bathrooms, kitchens or conference

tables? Are aisles or hallways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters or walkers?

When purchasing furniture, look for pieces that will accommodate all users. Many manufacturers create products with special features added that make them work for both disabled and non-disabled users. For example, there are chairs with adjustable features for people with chronic back problems. The aesthetic design of the chair isn't compromised – in fact it's actually enhanced because





the manufacturers go out of their way to create a state-of-the-art product.

Today, designing an accessible house can easily mean creating a home that looks beautiful, rather than institutional. Many self-help devices such as grab bars and shower seats are now designed to complement the home décor. And designing accessible vanities or kitchen counters using corian, granite or marble helps improve the aesthetics of the bathroom or kitchen—just be sure they are installed at an appropriate height with built-in space under the counter to safely accommodate anyone using a wheelchair or scooter. In addition, it's a

good idea to install anti-scald faucets.

Lighting is another important consideration. As we grow older, it becomes increasingly more difficult to see. And for people living with MS, visual problems can be intensified. Give careful consideration to proper placement of lighting and lighting fixtures to minimize the risk for eye strain.

For more information or ideas about how you can plan for your home, talk to an interior designer about your needs and what's best for you.

Leslie Stern is an interior designer who specializes in designing accessible and aesthetically pleasing spaces.

