THE DRAGONFLY HOUSE

After Ashlee Johnson and Chuck Mooney found themselves literally tried by fire, they set out to design a meaningful new home — named after a special winged insect — for their midcentury-inspired, eco-friendly way of life.

by Amber Bell
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"The dining space is simple yet elegant with a West Elm white copper top table and a stack Modern Stool Riddle Recliner from Nessen Studios, glass, stainless steel and black leather chairs which is rested by Cloudy Yellow Ruffled. My husband and I also have a family heirloom china cabinet that my grandmother had given me that I love," says Ashlee. "We found a vintage Murano glass chandelier from a local shop, and my brother-in-law bought it for me as a gift. It's very special to me."

"The dragonfly is a symbol of transformation," says Chuck. "It's a symbol of change and change is exactly what we went through."
When Fort Worth native Ashlee Johnson began house hunting in Aledo for a home closer to her partner, Chuck Moroney, and her family, she had no idea of the life-altering journey that awaited. Just four months after she and her children — Campbell, 18, and Claudia, 14 — moved into their brand new spec house in the Lost Creek neighborhood, a fire broke out and claimed everything.

Campbell had been at home when it started and escaped by knotting his bed sheets together and climbing down from his second-story window, suffering second-degree burns and cuts along the way. Meanwhile, Ashlee was at Cook Children’s hospital with her daughter who was undergoing a major spinal fusion surgery. Her son called from the neighbor’s house to tell his mom their home was ablaze, and when Ashlee arrived at the scene, it was nothing but charred remnants.

The family relocated to a condo in downtown Fort Worth while they began the rebuilding process, and both Campbell and Claudia made full recoveries. “When you lose everything like we did, you realize how little you actually need,” says Ashlee, general manager and co-owner of The Ashton Depot Catering and Events. “So, when we started from scratch, I said, ‘Let’s only replace the things we really want and that we really love.'”

She and Chuck designed the new house on their original lot, which includes part of Mary’s Creek and backs up to Welch Ranch. Completed in April 2017, the 2,900-square-foot, modern build boasts a neutral-toned, steel-frame Hard/Plank exterior and dark grey stacked stone for a midcentury mod appeal. They also incorporated numerous energy-efficient details like spray foam insulation, galvanized metal roofing and a 1,500-gal rainwater cistern, which they use to water the landscape designed by Michael Kinsler from Redefine’s Garden. There’s also Milgard windows outfitted with 80 percent visibility, glare-reducing solar shades from The Shade Store that are carefully placed around the home to maintain interior air flow.

The real pièce de résistance is the 36 solar panels that deliver 80 percent of the home’s power. Chuck — who provides credit card processing and ATMs for local businesses — initially spearheaded the sustainable approach, which has always been important to him, but Ashlee was quick to jump on board. “Chuck doesn’t put a single chemical on our lawn,” she explains. “And
we're always recycling and composting our food and everything.” The pair worked closely with Ferrier Custom Homes owner Don Ferrier and his daughter, Heather Ferrier, the company’s general manager and fourth generation namesake. Known for their design savvy and green-minded homes — Don was named National Association of Home Builders’ Green Builder Advocate of the year — the Ferriers invited Ashley and Chuck to bring their inspired vision to life. And in 2010, the residence won a Housing Innovation Award from The Department of Energy.

The three-bedroom, 3 1/2-bath setup is largely one story with the exception of Campbell’s spacious second-floor room. It connects to an outdoor rooftop patio, which also provides a valuable secondary exit in case of an emergency. (Though, Ashley quips, they’ll likely never have another fire and have a FEMA-approved FS tornado shelter in the garage.)

Claudia’s bedroom, the guest room — which consists of the kitchen, living, study area, wet bar and dining space — and the master bedroom comprise the lower level. “I bought all the furniture before the house was built,” says Ashley, who worked with a West Elm designer to outfit the rooms. “We spent a lot of time measuring, comparing against the architectural plans and doing storyboards so we could visualize how it would look.”

In the spirit of transformation and adaptation, Ashley and her family affectionately named their home the Dragonfly House. “My daughter sketched a beautiful dragonfly for me that first Christmas after the fire, before we’d even moved into the house,” says the proud mom and partner. “We learned they symbolize our ability to overcome times of hardship.”
The all-white, open-concept kitchen is airy and bright, with a mix of modern and traditional elements. Notable features include floor-to-ceiling windows that flood the space with natural light, creating a welcoming atmosphere. The kitchen is equipped with sleek, stainless-steel appliances and a large island with a smooth, polished surface. The countertops are made of high-quality, durable materials, ensuring longevity and ease of maintenance. The overall design balances functionality with aesthetic appeal, making it an ideal space for both cooking and socializing. It's a testament to the careful consideration given to every detail in the design process.
Ashlee lived in New York for a decade while studying art connected to financial planning on the side. She now brings a city-slick sensibility throughout the home. One of her prized possessions is a two-piece painting of the New York skyline by Dallas-based artist Andy Brick. It brings a sense of space to the room. Other highlights include a pair of leather chairs by Roar + Rabbit from West Elm and a pretty, blue-hued rug.
Though the home's aesthetic is mostly neutral, an accent wall or feature adds a splash of vibrant color.