

## Second Homes Emerge As Family Haven And Economic Refuge

(NAPSA)—Whether it's a rustic cabin in the woods or a luxury poolside condo, the private getaway retreat is a hot commodity. Second home ownership is at historic highs according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR) and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Low interest rates, recent tax reform benefits and recreation-minded Baby Boomers with healthy equity in their primary residences are all fueling the second home market. Financial analysts also say that vacation real estate is an appealing, stable investment alternative. In fact, the number of buyers cashing out securities to acquire second homes more than doubled during the last two years, the NAR reports.

Nevertheless, most American buyers purchase a second home to use as a family retreat, not just as an investment. And, over half choose a vacation home within 200 miles of their primary residence, preferring an accessible home-away-from-home, rather than an exotic vacation spot.

"As Americans reassess their priorities and opt for more time with close friends and family, a second home provides fun and togetherness in a familiar, worry-free environment," says Mike Short, design director for Sauder, America's leading manufacturer of RTA furniture.

Short and his staff suggest these tips for creating a carefree, family-oriented getaway haven.

- Seek out low-maintenance decorating elements, advises Short. "The goal is to create a casual setting that requires minimum upkeep," he says. Bright, washable painted walls, sturdy slipcovers and flooring, and easy-care laminate furniture finishes make a hassle-free atmosphere.

- Select furnishings that reflect timeless pleasures and relaxation, such as country and cottage-style designs. Although over half of the nation's second homes are in rural areas, today's casual looks are at ease in any



**A CAREFREE HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME starts with ample storage options for high-tech and low-tech activities alike.**

environment. Sauder's Harbor View collection, for example, offers nostalgic details, such as an antiqued white finish, bead board treatments, louvered doors and pewter-toned bin pulls.

- Don't sacrifice contemporary comforts. "People want privacy, not isolation, in their second homes," Short says. "So, technology needs to be gracefully accommodated." Cottage-styled entertainment and computer centers from Sauder are designed to house 21st-century electronics, including today's popular large-scale TV screens and computer components.

- Make life easy with designated storage for each major activity. Sauder's Harbor View Storage Cubby, for example, keeps items readily accessible with ample dividers, shelves and hooks for organizing fishing gear, gardening tools, or picnic paraphernalia.

- Plan a central gathering spot, whether a cozy fireplace, a hearth-like home theater or a commodious table, to nurture togetherness. Short notes, "For family bonding across the generations, stock up on old-fashioned board games or jigsaw puzzles as well as classic videos and DVDs."

- Bring the outside in, with oversized windows and outdoor-themed upholstery that sports animal and landscape motifs.