

# New England HOME

## 5 Under 40 2020 Winners

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The entrepreneurial spirit runs in Emily Pinney's family. Her father had a design/build firm in New Hampshire, and she spent plenty of time at his work sites or in the workshop where he crafted millwork. So when she decided to start her own firm, Pinney Designs, in 2011, the idea wasn't at all scary. "It just sort of evolved organically," she says. Home base for the company is Belmont, Massachusetts, where Pinney's two young children often join their mom in her workplace, just as she did with her dad.

The built environment was Pinney's first interest, she explains. "I was born and raised in residential design. It wasn't until much later that I realized interior design was a thing," Pinney says. A wise high-school teacher suggested she take a CAD class, and she found she loved it and had a talent for design. Education at the Boston Architectural College suited her, with its emphasis on hands-on learning. "I really believe that design is something you learn by doing, not necessarily in a classroom," she says.

Helping younger designers get that firsthand experience is important to Pinney, and she enjoys hiring interns. "I really like to take them under my wing and teach them," she says. "One of my longest-running employees started as an intern."

Equally important is community involvement, such as last year's Room to Dream project her firm undertook, redesigning the basement and the three kids' bedrooms for a family whose home had been damaged by a flood.

Pinney also fulfills her entrepreneurial desires with Syd + Sam, a Belmont-based home boutique (currently with online shopping only, thanks to COVID-19). Again, the philanthropic occasionally comes into play; last year Pinney created a pop-up Syd + Sam in Brooklyn, New York, to raise funds for the Global Autism Project, a nonprofit started by her sister, Molly Oly Pinney.