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Bucks County

Best of HOUSE & HOME



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Transforming rooms into beautiful and efficient spaces page 19

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Untapped Potential

Advice for remodeling a basement

Volume 22, Issue 2
Bucks County

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Basement Waterproofing Specialists

Family values, happy customers triumph over pandemic page 27

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Volume 22, Issue 2
Bucks County

Best of HOUSE & HOME



Preferred Home Improvement

Your go-to company for exceptional exterior remodeling services page 31

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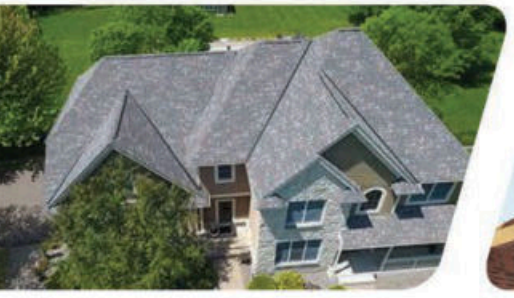
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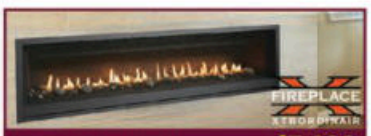
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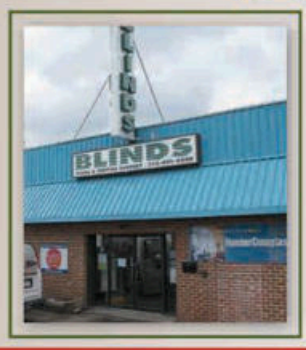
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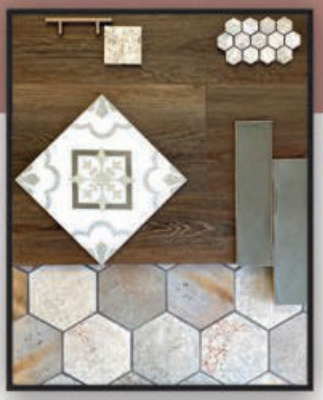
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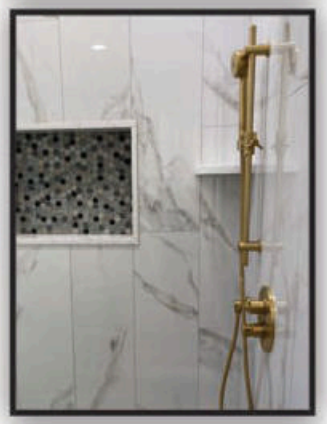
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contents

11 Best of *House & Home* 2021
Our seventh annual list recognizing the top companies, products and services, as voted by our readers

14 Best of *House & Home* Spotlights
We take a closer look at this year's winners and what sets them apart

19 Fascella Construction Corporation
Creating custom designs to help make work-at-home life easier

20 Untapped Potential
A finished basement can add valuable space to a home, but there are several important steps to take during the remodeling process

27 Basement Waterproofing Specialists
Family values, happy customers triumph over pandemic

29 Ask the Expert
Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete

31 Preferred Home Improvement
Your go-to company for exceptional exterior remodeling services

34 Smarter Than Your Average Home
Manufacturers are responding to the demand for automation around the home with innovative products that make life easier



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Basement Waterproofing


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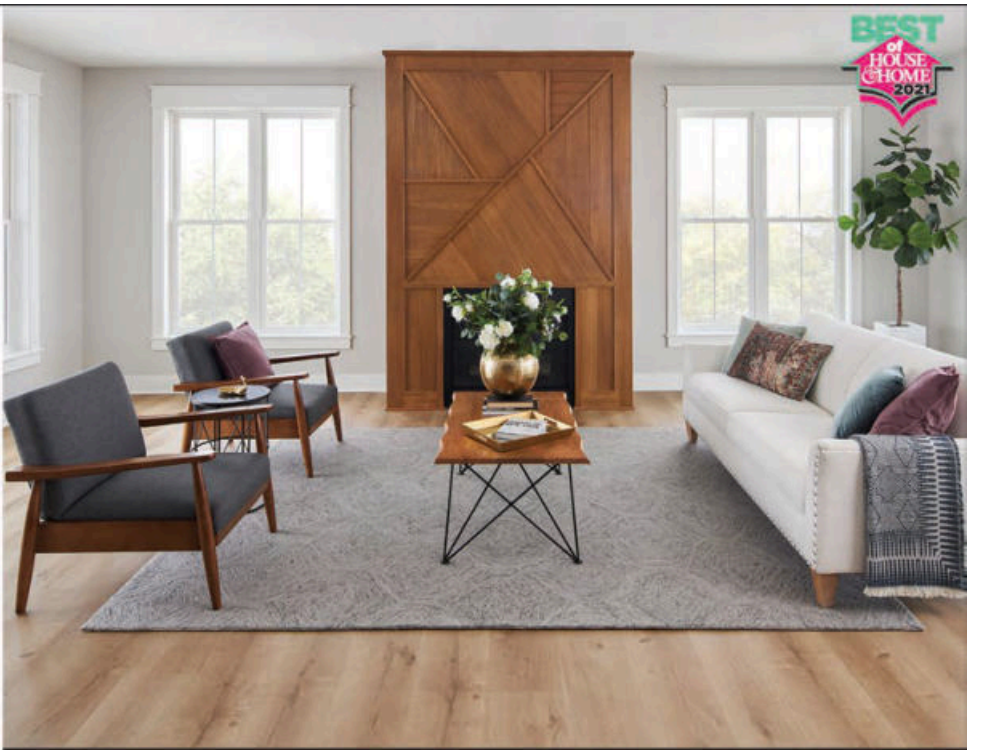
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Featuring

WINNERS, SPOTLIGHT and SHOWCASE

We are excited to present our seventh annual **Best of House & Home.**

As voted by our readers, the following companies and professionals are being recognized for their quality products, expertise, top-notch customer service and reliability. We're also featuring a closer look at these companies in informative spotlights and showcases that shed some light on their dedication. For your next home project, there is no one better than these winners.



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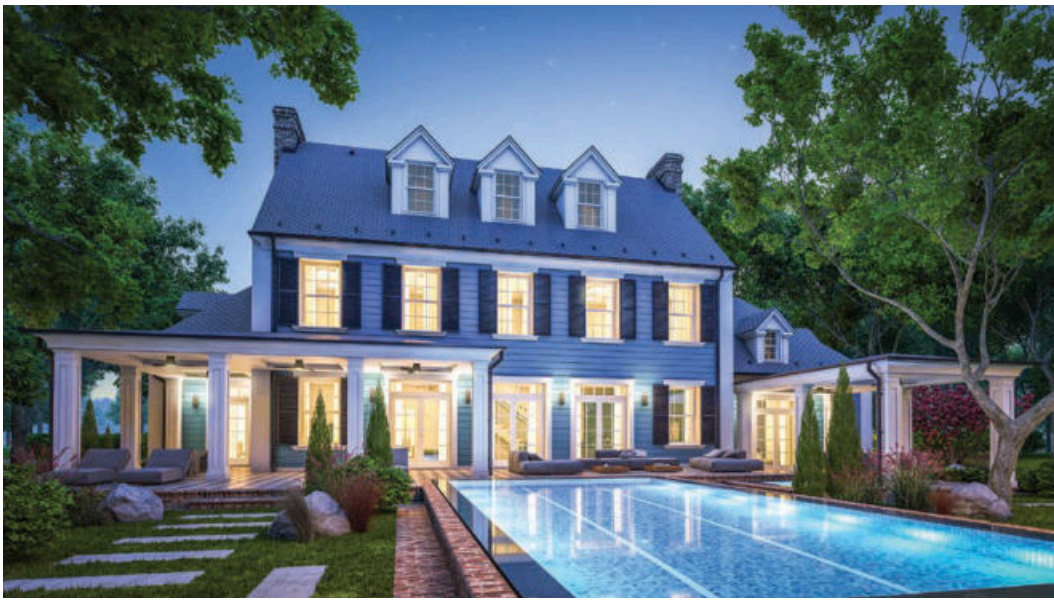
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What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
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How many years have you been in business?
Fifteen years.

What separates you from your competitors?
I do the little things others don't do and pay close attention to detail.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
It is very gratifying to be recognized.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
There are times that I perform magical, jaw-dropping transformations.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
Being recognized by my competitors as the best is very rewarding.

Are there any new products or services you are offering that you'd like our readers to know about?
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SPOTLIGHTS

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How many years have you been in business?
Over 75 years.

What separates you from your competitors?
We are family owned and operated. We always try to treat people the way we want to be treated.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
It feels great to be recognized that our effort has paid off; we will continue to try our best.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
Every day is different, there is always a new challenge. Every year new products come out and change the way things work.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
Hard work pays off, sometimes things don't go easy, but when the job is done and we can see what was built, that's a great feeling.

Are there any new products or services you are offering that you'd like our readers to know about?
In this crazy year of COVID a lot of challenges have occurred with supply lines. Because of that we have seen delays in new product releases. We are hoping things will continue to get better as we pull out of this pandemic.

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BEST of HOUSE&HOME in:
Bath Design





How many years have you been in business or in this industry?
We have been in business for 72 years and I have been running the family business for 27 years.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
Humbling. We strive on a daily basis to be better than we were the day before. My grandfather started this business with the philosophy that "We do what we say we are going to do" and 72 years later that is what we continue to do.

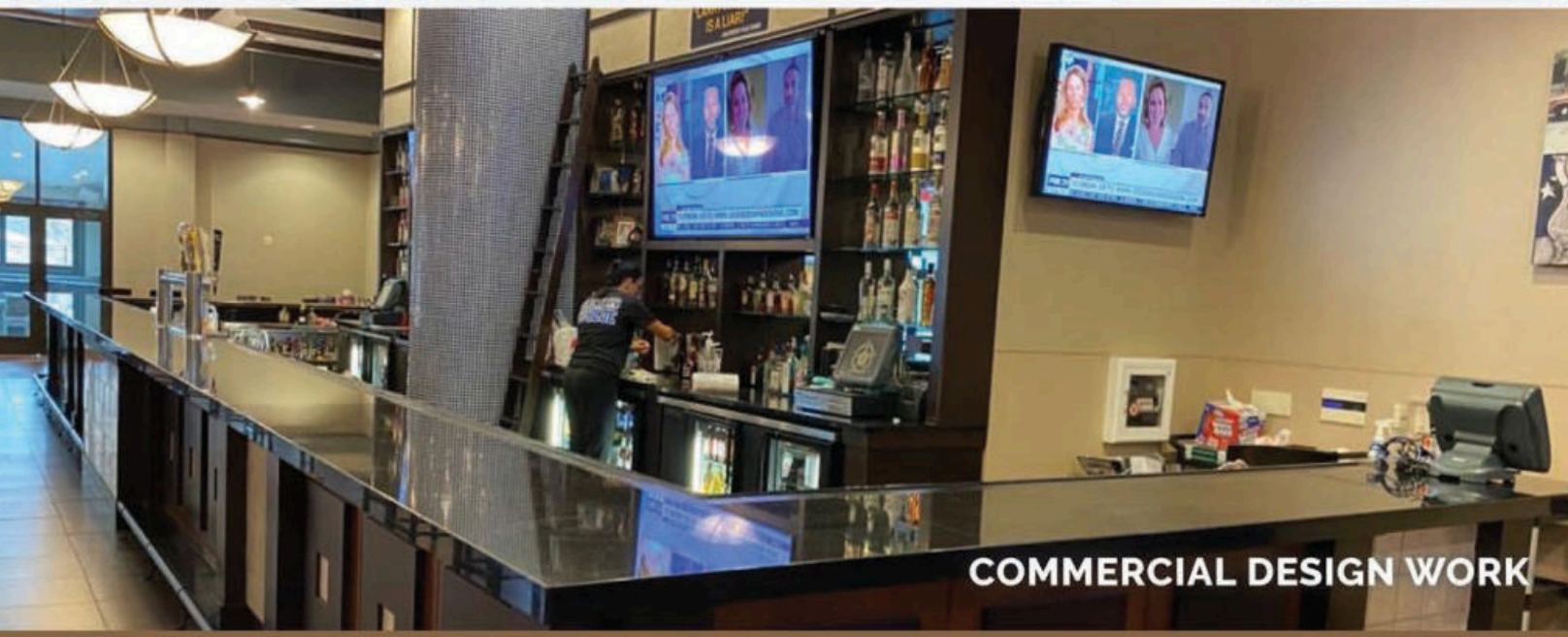
What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
The smile and the pure joy you see on a customer's face when the project is complete. Most of our customers save for years to be able to redo a kitchen or a bathroom. We are lucky enough to help that dream come true.

Are there any new products or services you are offering that you'd like our readers to know about?
Last year we started a community give back program, McHalesCares.com. This program gives away $1,000 every month to a local charity that helps the community. We urge everyone to go to the website every day and vote. Learn about these charities and help us help them!

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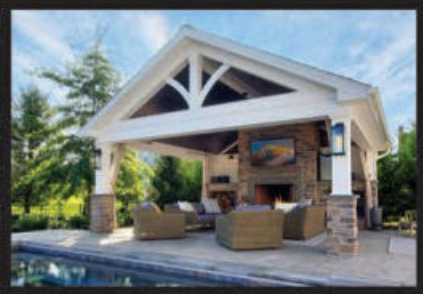
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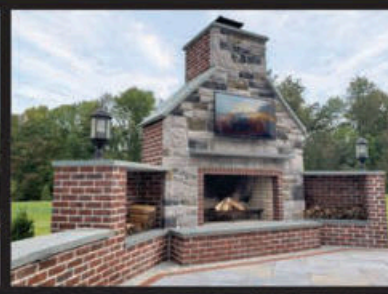


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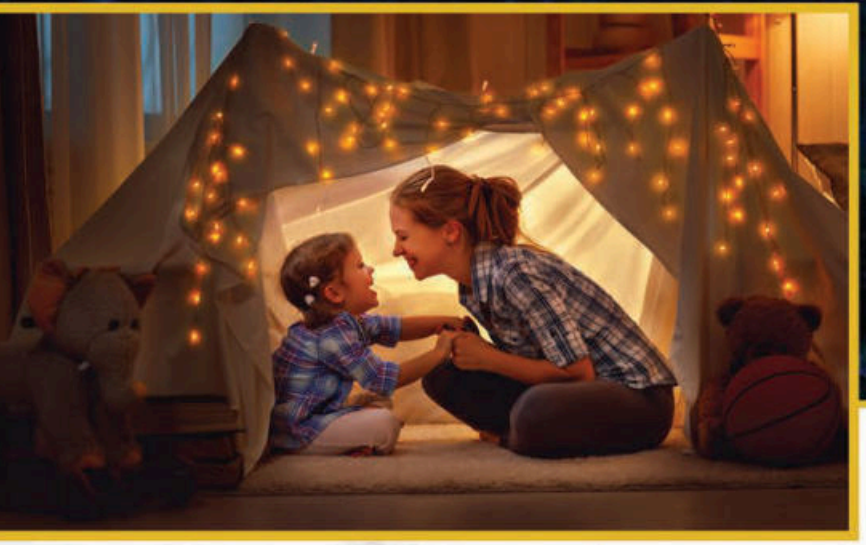
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BEST of HOUSE & HOME 2021

Creating custom designs to help make work-at-home life easier

Fascella Construction Corporation





by **Amanda Hamm Hengel**

In the construction business, ebbing and flowing trends are typical. What's popular today may not be so popular next year, or even in six months. As a full-service general contracting firm licensed in Pennsylvania and New Jersey with more than two decades in business, Fascella Construction Corporation (FCC) has seen plenty of these trends come and go. But if there's one thing that has seemed to hold steady over the last year and a half, it's the desire to create a desirable space to work from home.

"Homeowners want a nice, clean area to work from that doesn't feel like an office," says FCC Design Coordinator Holly Reinheimer.

To help achieve the ultimate space, FCC creates custom designs for each homeowner's needs. This includes making considerations down to the smallest detail, whether it is a special drawer size for filing or creatively using reclaimed barn siding to aesthetically warm up the space.

The custom design can also help hide equipment, or wires and cords, that are necessary for work from home success, but don't necessarily need to be seen.

Of course, not all homes come with the luxury of a dedicated home office, but FCC can help find the space to make one happen, and one of the first places that is often considered is the basement. It is typically the space that is most under-utilized and sees less traffic than the rest of the house.

While FCC has designed many home offices in basements, a first-floor option that may offer windows and more open space might be more appealing. This may come in the form of converting a formal living room that isn't being used into a space with furniture that can be utilized for office work but still looks great when guests come to visit.

The sitting area in a master bedroom is also a great place to set up a home office, especially since that space doesn't typically get used often anyway.

Whatever space may be available, and whatever requirements may need to be addressed, FCC takes it all into consideration and creates the ideal setup.

And because FCC designs each space to be custom built, there is no worry that the design aesthetic won't fit in with the rest of the house. In fact, many homeowners find custom designs fit better into their homes than other pieces they have purchased.

Naturally, not every homeowner is looking for a home office space to settle into right now. But a finished basement, which adds value to a home by creating more living space, can be just as appealing these days. By simply adding new flooring, drywall and possibly acoustical ceiling tiles to help eliminate upstairs noise, the typical idea of a damp, cobweb-ridden area is completely erased.

The mechanical systems often found in basements can also be enclosed so they're in a separate room. Storage shelving can also be added to aid with organization, eliminating the common utility shelving and endless piles of boxes often found in basements, and creating a clean, organized space.

Whatever changes a homeowner may be looking for, whether it be a home office integration, basement remodel, kitchen update or bathroom addition, FCC is available to help design the perfect solution. H&H

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A finished basement can add valuable space to a home, but there are several important steps to take during the remodeling process.



UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

BY MATT COSENTINO



Even the closest of families sometimes need a little bit of time apart from one another. Whether it's young kids craving a dedicated room to play in, teenagers looking to hang out with friends, or adults requiring a home office to work in peace and quiet, finding the space can be difficult. More and more homeowners are looking downstairs to solve the dilemma.

Finishing a basement to create extra living space has always been popular, but since the pandemic struck and families were stuck at home more often, this type of remodeling project has become even more in demand. In fact, local contractors have seen a significant rise in requests over the past 20 months.

"Once the kitchen and baths are done, the basement is always next on the list, especially for a family," says Dan Dilworth of Dilworth's Custom Design. "It makes sense to finish off the basement and make it another living space, even if you only use it while the kids are at home."

Dennis Gehman of Gehman Design Remodeling starts a basement renovation the same way he does every project: by having an extensive conversation with the clients to discover exactly what they're looking to accomplish so he and his team can come up with the appropriate plan.

"Initially you have to ask the question, 'What do you want to use this space for?'" he says. "If it's a playroom for the kids, then all we need is drywall on the walls, a few lights in the ceiling, carpet on the floor and then we can paint the room and it's ready. But if it's a home office area, a home theater, a workout area or a bar, [it gets more complicated]. We've done them where it's basically a whole other house with a kitchen, a laundry, a bedroom, all those types of things."





No matter what the space is going to be used for, there are important precautions that must be taken even before the design is considered or construction can begin. *House & Home* spoke to several area professionals to learn more about these steps along with design trends and creative solutions to common issues.

STARTING THE PROCESS

After the decision has been made to finish the basement and the contractor has been hired, one of the very first concerns is addressing any mildew or moisture issues. Hurricane Ida recently served as a reminder that serious storms have become more frequent in this area, and water damage can have major implications regarding such an expensive investment.

According to Todd Prosan of '58 Foundations, groundwater problems are more prevalent in older homes, but leaks can happen anywhere.

"Through our 63 years in business, we've worked with many builders and had to have fixed thousands of leaky basements in homes under a year old," he says.

"The best time to waterproof the basement is before finishing it—even if it's precautionary. There are less expensive ways to prepare a basement ahead of finishing it that can be added to later at a lesser cost if a water problem presents itself. If there is a water problem, identifying the source of the problem and the solution comes from our years of experience, training, plus working with the homeowner—asking lots of questions and together creating a custom solution that fits what they are trying to accomplish in their home."

Kevin McCormack of McCormack Construction has completed many basement remodels and says the winter is a particularly busy time for such a project. Assessing any moisture issues is always one of his first priorities.

"You look around at the basement and see if there's been a history of seepage of water or direct water coming in through the wall," he says. "A lot of times that can be corrected from the exterior because the grade is sloping to the foundation and when it rains the water is collecting there. So you can change the grade by lifting it up with some soil and pitching it away from the house. That's the simple way to do it.

"It also might be a combination of doing that and waterproofing the basement by putting a French drain in around the perimeter before you do the remodel. If there's any sign that water has been there … it's silly to put in a remodel without putting a drain around the building and a sump pump. That would be a major mistake. You have to put a good plan together."

In addition to waterproofing, it also makes sense to examine the foundation before the renovations are started.


GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING


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"While we're asking questions of the homeowner to better understand the home, we do a thorough interior and exterior inspection of the entire foundation," Prosan says. "Besides waterproofing, we provide foundation settlement and wall solutions. Many hairline cracks in poured concrete floors and vertical cracks in walls occur during the concrete curing phase when the house is first built. As long as these cracks aren't leaking or getting wider, they are probably fine to leave alone. If cracks leak, we can seal them. If they are expanding, are horizontal on the wall, or stair-step shaped in concrete block walls, this can be a sign of a potential foundation settling problem or external pressure problem on the walls. For either of these issues, structural supports may be necessary."

OTHER IMPORTANT STEPS

Once the moisture issues have been resolved, that doesn't mean the homeowner is in the clear just yet. There are other significant conversations to be had.

"The next big thing to think about is egress, especially if you're putting a bedroom down there," Dilworth says. "Some townships want an egress no matter what, in any enclosed space. That's basically a window of a certain minimal size or a door to get outside in case of emergency."

A Bilco door is a common method for egress, but there are some houses where adding a door or window is not possible because of the way the structure is situated. In those cases, Dilworth adds, the client may have to adjust plans for the space.

HVAC is another item to be checked off the list, but according to Gehman, that's not always as easy as some homeowners expect.

"Most people say they'll just tie into the existing HVAC, but generally speaking we are unable to do that because the existing unit was sized for a certain square feet of living space," he explains. "Let's say it's a two-story house and it has one HVAC unit; if we finish the whole basement we're basically adding 50% more space, and the one unit is not going to be enough."

Reuben Stoltzfus of EWBN believes this is where the expertise of an experienced contractor comes into play. "One of the most important aspects with your HVAC is knowing the system can handle the space," he says. "If it's too small there will be temperature issues and if it's too large, it is money wasted. Understanding and having familiarity with township regulations is key, especially when it comes to the timing of the project."

McCormack points out that because most basements usually don't get too cold or too hot, there are multiple options to consider. Air conditioning might not even be necessary.

"The good thing about a basement is most of it is in the ground, so you're already insulated by the earth," he says. "In an attic, forget it, it's blazing hot up there. But the basement stays kind of cool so you don't really need air conditioning, and you can use other sources of heat without spending a lot of money. Not that I recommend electric heat, but you might only need a couple of sections which is very simple and you can put it on its own thermostat. Or you can do another boiler or a heat pump that does heating and air conditioning."

GETTING CREATIVE

Many basements have odd space configurations or elements that may not be a factor in other rooms in the house. Designers often take pleasure in using their creative side to come up with interesting solutions.

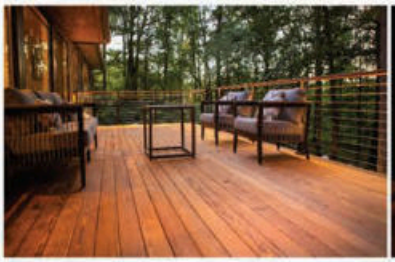
"The CAD [computer-aided design] program that we use is designed for kitchens and baths, but we can also use it for any room in the house, including the basement," Dilworth says. "We can put the walls anywhere we want: around support poles, around sump pumps, around strange structural configurations with the exterior cinderblock walls and stuff like that. … All of that can [be resolved] through the CAD system and you can draw it up as detailed as you want. … There are limitations of course, but at the same time, in the

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UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

digital age you can draw just about anything."

Certain basements come with their fair share of challenges, but these idiosyncrasies can also make the space unique and something that stands out to friends and family.

"Sometimes, odd spaces can become a conversation piece," Stoltzfus says. "For example, last fall we did one basement remodel where the space under the stairs was converted to a kids' cave, which was an instant favorite with our clients' children. Other times, we have used custom cabinetry to fit the space and everyone could always use extra storage space. When creativity is needed, that is when projects become more fun, not just for me, but also the crew."

McCormack and Gehman have both been part of projects where lally columns were hidden in walls, turned into decorative aspects or even relocated.

"Sometimes there's a space that makes sense to put the big-screen TV and the seating, but you've got one or two columns in the way," Gehman says. "Most of the time people just work with them, but sometimes it makes sense and they're willing to spend the money for us to do some structural engineering to figure out a way to get those columns out of there. People ask us, 'Can you do that?' Well, bridges are made of beams and typically there's not a column coming down in the middle of it, so it can be done. But it's time and money and unfortunately both of those are limited resources."

THE END RESULT

Like any renovation project, a finished basement has obstacles to overcome, but when all is said and done most homeowners are thrilled with the extra living space they have added to their homes.

"One of the things we'll hear is, 'I'm sorry I didn't do this sooner. I don't know why I waited so long, I could have used this space even more when the kids were younger,'" McCormack says. "Or clients will say, 'I'm glad I have this space now away from family members where I can concentrate on my work more or have my man cave.' Everybody has a different angle and everybody is appreciative of our work because we're very detail oriented."

Stoltzfus and his team are just as pleased as the clients when they can deliver on their promises for the space.

"We get a lot of wows," he says. "No one ever anticipates the final look being as great at it is. It is the most joyful reaction and it brings our entire team so much satisfaction knowing the customer is a happy one." H&H

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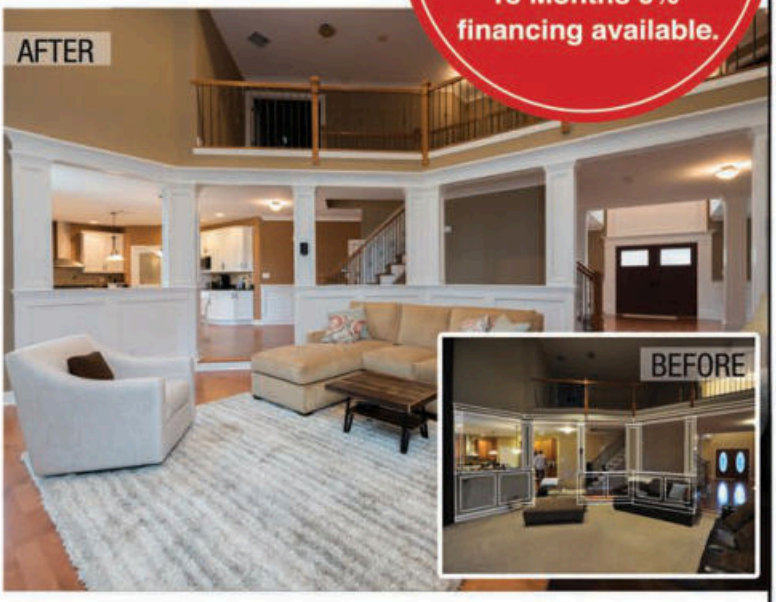
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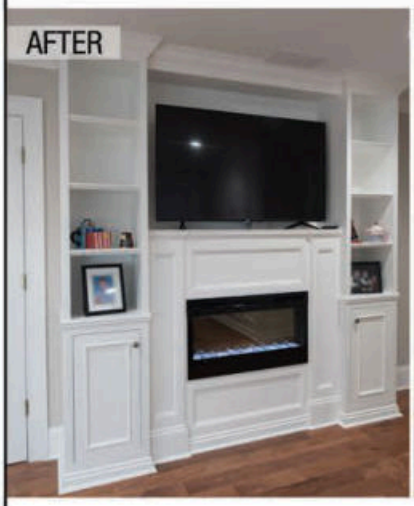
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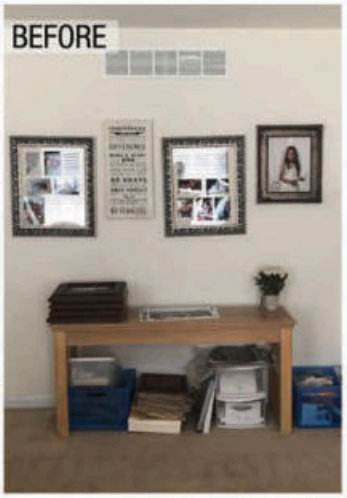


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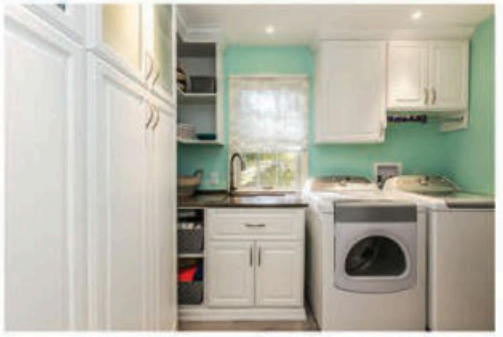
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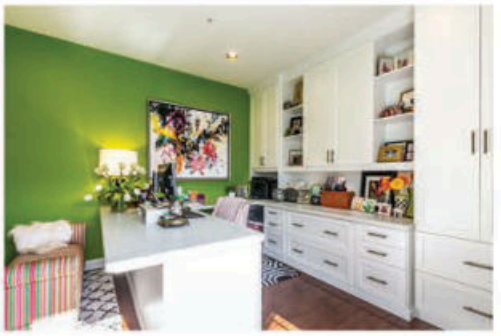
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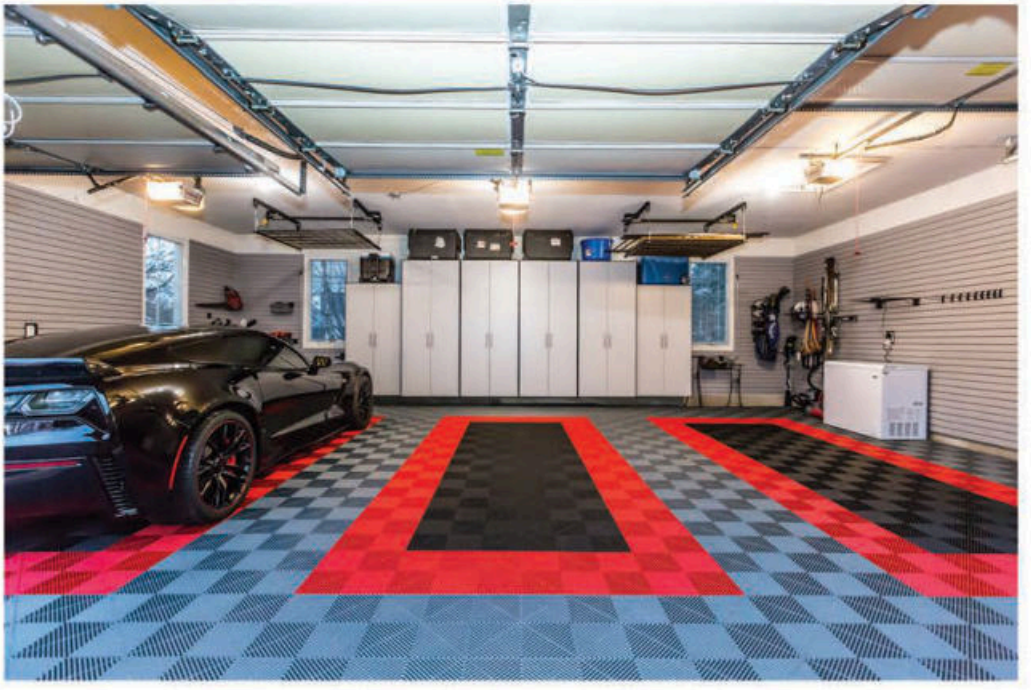
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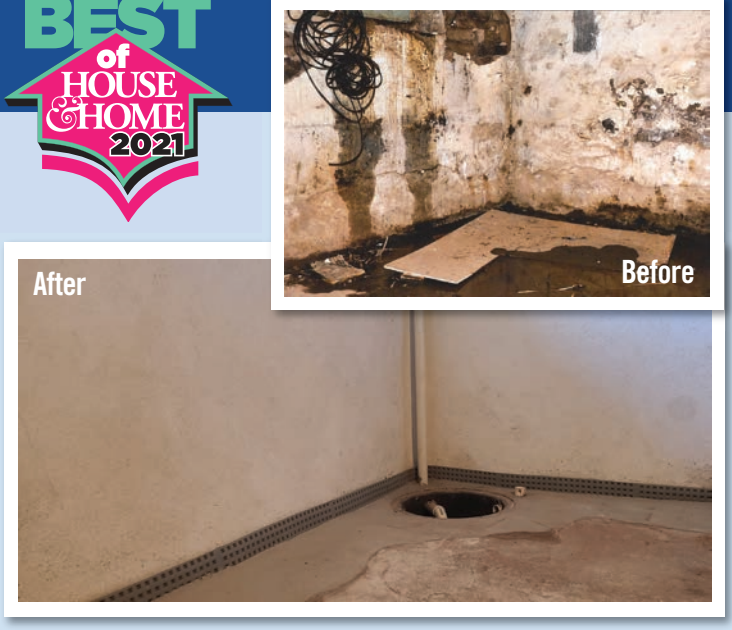
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BEST of HOUSE & HOME 2021

Basement Waterproofing Specialists



Family values, happy customers triumph over pandemic.

Nearly 50% of American businesses are closed temporarily, or operating at a loss, because of the devastating aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide economic slowdown. Many businesses have closed their doors forever. However, despite the bleak outlook for many, one local business is overwhelmed with new customers. In fact, it's in the midst of an immense expansion, including the conversion of a historic Collegeville home, built in the 1700s, into a second location.

Using a house as an office isn't new for Basement Waterproofing Specialists. Its main office, located in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, is also a farmhouse-turned-waterproofing headquarters. It's no coincidence that the company is converting a second home into a new workspace. "Our goal has always been to treat you like family. That's not a marketing gimmick. We teach our inspectors and work crews to treat every single client's home as if it were the house of one of their family members," says Ken Klinger, his wife Deb and daughter Anne.

This philosophy has paid off well for both the company and its clients. It's been a happy home to many pets. Employees are encouraged to bring their pets to work. Besides Ken and Deb's two giant, lovable Boz shepherds, Calvin and Clarabelle, the main office is also often host to a happy flock of dogs, cats, rabbits and birds.

Over the last seven years, the company has won awards for "Best Basement Waterproofing company" from Angie's List, *House & Home*, *Home Advisor Magazine*, the *Mercury Newspaper* and more. It currently holds an overall 4.6-star rating, based on over 200 reviews on Facebook, Google, Thumbtack and Angie's List. It also has an astonishing 6,200 followers on Facebook while competitors average under 500.

This award-winning service combined with extreme customer loyalty is the major driving force behind the company expanding while many are retreating. "Humble thanks to our amazing customers. We have been overwhelmed by so many referrals during the COVID crisis. Those referrals, plus Gov. Tom Wolf deeming us an essential business, have helped us expand into a second office to house our ever-growing staff," says Ken. "We are not only thrilled to help our customers solve their problems, but also happy to create new jobs for people in the area."

In March of 2020, Gov. Wolf determined that Basement Waterproofing Specialists is an essential business whose work is "necessary to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19." In addition to waterproofing, the company also removes mold and improves air quality. Its Ozone Generation technology is EPA-approved and can help eliminate not only mold and mildew, but also airborne pathogens in your home.

Basement Waterproofing Specialists' expansion is a bit historic, as well. Its new building, located at 109 River Road in Collegeville, was built in 1700, and was used as a hotel to help with the growing tourism to the area. The company plans to officially move into its fully renovated second home in April. This fourth-generation family business is eager to help your family enjoy a clean, dry, mold-free, safe basement. H&H



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The company's experience and range of materials make it a quality resource for home improvement projects. "Our staff works with our customers to help them with their home improvement project, [figuring] out if they can do it, or if the job is too big for them," says Jarrod Nyce, vice president. Then the company assists the homeowner in connecting with qualified contractors, ones Nyce says have proven over the years to be reputable and trustworthy.

House & Home spoke with Nyce about why homeowners may be pleasantly surprised by their experience with his company.

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IS AN APPOINTMENT NECESSARY FOR HOMEOWNERS TO BROWSE YOUR SELECTION OF PRODUCTS?

We are open six days a week, no appointment necessary. Just because we are a contractor service company doesn't mean we don't deal with average people. We try to help everyone make the best decision for their project.

WHAT ARE THE BEST THINGS A HOMEOWNER SHOULD DO DURING THE WINTER MONTHS TO PLAN THEIR OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES?

It's a matter of space, time and budget. It's really simple—we can help any customer figure out what they are capable of doing. We have lots of ideas but doing your research is always best. Once you have an idea of what you want to do, we'll help you get there.

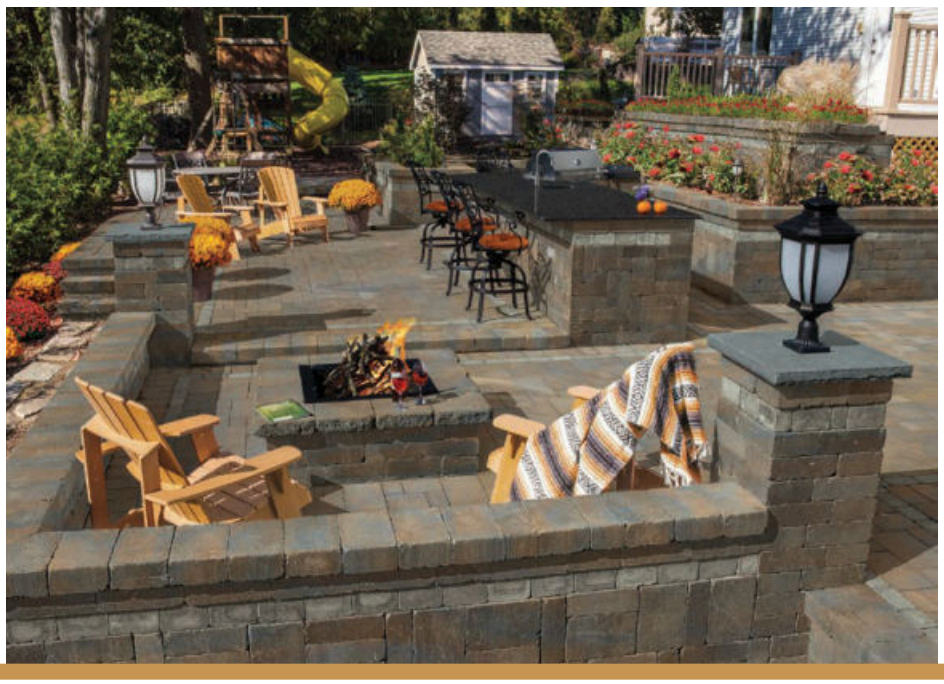
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What goes into making a luxurious backyard is up to many different definitions. It depends on what your vision is. We can help in many different areas. Pictures and displays are a good start and we have a lot of both. Whatever you want is limited only by your imagination and budget. Whether it's an outdoor kitchen, fire pit or outdoor fireplace, an outdoor grill area or a beautiful hardscaped/paver backyard, it's all about going to the next level and we can help you create just about anything you would like to do. It's all up to your imagination.

WHAT TYPES OF PRODUCTS DO YOU HAVE TO HELP CREATE THESE SPACES?

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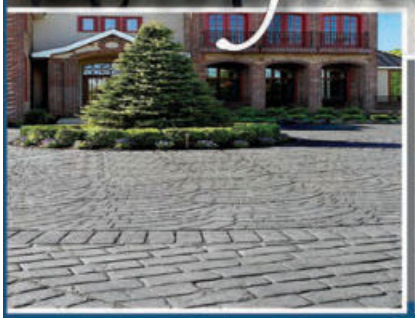


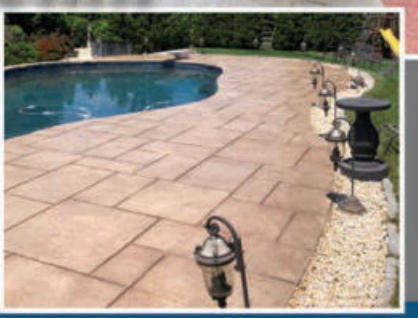


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Preferred Home Improvement

by Liz Hunter

YOUR GO-TO COMPANY FOR EXCEPTIONAL EXTERIOR REMODELING SERVICES

Not many people can take credit for starting a business while still in their teens, but Michael D'Amario Sr. can. He founded Preferred Home Improvement, offering roofing and siding services, at age 18, after witnessing the work ethic of his own parents. From day one, D'Amario committed to hard work, quality, craftsmanship and treating people right. In the business for 35 years, it's still going strong, and now includes his own son, Mike Jr., who is following in his father's footsteps.

"My dad has taught me the importance of hard work, and quality work, as well as giving good service," Mike Jr. says. "We also make sure to stay aware of the latest products, installation methods, technology and building codes." These tenets have contributed to long-term relationships with loyal customers who have become like family.

"We have a lot of customers who come to us for one thing initially, like a roof, and then come back for other projects," says Mike Jr. "People know that we provide good communication throughout the process and fair pricing on top-notch products. Our crews are friendly and extremely neat. They really have a sense of pride in what they do."

From roofing and siding, Preferred Home Improvement also offers windows, doors, stucco remediation, additions and decks in its repertoire of services. Its pedigree in the industry has earned it some of the highest designations from several prestigious manufacturers, including Owens Corning roofing and James Hardie siding.

"We are preferred contractors for both Owens Corning and James Hardie. To meet those



standards, companies must have installed a certain number of roofs/siding with those products to the manufacturers' standards and participate in best practices and continuous training. The designation gives us the ability to offer top-level warranties on these products," he says. "We feel these manufacturers have been at the forefront of innovation and technology and are the nicest on the market."

Mike Jr. says the company works all year-round, and he advises homeowners not to hold off on these remodeling projects. "Especially considering the supply chain issues happening now, certain products can take eight to 12 weeks or more to come in, so if there is a certain design or style you want, it's best to get the order in as soon as possible."

He also recommends coordinating several projects at once, if needed. "If you're having a new roof installed, it's always a good idea to consider updating the siding along with it to ensure everything ties together," he says.

Preferred Home Improvement's reputation has earned recognition in the Best of *House & Home*, for which the D'Amario family is grateful. Together, both generations look forward to carrying on their principles of providing their expertise and craftsmanship to future customers who will become family. H&H



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Customers describe their experience with Preferred Home Improvement

> **Finally a trustworthy contractor that does what he says he would do, and more!** Mike, Jessica, and his crew are as professional as you will find. I will be calling on Preferred for future projects as well as recommend them to neighbors, family and friends. Thanks Mike and team! —TOM & JUDY R.

> **The entire team at Preferred is professional, timely, kind and hard-working.** There is no other contractor I would recommend as strongly as them! He always let us know exactly what was going on and when things would be completed. Everything was completed exactly on the timeline that he promised. —JULIETTE & JOHN D.

> **The whole crew was professional and friendly.** They cleaned up after themselves. We actually had them back for gutters and trim work. Highly recommend! —CAROL M.

> **Mike and his teams at Preferred Home Improvement did a great job with our major home project,** which includes stucco and deck removals, installation of James Hardie Plank Siding, front door, windows, gutter and downspouts and the front door overhang with columns. Mike and his teams are very reliable, trustworthy and professional contractors. —DO K.

> **I highly recommend this company.** Mike was super professional and knowledgeable.The crews were very punctual, clean and respectful of my home. I couldn't ask for a better experience. —HARRY C.

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H&H TECHNOLOGY

by Liz Hunter

Manufacturers are responding to the demand for automation around the home with innovative products that make life easier.



SMARTER THAN YOUR AVERAGE HOME

Kids these days don't know how good they have it. Thanks to the prevalence of smart technology, they can just shout out the name of a song and voila, a nearby smart speaker starts playing it. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Thermostats, blinds and shades, doorbells and even faucets are among the latest products to get "smart" as manufacturers respond to the never-ending demand for automation around the home, and with more millennials becoming homeowners, they will likely drive this exposure higher.

"If you can dream it, we can make it smart," says Andrew Sherman of Sound Advice & Video. "More and more devices are becoming available within this smart home ecosystem; everything from dishwashers to coffee machines to doorbells and locks are smart ready. You can now control all these devices via an app on your phone or even by your voice."

We asked some local professionals to highlight a few of the best items to make "smarter" around your home.

WINDOW TREATMENTS

Believe it or not, motorized window treatments have been around for over two decades. "When I first came into the industry over 20 years ago, motorized window treatments were a very forward-thinking option," says Laura Hawley, president and owner of Ambiance Design Window Treatments. "I served in a role that was focused on those options."

However, the technology has come a long way. "It was expensive and mostly infrared with a clunky, unreliable remote control," she says. "Now they are tied to a smartphone and can even be set to a specific schedule to open with your morning alarm or, based on the temperature in the house, closed to help conserve energy."

Opening and closing window treatments with the touch of a button has its advantages for those with dexterity issues, whether related to aging or a disease. Hawley knows of a client with ALS who says the smart functionality of motorized window treatments has changed her life. "There are also some safety concerns around traditional blinds with strings and children. Motorization removes those hazards," she adds.

Ambiance Design offers Hunter Douglas products, and Hawley says every product, including shutters, can be motorized. "Hunter Douglas is a leader in the design world and well-known for their beautiful products that meet homeowners' sophisticated needs and functionality."

FAUCETS

Kitchens and baths have seen a big technological jump recently and Moen is one brand embracing the smart trend, says Matt Mann, of Bellmawr Plumbing Supply. "Moen has several products—smart faucets, shower systems and the Moen Flo water monitoring system—that are going to become more popular in the coming years," he says.

First, the Moen Flo is a device installed off your water main and connected to your phone's Bluetooth. "It monitors the water pressure throughout the house and if there is a leak or sign of a drop in water pressure, the system sends a message to your phone and shuts off the water from the main so the leak stops. It's a nice security feature if you're on vacation or for your vacation home so you can rest assured your house isn't flooding," he says. "It can also save money on homeowners' insurance because they will see less of a threat from water damage."

When it comes to smart faucets, Mann feels Moen's products are the nicest. "Moen took the idea of Siri from Apple and incorporated it into the faucet so it's completely operable by voice. You can ask it to dispense exactly 8 ounces or whatever amount you need, and at an exact temperature," he says. For example, any parent would appreciate being able to fill a baby's bottle with the perfect temperature of water and completely take out the step of warming a bottle of formula.

On some of Moen's smart faucets, there is even an option for handwashing in which


MOEN

the water shuts off for 20 seconds while the person lathers up before automatically turning back on for rinsing.

Mann also says Moen's smart shower system can preheat the water so it's ready to go when you wake up in the morning, and it can be programmed for different users not only for preferred temperature but also for the shower head functions and sprays.

In five to 10 years, Mann believes these products will be the norm in kitchen and bath design. "In the future for my industry, I see every appliance—washers, dryers, dishwashers, stoves—all being controlled by phone app. Individual companies are starting to do it, but I think it will all be integrated," he says. "Eventually we're not going to need to touch anything with our hands around the home."

SECURITY

Whether for your primary home or a vacation property, some level of security is necessary. "Our market is full of secondary homeowners, so we see a lot of requests regarding HVAC control as well as surveillance. By incorporating smart thermostats and video doorbells our clients can now control their heat and AC as well as check the front door for any package deliveries," says Sherman.

It can also come in handy for those forgetful moments. "Most smart home devices come with a compatible app which allows for push notifications and two-way feedback/control. Gone are the days of worrying about if you locked the front door. Now you can open up your app, check to see if the door is locked or lock it if necessary. Notifications work in a similar way, when someone unlocks the door, or turns off the security system you will receive a notification to your device of this change."

These systems might seem DIY-friendly, but there are benefits to having them professionally installed, he continues.

"It's always beneficial to look at contracting a smart home installer compared to DIY. Not only do we have experience and an understanding of the products and their set-up needs, we are always just a phone call away for tech support or troubleshooting. When a DIY system goes down you are often required to contact the tech support department of said device which can relate to hours of time spent on hold or waiting for the correct specialist. Whereas we are a quick phone call with the ability to send a tech for an onsite visit," says Sherman. H&H

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