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Bucks County

Your #1 Resource and Design Magazine

Volume 22, Issue 1

# Renaissance Ceramic Tile and Floor

Your one and only stop for all of your tile and flooring needs *page 25*

## ASK THE EXPERT



## McHales Kitchen & Bath

*How a simple philosophy helped grow this third-generation family business* page 11

## + Inside: Annual Kitchen & Bath Directory

*page 14*

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# Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete

A third-generation business with the experience and materials you need to transform your outdoor space *page 35*

## ASK THE EXPERT



## *McHales Kitchen & Bath*

*How a simple philosophy helped grow this third-generation family business* page 11

## + Inside: Annual Kitchen & Bath Directory

*page 14*

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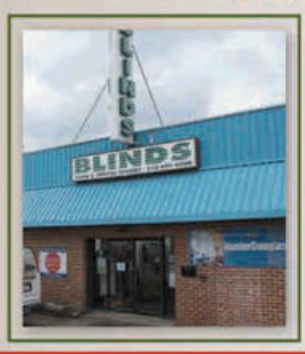
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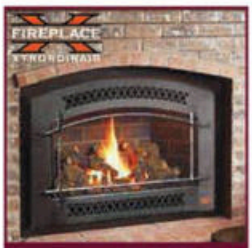


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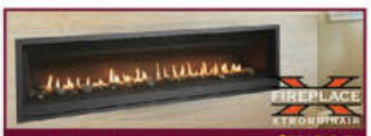
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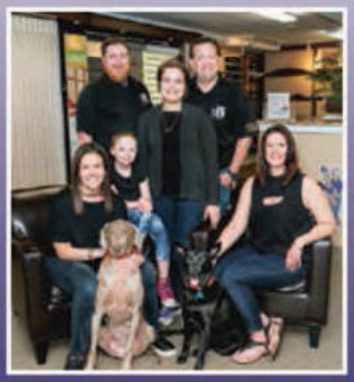
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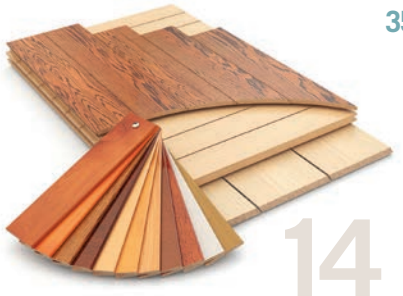
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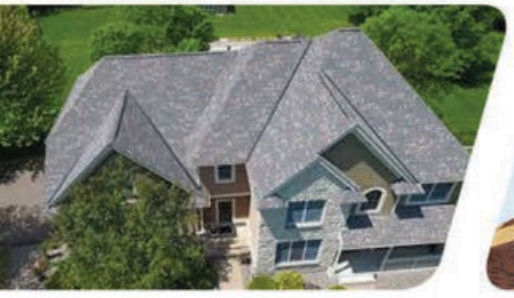
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**PUBLISHER**
Edward P. McCartney

**EDITOR**
Peter Proko

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**
Liz Hunter

**ASSISTANT EDITORS**
Matt Cosentino, Madeleine Maccar

**CONTRIBUTING WRITER**
Amanda Hamm Hengel

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**
Hank Alspach

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**
Brian Mikulski

**DESIGNERS**
Abby Lurty, Dori Shields, Lisa Zollinger

**ACCOUNTING DIRECTOR**
Darlene Versak

**SALES DIRECTOR**
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Chuck McKane

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Bonnie Remmey, Lori Vorgang, Amy B. Weiss

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Max Haggerty

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Leigh Stuart

**PUBLISHER EMERITUS**
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**National Sales Office:**
*HOUSE & HOME* Magazine, LLC
700 E. Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401
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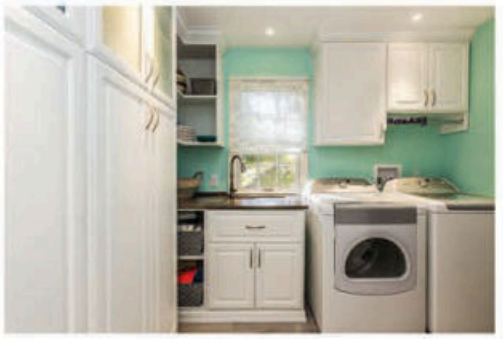
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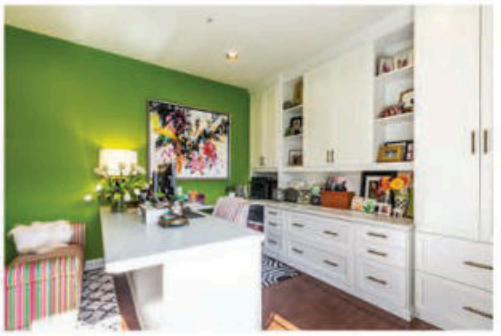
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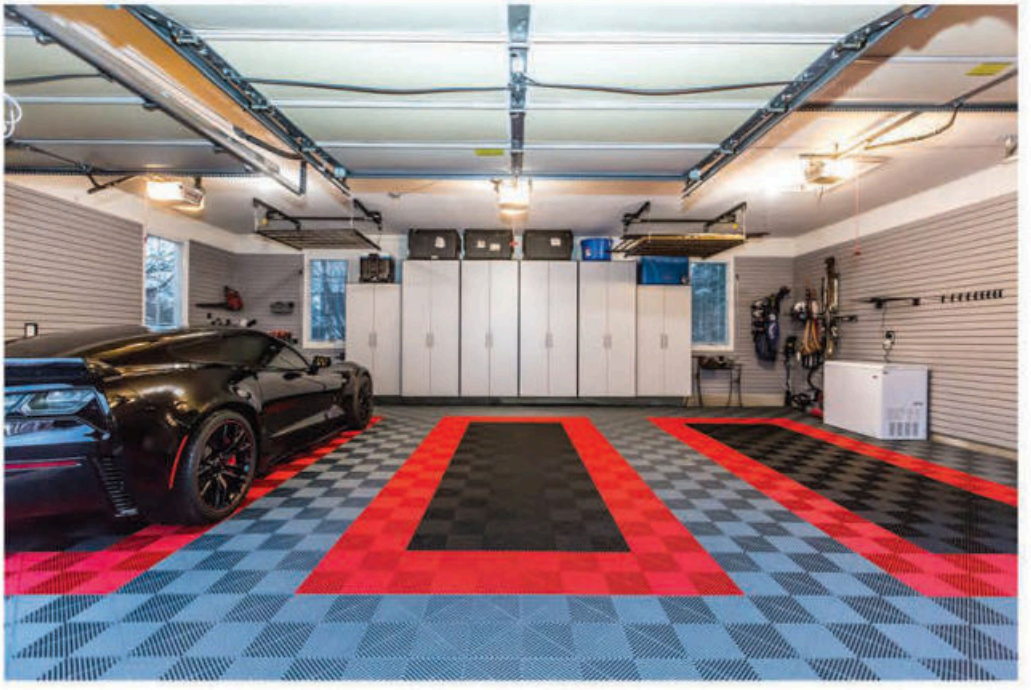
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# McHales Kitchen & Bath

**BACK IN 1950, JOHN AND ANNA MAE MCHALE STARTED A SIMPLE PLUMBING BUSINESS WITH ONE TRUCK AND THE PHILOSOPHY: "WE DO WHAT WE SAY WE ARE GOING TO DO!"** Trust was so ingrained in John's philosophy that he would go to job sites for free, complete the work over a hand shake and mail the customer a bill.

Today, McHales is under third-generation owner Tim McHale, with two divisions—one dedicated to kitchen and bath remodeling, another for residential plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical and drain cleaning. In 2019, McHales Inc. hit a milestone and purchased truck number 100. The company handles about 5,000 service calls per year, remodels about 100 kitchens and baths and is approaching 2,000 online reviews. Although the company has evolved from the days of bills in the mail to include paperless invoicing with iPads and GPS tracked vehicles, everything is still being run from the original location on Trenton Road in Levittown and the simple philosophy, "We do what we say we are going to do!" remains.

*House & Home* spoke with Tim about McHales' growth and the charitable arm, McHales Cares, to find out why the community has been an essential part of their success.



Tim McHale, head coach, with family

**MCHALES HANDLES SO MANY COMPONENTS OF HOME REMODELING AND SERVICE. HOW DID IT GO FROM SIMPLE PLUMBING TO A TWO-DIVISION COMPANY?**

John McHale Jr., my father, returned from the Vietnam War, where he served in the Navy, and received his Master Plumber license in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He learned the business from the ground up, and recognized that post-World War II homes were in need of updates. In the 1970s, he started to expand into remodeling, and even became one of the first Master Plumbers to own a computer and install Motorola CBs in his trucks in the '80s.

I was the first McHale to graduate from college in the '90s, earning a business degree from California University of PA, as well as my Master Plumbing license. With my background in the trade and business operations, I helped take the company from a mom-and-pop shop to one of the largest service companies in Bucks County. McHales Inc. now provides service in plumbing, electrical, heating, air conditioning and drain cleaning. The kitchen and bath remodeling division has won Contractor of the Year 10 times by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) and we are multiple winners of Best of Bucks and Bucks Happening.




John McHale Sr.

**YOU ALWAYS SAY THE BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY HAS BEEN A HUGE PART OF YOUR SUCCESS. WHY IS THAT, AND HOW DO YOU SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION?**

Over the last 71 years, our customers have made us who we are, and we have continued to grow and serve them. Without them, there is no McHales. To us, it is vital to give back, and we do so through McHales Cares, our community give-back program. Our goal is to find well-deserving charities in our backyard that could use a little help. We will donate $1,000 each month, so the winning charity can continue to give back to the same community that McHales has been a part over for over 71 years. You can go to McHalesCares.com and vote every day. Whichever charity gets the most votes at the end of the month wins $1,000. You can also nominate new charities on the site as well.

**WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT THE BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT MCHALES?**

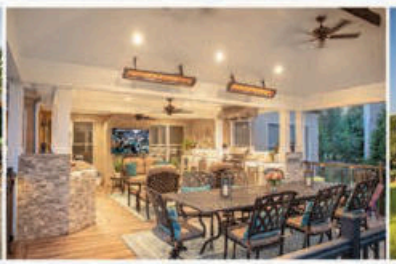
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# Total Comfort, Total Convenience

## A residential elevator from **Total Access** is the next must-have home appliance.

*by* **Liz Hunter**

We take for granted the fact that many appliances around the home were not always standard. Automatic washers and dryers were considered a luxury in the 1930s and microwaves didn't even become mainstream until the late '60s—yet we can't imagine life without them. And if you ask Curt Lampe, co-owner of Total Access Elevators & Lifts, residential elevators are poised to become the next must-have appliance in the home.

Lampe incorporated the company in 1991 with his partner Ted O'Neill. The market for residential elevators was still new, but over the past 30 years, Lampe says the demand has grown tremendously.

"In a lot of new construction, especially at the Shore for the multi-level properties, elevators are being put in automatically," he says. "We're also seeing people who want to age in place investing in an elevator instead of moving out of the home where they raised a family. They can install an elevator without the hassles of selling, packing and moving, and they can stay in their home comfortably."





Elevators appeal to people for a wide range of reasons, whether they want added luxury to their property or have mobility challenges. They can also be used to transport groceries, laundry and other bulky items as well, taking the physical burden off of people and encouraging more independent living.

There is a product to fit any lifestyle and budget, says Lampe. One of the most popular styles right now is the pneumatic vacuum elevator (PVE). Using only air, PVEs require less space and less energy than the traditional in-home elevator with a shaft.

"The PVE uses the same technology as when you go to the bank and send your money through the cylinder. One of the best features of this product is that construction is minimal. It doesn't need to be in a shaft, and we don't need to dig a pit in the basement," Lampe says. "Technology has come a long way."

These units are also eco-friendly, only using power when going up. Coming down is all gravity. Lampe says some models can connect to your smart home setup as well.

In areas where water might be a concern, the elevators have float switches and homing devices included. "If the unit comes down and hits water, it automatically shuts off. Also, after you take the unit down to the lower level, a homing device brings the unit back up to the highest level after five minutes in the event water could become an issue. It's safest up at the top," Lampe says.

Additional safety measures include light curtains, which can sense if something is operating incorrectly and stop the unit automatically. Doors must also be fully shut for it to run, and if a unit loses power, it can still lower itself to the lowest level so a passenger could exit.

If the design of a home does not allow for a clear passage for the elevator on the interior, an exterior installation will soon be available, says Lampe. Currently, the company has its first beta test exterior elevator attached to the side of its building, and it's expected to be available for residential installs by October.

Lampe says the time from when the product is ordered until installation is approximately two months, and if it's new construction, the elevator is one of the last things installed.

Throughout the process, homeowners can expect to have any question answered by a knowledgeable team of professionals. "We pride ourselves on the longevity of our employees and sales consultants. Most have at least 14 years' experience each, and both myself and Ted are actively involved in the business every day," Lampe says.

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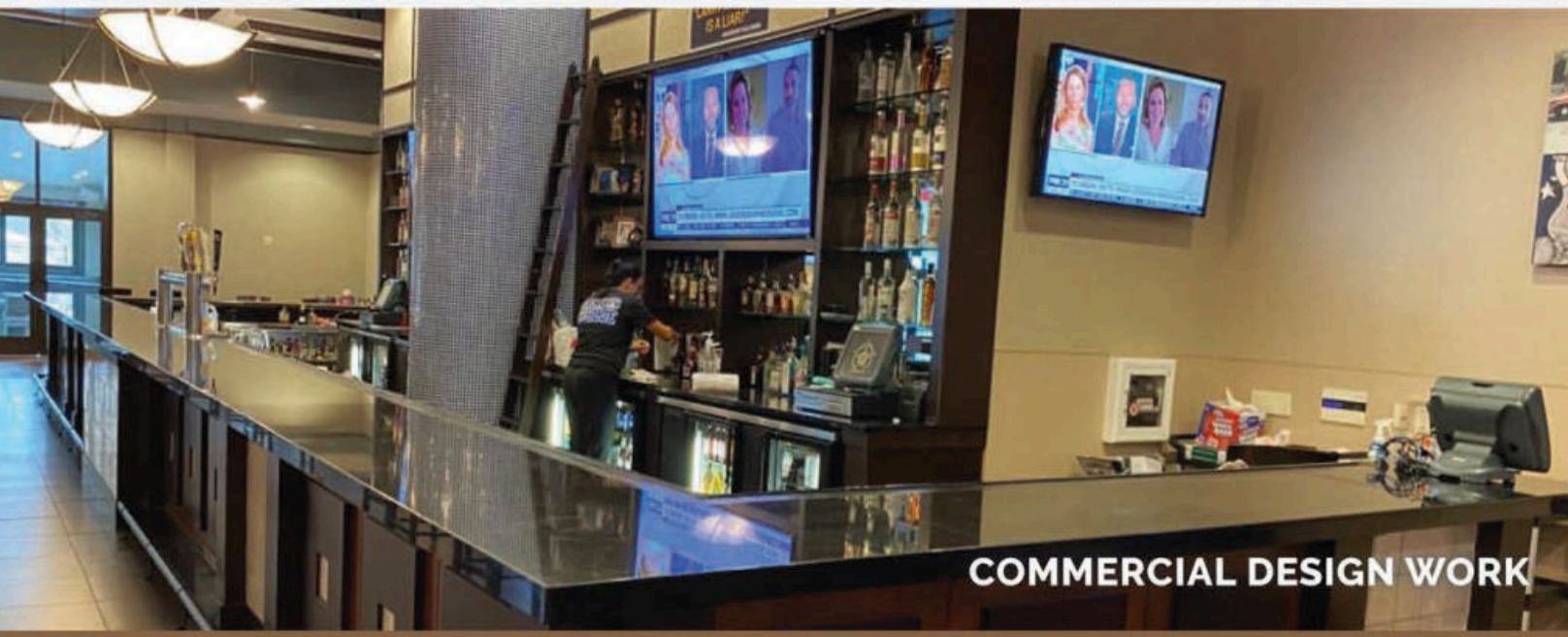
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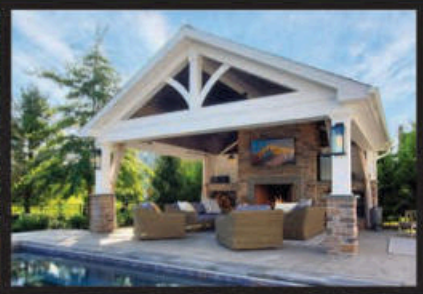
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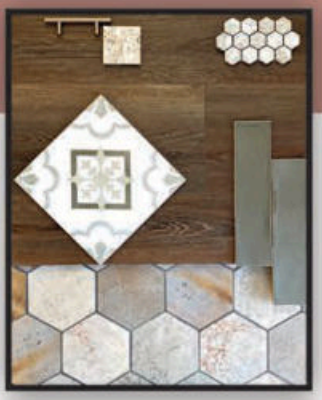
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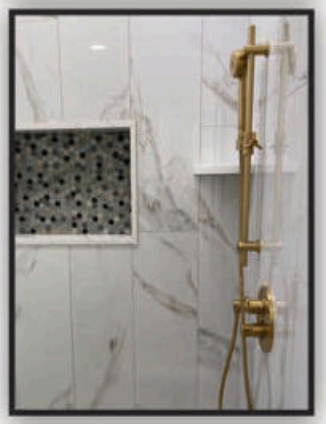
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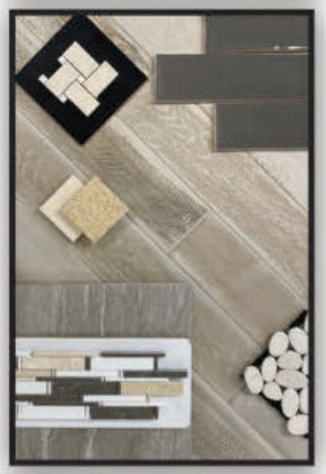
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*by* **Liz Hunter**





ONE OF THE MOST DAUNTING STEPS DURING A REMODELING PROJECT IS VISITING A SHOWROOM. You never know what kind of experience you'll have: Will anyone be available to show you certain products, who is educated, helpful and creative in the design process, or what if they never give you a moment to yourself? At Renaissance Tile and Floor, the design professionals have struck the perfect balance when assisting customers, establishing themselves as the premier partner in kitchen and bathroom remodels. This balance is backed by over 125 years of collective experience in the tile industry.

Renaissance is a family-owned company, open since 1990. Approximately three years ago, Renaissance merged with one of the largest tile importers on the East Coast giving Renaissance access to one of the largest inventories on the East Coast spanning 5 million square feet of ceramic, porcelain, stone, glass and mosaics stocked in one of six warehouses. Customers benefit from this wider selection and competitive pricing offered at Renaissance, making it the supplier of choice for installers, builders, architects, interior designers and even the do-it-yourselfer.

Julie Ward studied interior design and has been with Renaissance for nearly eight years. In her role as showroom manager and lead design consultant, she manages the 5,000-square-foot designer showroom located in Horsham, Pa. It's one of the biggest tile and natural stone showrooms in the area, she says, but customers are not left to fend for themselves.

"The showroom is filled with multiple vignettes and displays, with skilled consultants on hand to help design your project. We have everything from natural stone to porcelain tile, tons of glass tile and glass mosaics and luxury vinyl tile (LVT). There is something for everyone whether your tastes are contemporary or more traditional. We are not a niche showroom; we work throughout the greater tri-state region," Ward says.

The versatility of tile is what drew Ward into this realm. "I loved the ever-changing and innovative product that tile offers. There is always something new and it's fun to work with every day," she says.

This natural, creative passion is something all of Renaissance's designers have in common. "Our main focus is the homeowner and we want them to leave the happiest they can be. Our service is exceptional and everyone who works here has a passion for tile and design," she says. "We love working with customers and often meet with them three to five times before the project is done. If there is something they aren't satisfied with, we're involved until it's perfect."

Designers at Renaissance can be as hands-on as needed. The showroom is open to the public, and has dedicated desks for homeowners as well as a "Pro Desk" for contractors with an expansive selection of newest tools, saws, prefabricated shower pans, waterproofing systems and all other sundry items needed to complete the project.

"Also, it's not necessary for homeowners to already have a contractor or designer. We always have designers on hand, along with a list of recommended professionals to install the project if needed," Ward says.

Renaissance has the industry's newest products imported from premier tile factories from around the world, showcasing colors and styles homeowners won't find elsewhere, including mosaics that are world exclusive to the company.

Ward has noticed that people continue to gravitate toward the modern farmhouse look. "We do a lot with our various handmade collections in different, difficult to find colors. People love a timeless look," she continues, adding that hexagons have become a big trend for kitchen floors and bathrooms.

LVT (luxury vinyl tile) has become immensely popular due to installation cost benefits and continued product improvements over the years. "LVT's high-definition images have gotten so incredible that many people are choosing it over hardwood. It's also more durable and easier to clean than hardwood," Ward says, adding that the showroom has dozens of different styles of flooring, including premium LVT on display, making it easier to visualize the product in your own home.

Renaissance also offers an availability advantage in this current era of supply chain disruption. "We have over 5 million square feet of inventory stocked in six different warehouses, giving Renaissance quick order delivery times. We can typically serve a tile project within one to two days, or whatever lead time a customer needs," she says.

As previously mentioned, in addition to tile and flooring products, the showroom offers all materials needed to install tile, including grout, thin sets and tools, available to professionals or the homeowner who might be tackling a weekend backsplash project.

The ultimate goal of Renaissance has and continues to be customer satisfaction. Renaissance is a 31-year-old family business that enjoys unparalleled longevity and success. "We have homeowners who have done four to five homes with us over the years," says Ward. "I think we continue to be the top tile company because we have been around for so long and never strayed from our main focus of offering knowledgeable, creative, excellent customer service." **H&H**

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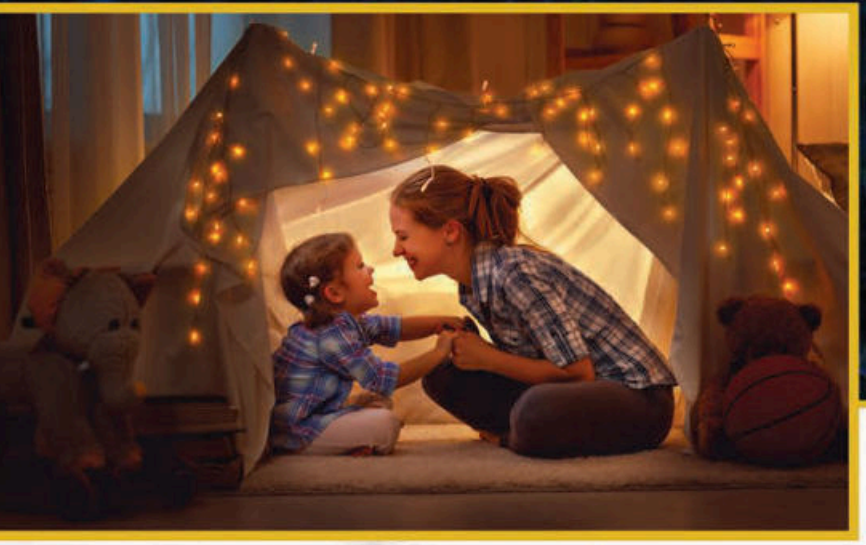
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# THE GREAT INDOORS

**Despite supply-chain delays, homeowners are still riding the pandemic's ongoing trend of refreshing their living spaces with a focus on interior spaces like bathrooms and kitchens.**

BY MADELEINE MACCAR


Kitchen Magic

After staring at the same walls, fixtures and accents throughout the pandemic's uptick in time spent at home, homeowners everywhere have been overhauling their living spaces. Whether it's all as one big project or tackled room by room, kitchens and bathrooms have not escaped housebound families' scrutiny and desire for an interior refresh.

The area's experts took some time from their busy schedules to talk to *House & Home* about how clients can plan ahead for a smooth project timeline, managing expectations as supply delays are still creating a number of snarls along the way, and all the options available for lightly renovating or all-out remodeling two high-traffic areas on any budget.

## BEGINNING A PROJECT

As the adage says, failing to prepare is preparing to fail, and home projects are no exception. While some clients are experienced at navigating the process, others are beginning their first foray into interior redesigns armed with only the knowledge that it's time for something new.

Whether you're working with a one-stop shop or a dedicated expert in kitchens and baths, the team you're trusting with the job can ensure you stay within your budget while planning a new layout, establishing a timeline and providing all kinds of expert insight as they bring your dream designs to life

"Construction is a journey," says Joe Sananes, who runs Cabinet Design Center with his wife, Yafit. "It can be fun and exciting, but it can also be overwhelming so you have to prepare a client mentally for the whole process. Hiring a company that will be transparent about that will help them be prepared for the journey and encourage them to look at their home like it's a blank canvas."

Whether that blank canvas will be filled in with new countertops and cabinets, a shower upgrade, customized accents, a full-scale remake or an addition, coming up with a layout design will help a homeowner visualize what their updated kitchen or bathroom will look like.

"We create a 3D layout on the computer so the customer can see a rendering of their new kitchen," notes Lorraine Sterl of Sterl Kitchens. "The custom layout/floor plan we create with the customer is based on the space they have available in combination with the use they have in mind. For example, [that could be] drawer bases, lift-up doors, spice racks, trash/recycling pull-out cabinets, islands, height of wall cabinets (from 30 inch to 42 inch, or stacked if desired higher), farm sinks, glass doors on cabinets, glass shelves, etc. There are so many options."

While the end result of any successful renovation project is making a lived-in room feel like a brand-new space that's more in line with your current tastes or modern trends, getting there takes a tremendous amount of proactive communication from beginning to end.

"You have to ask the client questions to find out what their wants and needs are, like if they're a retired couple, if it's for a family with a new baby or if it's a rental home," explains Denneen Guidici, designer for Floors Just For You. "There's usually an initial design consultation and, depending on the client, it gets handled in a few different ways. Sometimes we go out, measure the space, and then put together a quick design and estimate—there's so much involved that people don't always know how much it's going to cost."

No matter the scope of the project, managing a budget is one of its most crucial elements.

"Set realistic expectations going into the project," advises JT Norman, product and design innovator at Kitchen Magic. "Budget depletion happens when the homeowner doesn't set a realistic and clear value for a quality remodel and product costs. … Choosing materials and items that fit your budget and allow for one or two must-haves that are within your budget allowance is key."

While some experts say that the ongoing supply chain delays are getting somewhat better, they remain an additional hurdle that homeowners will have to be cognizant of as their new kitchens and baths take shape.

"In the last six months, our management and designers have recognized the impact of both the lack of trained workers available in the manufacturing sector, and the inability to source raw materials that are used in production of cabinetry," says Barry Tarzy of CabinetTree Design Studio. "We believe this state of the business will continue to cause delays in some clients' orders early into 2022."

## MODERN OPTIONS, CURRENT TRENDS

David Cerami, owner of both HomeTech Renovations and Let's Face It, says that homeowners have a wealth of options when it comes to redoing their living spaces, starting with the scope of their projects. Let's Face It has offered refacing as a greener, less-laborious alternative to completely reconstructing a room, and is generally the preferred option for folks who love the bones of a room but love its dated details a little less.

"We were one of the first companies to offer an alternative to the

# THE GREAT INDOORS

conventional approach of gutting the cabinetry and rebuilding the entire kitchen from floor to ceiling," he says. "Cabinet refacing is for homeowners who have a kitchen that mostly works for them in terms of its design, but they're tired of the colors, the door style, the hinging of their cabinets."

Even those homeowners who begin a project with the utmost confidence in their visions have been swayed by visiting a showroom to see their options for tile, flooring, countertops, cabinets, bathtubs, showers and more in-person and all under one roof. Actually interacting with the elements they'll potentially see every day for real-life assessments and comparisons is an invaluable asset to clients.

Spending some time in a showroom can also help illustrate just how many options there are for every budget.

"What I do is start out at a mid-grade bathroom and I let the customer go wherever they want to go with it," says Chris Hermann of Harmony Home Remodeling. "I give them a range of material pricing where I would say, 'Your shower wall's tile can be $4 a square foot, your floor tiles are $3 a square foot.' If they want to go higher or lower, then I tell them they can go to my showroom, pick out what they want and then they pay the difference. … I can get anything they want in any material, so it's a one-stop shop."


Amiano & Son Design-Build

Hermann notes that his company specializes in additions, and that "90% of the time, if someone does an addition, they'll want other work done." That could be anything from turning bathroom closets into smaller storage spaces with matching vanities, replacing outdated small tiles with much trendier large tiles, installing heated floors and replacing a second tub with the stand-up showers that clients are still clamoring for.

Sophia Amiano, the design-build specialist at Amiano & Son Design-Build, adds that the freestanding garden tubs everyone wanted a few years ago are being replaced by cabinets and linen closets. She agrees that walk-in showers are still popular but that "the main focal point in any bathroom that I've been doing is definitely storage, as well as having that nice, spacious shower."

But she says the most prevailing trend she's noticed, from the western Pine Barrens to the Jersey Shore, is an in-demand, versatile hue: "If 2021 had an official color, it would be navy blue," she notes. "I and the other designer on our staff have been doing a lot of navy blue kitchens. What's nice about it is that it can look a little nautical, it can look a little modern and it can look a little more sleek and almost glam."

When it comes to outfitting those kitchens, Sterl says there is one countertop option that, hands down, delivers the biggest bang for your buck. "The best value for your dollar? Quartz countertops," she says. "They do not absorb bacteria or stains because they are nonporous, do not need to be resealed, are an extremely hard material, scratch-resistant, warrantied and very beautiful because they are made from natural quartz stone."

Norman observes that homeowners have been outfitting their kitchens with multitasking amenities like islands, desk niches customized for specific uses and pet stations, plus designated bar areas for a wine fridge, glass storage and entertaining. "Function remains vital to the way a kitchen performs," he says.

Sananes notes that Cabinet Design Center has been creating a lot of farmhouse-style kitchens with less-is-more vibes and clean lines. "Our job is to listen to you and look to the future while correcting any missteps—we are designers by trade so we try to create a timeless look," he says. "If you invest in an item, like a kitchen island, that's too trendy, you're going to get tired of it. So we encourage the customer to be bold, but with items that are easily changeable. It's not a big deal to change paint colors, but to change a cabinet would be."

## IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Of course, no matter the trends, every good designer and expert wants every customer to be happy with the kitchen and bath they'll be seeing, using and living in for years to come, which means using their expertise

> "If 2021 had an official color, it would be navy blue. … What's nice about it is that it can look a little nautical, it can look a little modern and it can look a little more sleek and almost glam."
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> –SOPHIA AMIANO, DESIGN-BUILD SPECIALIST AT AMIANO & SON DESIGN-BUILD


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## Q&A with Rick Anderson, Owner

**What services does your company offer and what areas do you serve?**
We're famous for remodeling kitchens and bathrooms at a reasonable price and we provide full-home remodeling and installation of hardwood and ceramic flooring throughout all of Bucks County.

**How long have you been in business and how did you get started?**
I have been in business for 30 years. I actually got started in the business of remodeling kitchens when my daughter bought her first home. She asked if I could remodel the older style kitchen that was in her starter home and many of her friends were also buying their first home and they saw my daughter's kitchen and fell in love with my work and so I started getting call after call. Before I knew it I realized how much I enjoyed remodeling older kitchens that needed a new look at a fair price.

**What drives you to do the hard work necessary to run a successful company?**
I love to see the smile on clients' faces when the remodel is finished. It brings me joy. I get my work ethic from my father and I've followed in his footsteps, giving 100% to my clients. I treat every project as if it were my family and I want to know that they are completely happy with the work I did for them.

**Are there any new products/trends in your industry that you notice?**
White kitchens with quartz countertops, white shaker-style cabinets and very simple, clean lines are what the younger homeowners seem to want for their kitchens and baths.

**What separates you from your competition?**
A personal touch. I treat everyone's home like it is my own home and I really listen to the client and ask them questions, such as 'what is your home lacking?' and then they really open up and explain what they need and want for their remodel for their kitchen and bath.

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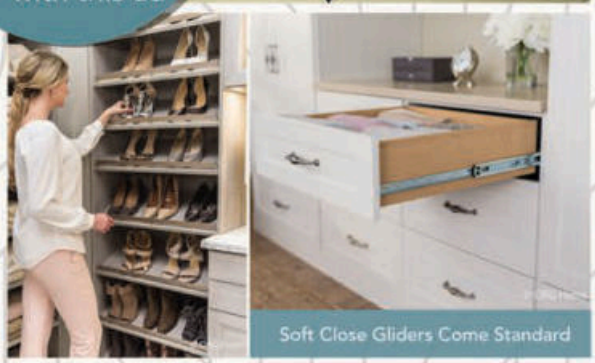
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to bring those unique wants and needs to life—and without compromising your budget or settling.

"If you're looking for a very specifically styled or color cabinet, there typically are alternative solutions within the stock cabinetry lines," says Amiano. "Right now, stock cabinetry is probably a bigger seller than semi-custom. The stock cabinetry nowadays is beautiful, with these great options in styles and colors."

With so many options on the table, it's important for an expert to get familiar with your space before the project begins.

"Getting a free in-home consultation and estimate can be a valuable first step in the remodeling endeavors," advises Norman. "Kitchen consultants come with a list of ideas and will give you a solution and quote for what your budget will allow."

No matter what direction you're taking your kitchen and bathroom, though, one of the best ways to ensure a project's success is to plan ahead.

"Order early to prevent delays in planned construction and kitchen and bath installation," Tarzy says. "Make sure you select and secure all plumbing and electrical fixtures ahead of time so that when it is time to install, everything is in place with no delay caused by lack of products. Couple cabinet delays with the availability of a qualified professional to install—it has become more important than ever to plan ahead."

The other, of course, is to enlist the help of quality, qualified professionals who know how to turn the spaces of your dreams into a long-lasting reality.

"You get what you pay for," Cerami points out. "There are some very talented contractors out there, but they might not be good at communication or following up, they're not good with designs or suggestions that would yield a project that is flawless in the end. You wouldn't build a house without an architect or a plan; certainly, you wouldn't build out a significant kitchen without one." **H&H**

## RESOURCES

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# Outdoor Oasis

**Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete** supplies all your hardscaping needs to create an amazing outdoor living space.

by **Julie Shannon**

**FALL IS HERE TO STAY,** and unfortunately so is the pandemic, which means more time spent at home. With the cool, crisp temperatures setting in, it's the perfect time to extend your living space and spend the extra time at home outside with a new outdoor living area that includes features like an outdoor kitchen and fire pit to keep you warm.

The first thing to check off your list when designing a project is choosing hardscaping materials, and Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete is the one to help you make the best decisions. A third-generation, family-owned business with two locations in Lansdale and Souderton, they are the area's largest supplier of pavers, brick, stone products, flagstone and bluestone.

"Over the last 18 months people have relooked at their home space. Many are looking to give themselves a place to get away without leaving their home. We help people to determine how much they can or cannot do," says Vice President Jarrod Nyce. "Imagination, space and budget are what can determine the project."

Outdoor kitchens made with stone veneer are popular, and from there you can add all the bells and whistles to make it the ideal entertaining space.

"Outdoor kitchens are so much fun and really add to your home," Nyce says. "Imagine entertaining outside without having to go back into your house. From a basic grill kit to a full-blown kitchen with sink, ice maker and refrigerator, there are so many things that can be done in your own backyard.

"Time and time again we are seeing outdoor living spaces getting more like an oasis with waterfalls, sound systems, lighting and even outdoor TVs. Fire pits and fireplaces help to warm up areas with heat and light."

It's not too soon to think about installing a pool, and Nyce says there are many hardscaping options available for the pool deck.

"There are many options for pool areas from stamped concrete to pavers for your pool deck," he says. "Also, coping can be a fun area to explore different options, such as precast concrete and natural stone. We've also seen a lot of stacked stone being used for the natural look."



Nyce says patios are very similar to pool decks with many options for style and effect. "This versatility helps people turn a space into something very special," he says.

When it comes to retaining walls, Nyce says they are practical and have more than a few uses.

"Retaining walls sound boring but they're very useful," he says. "You can add areas to any project using a retaining wall to flatten out unusable ground. They can also be used for privacy or simple sitting walls."

Nyce says Cambridge Pavingstones with ArmorTec have proven to provide quality materials year after year.

"They continue to evolve with the times with new products and colors every year," he says. "Their line of retaining walls has also grown and evolved to adding new colors and styles. They have also maintained a steady lineup of tried and true products that have worked for over 15 years.

"We have a large supply of Pennsylvania bluestone and flagstone hearths. Natural stone never goes out of style."

Belgian Blocks, which are large blocks of stone, are used for many purposes. "They are made of granite and are very tough. They are mostly used for curbs or edging around gardens, but they can also be used for walkways or driveways," Nyce says.

Nyce says a recent trend he's been seeing is outdoor ceramic tiles. "These are just like the tile in your bathroom but a much larger format," he says. "They come in many different colors and styles and are safe for use in outside areas."

Like most companies, the pandemic has had an impact on Nyce Crete, but when you've been in business for 78 years, you're accustomed to dealing with various challenges and obstacles.

"Our family has been able to change and adapt over the years, and we have always stood behind our products," Nyce says. "We pride ourselves to be a complete resource for any questions that may arise. We also understand our products, keep up with new trends and understand building codes to help people do their project the proper way. We also try our best to be honest, deliver on time and sell quality products that we would use personally. We treat people the way we would like to be treated." H&H

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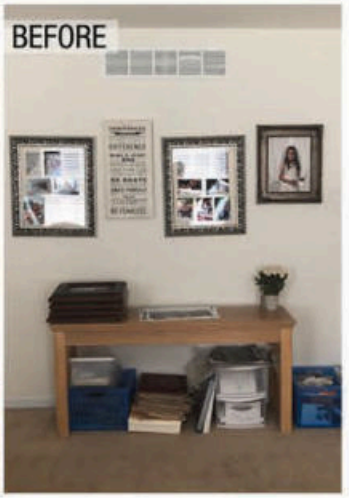

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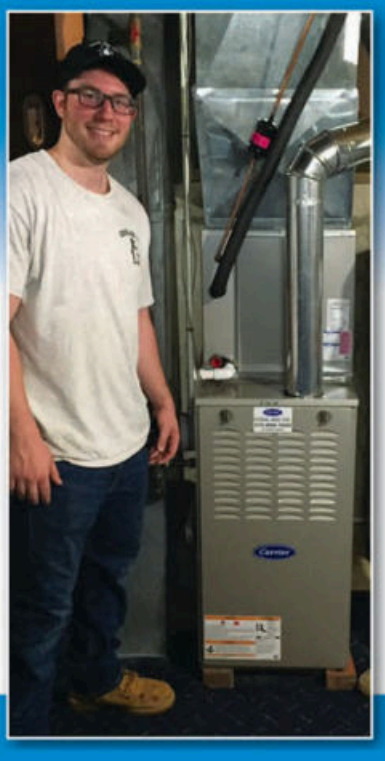
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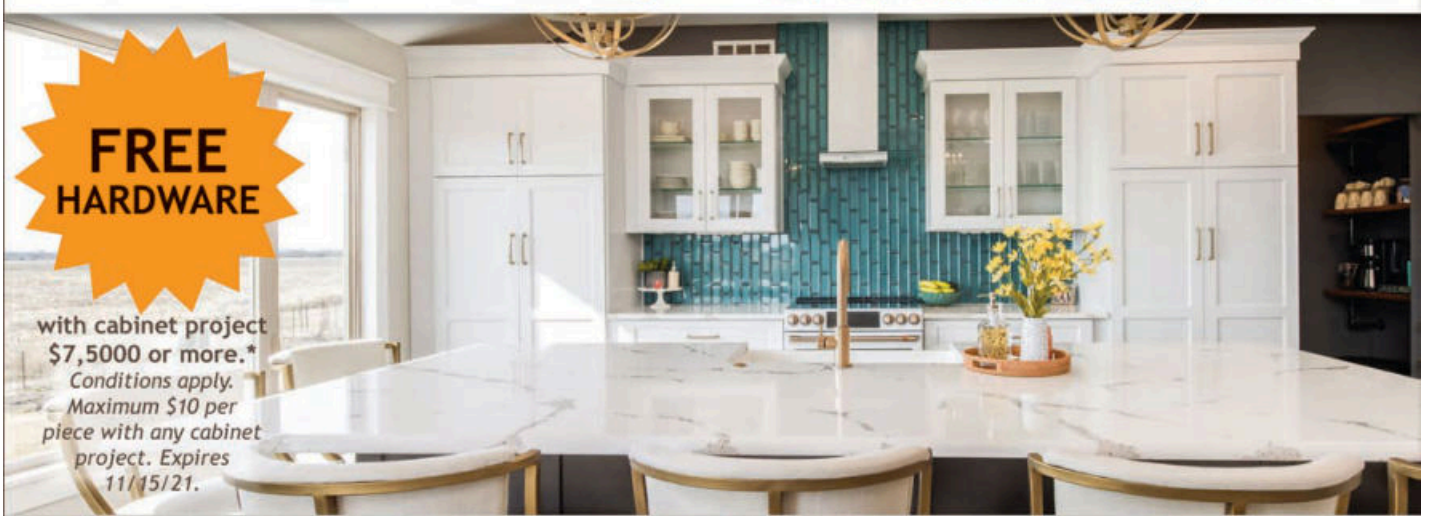
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