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Volume 22, Issue 2
Central Jersey



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Basement Waterproofing Specialists

Family values, happy customers triumph over pandemic *page 19*

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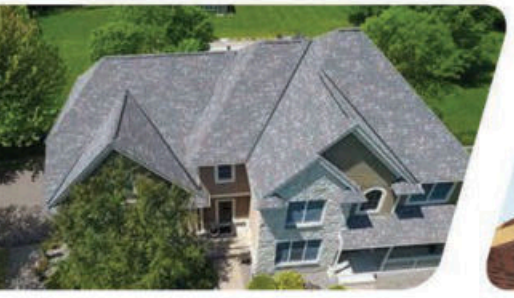
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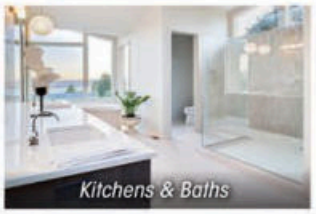
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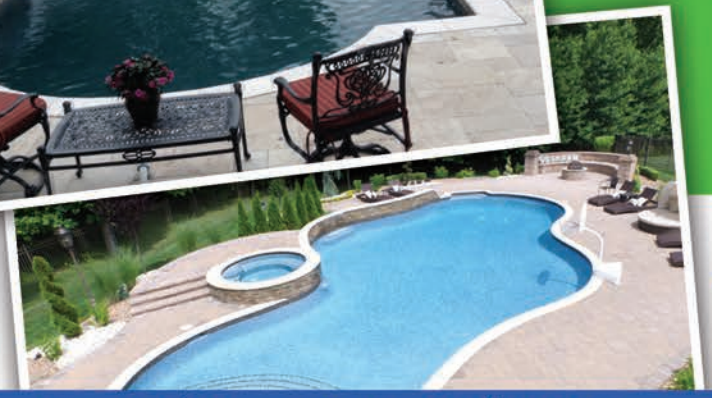
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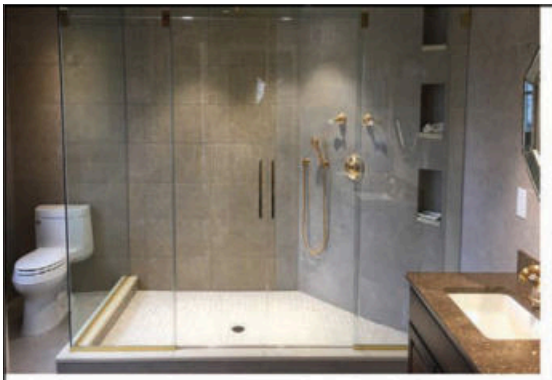
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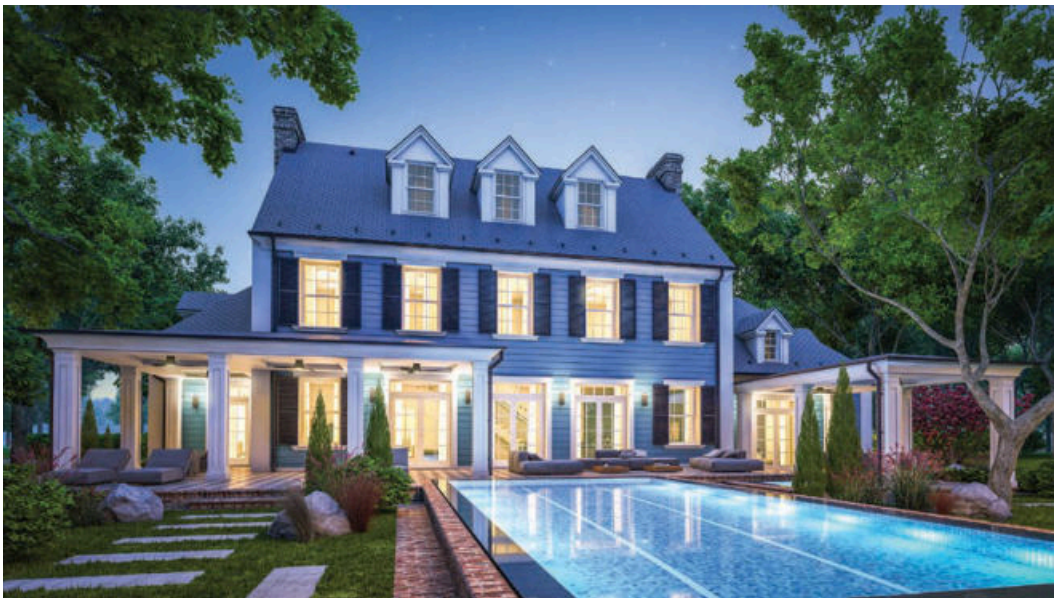
WINNERS, SPOTLIGHT and SHOWCASE

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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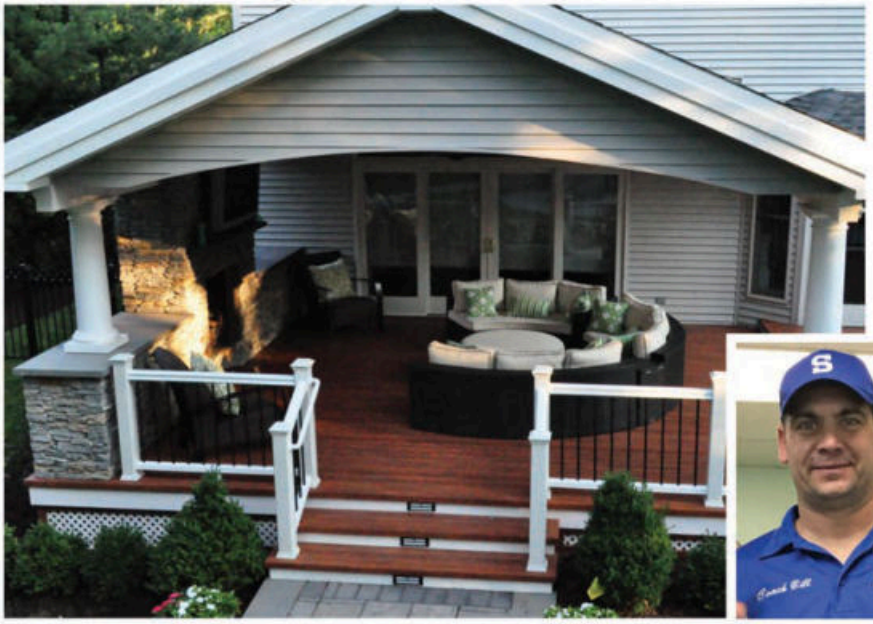
What makes you the best in your industry while separating you from your competitors?
My personal approach and involvement in every project we do. It's very unlikely to find an owner/operator in this industry of 32 years who is still working out in the field—most often they are in the office dispatching crews, etc. We also have separate divisions; for example, we have a mason/brick crew that does that kind of work every day for many years; we have a fence crew, we have a plant crew and a lawn cutting/maintenance crew. This ensures great experience related to the specific work.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of winners?
It is very humbling to be recognized among the leaders in our industry, as I have worked very hard over the years and I am still learning every day. I do believe the best experience is on the job site.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work that you do?
I really enjoy what I do—transforming an old deck to a bright updated brick patio, or tearing down an old fence and installing a new updated style or transforming that dull overgrown garden into a colorful interesting focal point never gets old. Contributing to the overall aesthetic of our environment is very rewarding.

BEST of HOUSE&HOME in:

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How many years have you been in business or in this industry?
We started constructing outdoor living areas in the spring of 1975 and we are about to enter our 46th year.

What makes you the best in your industry while separating you from your competitors?
Honesty and the desire to meet our customers' needs and wishes in our designs and construction. Our experience in the construction trade brings our customers confidence in our abilities.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
House & Home is experienced and enjoyed by the individual looking for much more than a carpenter or builder. *House & Home* readers are consumers who desire a more sophisticated design with matching results. Being recognized by the readers of *House & Home* is an honorable and rewarding acknowledgment.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
We have completed well over 3,000 projects since our inception and some projects run smoother than others. But just about all projects end with a big smile, many with a warm hug and all end with a firm handshake and an appreciative thank you from our customer.

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How many years have you been in business?
Thirty-five years.

What makes you the best in your industry?
We run our company with customer service as the No. 1 priority with a family-friendly employee atmosphere operation with empowered employees to get the job done.

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
Great, after years of building service and operations to service the community and all of Central New Jersey.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
Great employees and customers; I love what I do.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
Doing service and installations that other companies can't or won't do correctly.

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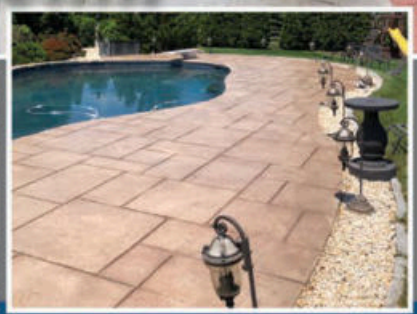


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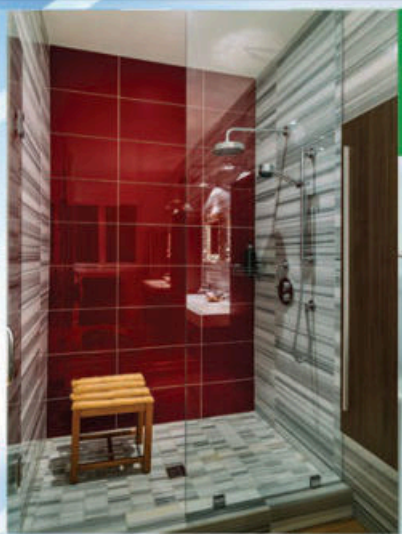
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Basement Waterproofing Specialists

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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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


GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING

"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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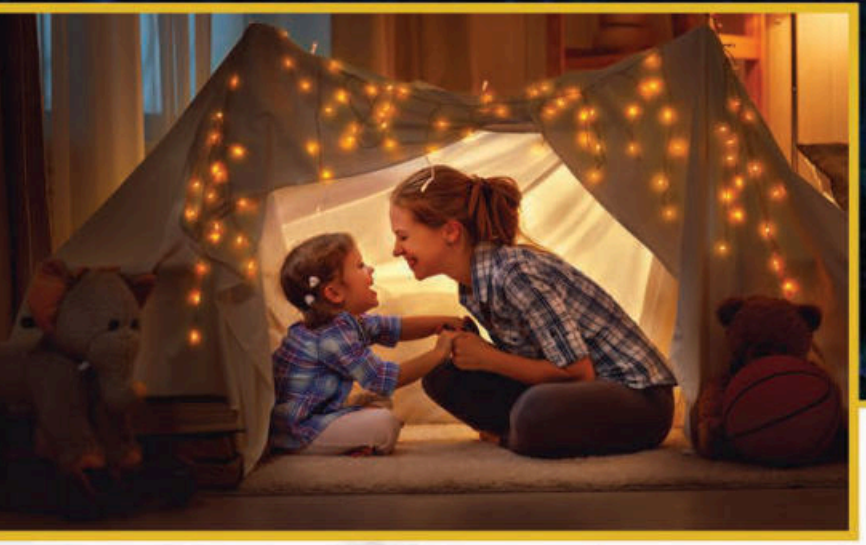
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H&H SHOWCASE by **Lindsey Getz**

Generating Peace of Mind

Colonial Generators helps homeowners and businesses eliminate the stress, inconvenience and cost associated with losing power.



Photography courtesy of Colonial Generators

Almost every aspect of American life depends on uninterrupted power. When the power goes out, even for a short time, it can be incredibly inconvenient, unnerving and even dangerous.

For a young mother of twins in Delaware County, a power outage that lasted four days following a severe storm left her feeling helpless and stressed. At the time, her twin girls were only newborns. After that experience, she began looking into options for whole-home power generators. She felt fortunate to have found Colonial Generators. Having recently moved, she says she is planning to have Colonial install a home generator once again. She simply cannot imagine living without one anymore.

"In the area that we previously lived, we lost power frequently—as often as two or three times each month, largely because of all the trees around us," says the homeowner, who asked to remain anonymous. "Even if it was just a few hours, it was hard with new babies. Heating formula or even just keeping the house warm were suddenly stressors I had to think about."

After having the home generator installed, the homeowner says she never even noticed when the power went out in her area. Backup power would kick on so quickly, so it seemed as though nothing had even happened.

That's exactly what a whole-home generator is meant to do, according to Nikos Papadopoulos, president of Colonial Generators. When a home loses power, an automatic transfer switch shifts immediately to the standby generator. Only a few seconds pass between the power going off and then kicking back on—like a "quick blip," Papadopoulos says.

Although Papadopoulos says the trend toward whole-home generators remains in its infancy—approximately 5% of homes have full backup power, he estimates—the need continues to increase. The COVID-19 pandemic, in which people spent more time than ever at home, has made this need quite clear. When unnerved homeowners were stuck home with no power, Colonial Generators received a significant uptick in calls and requests for price quotes.

"As people experienced power outages in the midst of being stuck at home during this pandemic, I think the need to have power at all times really emerged," Papadopoulos says. "Homeowners were stocking up on food and had freezers full of meat. There was a lot to be lost if the power went out for too long."

Likewise, generators have equipped many businesses with essential backup power. Local restaurants are a fine example. Restaurateurs who were already coping with razor-thin margins even prior to the pandemic certainly cannot afford to throw away any food due to power outages and other preventable disruptions.

With the need rising, Papadopoulos believes home generators will become an increasingly important part of America's future. He equates it to the comforts of heating and air conditioning, once considered an indulgence that has become a necessity most people cannot imagine doing without.

"We believe in the not-too-distant future that whole-home generators are going to become a standard part of homeowners' lifestyles," he adds. "There are many different benefits to having backup power, and we all want to have life uninterrupted. With people at home more than ever, the need will only grow."

Of course, he suggests homeowners should carefully vet providers when selecting a professional to install and maintain their generator. With the "newness" surrounding this market, some inexperienced providers have jumped into the fray. The benefit to choosing a provider such as Colonial Generators is that the company focuses solely on generators.

Worth the Investment

Colonial Generators has the specialized expertise needed to sell, install and service generators for homes and businesses. Papadopoulos considers this an important point, adding that no one can afford to be left "in limbo" if something goes wrong and no one is available to fix the problem.

"For some people, especially the elderly or those with medical needs, losing power is more than an inconvenience," he says. "For some, losing power can be really serious. It's important you get a whole-home generator from a reputable company that can also service their work."

To his point, the decision often comes down to peace of mind. Going without power for any amount of time can be frustrating. And for the young Delaware County mother referenced earlier in this story, having babies at home without power has the potential to cause unwanted stress. Now, she considers a whole-house generator nothing less than a necessity.

"It's an investment, but it's worth it," she says. "While they have small generators that you can buy yourself and will give you some power, once you've experienced whole-house power like this, it's really hard to imagine living without it."

Papadopoulos says he's thrilled to be able to make this service available to homeowners and business owners. Also, because Colonial Generators offers financing plans, whole-home generators are more affordable than ever.

"As an owner, I'm just really excited about what whole-home generators can do for people," he adds. "It's a solution for homeowners who not only want to avoid inconveniences to their lifestyle but who want to have comfort knowing that they won't lose food or heat or even medical supplies or baby formula that needs refrigeration.

"This is a solution that will give people peace of mind," he continues. "And for many, that's invaluable." H&H

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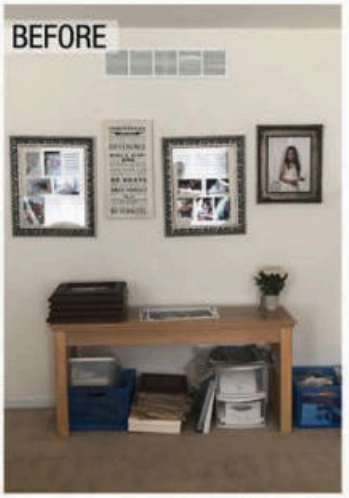


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Swim-Mor Pools & Spas is a family-owned and -operated business started in 1967 that proudly carries on a tradition of quality in our products. We have an experienced staff that utilizes some of the latest technology to bring to you. Visit or contact one of our three convenient locations for a consultation about building your ideal pool.

SWIM-MOR POOLS & SPAS



Put some tropical escape back into your suburban sprawl. This perfect oasis is no mirage but the ideal transformation of your yard to the spot where everyone gathers to enjoy.



Stun your neighbors and attain a level of sophistication that you have always dreamed of. Your yard is now ready for everything from cocktail parties to barbecues and birthdays.



Give your old pool a new look with the latest features, functions and materials. Add the hydrotherapy spa that you always wanted or simply replace the worn plaster, tile and coping, a full range of options is available.

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

RESOURCES

Ambiance Design
Blue Bell, Pa.
(267) 898-0200
AmbianceDesign.biz

Bellmawr Plumbing Supply
Bellmawr, N.J.
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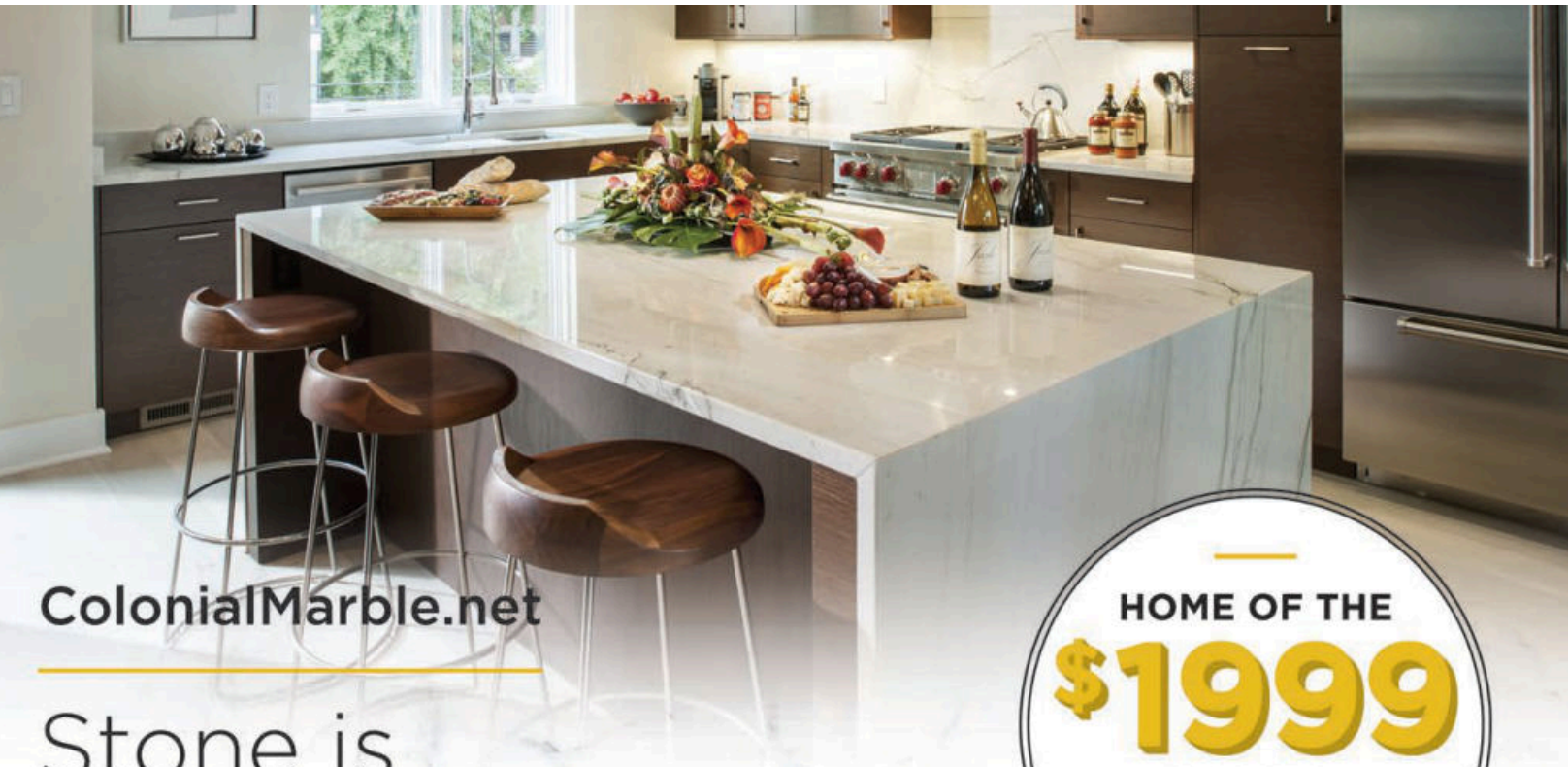
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