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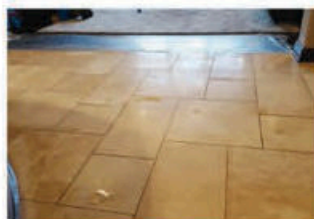
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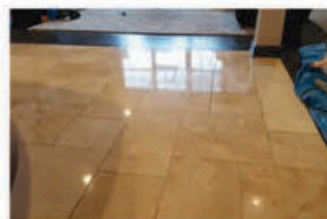
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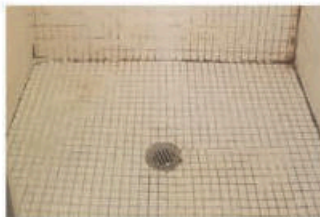
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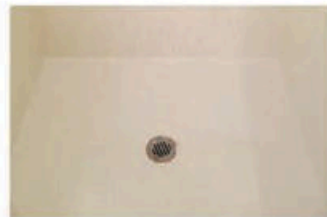
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contents

- 7 Best of House & Home**
Our annual list recognizing the top companies, products and services, as voted by our readers
- 12 Maximizing Creative Potential**
When it comes to basements, no vision is unattainable
- 18 A Fresh Look**
Simple changes can transform the look and feel of your home
- 10 Fall Showcase Special Advertising Section**



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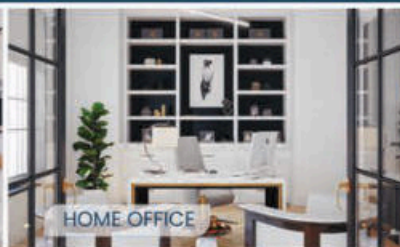
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We are excited to present our ninth annual

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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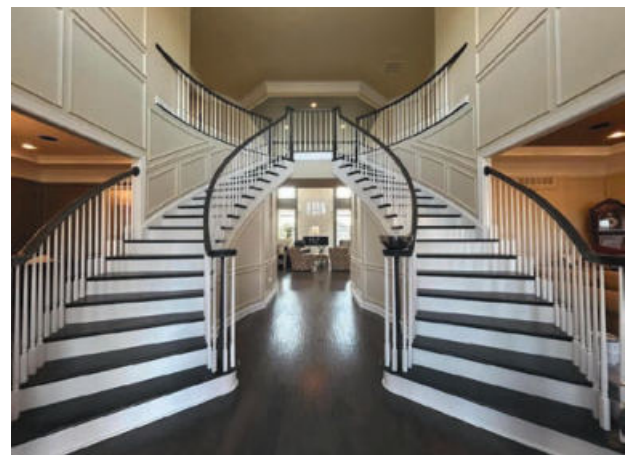
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How many years have you been in business or in this industry?

Our father started the business over 30 years ago and my brother and I have been running the business for the last seven years. We both got into the trades full time as soon as we were done with school.

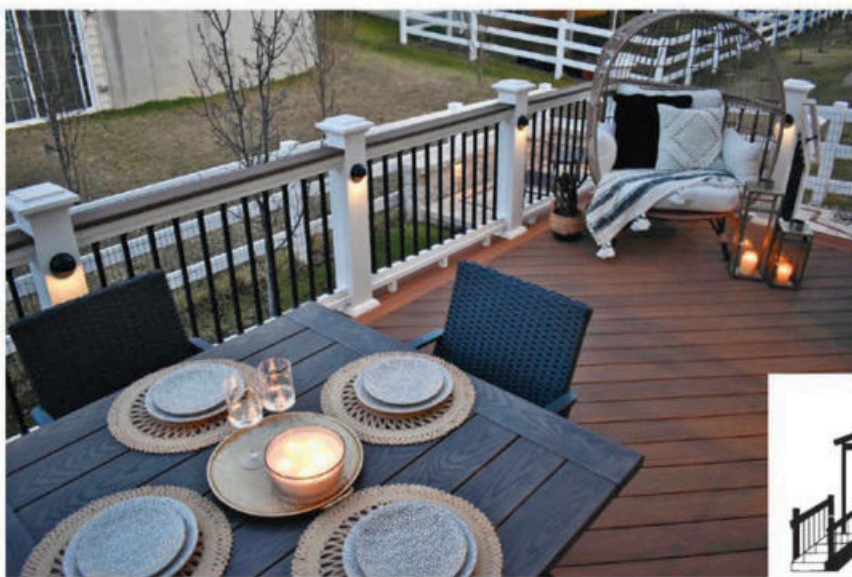
What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?

At the end of the day, it is extremely rewarding to read letters and reviews from our clients expressing how thankful they are for the transformation that we brought to their home. Seeing a phenomenal finished product is really rewarding.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

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BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: DECK DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION



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What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

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MAXIMIZING CREATIVE POTENTIAL

BY CARLY MURRAY

One are the days of rarely-traversed basements, used solely as a storage space and visited seasonally to obtain holiday decorations. Basements are now viewed more commonly as a first floor, with an open-concept style akin to a blank canvas. When considering a dream home, one might envision a home theater, a customized arcade with a personal bar, a sports-themed hangout for game day, an extensive library filled wall-to-wall with books, a fitness room, a collector's haven—a combination, or something else entirely.

“Most people don’t just say, ‘We have this space, we ought to finish it.’ They’re probably thinking: it’s space for the kids to play, it’s a game room for adults, it’s an exercise area, it’s a home theater, it’s another family room. If they think through it in that way, that’s a big help for us,” says Dennis Gehman, pres-



When it comes to basements nowadays, there is no vision that is unattainable—and there's no better way to express ideas than with a large, open space.





MAXIMIZING CREATIVE POTENTIAL

ident of Gehman Design Remodeling.

These ideas and more are possible with the vision, commitment and professional resources. The extent of one's imagination can be replicated with a transformation that is uniquely theirs, and that fits the character of the home and its members.

Joe Magolon, owner of Stonebridge Renovations, points out that basement en-

tertainment areas have increasingly become a space for the entire family to create memories while enjoying their individualized attributes. One of the many creative ideas he's seen lately are chalkboard walls for the family to customize and to play with.

"I feel like the whole family's getting involved downstairs; there isn't just a kid area or an adult area anymore," he explains. "We've recently just done [a project] that had a home gym with a big, glass door and panels, so it still feels open with a lot of natural light. It had a kitchenette, plenty of space for entertaining and counter space. It hit on everything: It had that family living space to hang out, it had the pool table area, it had an area for the kids and their games."

Refurbishing a full-sized arcade machine with new buttons and controllers, which come in several colors and styles, is a great idea for a passionate collector—and can be a show-stopping focal point for a game room. However, if quantity is the goal, there is a large range of smaller, portable arcade machines that can transform a basement into a game-lined retro arcade. Of course, this would not be complete without

one or more table games to provide that classic warmth.

"Eighty percent of what we sell is extremely customizable; you can completely do whatever. You could really change the look, you could change the wood ... and there are multiple finishes available," says Audra DelConte, owner of Royal Billiard & Recreation. "The bar that is often down in that lower-level space will also be coordinated with the game tables ... but our specialty is doing a whole package for people to complete their room. All of our products—whether bar, card table, pool table—can be coordinated."

Basement bars can be found in trendy lower-level areas in households both with and without children. In entertainment spaces designated for all ages, liquor can be concealed and stored in safe, locked cabinets. And for homes with adults only, it can be displayed in a variety of inventive ways. DelConte comments that a lot of people are embracing a speakeasy aesthetic lately—with dark, moody colors, classic and cozy designs and hidden features. Popularly utilized smart home automation harmonizes modern and vintage by allowing convenience

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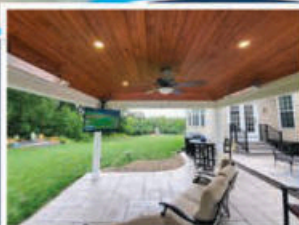
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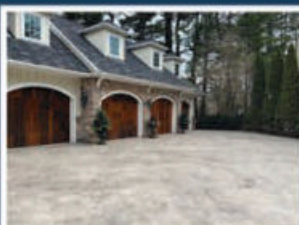
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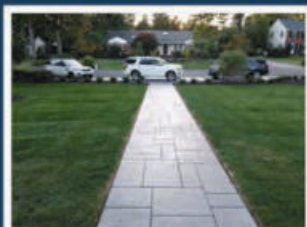
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"People are doing some really cool, hidden built-in storage for [table game accessories]. A lot of the pool tables we sell have a hidden storage door built into them. So, that kind of goes along the lines of that [speakeasy] theme. Reclaimed wood products are still going strong—we see a lot of that and the rustic look, but we are seeing more of the traditional Queen Anne style," DelConte says.

Fitting into this trend perfectly are Murphy Doors, which are designed to open to hidden spaces. This incorporates a feeling of magic as well as provides extra security for valuables. They also function as an easy way to divide the space into different designated areas. Ultimately, there is still a major storage element to consider in the basement though it is no longer the main purpose.

"We like to get creative with storage areas ... like little nooks under the stairs, we've done drink rails in the entertainment area. A lot of people lately have been loving the Murphy Doors," says Magolon. "It looks like a bookshelf, and it brings you back to, like, a wine cellar or different areas like that. The Murphy Doors have definitely been up and coming, [as are] custom built-ins for more storage."

Finishing a basement is not only fun and games—even though the finished product will be. A consideration of utilities is key to obtaining a successful final result. A professional can help place appliances and demonstrate ways to conceal or blend in unsightly elements like electrical panels. Keeping this in mind extends beyond ap-

pearances, as it also may affect comfort within and enjoyability of the area.

"One of the things that people are often surprised about is, when they want to finish the basement, typically it's going to involve HVAC, because they want that space to be comfortable. Most of the time, the existing heating and air conditioning systems in the home are not large enough for that additional square footage," explains Gehman.

He adds that planning for this in advance helps people budget properly, and that he is required to insulate basement walls—which helps conserve energy. A good contractor can assist clients in considering all of these necessary factors with time estimates and what local regulations may be relevant to each home. Then, one can focus on the most important part: allowing imagination, personalization and artistry to take flight. **H&H**



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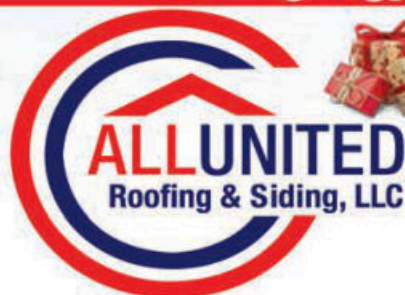
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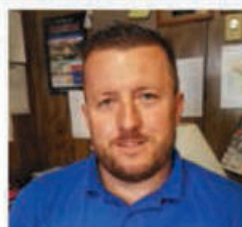


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A Fresh Look

Simple changes can help transform the look and feel of your home. *by* KRISTEN JORGENSEN



Want to refresh your space but have a small budget and limited time? Creating a fresh and inviting look in your home doesn't have to involve a major renovation or hefty expenses. With some creativity and a few simple changes, you can breathe new life into your living spaces.

We asked a few leading professionals in the industry to help gather ideas and inspirations, along with discussing upcoming trends. Whichever technique you opt for, these experts all agree that your home is your sanctuary, and giving it a fresh look can make it feel more welcoming and rejuvenating.

Add a Splash of Color

Color has the power to transform a space. A bold accent wall in the living room or a pop of color through accessories like throw pillows, blankets or rugs can make a huge impact.

"We're seeing a lot of homeowners have the courage to go bold with paint," says Daniel Carhart, owner of Star Painting and Wallcovering.

Deep burgundy, brown and even green hues are growing in popularity and steering the trend to a much more moody aesthetic.

"Homeowners are not only opting for deeper colors, they are saturating the space with it. The bright whites and neutral grays have made way for rich earth tones and bolder options," adds Carhart.

Another trending option to bring color to a space is painting the ceiling. "You'll often hear people referring to the ceiling as the 'fifth wall' and homeowners are deciding to bring those rich colors to the whole room, including the ceiling. In some instances, they paint just the ceiling as the focal point or statement wall with a darker color," Carhart says.



Wall Updates & Textures

Of course, painting is a quick and easy way to make a big impact in a room, but adding other smaller additions to your walls is also a great way to freshen up your living space. Utilizing artwork or shelving can add visual interest to an otherwise uninspiring room.

Designers suggest you hang a new statement piece of art or create a gallery wall with photos, prints or even framed textiles. Or with the addition of floating shelves, you can easily display books, plants and even curated collections.

Texture, too, can refresh a space—think soft velvet cushions, chunky knit throws or woven baskets for added depth.

"We're definitely seeing more prints and more textures being used in homes," says Isabelle Tariqyan, from Mike's Upholstery. "Not only are they showing up on home accessories, but homeowners are also opting to bring texture to the walls via wallpaper. For a long time, designers moved away from wallpaper, naming it outdated, but it is making a huge comeback."

Tariqyan says that by partnering with brands like Schumacher, the colors, prints and texture options are endless. "There is something for everyone's sense of style and desired design goals. If you can dream it, we can help you achieve it."

Millwork and Moldings

Millwork and moldings have surged in popularity in recent years as homeowners and de-



signers increasingly recognize their ability to elevate a space's aesthetic appeal. These architectural details, including crown molding, baseboards, wainscoting and custom trims, add depth and character to otherwise plain walls and ceilings. They serve as the perfect finishing touch, blending form and function by framing spaces and hiding imperfections. Whether it's the classic elegance of coffered ceilings or the clean lines of modern shiplap, millwork and moldings provide a tailored look that resonates with a wide range of interior styles, from traditional to contemporary.

One reason for their enduring appeal is their versatility. "Millwork and moldings can transform a space without requiring a complete overhaul, making them a cost-effective option for home improvement" shares Pavlo Danylchenko, owner of Signature Woodcraft. "Their customization potential allows homeowners to match these elements to the unique style of their home."



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A Fresh Look

With materials ranging from traditional wood to more affordable, eco-friendly alternatives like MDF, installing this type of upgrade to the home is accessible to most. Additionally, social media and home design shows have further popularized these features, showcasing how simple additions like crown molding or decorative paneling can dramatically enhance a space's sophistication. As a result, these design elements have become go-to choices for creating timeless, high-impact interiors.

Rearrange: Making the Old Feel New Again

Simply rearranging what you already have can also make a noticeable difference. This technique is meant to help you refresh your home affordably by using items you already have. It's simply a matter of

reconfiguring your furniture, swapping a few items, and voila—your space feels brand new.

The idea is that you can restyle your space without spending much money, contrary to what many of us believe we need

for designing a space—which is to go out and find new pieces. The process involves decluttering, reorganizing and even changing up the purpose of an existing room to breathe new life into it. Sometimes, a new perspective is all you need. Moving your



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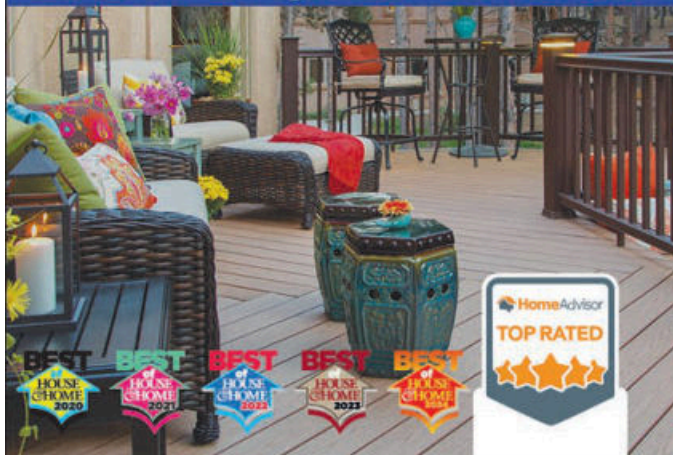
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furniture around can transform the look of a room without spending a dime. Experiment with different layouts to create a sense of openness or

intimacy, depending on your preference.

Refreshing your home is about finding joy in your space again. Whether it's

through rearranging furniture, adding pops of color or even just decluttering your belongings, even the smallest changes can have a huge im-



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With **First State & Building Design**, homeowners get a trusted remodeler able to skillfully handle all their exterior needs.

by **Kristen Jorgensen**



First State Building & Design (FSBD) is a premier home renovation specialist renowned for its innovative building solutions for exteriors. Family-owned and established in 2006, FSBD has grown to become a leader in the outdoor living industry, offering a comprehensive range of exterior services that encompass patios, porches, porticos, pools, pergolas, sunrooms, outdoor kitchens and fireplaces, simple decks to more elaborate outdoor living spaces with pavilions and other custom specialty features including Phantom motorized screens.

The company's mission is to transform visions into reality through excellence in design and engineering. "We are committed to delivering functional and aesthetically pleasing structures that meet the needs of our clients, while enhancing the build environment. In continuing the tradition of superior customer service and quality workmanship, our team of designers and craftsmen create beautiful outdoor living spaces for your home," says Joe Oakes, president.

To further showcase that FSBD is the lead provider of cutting-edge building design solutions, they recently renovated their showroom space to help clients get a clear vision of materials and the final results of their exterior home projects. Conveniently located on Route 202 between Wilmington, Delaware, and West Chester, Pennsylvania, Oakes says the space is a "must-see" for new clients.

"Our showroom is where we host our client presentations, and it embodies the best of our outdoor living design features," Oakes says. "We welcome you to come and see the many materials, styles and fabrications utilized for decks, railings, porches, firepits, fireplaces, roof structures, awnings and outdoor feature walls up close and personal – essentially, anything outdoor living is what you'll find when

you visit us. We are the go-to experts for all your outdoor living needs. Our showroom is where you can envision how you can incorporate the latest style trends in your new outdoor living space. Our outdoor displays allow our clients to make selections after getting to see and feel our quality products and designs. We want to inspire what their next outdoor living space could include and help them bring their vision to life."

With expertise in exterior renovations, First State Building & Design is the go-to choice for Pennsylvania and Delaware homeowners looking for a full-service contractor that offers both design and build services to transform their spaces. **H&H**



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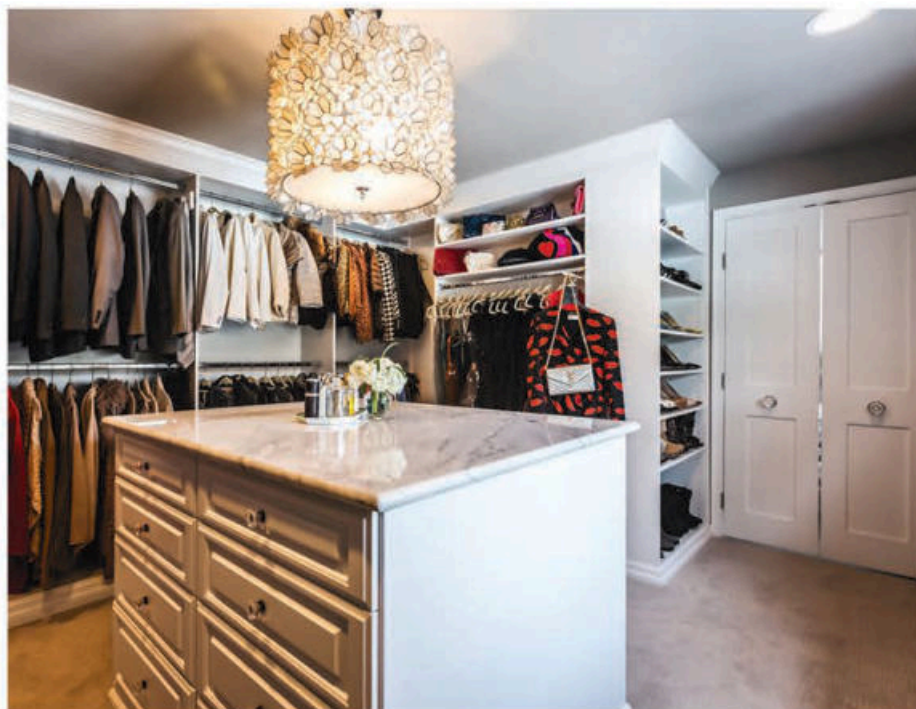
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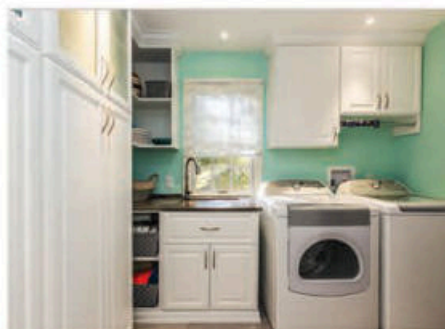
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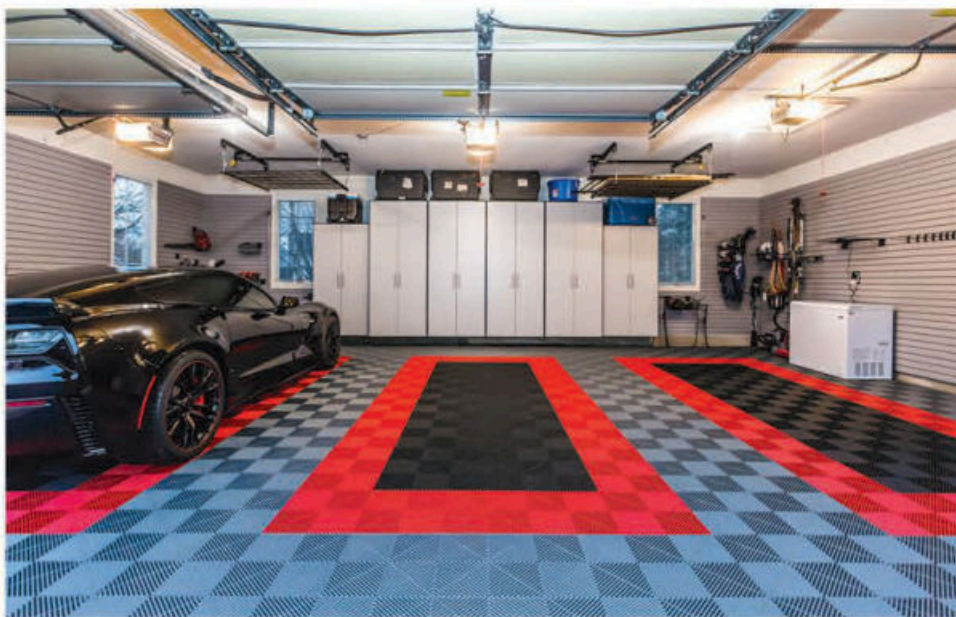
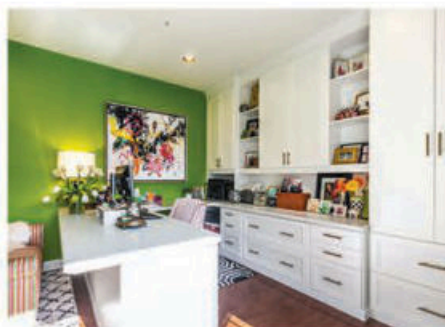
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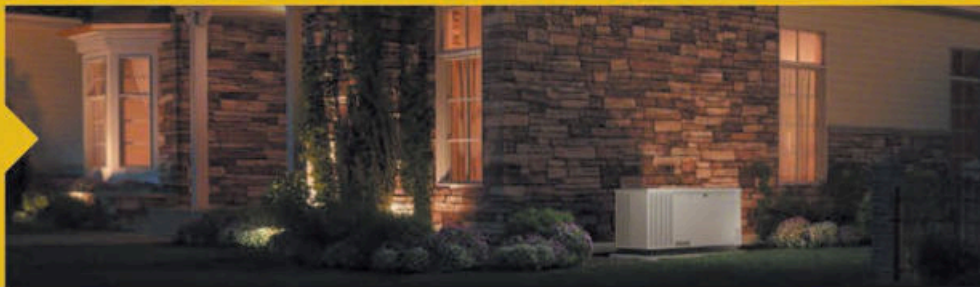
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