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Volume 21, Issue 1

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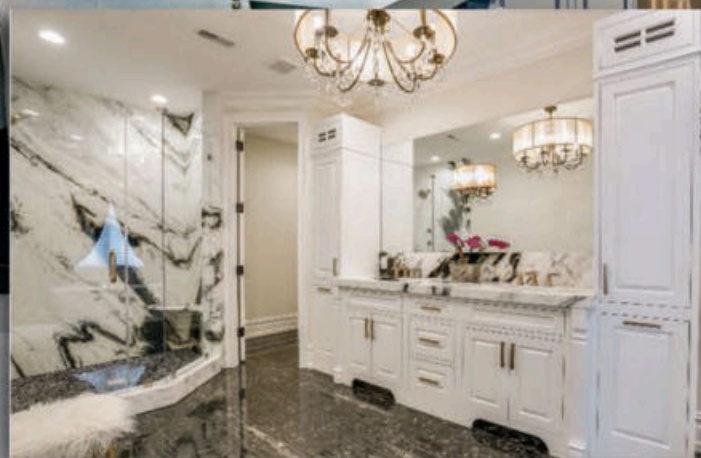
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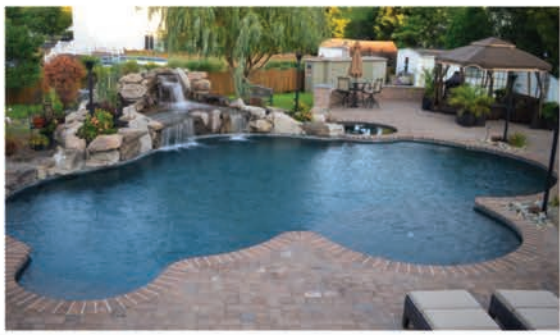
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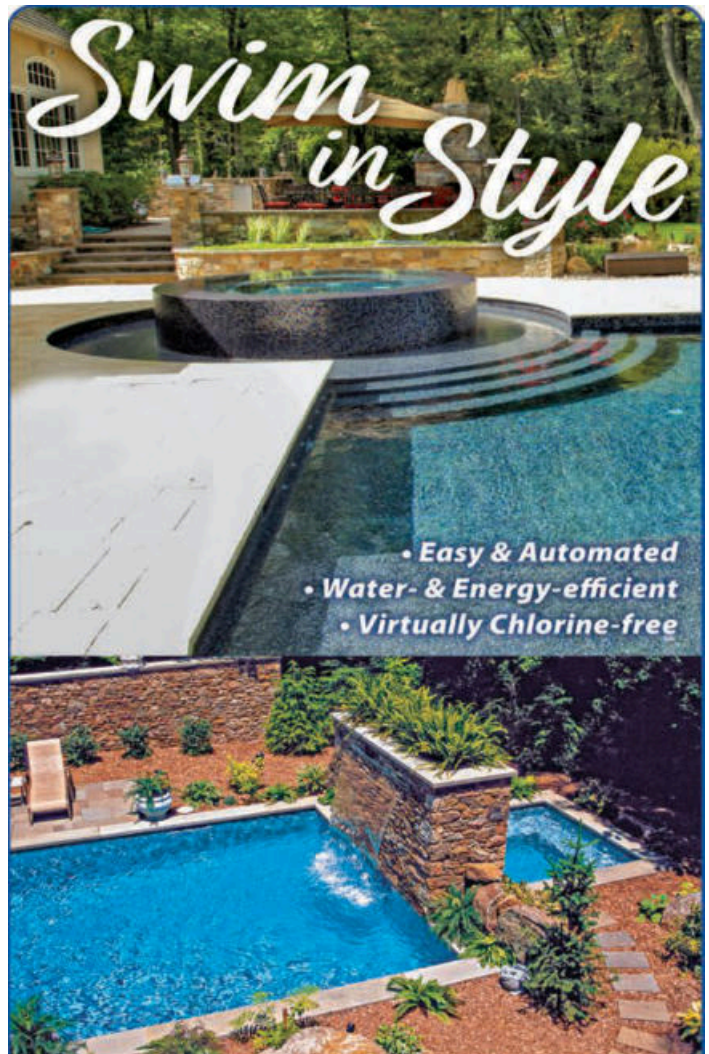
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On the cover:

Homeowners are contemplating updates to their kitchens now more than ever. On page 44, design professionals discuss the benefits of a full remodel or how smaller projects can be just as successful.



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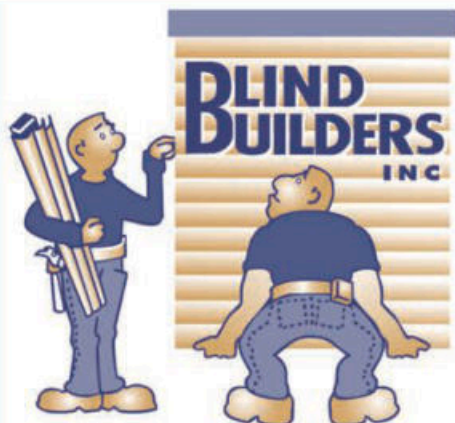
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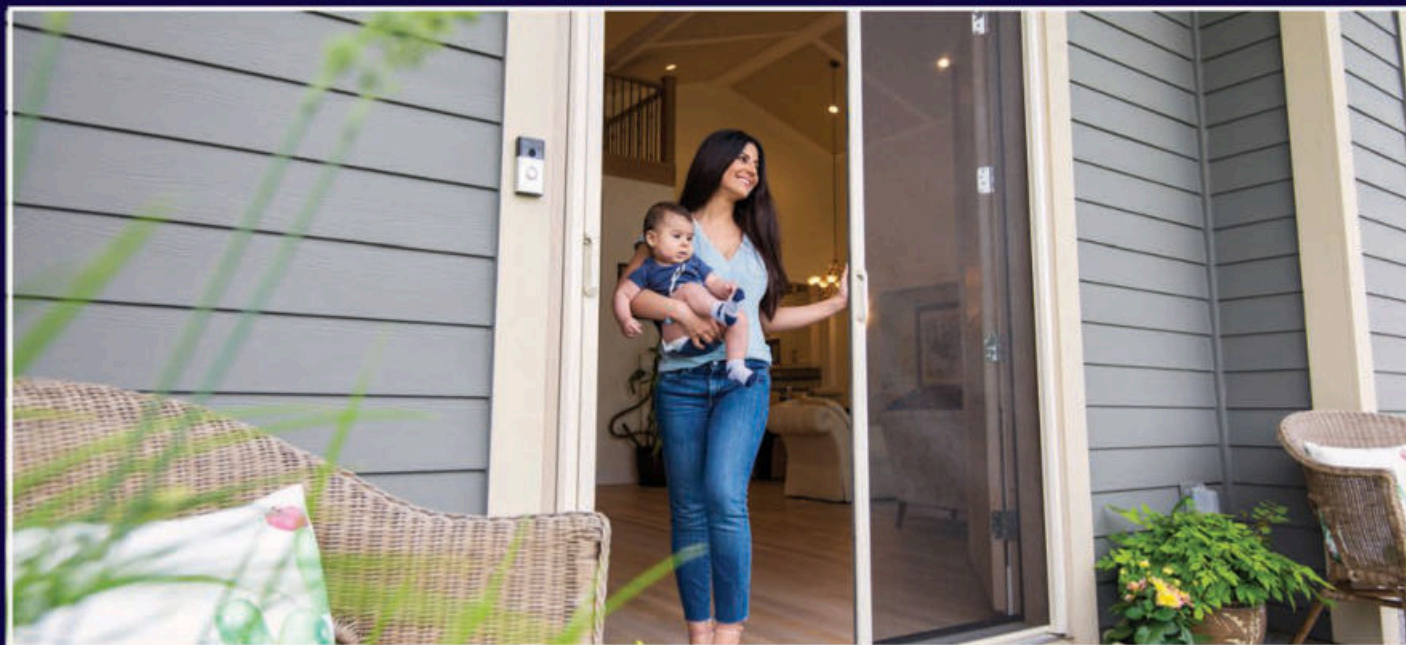
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With families spending extra time in their houses during the pandemic, **home organization is more important than ever.**

■ BY MATT COSENTINO

Organization is a goal that just about every homeowner strives to achieve, but it can be easy to fall short. During hectic days filled with work deadlines and children's extracurricular activities, areas such as master closets, kitchen pantries and garages often get overlooked, no matter how much we would like to keep them straight.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified the issue since many people are working from home and children are learning remotely. With the kitchen table now serving as a desk and a den doubling as a conference room, organization has become even more crucial than ever.

"People are in their houses and they're using their kitchens more and they're using every bit of their house more than they ever have," says Vaughn Hunsicker, who owns ShelfGenie of Philadelphia. "Organization seems to be on top of mind for everyone."

Fortunately, there are plenty of experts available to come up with a custom design and creative solutions for cluttered spaces, or to transform part of the home into an office. Projects that were considered in the past but then put off for one reason or another are now coming to fruition.

"We were much busier than we ever thought we would be in the first three months of the pandemic," says Anthony Brinn, owner of ABC Closets. "We found that homeowners were finding extra time to organize and reduce clutter because their normal schedules were so disrupted. Organizing and cleaning gives us a sense of order and less chaos; it's something we [can] control and it gives us a feeling of empowerment."

FINDING SPACE FOR WORK AND SCHOOL

When the pandemic first hit the United States and businesses moved to a work-from-home model, those employees who already had a designated office in their house were in luck. But many others were left scrambling as they sought space to focus on their daily responsibilities. Throw in their spouses also working from home and their children learning remotely, and there simply wasn't room for everyone to get things done.

"The first few months of staying at home during the coronavirus pandemic showed us all that we need more space to live, work, learn, exercise and relax at home," Brinn says. "We have gotten many calls for home offices as it became clearer that most people will not be returning to the office this year and possibly next. Our customers needed multifunctional spaces that will work





of baseboard molding, and the room can be converted back to its original use when the time comes.

When called for home offices, Waterman says it is important to find out how many people will need work spaces, and his designers come up with solutions for the children as well, since many are at least starting this school year with a component of remote learning.

“Certain areas are for mom and dad, and then we’ll find out how many children need separate areas,” he says. “They may even need a separate space made of a different material, something more robust to stand up to spills and artwork projects that is able to be cleaned up easier.

“Each [child] would need their own drawer for daily

utensils like pens, pencils and papers, and then a set of letter-sized files for each one that would explain each subject matter, each class, artwork, those types of things. There can be a file for each subject, so when class starts virtually there’s not a lot of time running around the house searching for what the child is working on. It’s great to have it right there and it gets everything off the kitchen table. When you log on you’re all ready to go.”

ORGANIZED CLOSETS REDUCE STRESS

It’s been said many times before but it’s worth repeating that an organized closet can go a long way toward getting the day started on the right foot. When the homeowner does not have to sort through a messy space and is able to find all of his or her belongings, it’s easier to be punctual.

“Life is still fast-paced but instead of driving [to work] you’re trying to get to your Zoom meeting on time or trying to log in one time,” Waterman says.

Adds Brinn: “Organization, especially your closet, will greatly help reduce stress levels and eliminates that last-minute scrambling in the morning. It’s important that we reduce any additional stressors in our lives.”

According to Lewis, solutions can be found for closets of any size. He has worked on closets as small as 2 feet wide and has converted adjacent bedrooms into large walk-in closets or dressing rooms. No matter how big the space, the key is customizing it to the client’s lifestyle.

“We find out whether they want hampers or drawers, straight shoe shelves or slanted shoe shelves, if they want baskets to throw scarves in,” he says. “Then we come up with a design for them and tweak it back and forth until they’re totally happy with what they’re getting. I tell everyone, ‘I’m great at what I do but I don’t have to live with it. Let’s get it right the first time so everything makes you happy.’”

Brinn is not discouraged by working on a smaller closet but instead embraces the challenge.

“There are some great solutions you can utilize to maximize a small closet space, or even create a closet when you don’t have one,” he says. “We often find the vertical space in a closet is one of the



as their office, conference room and classroom. One way to make this work for them is to convert basements, attics, garages and guest rooms into an essential multifunctional space.”

Aaron Lewis, owner of Closets For Less, recognizes that many of his customers may need certain rooms to fill multiple needs. For example, a work station can be set up in den with a TV hanging over the desk and a couch off to the side.

“We can add a total office area with a desk, file cabinets, book shelves and an area for a printer,” he says. “We can also use pull-out drawers to hide the printer so the room can be utilized as a study or a den as well. It serves two purposes.”

Charles Waterman, owner of Closets By Design of Southeastern Pennsylvania, has often converted a dining room into an office. Since the room is usually right off the front door, the homeowner can even host business meetings there if necessary. The desk units his company recommends are designed to sit off the wall at the bottom, so they can be used in the dining room without requiring the removal

NICE —and— NEAT

best ways to fully utilize all of the closet space. One option is to continue hanging rods (single or multiple, depending on the amount of short items) with open shelves customized to the homeowners' storage needs. We are able to install multiple closed drawers, which will keep your closet organized, simplified and looking clean.

"Another way to maximize the space available in a small closet is to add closet accessories. For example, a valet rod, tie rack or belt rack allows you to make use of the wall space inside a closet and keep these items neat and organized."

Waterman suggests identifying items that are not being used and moving them to a separate part of the house to create more space. At the other end of the spectrum, several of his clients have requested coffee bars or mini refrigerators for larger walk-ins.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE KITCHEN

Another area of the house that gets used frequently—and can certainly be in need of order—is the kitchen. Although restaurants are starting to bounce back slightly as restrictions are eased, some people still prefer a home-cooked meal for the time being, so they need an organized kitchen.

"People are using their kitchens more not just because they're home all the time but also because they're not going out to eat as much," Hunsicker says. "During the pandemic people are making more dinners and making more lunches. The other thing is if you look at the way new houses are built, there's more open concepts so people are in their kitchen and they're talking to people in their family rooms or living rooms. That's where people tend to congregate in their houses now."

ShelfGenie's glide-out shelves can be custom made for cabinets of any size and shape and are helpful in organizing pots and pans as well as food.

"A lot of our clients are above the age of 55 and it's easier for them to get to things if they have some of our glide-outs," Hunsicker says. "So not only do we help with organization but we help with access. Our designer will come up with a design based on how they use their kitchen and how they want it organized."

"We get a lot of positive feedback; once it's in, people really like it. It's refreshing the space and making it easier to use. That's our main goal—we want to make everything easier in your everyday life and help you organize things."

Lewis points out that better storage in the kitchen, such as adding pull-out drawers to pantries, can help homeowners plan ahead.

"They can buy more stuff in bulk so they're not running out all the time during the pandemic," he says. "They can go to the supermarket once a month instead of every week if they have more space to store everything."

"PEOPLE ARE USING THEIR KITCHENS MORE not just because they're home all the time but also because they're not going out to eat as much."

■ VAUGHN HUNSICKER,
OWNER SHELFGENIE
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OTHER WORTHWHILE PROJECTS

The garage is often a dumping ground for everything from sports equipment to garden tools, so storage solutions such as wall racks, overhead compartments and cabinets can all be useful. There is also much potential in the space, and Brinn hears from many satisfied customers who wish they had tackled the project sooner.

"A garage is a versatile and interesting space and can be transformed into whatever you want it to be," he says. "We have customers choose garage organization for several reasons such as the need to park and protect their cars to utilizing the space for a gym, home office, man cave or bonus room and everything in between. The garage is typically the messiest spot in the home. By having a garage with custom-built cabinets and wall-mounted solutions with bins or hooks for all of your garage items, you will save so much time searching for things. Properly maintaining items in your garage will protect your belongings from dirt, dust, pests and weather changes."

Waterman calls the garage generally the biggest but least utilized room in the house and explains that it can be addressed one section at a time for those with budget concerns. He also believes garage organization is especially useful for busy families.

"There are a lot of events that aren't happening that used to take

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NICE and NEAT

the children out of the home, whether it's a soccer game or club of some sort," he says. "They're playing more at home so it's great to have the toys and other items organized in the garage. ... It's also a great place

healthy and ready to receive us in their homes," Waterman says. "Our designers wear masks and we practice social distancing, but we really need to be able to observe their home to come up with the best solutions. We offer virtual appointments if necessary but we find that we're more effective in person. Being there in person is the best way to see how they utilize and organize their house; it's a wholistic approach to their storage needs." **H&H**



for mom and dad to do projects with the kids during this situation we're in. Whether it's a workbench or a table, they can be potting plants or doing arts and crafts."

Lewis recommends shelving, baskets and bins be used for children's toys and games, whether in the basement or a designated playroom. Another area of the house to think about organizing is the bathroom, where Hunsicker says glide-outs can be beneficial just like in the kitchen.

Whatever the need is, professional organizers are ready to help. They are busier than ever during the pandemic and have changed their protocols to ensure the safety of their employees and customers.

"We're taking all the necessary precautions of calling our customers before the appointment to make sure they're



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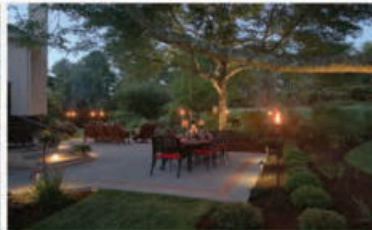
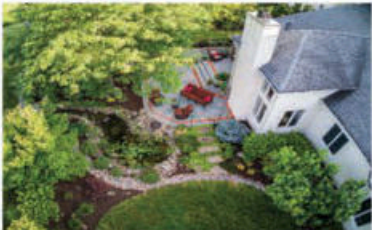
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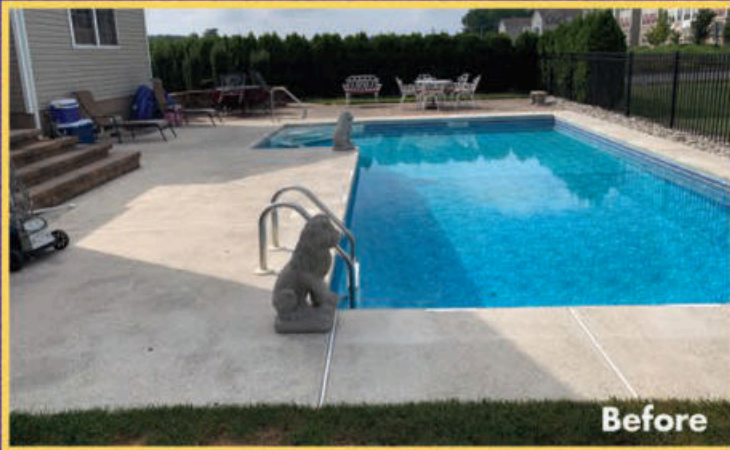
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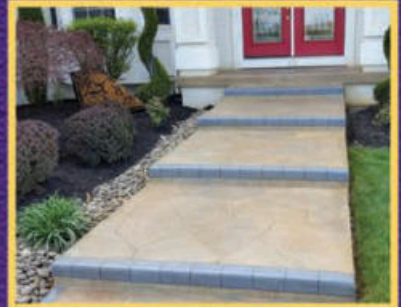
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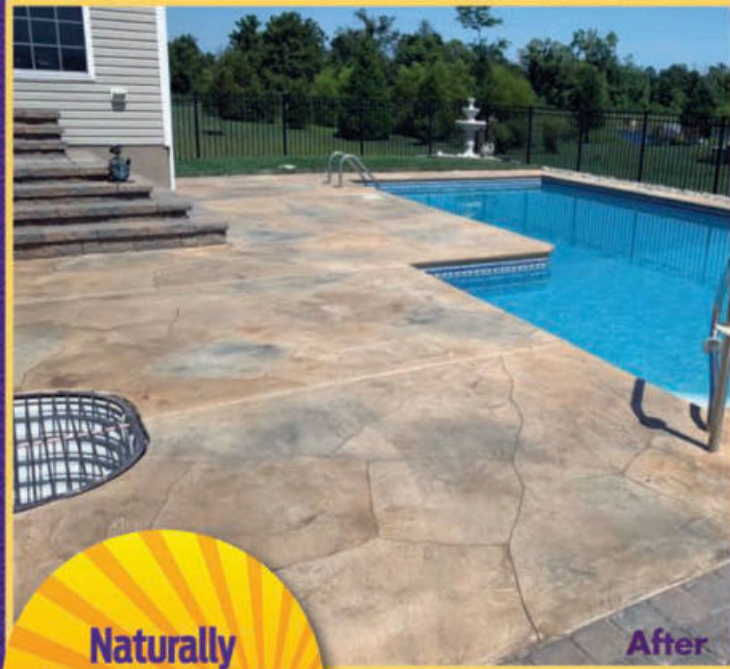


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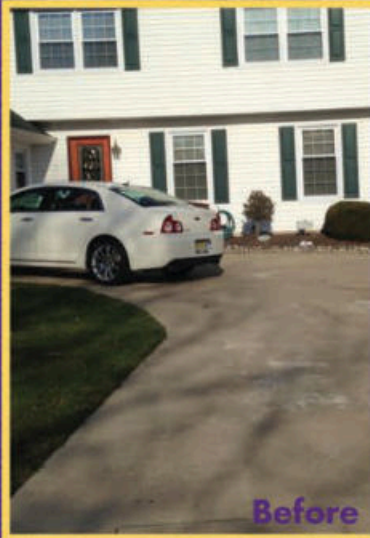
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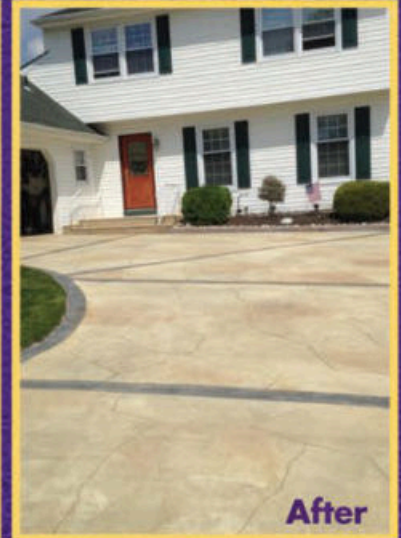
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Smart House

The latest advances in technology can make your home more energy efficient, comfortable and fitting to your family's lifestyle.

In the 21st century, technology has come to be a significant part of our everyday lives, so commonplace that it is no longer remarkable to see someone use their smartphone to video chat or get directions in an instant.

That same technology is available for your home, from smart thermostats to motorized shades to home audio systems to responsive lighting. Smart living technologies like these have certainly been around for years, however, just like your smartphone and computer, today's home gadgets are more sophisticated. Your lights can be controlled even when you're away at work or on vacation. The home theater is sleeker and more streamlined.

So, maybe it's time to take another look at the smart living technologies in your house. Or, if you're a newcomer to smart devices, it's time to upgrade your space. Either way, you'll find that smart home devices make living easier.

UPGRADING NETWORKS

The coronavirus pandemic has people working from home and taking meetings through Zoom video conference. Meanwhile, students are attending school by livestreaming classes on their computers. All that bandwidth at one time is causing a strain for many families.

Neil Wiessler, president of Shore Sound & Cinema, says he receives more calls today for network upgrades than any other service.

“With multiple family members all trying to run Zoom calls for both work and education simultaneously, the demand on networks, that we designed for entertainment and lifestyle purposes, are being crushed by the need for greater speed and bandwidth,” he says.

"Now the kids have to do school from home, and parents are working from home and it's just not cutting it," says Harry Blanchard, senior sales engineer for Creative Systems. "Our enterprise grade networks are becoming more valuable and more sought out to people."

Additionally, smart home technologies in many cases need to connect to your WiFi network just like your smartphone or tablet.

"All the smart home devices basically need to be connected to the internet to get their updates and to control them from your phone," says Scott Leonard, system engineer and designer at Valley Automation.

With so many devices linked to your WiFi network, it's important to have a strong signal throughout your house.

“If you don’t have a good connection with your home WiFi on your phone, you won’t be able to have a good experience with your smart home devices,” Leonard says.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Having an energy-efficient home is good for the environment but it's even better for your wallet. And smart home technologies are a great way to reduce your energy use.

Blocking out sunlight during the hottest parts of the day is one way to lessen how often your air conditioner needs to run. Motorized shades provide a solution, allowing you to keep your home cooler without straining your AC and giving you the ability to easily roll your blinds up or down.

Smart lighting devices can stop you from accidentally leaving switches on around the house. In fact, you can use your phone to pro-

gram your lights to turn on or off according to your schedule.

But the No. 1 way to better equip your house for better energy management is to install a smart thermostat. Thomas McCarty, a comfort specialist at C&C Heating & Air Conditioning, says today's smart thermostats can be set up to automatically relieve the temperature of your home by a few degrees when you are away.

“And then we would set it to automatically come back to your desired comfort settings so that when you arrive home, your house is already at the desired comfort temperature,” he says. “The couple of degrees of difference over a period of time is pretty significant energy savings.”

Your smart thermostat will also collect data on your home's energy usage and that information can be used to help you make more informed decisions.

“You can look at your monthly trend from year to year, and it’ll say what the average temperature was that month and how much energy was consumed in your home that month,” McCarty says. “So if you’re looking at your smart control and it’s telling you over the last three years you’ve used more and more energy as each year goes by, it’s a good indicator that there might be an issue.”

LIGHTING

Integrating your lights into one system is one of the most popular smart home upgrades. Homeowners say they love the convenience of being able to control their lights even when they are away from home, along with the

ability to set the system on a timer.

"And the one-touch programming allows [the homeowners] to basically have the same light settings every time so they don't have to go around to different rooms and adjust the dimmers," Leonard says.

People can also use their lighting control system as a security measure by setting it to mimic that someone is home when they are not.

Smart lighting systems can be operated from a keypad installed in your home or by smartphone or tablet. They can also be voice activated with the use of a Google Home, Amazon Echo or a similar home speaker.

"Instead of going around and switching buttons, you can say [to] whatever the device is, 'Hey, turn off my lights in the kitchen,'" Leonard says. "And the lights in the kitchen will turn off."

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT

Home theaters with surround sound and high-definition viewing have been fashionable for a long time. But equipment for older home theater systems has aged and some people are finding that the quarantine imposed by the coronavirus pandemic is a good time to upgrade.

Blanchard says many of the systems he's been called to redo lately are 10 to 20 years old.

Homeowners are also wanting to take their entertainment outdoors by installing an outdoor television and landscape speakers in their patio or backyard. Both can be done creatively.

"I have a project where the TV is hidden in a container that looks like a stack of firewood," Blanchard says. "So when [the homeowner] wants to watch the TV, it rises up out of this stack of firewood. And when she doesn't need it, it motorizes back down inside."

Down at the Shore, entertaining outside is the norm so this is a highly desired amenity.

"Here at the beach, Shore living is a different dynamic, so our clients tend to focus more on the outdoor lifestyle," Wiessler says, adding that outdoor TVs are in demand.

INSTALLATION

There are some DIY ways to bootstrap your house with smart devices but installation can be tricky.

"Today's technology is ever evolving," Wiessler says. "And you don't want to rely on the neighbor's kid or your buddy from college for tech support."

Installation by a professional can save you a lot of headaches. It is also generally a swift process.

"It depends on how complicated the system is and how many devices [the homeowner] wants to install at one time," Leonard says. "Minimum it could be an hour. You could be looking at half a day for a couple of devices if you wanted to do a thermostat or some lighting installation."

But once you've gotten your devices in place, you may find that you never knew how you lived without them.

Leonard says homeowners who have one smart device installed often find themselves wanting to add another to their living space soon after.

"A lot of times we get calls to come back and do another area of their home," he says. **H&H**



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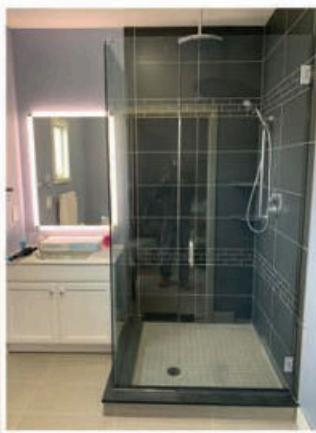
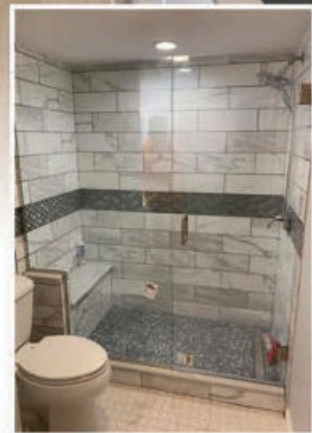
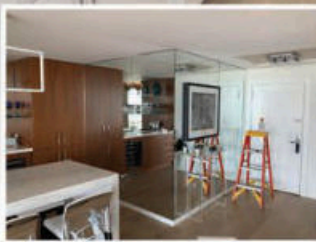
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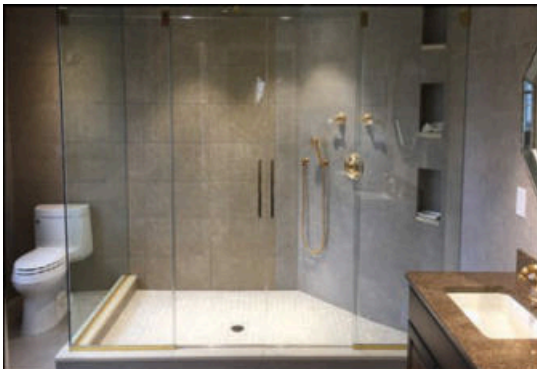
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Germ-Nix

by **Matt Cosentino**

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the world to think differently about safety, disinfection and cleanliness, Robert DiNunzio had already established himself in a field he feels passionate about. With 25 years of experience in the health care industry—many of those as the director of environmental services at hospitals throughout the country—he founded Legion Building Services in 2011 to offer professional cleaning to operating rooms, surgical suites and other health care facilities.

In 2019 he doubled down on his commitment by starting Germ-Nix, which provides the highest level of disinfection services to commercial and residential clients. Although demand was already high to reduce dangerous bacteria, germs and diseases, little did DiNunzio know at the time just how relevant Germ-Nix would become. With the onset of the pandemic, the need has only grown for the guidance his company can deliver.

House & Home spoke with DiNunzio to learn more about his company, the benefits of disinfecting and what separates Germ-Nix from its competitors.

Why did you decide to start Germ-Nix in 2019?

I saw a need in the maintenance division of so many hospitals regarding proper cleaning and disinfecting and started Legion Building Services to address that need in the health care industry, but I was also getting requests outside of the health care industry from government buildings, private businesses and homeowners. I started Germ-Nix so we could benefit a larger variety of clients. This was prior to the coronavirus pandemic; it was in response to what has been a problem for decades in hospitals and homes throughout the world, everything from the seasonal flu to MRSA and hospital-borne infections.

Many people might think deep cleaning is all that is necessary, but can you explain the difference that disinfecting makes?

Utilizing proper equipment, with an EPA reg-



Robert DiNunzio, Founder and President

istered disinfectant, will eradicate 99.99% of germs and bacteria that live both in high and low surfaces. Our equipment allows us to spray a disinfectant from ceiling to floor and that is more reassuring and efficient than wiping every surface by hand. General cleaning utilizing a cloth or sponge reduces germs on the reachable surface. Spray disinfecting, meanwhile, kills the germs on the reachable surfaces and unreachable surfaces.

Why is Germ-Nix different from other companies?

I believe that one of the main differences about Germ-Nix is that our staff is made up of infection preventionists, epidemiologists as well as certified technicians. The majority of our associates have worked in hospitals and in the health care industry. Many other businesses have added on disinfecting as a service, but do not have the experience of what is expected in a hospital or operating room. We also validate our disinfecting processes utilizing adenosine triphosphate (ATP) monitoring devices that read the level of bacteria, living and once living, on a surface, via swab. We offer free education to business owners, schools and government about bacteria and disinfecting processes, which may prevent potential problems to the general public.

Do you work with a wide range of clients?

Yes. Our clients include all industries—retail, transportation, businesses, schools, universities, residential properties and government buildings. There isn't an industry that we are unable to service. We have been working with several restaurants that have struggled with the closure of inside dining and limited capacity. Germ-Nix provides these restaurant owners the resources and knowledge to re-open and stay open safely. We have helped many small businesses with complimentary training and disinfection so that they may open their doors to the public once again and

not live in fear of losing their livelihood. Before this pandemic started, people didn't want to talk about the fact that they had a disinfecting company treat their establishment. Now, disinfecting a workplace is broadcasted publicly. It also eases the mind of employees and patrons when they see signs stating that "This Area Has Been Disinfected."

Why hire Germ-Nix for your home?

Our homes are supposed to be our safe zone. However, when it comes to bacteria it may not be as safe as you think. Our disinfecting methods reach everywhere you cannot reach by hand. Some of our clients are immunocompromised or have been hospitalized and released and need to come home to a disinfected environment. We also treat the homes of people who are caring for a loved one on hospice surrounded by medical equipment, which also needs to be disinfected.

Do you feel that disinfection will be necessary beyond the crisis?

Absolutely. Disinfecting and keeping bacteria at bay isn't a new standard but the process that Germ-Nix uses to keep these contagions at bay is. If you care about your health and the health of those around you our disinfecting service and treatment can be used as a preventive measure at home or work. We partner with you so your family, guests, employees and visitors feel comfortable knowing a health care-based professional disinfecting company is eradicating your facility of any potential contagious bacteria, germs and viruses. Our technicians thoroughly and professionally disinfect with the same standards required in a hospital or an operating room. Harmful germs, bacteria and viruses have been here long before COVID-19, during COVID-19 and will be here long after COVID-19 and so will Germ-Nix because we want you to live, work and play in a healthy environment. **H&H**

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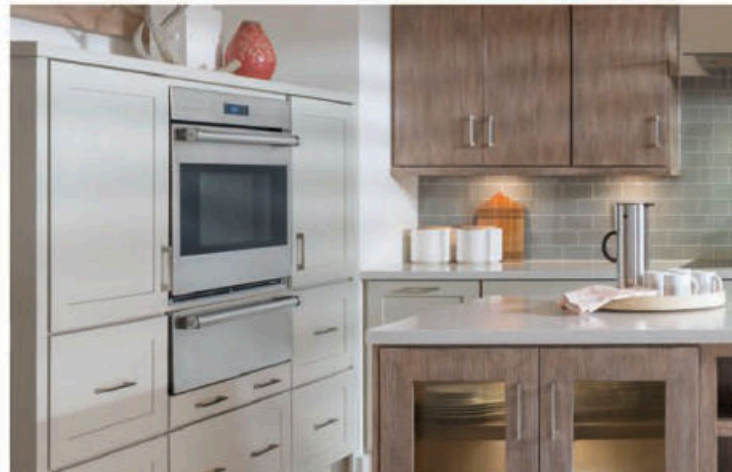
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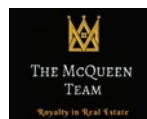
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Shore Real Estate by

**Why now more than ever, should a homeowner buy or sell a Shore home?**

Right now, rates are the lowest they have been in years, now is the time to shop for that summer beach home or investment property. With the rates being this low, homeowners who are thinking about selling should be selling because there is a high demand for properties, meaning that they have a better chance of getting full market value for their home.

Why should a homeowner choose you for their realtor?

I offer a few standout services, one being that myself and my team will give our clients 100 percent from start to finish. With advice and guidance helping them through the entire process, as well as keeping the lines of communication open all the time. As a Keller Williams agent we also have everything at our fingertips—my personal app is perfect for home shopping, they can bookmark favorite properties, save searches and check out the neighborhood. The best thing about our app is that it is 100% accurate because it is the live MLS.

What trends are there in your industry?

Mortgage rates are really low right now, and many people are looking to relocate from the city to the Shore. This has resulted in a surge of demand for Shore properties. The Ventnor and Margate areas provide a wonderful atmosphere and lovely towns in which to raise children, as well as to retire. I am the specialist in these geographic areas, and live as well as work here. I highly recommend a property at the Shore, and I am extremely well qualified and experienced in making that a reality for you.



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**Why now more than ever, should a homeowner invest in their home?**

Through this pandemic we are limited in choices of where and what we can do. So why not use what you have in your yard to create your own backyard paradise? In this housing market it's a great way to make your home stand out amongst the competition.

What products/services do you offer a homeowner that separates you from your competition?

We supply everything you need to construct your project. We also have a great staff that can answer your questions. We spend time with customers helping them decide if they can do the job on their own, or if they need to hire help. We have a Qualified Contractor list to help out customers.

With the current situation at hand, are there any protocols that your company has to ensure the safety of the homeowner?

We are following all the CDC recommendations for social distancing. We are doing our best to stay clean and healthy. All employees are screened and wearing masks inside the sales office, and products can be delivered without any contact.

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Are there any new products/trends in your industry that you provide?

New siding products and the complete line of Azek and composite decking, as well as new vinyl flooring that looks like natural wood and is great for Shore homes and condos.

Why now more than ever should homeowners invest in their second homes at the Shore?

With these uncertain times, investing money into your home will be an investment that you can enjoy for years to come.

What advice do you give to homeowners planning a project now?

You want to make sure your contractor has a solid reputation and portfolio. With us, you can rest assured that our team can create the right look and plan for your upcoming project.

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Why should a homeowner invest in their home now?

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BY
MATT COSENTINO

***A BEAUTIFUL DECK
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It gives homeowners the perfect place to take in some fresh air, bask in the sun and gather with family and friends for burgers and dogs on the grill or perhaps a strawberry daiquiri or two.

While that remains a popular visual, the fact is that decks are no longer just for summer. As the outdoor industry has exploded in recent years, so too have the possibilities for extended enjoyment. It is now more important to add certain elements to the space that will make it usable well into the cooler months—and maybe even year-round.

“Especially if you’re spending the kind of money that our clients do, you want to get the most out of it,” says Bradley Sensenich of Keystone Custom Decks. “Bringing in features and ideas that can extend the usable season of that space is a big priority.”

Keith Frederick of Environmental Landscape Associates adds that designers have had to adapt to customers’ wants and needs and approach every job with the mission of providing a space that can be enjoyed at all times.

“It’s not just a simple deck project anymore; it’s more like a porch or three-season room,” he says. “It’s all based on the outdoor living lifestyle of utilizing the space 365 days a year, even if you’re not hanging out there for a long period of time. If you’re having a holiday party in the wintertime, people can still congregate out there and smoke cigars without freezing. We see a lot of our projects encompass those elements and a lot of folks are using them on a year-round basis. It gives you much more value for the dollar spent because you

YMENT

YOUR DECK WAY BEYOND THE SUMMER.

Photo courtesy of Keystone Custom Decks



get a lot more.”

House & Home spoke with several area professionals to learn more about the options available for utilizing outdoor living spaces no matter what the calendar says.

TAKE COVER

Bill Lecorchick Jr. followed his father into the deck-building industry and now works side by side with him at Legends Home Improvements. One of the many tips he learned from his dad is that nothing adds as much value to a deck as a roof.

“The longer I do this, the more I believe it,” Lecorchick says. “In most backyards there’s no shade, so when you go outside the sun is beating down. You get an umbrella but that acts like a sun dial; you’re just following the shade. It’s a losing battle because you can’t put up enough umbrellas to make it usable.

“When you put up a roof and attach it to the house, it gives you automatic shade and you have the option of putting some blinds up for when sun is coming in through the side. If you set them up strategically and you know where the sun is going to be, you can enjoy dinner outside without getting blasted by the sun.”

Juan Cardona of Archadeck of Chester County agrees and estimates that at least half of the projects his company completes include some type of shade structure.

“If you’re looking for shade, I would say go with a roof,” he says. “A pergola is only going to offer you minimal shade unless you put a retractable awning underneath it or another method of solid shade. By the time you get done with that, the cost approaches that of a roof anyway. The roof is much more preferable because it keeps you dry in addition to giving you shade. If it’s a rainy day or a somewhat iffy day, you can always be under it, whereas with a pergola you really can’t.”

Both Lecorchick and Cardona add that pergolas can add a nice focal point to a deck or other area of a backyard. The same holds true of a gazebo—just don’t expect the same advantages of a roof.

“A gazebo is mostly for people who cannot attach a roof to the house,” Cardona says. “They’re looking for solid shade, they’re looking for someplace to stay dry, but for whatever reason they cannot attach a roof to the house, perhaps because of how the house is configured. Or maybe they just prefer a gazebo; some people like the distinct, octagonal shape of a gazebo. It can be a matter of aesthetics.”

Sean McAleer, owner of Deck Remodelers, says louvered roofs have become quite popular because they allow the best of both worlds. When the weather is favorable, you can open up the roof to let the sunshine in, and with one click of a button, you can close the roof to the elements while still being able to enjoy the outdoors.

The Equinox system that Deck Remodelers installs is “built to last,” according to McAleer. “The system we use is built for snow load and is rated to withstand 160 mph winds.”

As the fall season approaches and with coronavirus still a lingering concern, McAleer says the covered roof allows you the ability to still host family and friends while remaining outdoors.

“People want to do social distancing. If you can do it under your louvered roof with heaters on, you can have people over and you are outside with a feeling of safety,” he says.

AN OUTDOOR ROOM

The roof is the necessary first step, but it doesn’t have to end there. “You can also throw some screens on so there’s no sun and no mosquitoes,” Lecorchick says. “If you do glass windows instead of the screens and put in some heaters, you can be out there just about all year. You can just keep upgrading.”

There are several routes a homeowner can take depending on budget and lifestyle.

“Screen rooms and covered structures are extremely popular today,” says Joe Kalnas of My Deck. “We can install drop screens for an instant screen room under a roof structure or build a permanent screened-in area. We also offer a 4-track system that opens for 75 percent ventilation and still can close to keep out the rain, snow and pollen in the spring.”

Both Sensenich and Frederick have done home projects with retractable screens or windows like the ones common in outdoor seating areas at restaurants. Although a bit on the pricey side, these can be motorized or manual and allow the homeowner to easily adapt to the current weather conditions.

As for keeping the space warm in the fall and spring, there are a number of different heating sources.

“It depends on what the goal of the client is and how extensively they’re looking to heat the space,” Sensenich says. “If they’re just looking to spend time in the early fall, a fireplace is a great way to heat the space. If they’re looking to really extend the usability of their deck, a lot of times we’ll open the conversation up to installing actual heaters into the space. We do a lot of infrared heaters and that tends to heat up the room well.”

Infrared heaters can be mounted on the ceiling or the walls and Frederick offers a key suggestion.

“We typically use electric for residential applications,” he says. “Most commercial and restaurant applications use gas just because they’re usually burning for extended periods of time, whereas in residential applications you’re usually out there for an hour or two. It’s not like you need that space heated for an entire night or an entire day. It’s more economical to run the electric if you’re running it for short periods of time. It’s less expensive to



Top photo courtesy of Legends Home Improvements. Bottom photo courtesy of Archadeck of Chester County

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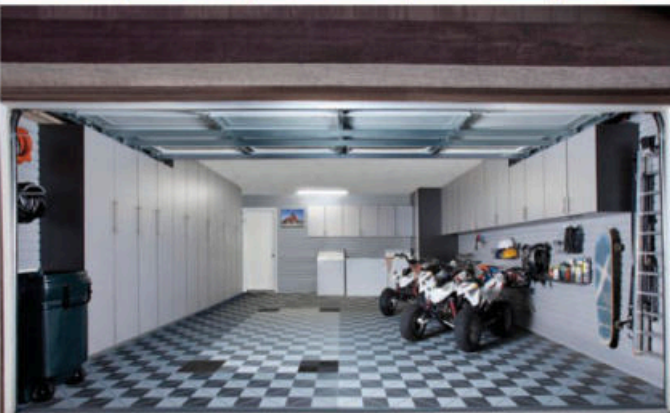
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TIME FOR ACTION

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been crippling for many industries, construction is not one of them, particularly when it comes to outdoor living spaces. Just about every professional contacted for this article reported an uptick in business this summer, with Sensenich calling it "our busiest year by far."

"Everyone is spending much more time at home," Kalnas says, "so it makes sense that people are investing in their home."

Lecorchick points to people using their tax refunds and money saved from not eating out to update their spaces. Vacations have also been replaced by stay-cations. "If your new office is your kitchen table and you're staring out the door all day, you're paying a lot of attention to your yard. That's why we've been working the whole time and still have appointments scheduled for [fall]."

"That's very much true this year," Cardona concludes. "Since people can't go on their regular vacation to the Caribbean or wherever they normally go, they have decided to upgrade their outdoor space and vacation there. The way the market has reacted after COVID, that seems to be the case. People are home, they're looking at their outdoor spaces and they're looking to fix them up."

McAleer concurs, saying a

lot of the demand his company is seeing is pandemic driven. "People are home, looking out the windows and they want a destination in their backyard to feel like they are getting out of the house and also to be able to entertain." **H&H**



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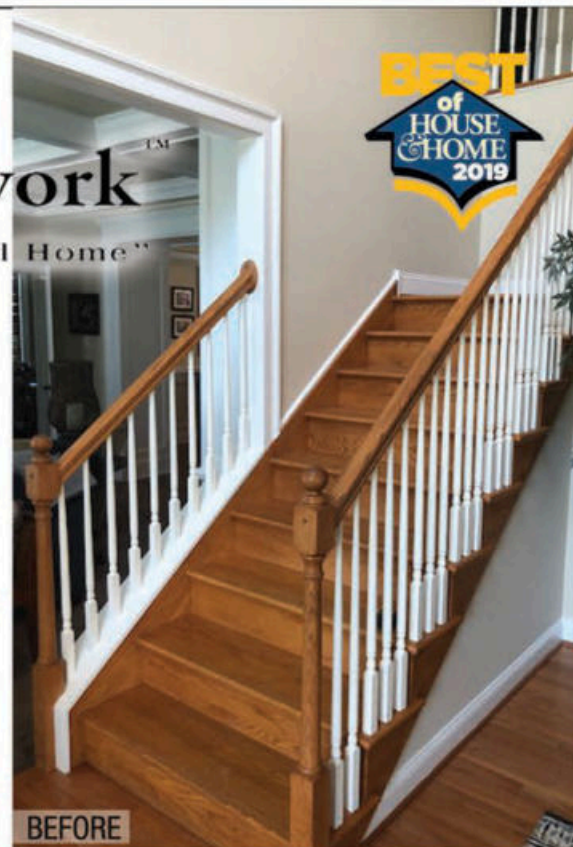


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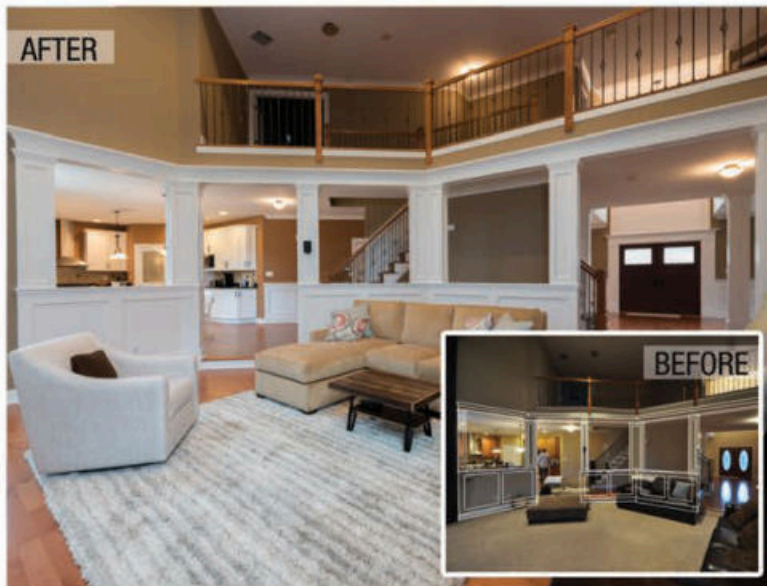
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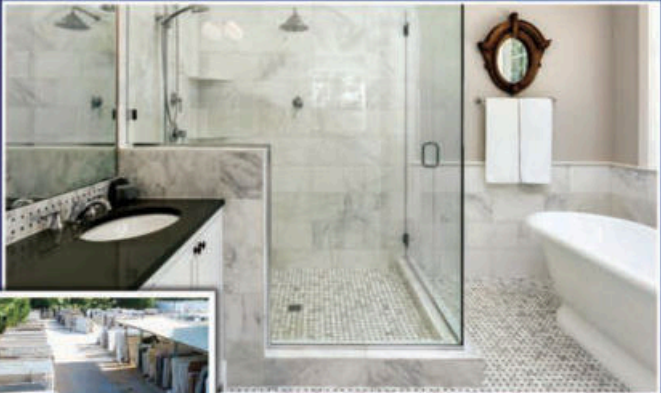
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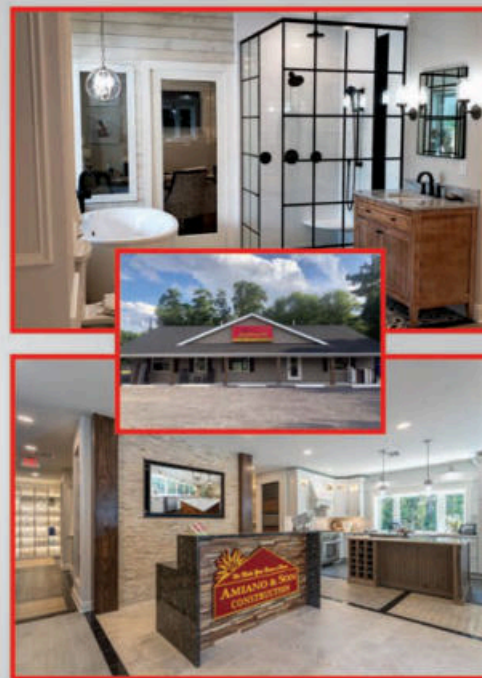
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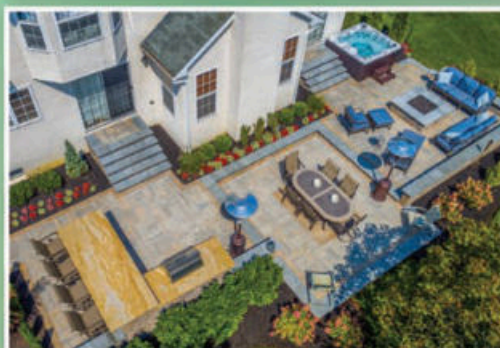
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COOKING UP A

New Look

by **Liz Hunter**

The big and small ways to update your kitchen.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives and while much of it has been negative, an unexpected boost has been seen in the area of home improvements.

“We have been working more during the pandemic than we have in years,” says Steve Matteo of Matteo Family Kitchens and Flooring. “Clients who have been

working from home and possibly canceled vacations or trips ... have focused on creating a new, up-to-date space in their homes.” Projects he’s been creating estimates for include everything from full kitchen and bathroom remodels to countertop and backsplashes and flooring. “Contractors are scheduled out for weeks at this point,” Matteo continues.

For those who haven’t yet taken action to upgrade their kitchens, local design experts offered their perspective on the minor or major ways to give this space—often seen as the heart of the home—a new look.

SMALL UPDATES, BIG DIFFERENCE

You don’t always have to gut your kitchen



to get a new look. “That’s one of the biggest misconceptions,” says Mike Werner of AAA Hellenic. “Just by changing the countertops and fixtures, you can get a fresh look and feel in the kitchen with easy things like that.”

Perhaps cost is limiting you to only one or two things to be done. Matteo says to decide which option is in the most need and also if other changes down the road are coming, will it be affected? “For instance, if we upgrade the countertops and in a few years you want to change the kitchen cabinets you will be locked into keeping the same

exact floor plan and there will be increased costs in removing the new countertop to install new cabinets,” he says. “I always love the look a new floor can make in a kitchen remodel. The options are limitless with styles and colors and should not be a problem to work around if a new kitchen is done at a later date.”

For kitchen surfaces such as countertops or backsplashes, Werner recommends doing these together. “A lot of times when you want to change your countertop but leave the existing backsplash, we can run into issues of height and gaps. It’s nice to be able to demo the countertop and backsplash in one shot.”

This also ensures the colors and tones come together as imagined. Marble and quartzite are becoming more popular as people look for the beauty of natural stone, Werner says. “Everyone is leaning toward cool colors—blue, gray, and sometimes a rusty gold—in 2020.” And that goes for backsplashes too, which are being toned down in white and soft grays.

“Patterns are also being simplified in smaller mosaics of herringbone or chevron to create interest in the grout joints. Less is more as far as tile,” he continues.



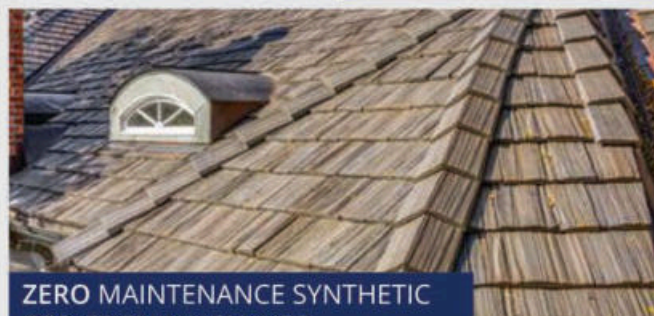
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If you're changing the countertop, it's an ideal time to change your sink as well, Matteo adds, and the most commonly requested are farm sinks. "Joanna Gaines has inspired a nation that a farm sink is the only way to go. We are asked to install these sinks in new kitchen designs and also while replacing the countertops alone."

Cabinets are the most critical when it comes to both functionality and looks. If the other elements around them are updated, they can become shabby, says David Cerami, CKBR (certified kitchen and bath remodeler), of HomeTech Renovations and sister company Let's Face It, a cabinet refacing business.

"You might love the design of your kitchen, and upgrading the cabinets through refacing is smart economically," Cerami says.



White cabinets are the top color choice among 70 percent of homeowners, says Linda Fennessey of Kitchen Magic.

"Clients can choose any door in any color, any finish; add interior organization with roll-outs or pull-outs—little things that are still an investment without the blowout of a remodel."

Linda Fennessey of Kitchen Magic says cabinet refacing entails laminating the existing cabinet box frames and replacing the doors, drawers and hardware. "By using the existing cabinet boxes by overlaying a

veneer on the frames in the new color and style ... you've renewed the cabinets. It's the doors and drawers that typically take a beating, so by replacing those components, the cabinets look brand new."

According to Fennessey, 70 percent of homeowners are getting some form of white cabinet, but gray, stone and greige are also serious contenders. "Woods are still popular, but less busy grains

like creamy maples versus busy oaks that are out of date. Cherry and dark woods have fallen down on the list as homeowners are looking to brighten their cabinets and use flat colors. Barnwood is a favorite for those looking for that rustic or farmhouse look."

Refacing saves time, stress and money. "The remodel is complete in under five days," she says. "The savings is significant too. ... Many homeowners re-

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invest their savings into new countertops, backsplash or appliances.” And, refacing rarely requires permits, she adds.

Refacing companies can also take care of other kitchen design details, such as under-cabinet lighting, crown moldings, floating shelves and adding islands. “The kitchen island is replacing the kitchen table these days. It adds more storage and allows for a second sink or stove top, display shelves, wine fridge, a microwave nook, an extra prep space and seating for two or more,” Fennessy says.

WHEN REMODELING FEELS RIGHT

Although smaller updates do bring big changes, sometimes the ideas or look a homeowner wants require a complete remodel. “Most of what we get calls for are full-scale remodels,” says Dan Dilworth, president of Dilworth's Custom Design. “While we still do smaller jobs, we try to educate the client to make sure if they are trying to just do a partial job it

may not end up meeting their dream expectations. ... If someone likes the current layout of their kitchen, does it make sense to do a full remodel, or how can you help them make updates without gutting? Sometimes when trying to do just a part of the job we need to disturb too many surrounding things that it makes sense to go all the way.”

Although Cerami's company, Let's Face It, handles refacing, HomeTech Renovations is a full-service remodeling firm. “Refacing could be a good option if you're selling your home in a year, but if you're going to be there for the next 50, you might want to go with the full monty, floor-to-ceiling remodel,” he says. “At HomeTech, a complete new kitchen is like rebuilding an engine. You're replacing everything for another lifetime, not putting patches on it.”

This is where a certified designer comes into play. “A major kitchen remodel is not a straight A to B path. You need a plan

and someone who can integrate everything into a fluid design and help you personalize it,” Cerami says.

HomeTech offers its own custom line of cabinets that are locally made and sourced, which are more economically priced, but costs do go up with custom cabinets in general due to the labor. “We do not see glazes that were popular years ago; antiquing is gone in favor of cleaner lines. Rather than highly ornate details, they want transitional, modified shaker style,” he says.

“In a lot of projects, most clients are going with white, off-white and shades of gray, and often the island might be a different color than the main kitchen cabinets. ... It depends on the age and comfort level of the customer,” Cerami says.

Even with the big picture mapped out, Cerami says it takes a qualified designer to identify the hinges, countertops, faucets and appliances to get the full price. **H&H**



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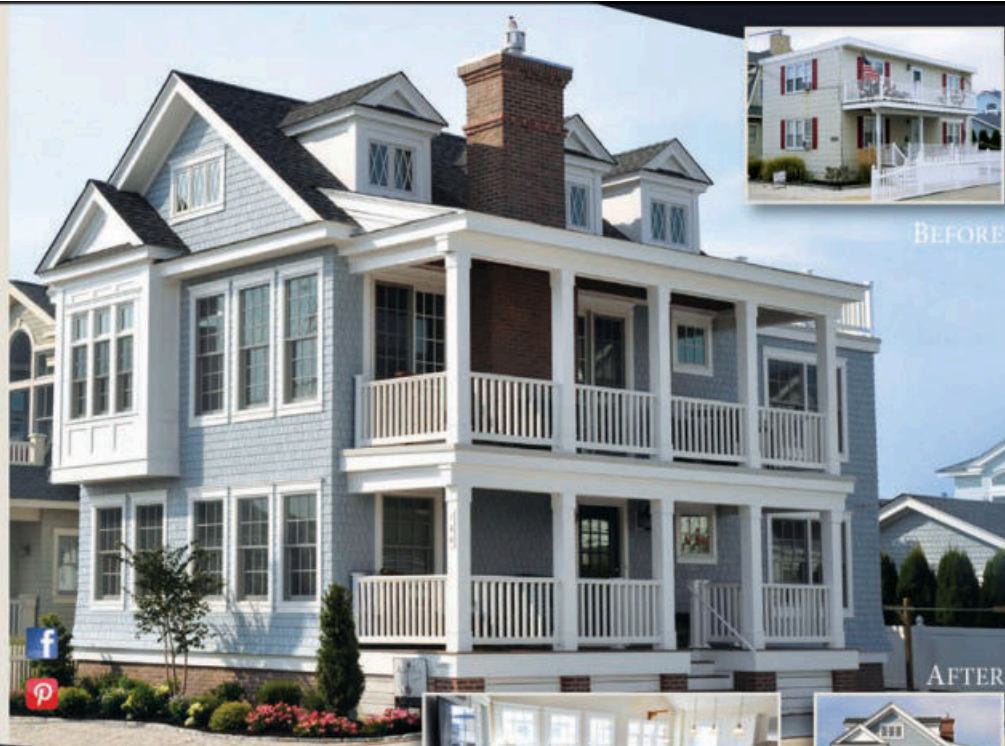
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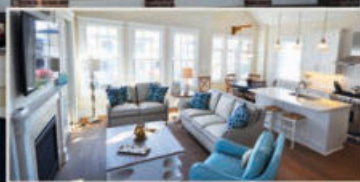




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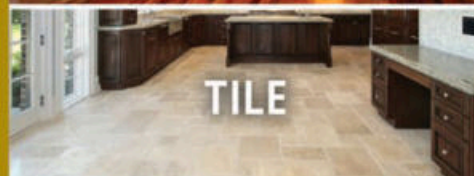
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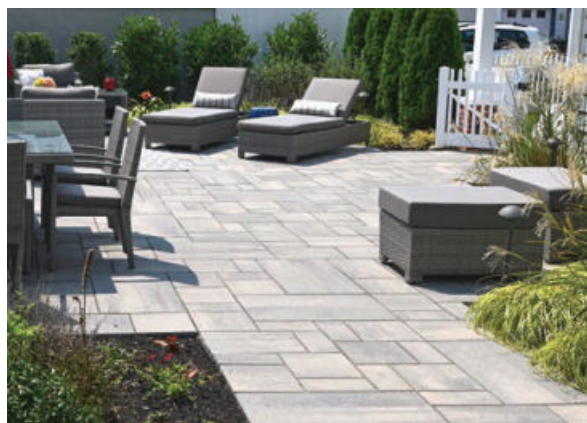
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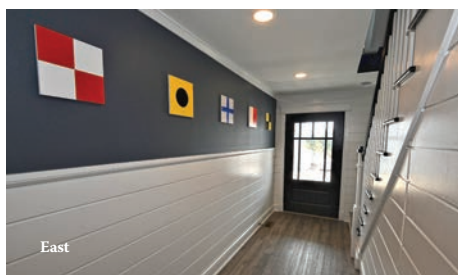
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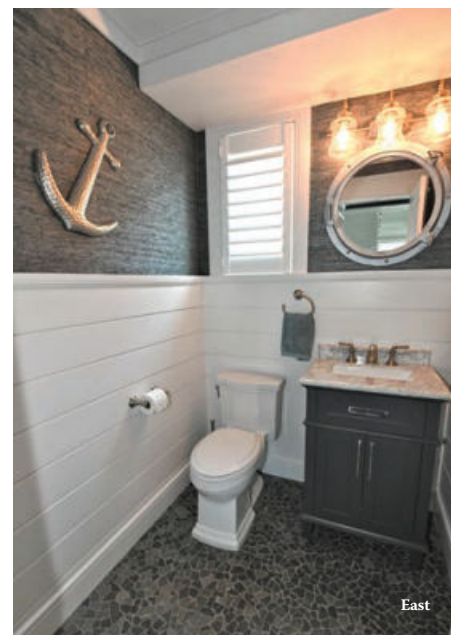
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West



East



The east and west sides of this twin home in Sea Isle City are each owned by sisters and used exclusively as their family vacation homes. This project began in 2016 with completely gutting both east and west, which allowed them to accomplish the goals of raising the previously low ceilings and roof line as well as adding bathrooms on the first floor for the growing families. Interior designer Tina Marie Warren says this project presented unique challenges working with two different owners who each have their own styles, while still creating a cohesive look. The east side's interior has Nantucket charm with a transitional approach, she says, captured by the contrast of navy, pure white shiplap and soft gray walls, accentuated by slate, cut rock and glass tile. The west side is Cape Cod meets traditional, incorporating a nautical theme with porthole mirrors, vintage lantern-style fixtures in aged bronze, wrought iron and jute accompanied by distressed and reclaimed wood touches throughout. Shared colors and nautical accents marry the homes to provide these families a "compound" where they can create memories for generations to come.



West



West

House Home

Shore Resource Directory

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Fine Architecture

609-427-6732
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Clock Repair

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germnixllc.com

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Quality Carpets

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Seashore Floors

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southjerseyhardwood.com

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610-364-5177 | zakianrugs.com

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countrylanefurniture.com

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Stone Tech Fabrication
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vikingcasual.com

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doylewindowtinting.com

Precision Glass Tint
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precisionglassinnj.com

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