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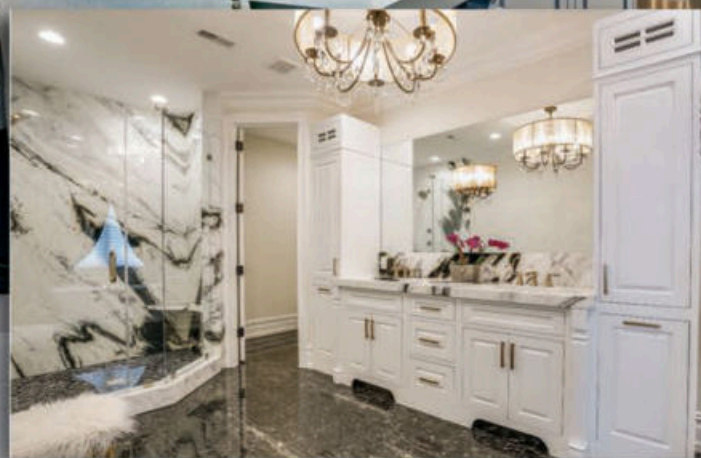


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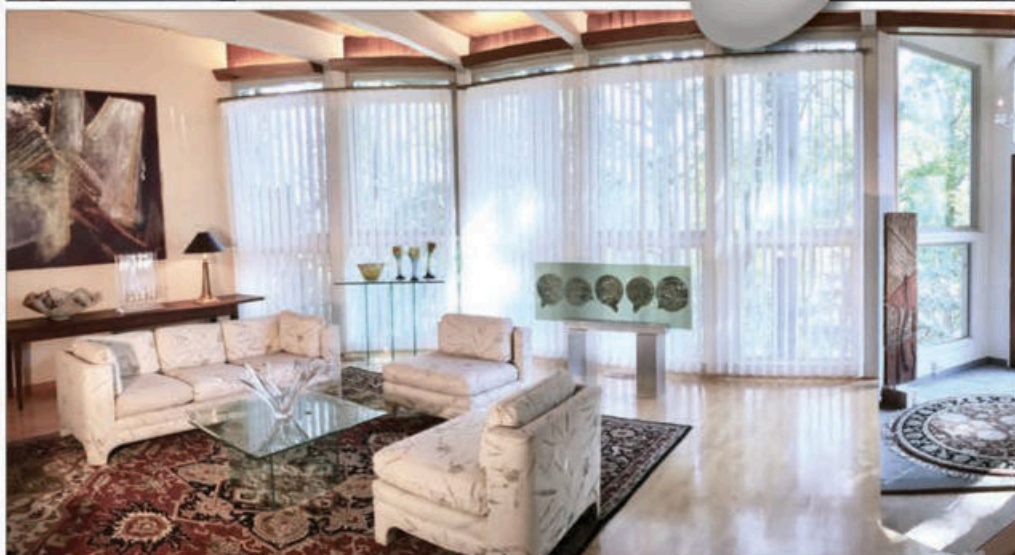
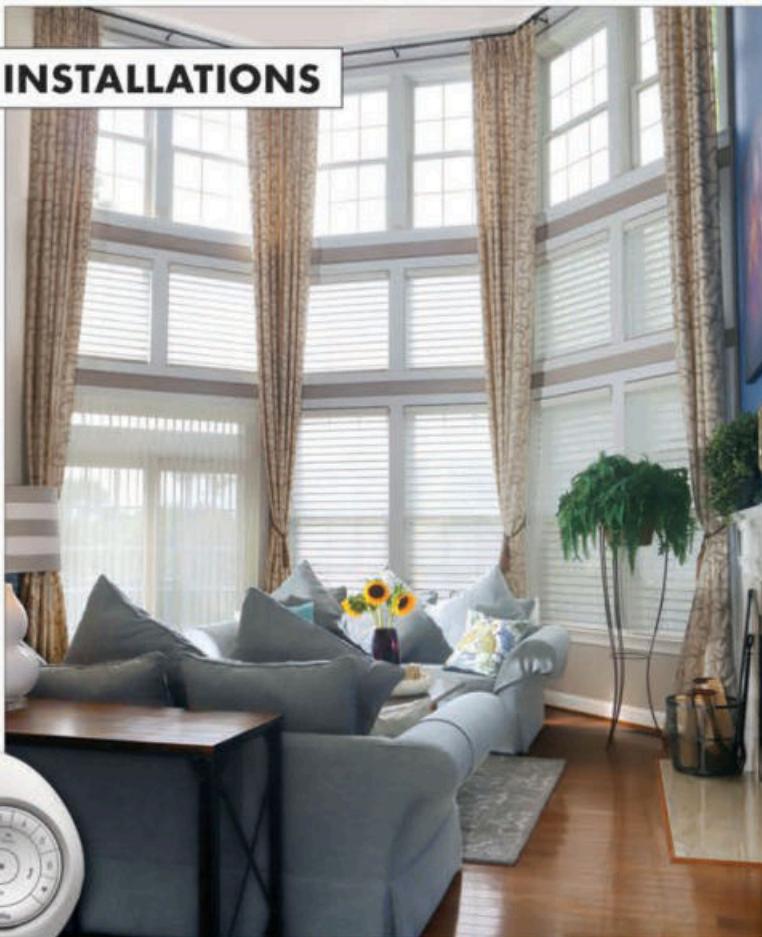
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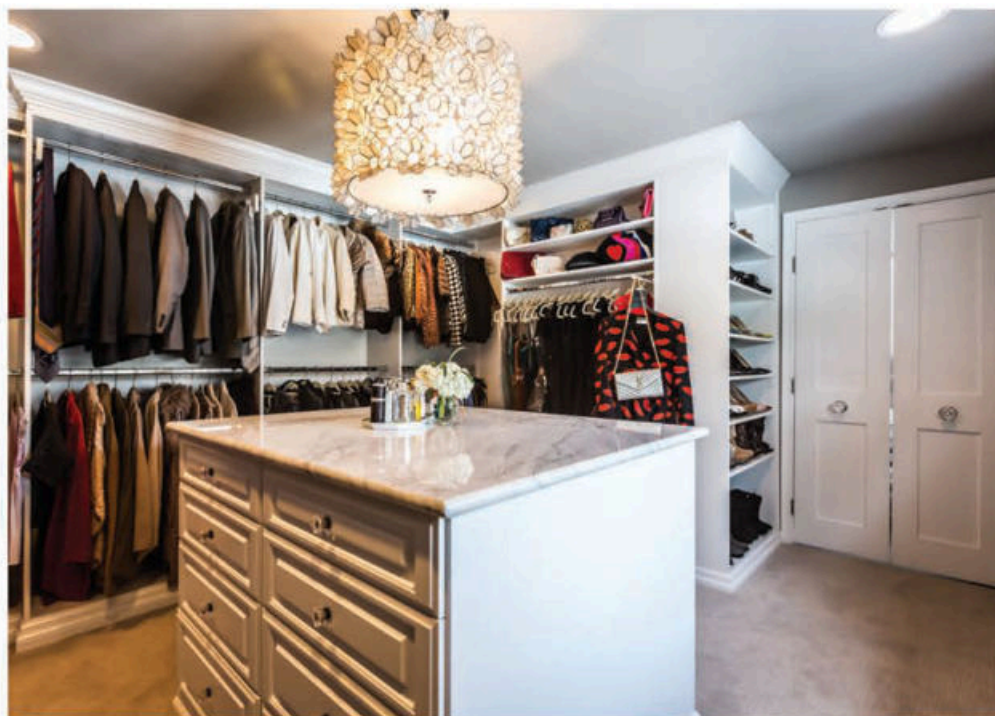
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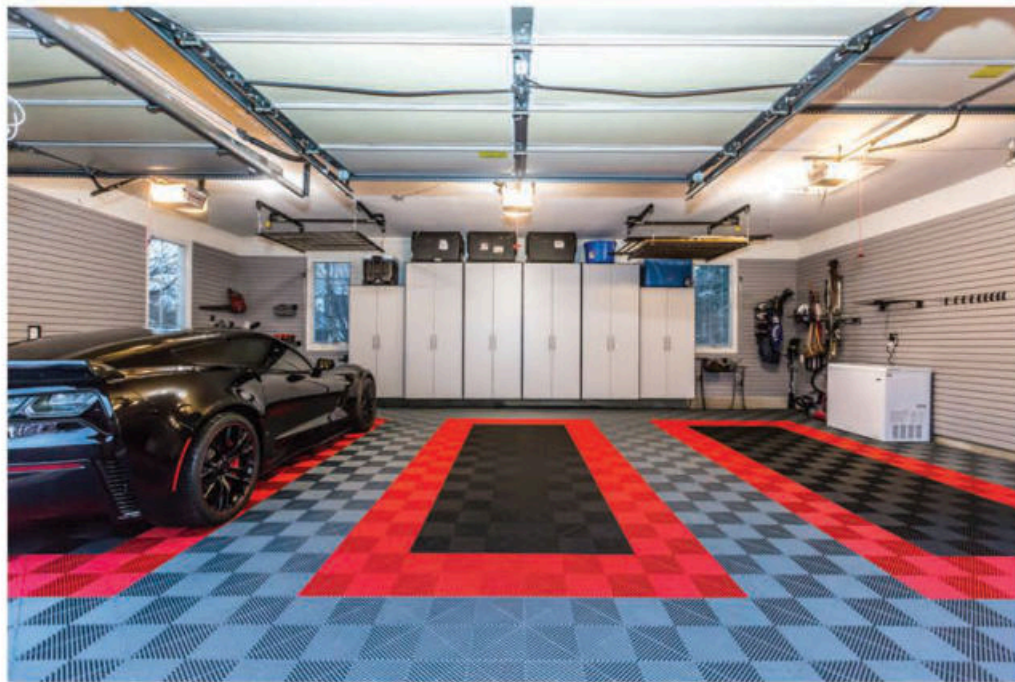
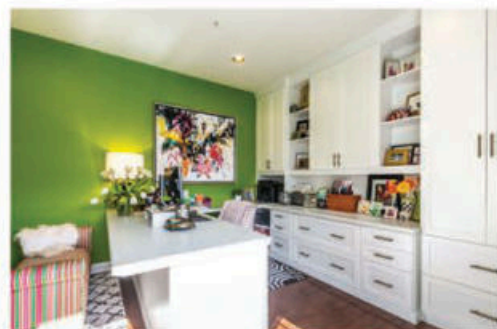
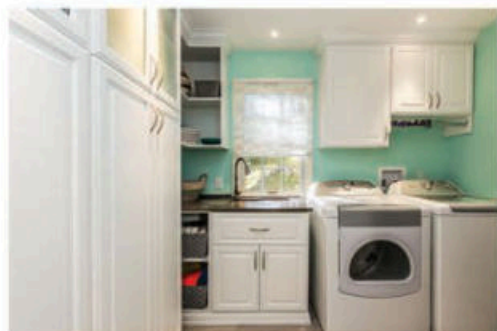
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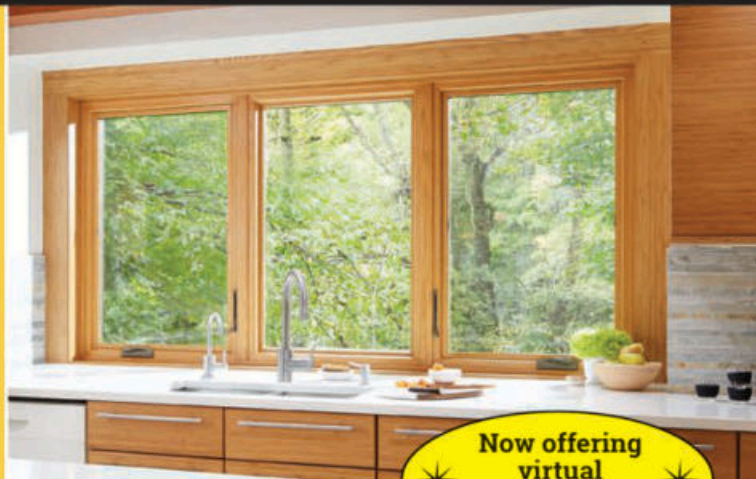
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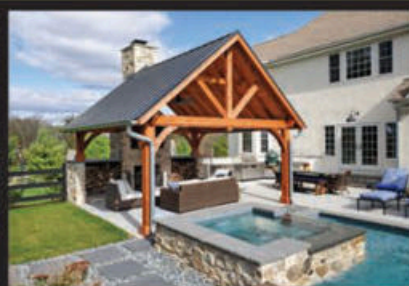
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On the cover:

This month's issue is all about celebrating, something much needed in 2020. Our sixth annual Best of House & Home recognizes the companies, products and services our readers trust most for their personal home improvement projects. Turn to page 11 to see this year's winners and join us in congratulating their efforts.

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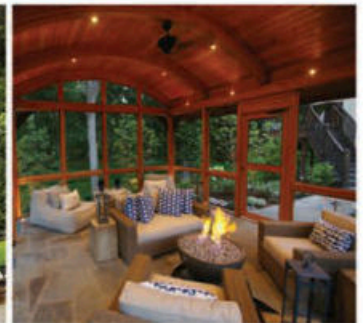
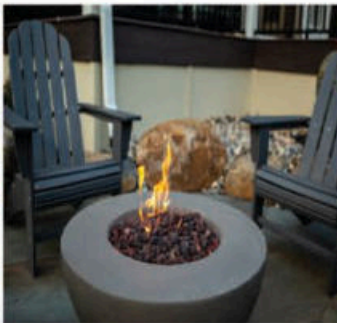
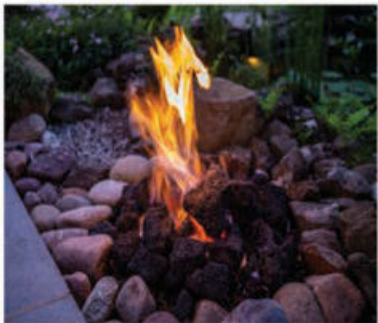
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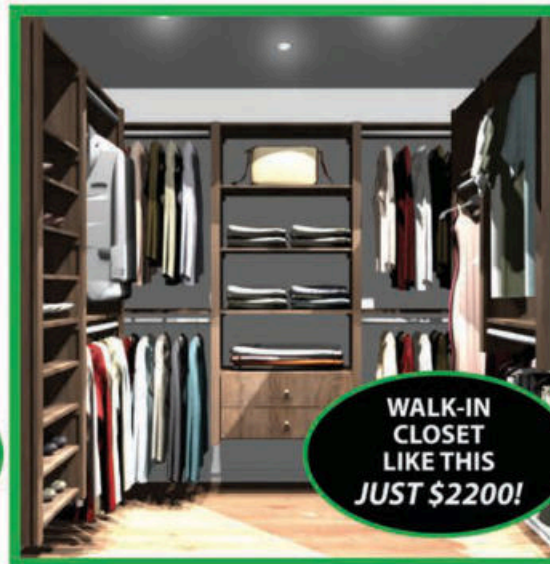
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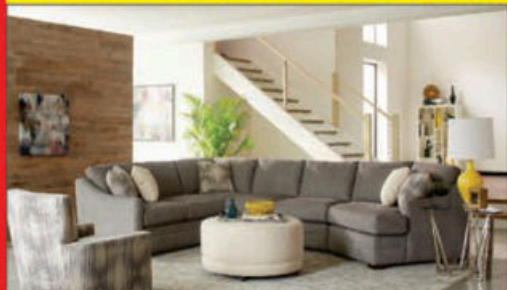
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We are excited to present our sixth annual
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As voted by our readers, the following companies and professionals are being recognized for their quality products, expertise, top-notch customer service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





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How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?

We are truly grateful to be honored in this way by a community that has been with us for so many years. Thank you to the readers of House & Home!

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

Providing warmth and comfort is our mission. There is something about sitting in front of a warm fire, curled up in a blanket with your family that seems to make all the trouble in the world melt away. It's something to cherish during these times. Fire seems to bring people together—that is what is most rewarding about our industry.

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

We have been taking the past few months to renovate the iconic Hatfield firehouse located on 56 E. Broad Street and are excited for it to finally open! Our new showroom is over 8,600 square feet and features all of the finest fireplaces, inserts, stoves as well as outdoor living products like patio furniture, spas, grills and outdoor kitchen products. We also have a roof terrace featuring a wide selection of products like patio heaters, grills and more. —*Jay Stong, Owner*

BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: *Kitchen/Bath Design*



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

This year, Dilworth's celebrated 30 years in business!

What makes you the best in your industry while separating you from your competitors?

We offer full turnkey services and use no subcontractors. All of our cabinetry is handcrafted in our Phoenixville shop, where we also fabricate countertops. Our quality is second to none, we have the best installers in the business and we stand behind every job we do.

How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?

It's quite a compliment to once again be recognized by the community and our clients as a Best of Winner. Most of our business comes from client referrals and repeat business so an award like this is greatly appreciated.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

Exceeding the hopes and expectations of our clients. It's very gratifying to hear our clients say how easy we made the process and how they still love their new kitchen or bathroom even many years later. It's difficult to describe the feeling of turning a client's dream kitchen into their reality.

BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: *Hardscaping*



How many years have you been in business?

Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete is a family-owned business, established in 1943.

How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?

We're very proud to be acknowledged by the people who read the magazine.

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

Helping people achieve their objectives and making them happy.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

There is always a new challenge, things are always changing. Keeping up with the quick pace of change, and staying on the cutting edge is exciting.

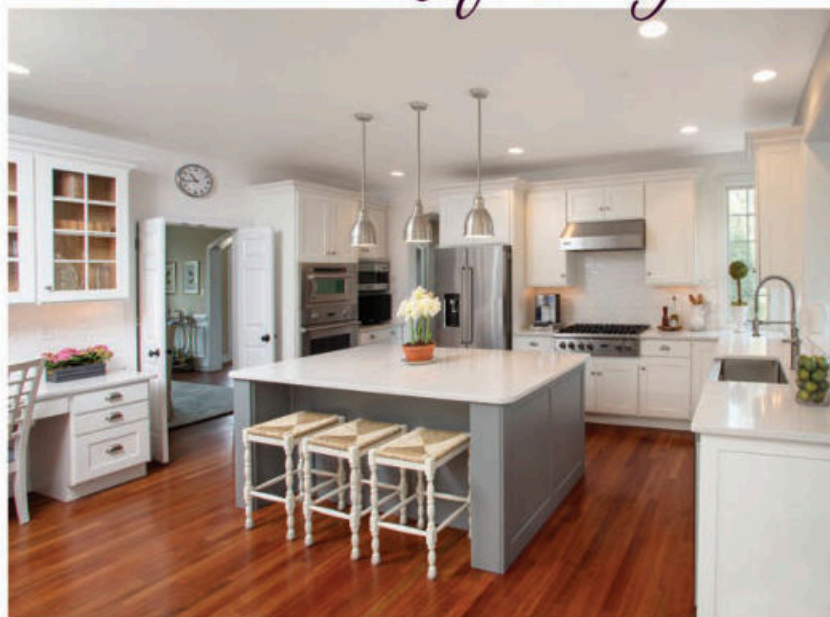
Are there any new products or services you are offering that you'd like our readers to know about?

We have a new tile made of porcelain for indoor and outdoor applications. It looks like Pennsylvania Blue Stone; it's really beautiful and versatile.



Jarrold Nyce,
Owner
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BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: *Cabinet Refacing*



How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?

It feels great to be recognized for the years of excellence and the thousands of satisfied customers!

What makes you the best in your industry while separating yourself from competitors?

In addition to having the most experienced staff of highly skilled installers and a lifetime guarantee, we can offer an almost unlimited variety of styles and materials. If someone has a vision, we can make it happen.

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

It's easy to stay motivated when you have such happy customers! I always joke that I'm only about 10 percent less excited about the finished product than they are.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

It's really rewarding to be able to give people such beautiful, updated kitchens at an affordable price.

—**Beth Soldwisch,**
Sales Consultant



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BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: *Roofing*



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

Rhino is a family-owned business that serves the Greater Philadelphia area and the surrounding suburban counties of Montgomery, Bucks, Chester and Delaware. The Rhino team consists of several vested professionals who contribute a variety of skills, knowledge and industry specialties. Together we bring over 25 years of experience in the industry.

What makes you the best in the industry while separating yourself from your competitors?

Simply stated—trust. Homeowners can trust that Rhino is the right company to do the job. It is an arduous process to select someone to work on your biggest investment, your home. At Rhino we make this process smooth and easy. From our fair pricing policy to our no-pressure sales approach, we help homeowners with a consultative experience throughout the entire process. With no money down we take the stress of this unscrupulous industry away from the homeowners.

We stand behind all our work with our 100% satisfaction guarantee and Rhino is backed by the nation's leading manufacturers with certified lifetime warranties.

Rhino has been honored to have won numerous categories with *House & Home Magazine*. We are striving to become the household name that homeowners know and trust. —Joe Austin, owner

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BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: *Window Treatments*



What makes you the best in your industry while separating you from your competitors?

It all comes down to our personal touch and exceptional client service. Everything we do as a small, family-owned company is done with our clients front of mind. This means that our staff is fully trained and certified, equipped with the knowledge and experience needed to provide the best service and experience possible from design consultations to product installation.

We also are a Centurion Hunter Douglas Gallery dealer, offering exclusive products and services others cannot, including the Right Choice Promise, which enables clients to replace their window treatments within a short time frame if they are not fully satisfied.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

Going into someone's home with my knowledge and expertise to help address their privacy, light-control, UV Protection, décor and other concerns or goals with custom window treatment selections is so rewarding. Many lasting friendships have been made throughout the years, and that is what I love most.

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

Yes; Hunter Douglas just released the new Design Studio Roman Shade line featuring fabric designs by industry-leading textile artists. We are so excited about this new launch that we renovated a section of our showroom to feature it.

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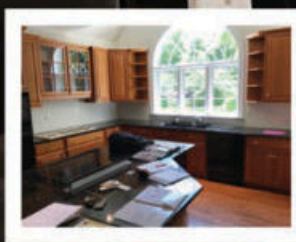


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What Lies Beneath

A finished basement can enhance your living space and add great value to your home.

BY PETER PROKO

One could argue that the home improvement industry has never been hotter than it has been these past several months. With the pandemic causing more and more folks to spend increased amounts of time at home, interest in projects has spiked significantly as working and schooling remotely have become the norm for the foreseeable future. And as homeowners look to transform their space into something better suited for their current needs and desires, they are doing so by prioritizing functionality and return on investment.

One of the best ways to address both is with a finished basement.

Basements can often be seen as an afterthought. A place to stow away holiday decorations, mementos from the past or that dusty treadmill you swore would never collect dust. But the truth is, a well-designed finished basement not only offers more ways to enjoy yourself at home, it can also add some serious property value. It's a much cheaper alternative than building an addition onto your home while also providing the personal benefit of the increased living space.

Dennis Gehman knows a thing or two about the matter, having founded Gehman Design Remodeling in 1990 in the basement office of his home. Since then, he's helped countless homeowners realize a basement's full potential by taking advantage of the extra square footage in a variety of ways.





“People want a workout space, a play area for the children or maybe an entertainment area with a large flat screen and stadium seating,” says Gehman. “They want to make their house feel like a resort ... like a place where they want to go.”

If finishing a basement is on your home improvement list, you can expect to wait at least a few months before any work to begin given the current demand for home remodeling. If a contractor isn’t booked up with jobs, you may question why that’s the case. That’s why it’s important to do your homework before moving forward with any project, let alone one of this magnitude.

As many homeowners readily know, finding the right contractor is a big piece of the puzzle.

“Check contractor references and verify that they are licensed and registered with the state. And ask for an insurance certificate,” Gehman advises.

“When looking into contractors, you want to know how many years of experience they have. Better Business Bureau ratings are always good indicators and, of course, referrals,” adds Tom Meier, owner of Basement Living Systems.

Meier has more than 30 years of experience in the home

What Lies Beneath

remodeling industry and has worked on more than 250 basements in the past 15 years alone. He says the days of the grandiose bar areas or larger-than-life media rooms have taken a back seat to more practical needs like home office areas and space for children to play.

"I've done the media rooms with projectors and staged floors where it's like you are inside a theater," says Meier, "but right now, people just want to finish the



space" so it can be better utilized during the pandemic.

One of the biggest concerns with a basement, finished or unfinished, is moisture. That's why a vital first step to making your basement dreams become reality is to ensure that the space is properly waterproofed. If ignored, mold and water damage can lead to repairs that could amount to triple the cost of the initial investment. And even after the basement is finished, issues can arise and homeowners need to pay close attention for any tell-tale signs of a failing foundation or crawl space.

"The easiest one is if there is visible water on the ground or walls. Try to diagnose where the water is coming from. It may just be a leaky pipe or washing machine. Other times it could be coming up from the floors or through the walls since concrete is porous," says

Jesse Cecola of Dry Guys Basement Systems. "Another indicator that your below-ground space needs help is how your home feels or smells, especially in your basement or crawl space. Humidity and musty odors are signs that your home is suffering from a mold problem; that can affect the air quality of the entire house."

Lately, a lot of homeowners have been trying to "seal out" the water with waterproofing paint and other similar products, which is problematic according to Cecola.

"The truth is that you are fighting against mother nature and she will always win. Fixes that try to directly stop water are doomed to fail eventually. The best solution is to always direct the water through a system and away from the home. Extending downspouts are a great start to this and there are a dozen other solutions and systems that can help," he says.

When it comes to creating the finished space, Gehman says it's important to take the necessary steps to make your basement feel like an extension of the rest of the home. "Don't cheap out," he says. "Spend the

money for finishes that look like they belong on the first floor."

Meier agrees, saying he prefers to blend the two levels together as seamlessly as possible. "I'll use the same trim the homeowner has upstairs, the same door styles. ... I'll carry that whole theme downstairs."

Adding a bathroom and adequate lighting along with proper heating and cooling are further ways to make the lower level feel less like a basement.

When it comes to choosing flooring, carpet provides a certain warmth and comfortability, but it can be a concern for any space where moisture levels could be high. As an alternative, luxury vinyl plank flooring has become quite popular. Available in a variety of colors from rustic-looking grays to glossy mahogany,

Images courtesy of Egress Solutions

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What Lies Beneath

they say “vinyl is final” because the flooring is waterproof and often carries a lifetime warranty.

Another big decision in the basement finishing process is what type of ceiling is best. A drywall ceiling can make the space look more uniform with the rest of the house, but a suspended ceiling can sometimes offer better acoustics and provide easy access to pipes and other valves in case of emergency.

In addition to customizing the space to your liking, you have to also consider egress requirements. In most cases, a basement is required to have at least two forms of egress, which means that there are at least two options for a person to safely escape to the outside in case of a fire or other emergency.

“What an egress system does is, No. 1 it allows for a safe escape if, God forbid, there’s a fire. I believe somewhere around 90% of basement stairs exit into a kitchen area. Typically, when a house fire breaks out, it’s going to happen in the kitchen. Someone could potentially be trapped in the basement with no way out if those stairs are their only way in and out of that space,” says Trae Lamborne, of Egress Solutions.

Though egress windows are often added out of necessity, there are other benefits besides the added safety measure, like allowing for more natural light and ventilation. What’s more is that a quality egress system can also boost your resale value and in the current red-hot real estate market, that can go a long way.

“Your realtor can market that space as livable space,” Lamborne says. “Having livable space versus just a finished basement is going to be a huge

jump on the resale end.”

With so much to think about, you’re going to want to do plenty of advance planning. Think about how or what you want to use the space for and what kind of amenities you want for certain and which ones would be nice to add if your budget allows.

“There may be a difference in the level of finishes and money you invest in finishing a basement depending on whether this will be a play space for your kids, a family space or a place you’ll spend time with guests,” says Gehman. “Invest a good amount of time in designing and planning your project. Depending on the size and scope of the project and how quickly you make decisions, design could take a minimum of two months, but it will go so much smoother once construction starts in your house.” **H&H**



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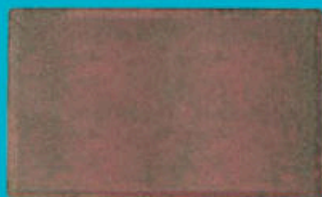
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Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete

by **Liz Hunter**

There is something to be said about a family-owned business celebrating its 76th anniversary. Now in its third generation, Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete has two locations—Souderton and Lansdale—and more than 50 employees. It is one of the area's largest suppliers of brick, pavers, landscape materials, stucco and cultured stone products.

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

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

How does the level of service you provide differ from others?

We are able to provide just about everything for any type of job. For contractors, we can deliver to all construction situations. We provide concrete pumping service, front discharge trucks and theme conveyor trucks. This makes our fleet versatile to handle all job sites, so we can service our customers. We also have piggyback fork trucks to deliver materials and get the material close to the job site.



We consider our shop as a one-stop shop. Our staff is educated in all areas of construction including codes, installation techniques and hands-on knowledge of our products. We are here to help you figure out what is possible. We have a no-hassle approach; there's no pressure. Our staff doesn't get paid on sales so we keep it real and ask all the questions you need to be happy. That's what we do!

Is an appointment necessary for homeowners to browse your selection of products?

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

What are the best things a homeowner should do during the winter months to plan their outdoor living spaces?

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

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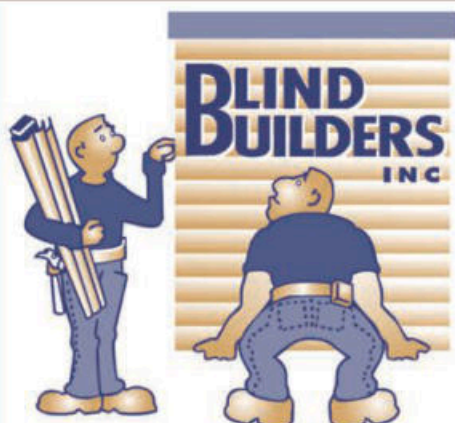
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The Comfort of Home

Gehman Design Remodeling is helping homeowners make their house suitable for loved ones during this pandemic, converting spaces to in-law suites and aging in place. *by Julie Shannon*

COVID-19 has changed the way homeowners view their home, as some spaces that worked pre-COVID no longer work in this current situation—in many cases leading to at least one renovation.

But some homeowners are also rethinking their current living situation due to COVID-19, especially baby boomers. Dennis Gehman, MCR (Master Certified Remodeler), of Gehman Design Remodeling, is seeing an increase in the number of people who want to address making their house work for multiple generations under the same roof, whether it be adding an in-law suite or aging in place—choosing to remain at home instead of moving to a senior living facility.

According to Gehman, the number of calls Gehman Design Remodeling has received inquiring for all projects is up 28% from this time last year, and the calls coming in specifically for in-law suites and aging in place is up 60%.

“Sometimes it’s a set of parents to move in or children moving in with the parents’ house. We’re also seeing people have decided they don’t want to move from their house that they have called home for however long and consider making modifications now so that as they age, if they can no longer handle steps or have mobility issues, they don’t have to make changes in an emergency situation,” he says. “They are trying to be proactive.”

In-Law Suites

Gehman says that a full in-law suite almost always includes a bedroom, bathroom, living room and sometimes a kitchen.

Depending on zoning, when installing a kitchen, he says it comes down to how many steps homeowners want to go through. If a second kitchen isn’t approved by zoning, then a variance may need to be applied for, which can add three to four months because of public hearings before the local zoning board.

There is also the option of converting an existing space in the home into an in-law suite, which takes less time and costs less.

“When the in-law suite is incorporated inside an existing home without adding an addition, probably 95% of the time they are not adding an additional kitchen space,” Gehman says.

“Just last month we finished making an in-law space in an existing two-story home in Lansdale. Those folks were willing to give up their formal living room/dining room and now that’s their mom’s space,” Gehman says. “The powder room nearby was enlarged to fit a shower and everything is accessible for her.”

Aging in Place

There are quite a few important elements for aging people to consider when making their home accessible and safe, such as one-level living.

“Getting the necessary rooms and accommodations on the first floor is the best situation, or a walk-out basement, one-level living with no steps,” Gehman says.

Accommodating wheelchairs and walkers is another important step in creating a safe environment.



“Installing doorways that are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or walker if need be is something to consider, as well as the right kind of flooring,” Gehman says. “Hard surface flooring, sheet vinyl and vinyl tiles are popular because wheelchairs and walkers move so much easier than they do on carpet. The challenge with that is many people like to put an area rug down or throw rugs which are a potential tripping hazard for people.”

When it comes to designing bathrooms, Gehman usually adds a seat and/or a grab bar in the shower to help prevent people from falling.

“There are nice looking grab bars that look more like a decorative towel bar. They are built structurally strong so if a person leaned on it, it won’t come out of the wall,” he says. “Additionally, these showers have curtains rather than glass doors. Oftentimes if a person has mobility issues and they have a caregiver, curtains make it easier to help the person in the bath or shower.”

For both in-law suites and aging in place at home, Gehman says the most important thing to install is the correct lighting.

“It’s the No. 1 thing people don’t think about, it’s critical,” he says. “We add recessed lighting in most rooms, and we add lights to walkways and hallways to prevent tripping hazards, especially when getting up to use the bathroom at night. Lights can come on with motion sensors or photocells that detect when it’s getting dark. There are LED lights in the bottom of wall outlets that come on when it’s dark and light up hallways, and LED strip lights that we add floor to ceiling inside closets.”

With the pandemic far from over, families are considering all options to make a better situation for themselves and their loved ones, and staying inside the comfort of their existing home—as opposed to a senior living facility—is more appealing than ever before.

“We’re involved with the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI), which tells us it’s not just our area where this is happening, it’s all across the country,” he says. “I think it’s a baby boomer thing where people like having their independence and don’t want to give it up.” **H&H**



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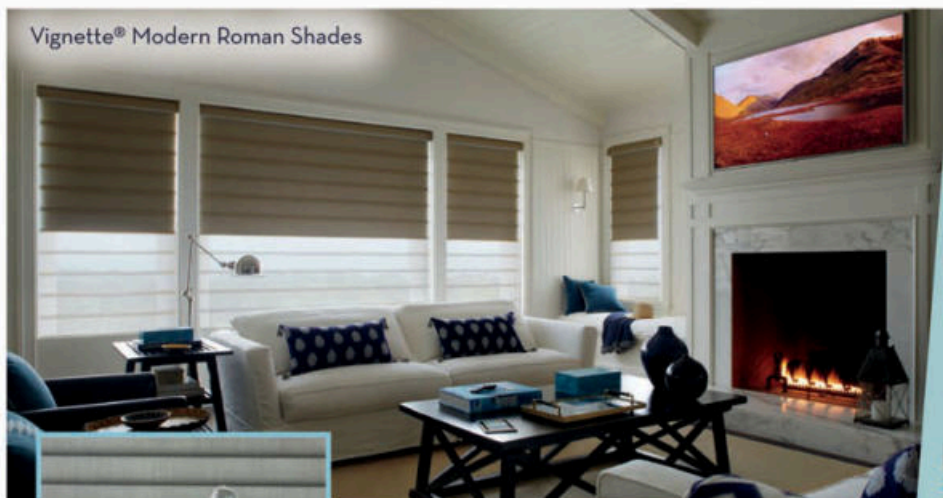
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Architectural Concrete Design can enhance your home's exterior with a spectacular decorative concrete project. *by* MATT COSENTINO

picture perfect

On the company website for Architectural Concrete Design—one of the East Coast's leaders in decorative stamped concrete for more than 20 years—there is a vast collection of photos from the thousands of residential jobs they have completed.

The portfolio of driveways, walkways, patios and pool decks is stunning to see, until founder and president Chris McMahon makes one very important observation. "Pictures don't do it justice," he says. "It looks even better in person."

McMahon made that discovery himself when he was introduced to stamped concrete while working in high-rise construction in San Francisco in the late 1980s. He immediately fell in love with the possibilities, and made up his mind to return home to the Philadelphia area to start his own company specializing in stamped concrete.

Architectural Concrete Design (ACD) was officially born in 1993 and has since become a staple in the industry.

"We are the go-to company for stamped concrete for all the major architects and big firms in the tri-state area," McMahon says. "We do all the heavy highway projects; in fact, we're working on the Pennsylvania Turnpike right now. We do all the malls, we do high schools and elementary schools and we've worked on every Philadelphia-area casino except one."

But the best part about ACD is that the same passion for the design and construction of those massive projects is applied to private residences in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and northeast Maryland to boost

curb appeal or spice up an outdoor living space. "So that experience and that level of expertise that is demanded by those other projects, you get at your home with the same crews," McMahon says.

Most of the crew members, as well as the designers and foremen, have been with ACD for almost two decades. Their craftsmanship and knowledge in the field is something you can't find everywhere.

"Our salespeople are landscape designers, so they'll come out and create the design for you," McMahon says. "They'll look at your home, your patio and your pool and give you ideas. When I do work at my home—and I consider myself a pretty good designer—I still have one of my designers come out just to see what his ideas are."

Stamped concrete is a popular option for homeowners because it can be made to look like a number of materials—including flagstone, brick, tile, slate, fieldstone, cobblestone and granite pavers—at a much better price. ACD offers an almost endless list of styles and colors.

"We can pretty much create any surface," McMahon says. "The product is used in theme parks throughout the world to mimic every material there is."

"It's more affordable [than natural stone], it's more durable and it doesn't chip or settle. Weeds don't grow through it and ants don't live in it like pavers. Natural stone requires a lot of maintenance, but with stamped concrete all you have to do is seal it every two or three years."

Bob Nonemaker is one of the founders of

paces inc., a company in Glen Mills, Pa., that designs and builds high-end water features. He has used ACD for multiple projects and has always been more than satisfied with the results, including a large pool deck the company recently installed at a retirement community.

"The fact that they can produce thousands of square feet in a day with something that looks really, really good, that's pretty amazing," Nonemaker says. "Most masons are lucky to get down a hundred square feet of material in a day. Everybody is always being pushed in construction to get things done. These guys get it done, and they get it done well."

Of course, with that sterling reputation comes a great demand for ACD's services. That's why McMahon encourages homeowners to start the process now, during the winter, to make sure they can have that dazzling new patio or driveway in time for spring.

They won't be disappointed in the end result, Nonemaker promises.

"Concrete is one of those things where if everything doesn't go right, it can end up really wrong," he says. "But with Chris and his guys, it's like a ballet for them. They know exactly what they're doing and they have tremendous productivity. It's pretty much impossible to find a flaw. They're just really good at what they do." **H&H**

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