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Volume 20, Issue 5 | North Jersey

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*How technology and experience drive
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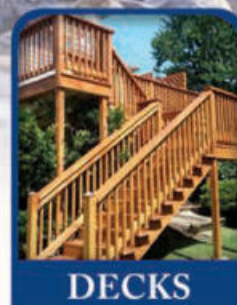
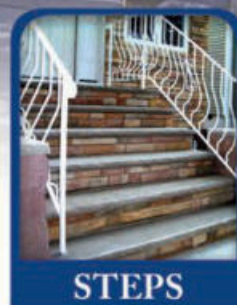
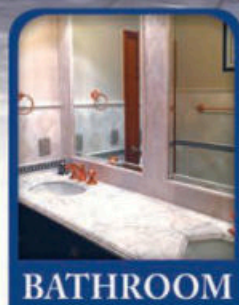
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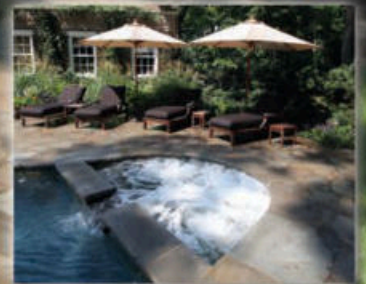
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Roseanne

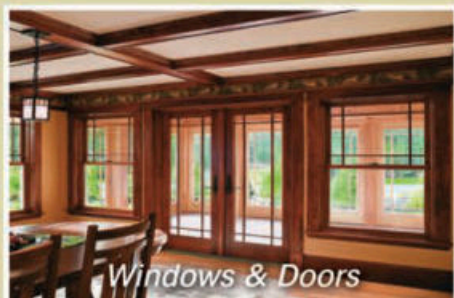
"Aldayna Stone Care & Maintenance completed a gorgeous job polishing and sealing four floors and four bathrooms in my very large home in Warren. They were very careful when the honed, polished and sealed a room by putting up plastic to protect other parts of the house. The end result was marble that looked brand new again."

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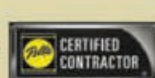
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On the cover:
House & Home is happy to present our fifth annual Best of House & Home, featuring the companies and services that our readers voted on, recognizing their industry expertise, customer service values, quality craftsmanship and overall high-quality products. Turn to page 11 for the list of winners in dozens of categories, each equipped to help with your next home improvement task.





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**We are excited to present our fifth 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 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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How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?

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What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

We find it most rewarding when we are able to pull off a truly unique project like a Complex Metal Roof or a Curved Marvin Window installation. Creating that "wow" factor makes it all worth while.

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

It's very gratifying to be recognized by our customers. We love hearing from them whether they come back into our store as a return customer or when they take the time to share their five-star reviews, pictures and stories on Facebook, Yelp, Google, etc. It's amazing and we really appreciate it and them!

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

What I find most rewarding is when we can tailor our customers' cushions to their special needs. For example, several of our customers are having trouble getting up from their couch, chair or love seat due to a knee, hip or back surgery. Our high-density foam replacement cushions solve this problem and allows our customers to enjoy their furniture again.



Jim Marr

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UNBELIE



Industry professionals discuss their clients' amazing basement transformations that might give you some inspiration to start a project on your space.

VALUABLE basements

BY JULIE
SHANNON

KITCHENS ARE KNOWN TO BE THE HEART OF THE HOME AND BRING FAMILIES TOGETHER, but a finished basement is the ideal place to gather family and friends to watch the big game, have movie nights and be the ultimate hangout space away from the main living areas in the home. It's also the area where you truly make this space extra creative and personal, having the ability to create a certain theme that ties into every piece of furniture and fixture throughout the basement.

Having this large space also gives you the options to add a full bathroom or even an extra bedroom, making it a complete living area where it's easier to have company stay over.

The industry professionals we spoke with went into detail about their clients' incredible basement transformations that not only are aesthetically pleasing to the eye, but fixed problems such as leaks and mold residue, and the final results are more practical for each homeowner.

NATURALLY NAUTICAL

"This is a 1930s house and the basement had been finished in the '70s and was poorly done. There were choppy rooms and it had a side entry, along with poor lighting and an old bathroom. They had an oil tank and we did a conversion to natural gas by pulling gas from the street.

"For this transformation, the owners had this idea of a nautical theme because they had family members in the Navy, so we wanted to home in on that specific theme, which was really cool. The thought behind this is, if you're going to spend money, make it personal and be creative. All of our collective thoughts came up with the best ideas. We bought a floating boat off Craigslist

UNBELIEVABLE basements



BEFORE



Courtesy Harth Builders

AFTER

and made a bar out of it. There are glass fixtures above the sink that are like jellyfish, we wrapped a column in the basement with a nautical rope and the balusters are also done in the same rope.

"This is a three-unit family—a husband, wife and son. The father constantly watches the stock market because of his job, but he and his son wanted to be able to watch sports as well, so we installed dual televisions side-by-side so they can watch both at the same time.

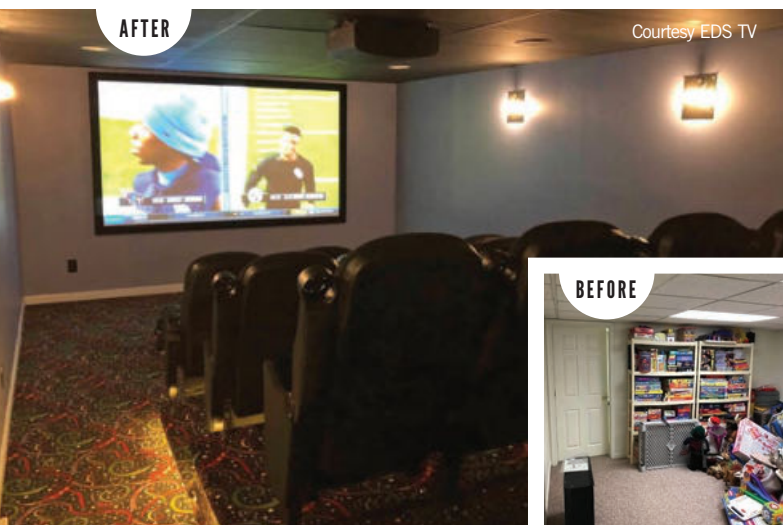
"It was an incredible project from a creativity standpoint and improved efficiency for the home. We relocated mechanicals of the home by going to natural gas and created space they didn't have previously."

*Greg Harth, owner
Harth Builders*

Spring House, Pa. | (215) 654-0364 | HarthBuilders.com

THE THEATER EXPERIENCE

"For this project, the homeowners wanted a theater in their basement. In order to do this, we had to move a wall and build risers to get to the appropriate seating heights so the person in front of you doesn't block your view. We put LED rope lighting on the tiers of the three levels of seating so no one trips on the risers. We installed a 120-inch acoustic transparent screen, a screen you'd find in movie theaters where the speakers are invisible



AFTER

Courtesy EDS TV

BEFORE



and the sound comes through the screen. We also installed a 4K Ultra HD projector and made equipment all automated through the Control4 system. This system gives homeowners complete access to operation and utilizes the ability to use Alexa and smartphones to control devices, including lighting. This minimizes frustration with multiple remotes and components. You can integrate a lighting scheme, you can set up speakers a certain way and start your DVD player with the command of one voice or button—that's automation. One command and it can shut everything down or turn everything on."

Jim Fossile, owner

EDS TV

Colmar, Pa. | (215) 997-4300 | EDS-TV.com

NO MORE LEAKS

"These homeowners had a sub-floor pressure relief system installed by another company that didn't do it correctly. The basement was leaking every time it rained and this company wouldn't follow up with the homeowners and wouldn't hold the warranty up. They ended up calling us to fix it.

"First, by taking out the system, we removed the concrete 16 inches from the wall all the way around the perimeter—285 linear feet. We also did lateral across the middle of the floor because the hydrostatic pressure was so bad. We dug to the bottom of the footer and removed the existing drain system that was incorrectly installed. We installed three, 4-inch perforated PVC pipes with a mud filter sock around it. We pitched 1-inch for every 10 feet toward different sub-containers we installed. Then we surrounded that with ¾-inch triple-washed clean stone, and then installed myriad drain and poured new concrete with the existing floor.

"With our completed job, these homeowners have no more leaks and a dry basement."



Courtesy Dry Tech
Waterproofing Solutions

Matt Kropp, owner

Dry Tech Waterproofing Solutions

Eagleville, Pa. | (484) 927-4326 | DryTechCorp.com

ENTERTAINING SPACE

"These homeowners have a good sized basement—well over 1,000 square feet—and wanted a complete basement renovation because they needed the space for entertaining family and friends, and having the additional bathroom was a bonus. They originally wanted a half bath, but the cost to go from a half to a full bath isn't that much more. They decided to go with the full bath and from what they told me, they've been using it when friends and family come over.

"The customers had a very nice home to begin with. They wanted the finishes to reflect the rest of the house so it didn't look like the basement was an afterthought, from the trim to the paint colors, doors, surface-mounted fixtures and lighting fixtures. We had a similar approach to the bathroom—matching up similar to what they had upstairs with nicer finishes. So when you come downstairs in a finer home into the basement, it has to mirror all

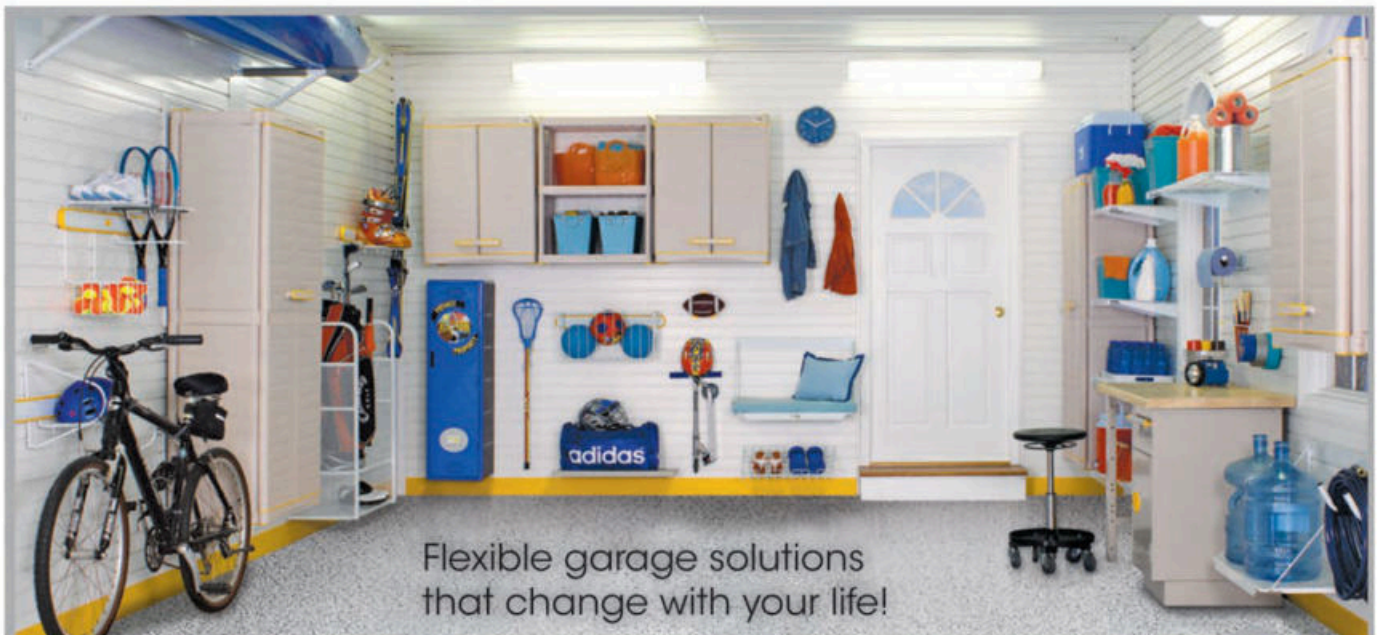
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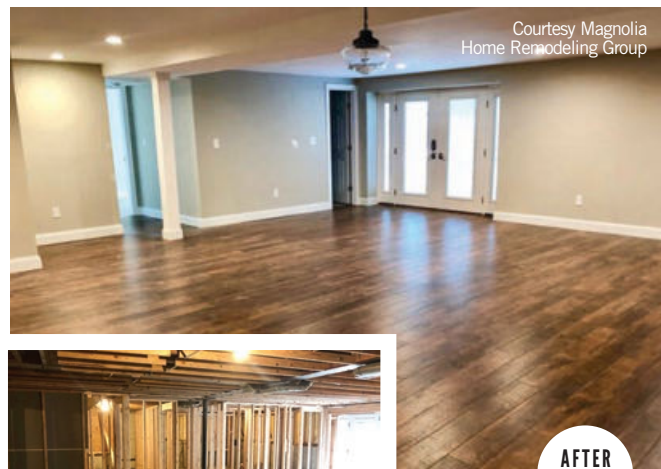
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UNBELIEVABLE basements



Courtesy Magnolia Home Remodeling Group



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tainment center that was customized to the size of their television, LED lighting and a full bathroom

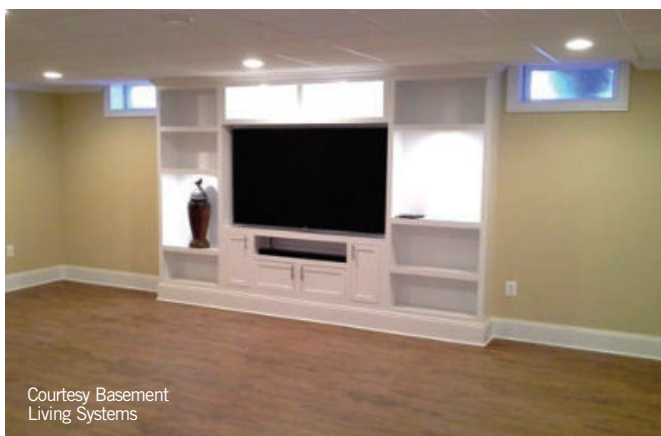
the finishes from the upstairs. It checked all the boxes they were looking for.”

*Chris Fontana, owner
Magnolia Home Remodeling Group
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that was also customized to their needs and looks like the master bathroom.

“Another room we added to the basement was a gym and within that gym I used a wall system with the combination of traditional drywall and purple board drywall. The benefits are that it’s mold- and mildew-resistant and it’s breathable; it allows moisture to come through. It also has 90 percent sound efficiency. It absorbs 90 percent of ambient sounds as opposed to drywall where it bounces and doesn’t absorb it.”

*Tom Meier, owner
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Atlas Marble & Granite

by **Matt Cosentino**

For a homeowner seeking the perfect countertop to

complete his or her dream kitchen, there are plenty of companies to choose from in a crowded marketplace. Marco Duran, owner of Atlas Marble & Granite, is not only unafraid of the competition—he actually welcomes it.

Duran has succeeded in the industry for almost 30 years by not backing down from challenges and constantly striving to improve. Whereas other business owners might grow complacent, he is always searching for new products and better ways to serve his customers.

House & Home spoke to Duran about the benefits to such an approach and trends he is seeing in stone fabrication.

What role does technology play in your company?

In today's society we depend on electronic devices more than ever before, so it makes sense that we should bring technology into what we do. We pride ourselves on being able to do visual renderings that we can easily communicate through email. In our industry, most fabricators do not do that, so it's an advantage we have in being a lot more visual and relatable. We use laser technology and software to create a file that can immediately be exported to all parties on a project, no matter where they are. That way, nobody is in the blind and we can have a discussion immediately.

Is granite still an in-demand product for kitchen countertops and islands?

Granite has sort of peaked; it's still a popular product, but in our business model we've always prided ourselves on exploring what's



Marco Duran, owner

next out there. We're always at the forefront of our industry trying to embrace and work with new products and whatever is trending. Our data tells us that granite has fallen by about 50 percent. It's still being used, but not as widely.

What materials are your luxury clientele currently looking for?

They're going for new products and the trendiest materials, such as porcelain and sintered glass. With porcelain, what they're trying to do is pay homage to marble by creating these beautiful prints on a porcelain product. It basically imitates, and in my view surpasses what you would see with real marble. People who love the look of marble and can afford the higher price of porcelain are going with porcelain because it puts an end to the maintenance issues you have with marble. Products like porcelain, glass and quartzite are what more affluent people are trending toward.

How do your customers begin the process of choosing their materials?

A lot of people visit our website to see what's new and trending, and then they come to our showroom to get started. They come here understanding that we have a design center showroom and they're expecting to see new things. We're stocked with at least six to eight different products, and within that we have six to 10 brands per product. For example,

we have over 18 products in quartz and we have six to eight in porcelain.

Do you think your vast experience in the industry separates you from your competitors?

Absolutely. Being in this business for so long, evolving with the industry and not being stuck in our ways has helped us diversify and not be complacent. The experience factor gives us a confidence rating that is almost synonymous with our name. There are a lot of companies out there that are very young, and they play their cards safely and work with the easiest materials. To me, that means you're not following the trends.

How do you stay on top of what's hot in the industry?

Every year at the trade shows you'll always find me or someone from our company, finding out firsthand what's new, what's hot, what's not and what's out. Our showroom is the result of making the effort to know what products are viable. Our shop also does the vetting for all of the products, which is important. Our vendors know we're going to put the products to the test, so they either skip us or have the real deal when they visit us. There are many product manufacturers who endorse our company for fabrication, because we've gone through the process, we're certified and we've already worked with the product, whereas other people haven't. **H&H**

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Get an Early Start on Fall Organization

When it comes to cleaning, most people focus on kitchens, bathrooms, closets and basements, overlooking a key component of their home: the garage. It's the primary entry for the majority of homeowners, family and friends. Yet, it's often a catch-all for bikes, sports gear, tools and more. With so much foot traffic, clutter looks unsightly, and creates safety concerns and stress as well. A well-organized garage improves access to your home, and you wind up with more efficient storage space than you realized you had while making this year's cleaning easier than ever.

Les Hutton of GarageTek of North and Central New Jersey says a garage makeover can make a big difference. "Removing clutter is at the top of everyone's list, and the garage is a great place to start," he says. "Homeowners need to easily locate their seasonal items during this transi-

tional time, when summer items are still being used, but also to get fall gear ready—rakes, leaf blowers, etc., as well as golf and fishing gear. Kids will also need to be able to reach their toys and easily put them away after using them."

GarageTek can help you take a fresh look at your garage and make it truly functional. "As part of our garage makeover services, we will help customers assess their space, figure out what should be kept and what they should get rid of," says Hutton. "Once we know what items are staying, we present and deliver cost-effective organization and storage solutions."



GarageTek offers flexible systems of hooks, shelving, cabinets and fixtures to get used items—like bikes, beach equipment and tools—up and out of the way. Special hooks, racks and baskets are available for everything from surf boards to scooters to golf clubs. Hutton says, "Imagine getting ready for practice and going to a dedicated spot in the garage where all of

the gear is safely stowed. It removes stress and gets you out the door in a better mood and on time."

He adds that an organized garage is much safer for kids, who are often injured when they trip over something left on the floor. "We help make the garage a safer place for the entire family to use."

And homeowners don't have to do the whole garage at once. You can set small goals, like organizing one wall at a time, or getting the car(s) to fit in. "We have an endless choice of designs and solutions that can address your needs and fulfill your goals throughout the year," Hutton says.

Homes with a clean, organized garage create a real wow factor for visitors—and potential buyers—who see this unexpectedly finished, clutter-free space as a positive reflection on the entire property. GarageTek of N&CNJ recently earned the coveted Angie's List Super Service Award, reflecting exemplary service to members. "We are extremely grateful to our thousands of satisfied customers, including many Angie's List members, for their continued support over the past 13 years," says Hutton. **H&H**

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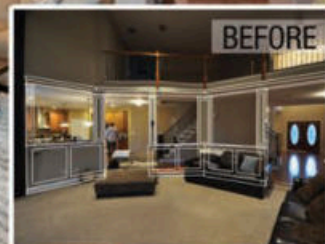
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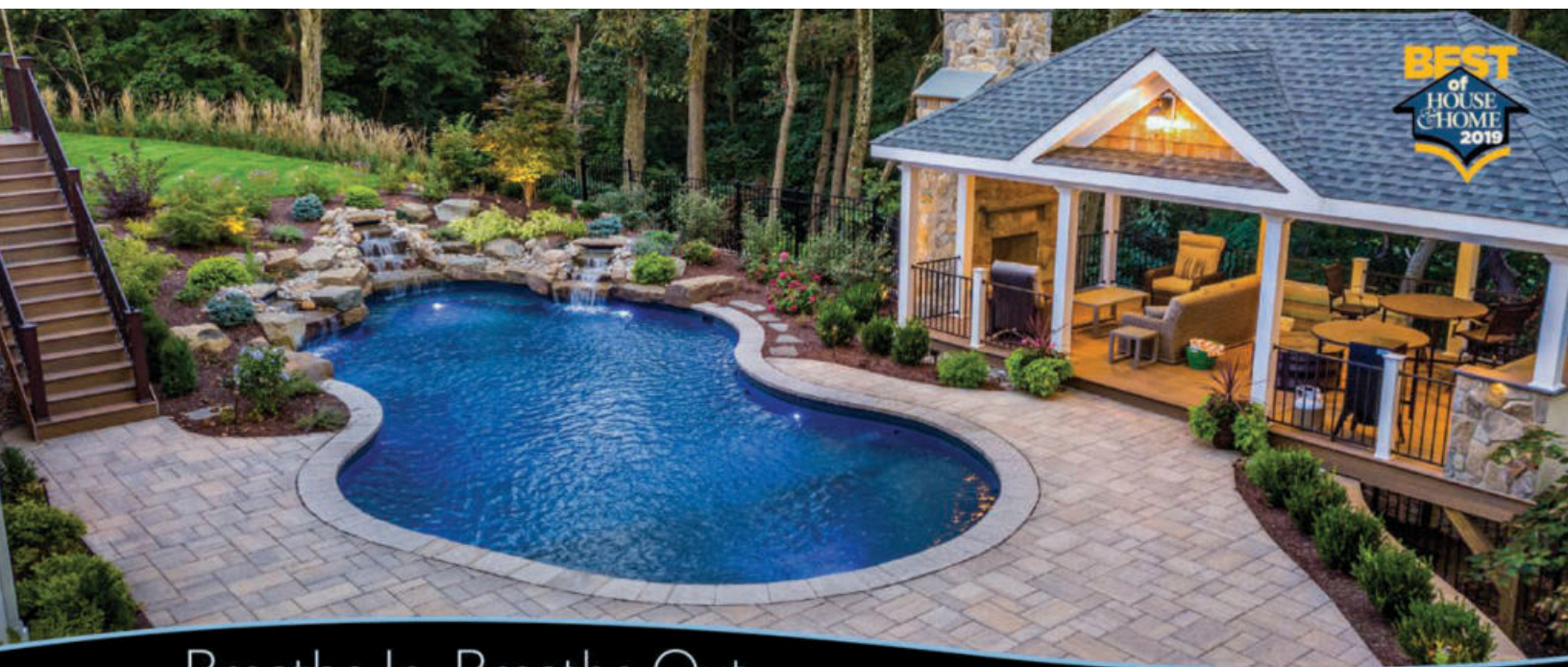
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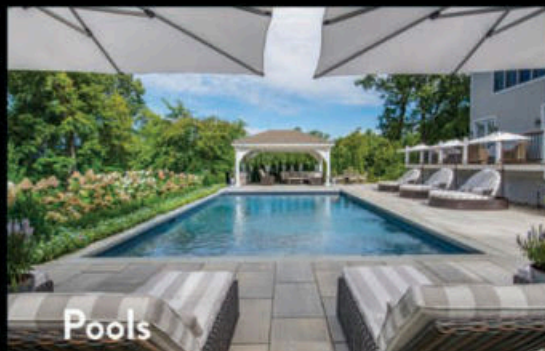


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