

Volume 23, Issue 2
North Jersey

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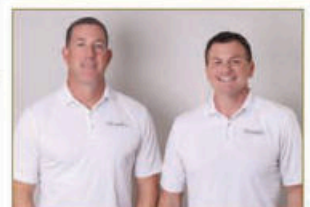
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contents

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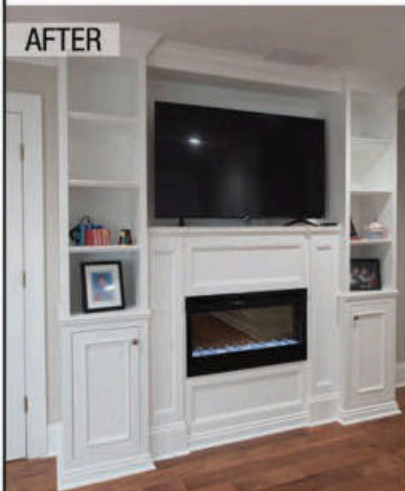


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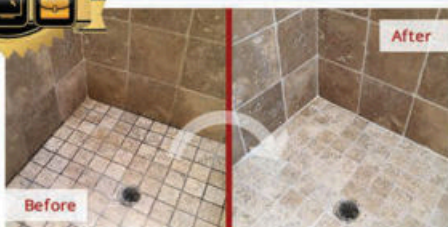
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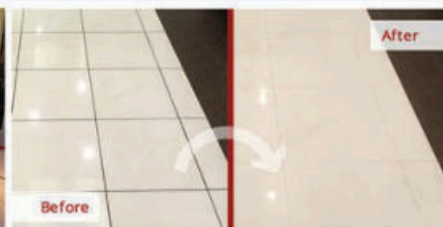
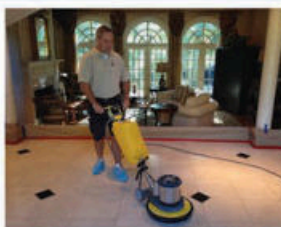
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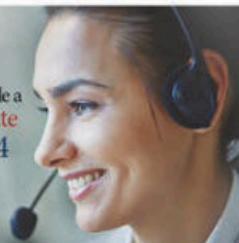


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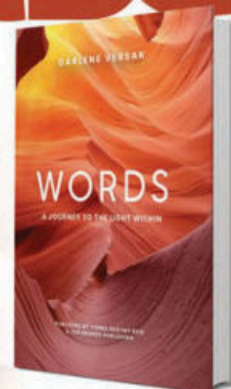
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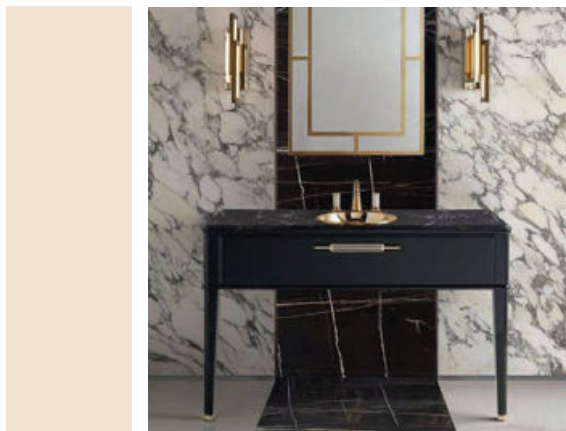
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What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?

What motivates me every day is keeping natural stone in the market and in front of our customers. While manmade material is flooding the marketplace, we choose to stick with our roots and focus mainly on importing natural stone. It's something that can't be replicated and stands the test of time.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

What I find most rewarding about this industry is not only being able to offer natural products to our customers but educate them as well. There is a lot of misinformation out there and we do our best to inform our customers on the best options for their projects. It's a great feeling when we

have customers expressing their appreciation for our honesty and integrity and then seeing them stop by years later for another project in their home.

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

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BASEMENT BR

From **home gyms** to extra **entertainment areas**, finished basements add more living space to homes without breaking new ground.



ALLIANCE

BY
**KATIE
FRANCIS**

So many homeowners can't envision their basements as anything other than unorganized, don't-let-the-visitors-see storage, and end up wasting the space's possibilities. However, many are now realizing that previously untapped potential and transforming their underground square footage into finished living spaces that they're constantly boasting about and showing off to guests.

House & Home talked to local experts to discuss the latest advancements in basement finishings, including the most popular trends and common uses for these repurposed spaces. All but one say they're seeing an increase in basement renovations—but even for that one, these projects are in high demand.

"We have not seen an uptick in basements but people are definitely still renovating them," says Dennis Gehman, owner of Gehman Design Remodeling, adding that this option is much more wallet-friendly than putting an addition elsewhere. "It is cheaper to finish that space because the square feet of floor space is already there, so we don't have to build an addition. You don't need a foundation. You don't need a roof. It's just putting the finishes in."

And now more than ever, people are looking to add—or in this case, take advantage of—as much space in their homes as possible. Following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many jobs are still remote or hybrid, meaning people are spending much more time at home than they have in years past.

Nick Kornea, owner of LBK Design Build, says that he's seen an increase in basement renovation requests because of the pandemic aftershocks.

"A lot of it has to do with the post-



Photo courtesy of Gehman Design Remodeling

COVID world because people are spending more time at home still. We feel that they're looking for more space within their home, especially if they have young kids," Kornea explains.

There are many different ways that basements can be utilized to ensure parents can finish the last few hours of their workday while their children are arriving home from school.

Kornea says that clients oftentimes create home offices on the lowest level, which frees up the ground level and above floors. Some transform their basement into more of an entertainment space, giving kids the opportunity to play or hang out while their parents are upstairs.

doubtedly the way to go if you're looking to increase the overall value of your home. The experts agree that nothing says dollar signs like an additional bedroom or full bathroom.

Regardless of how a homeowner decides to use it, finishing a basement gives a new and more intentional purpose to an otherwise overlooked space. Many times when Gehman first sees a project, it's an unfinished basement where homeowners have multiple things going on—storage in one corner, exercise equipment in another and a rug dedicated to children's playtime somewhere else. He says that finishing that space gives it a more deliberate appearance and gives those using it a much more enjoyable experience.



"A lot of homeowners may have limited space in their overall floor plan in their house, so they're using the basement as a rec room or playroom for their kids. Or, if they're older kids or teenagers, it'd be like a hangout spot," he explains. This space utilization allows for more privacy opportunities for all members of a household, too.

Extra living room areas and entertainment rooms are popular uses for finished basements, along with home theaters, gyms, and even guest and in-law suites.

These projects require more involved work, including plumbing for kitchenette sinks, bathroom showers and toilets, but are un-

"This space is sitting there, they're probably using it for something already. ... Now they're saying, 'You know what, we're spending so much time down here and I'm tired to look at the concrete walls and open ceiling joists so let's finish it off,'" Gehman says.

After figuring out what they want the space to be used for, homeowners must also decide the style their newfound space embodies.

The experts agree that the overwhelming majority of clients are looking to make their basements what Kornea calls an "extension of the house." In other words, they want to make the level feel less like it's underground and more cohesive with the rest of their home's decor.

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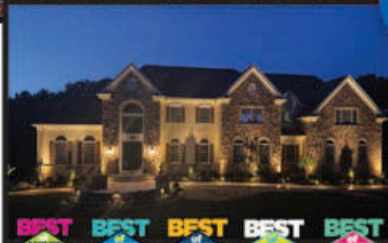
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BASEMENT BRILLIANCE



“People don’t want it to look or feel like a basement anymore,” Gehman says. Drop and suspended ceilings are telltale signs of a basement, which is what his clients are steering away from.

“People don’t even like to call it a basement. We call it a ‘finished lower level,’” Gehman explains. Of course, it’s difficult to mask this reality when many lower levels don’t have large windows or high ceilings. That’s where, Kornea says, clients opt for walkout style basements, allowing an exit and entry as well as the opportunity for natural light and that above-ground feel.

A lot of the “basement feel” also comes from the flooring. Bob Pop, owner of Transylvania Concrete Coatings, is seeing a trend in the flooring that people are choosing for their personal gyms, man caves and television rooms.

Pop says that “seamless, resinous floor” like polyaspartic

or polyurea flooring has become the most popular for finished spaces because people are becoming more and more educated on the topic.

“It is durable, tough, anti-bacterial, anti-microbial. In the event of flooding, it would not get damaged and is easy to clean,” Pop explains, adding that the typically popular carpet and floating floors have a lot more issues with mold.

That being said, adding an area rug or two is a great way to incorporate pops of color, warmth and comfort into any basement space while maintaining the practicality of hard flooring.

These spaces, regardless of how you use them or how you decorate them, are crucial square footage that can add value to a home and the lives of those residing there. Families feel pride in showing off their luxurious downstairs den instead of closing the basement door every time they have guests over. **H&H**



RESOURCES

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