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Volume 22, Issue 6

Sequoia Out Back

Endless inspiration to set up your summer space *page 14*

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East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows

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A company you can trust for your exterior projects *page 13*

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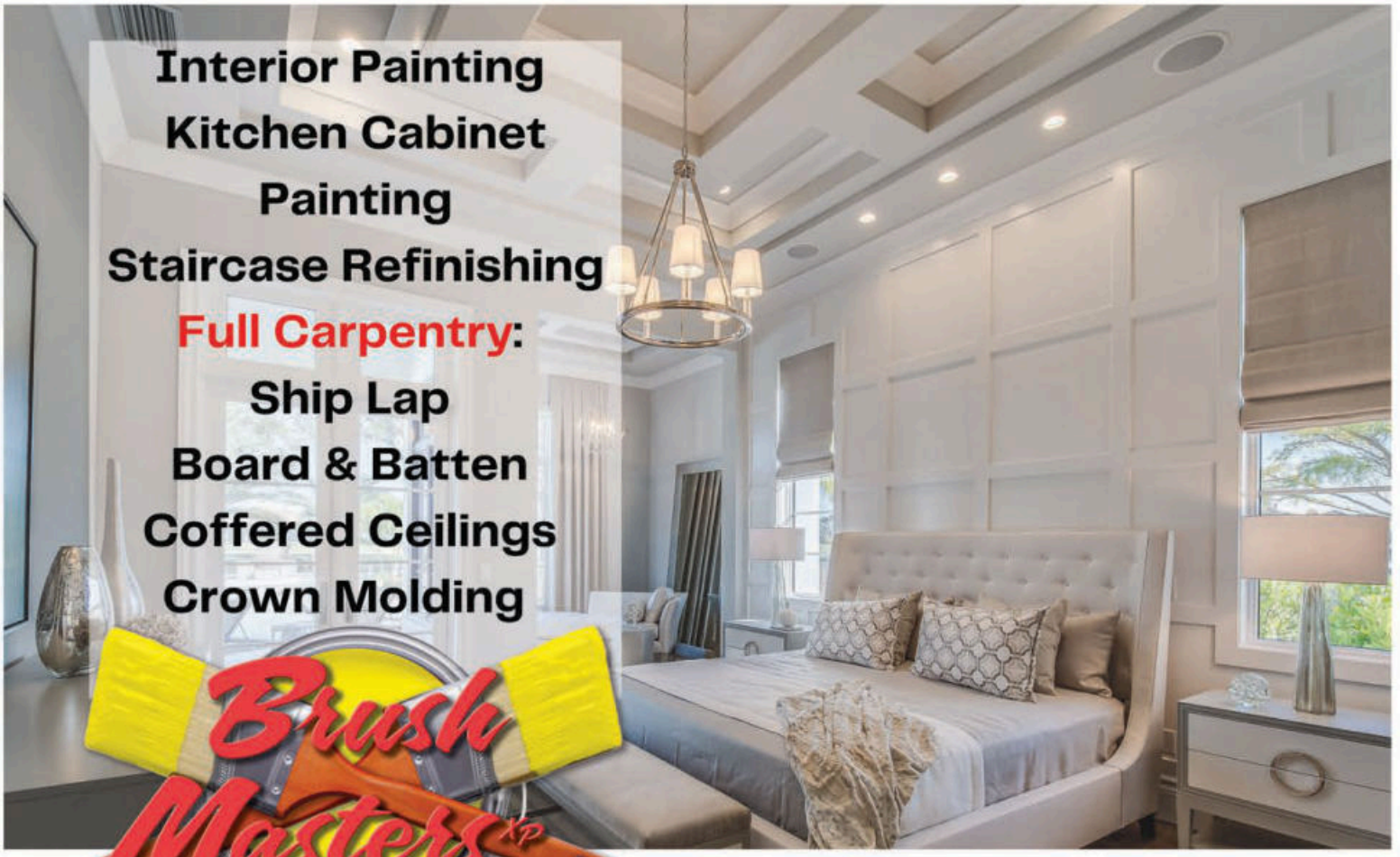
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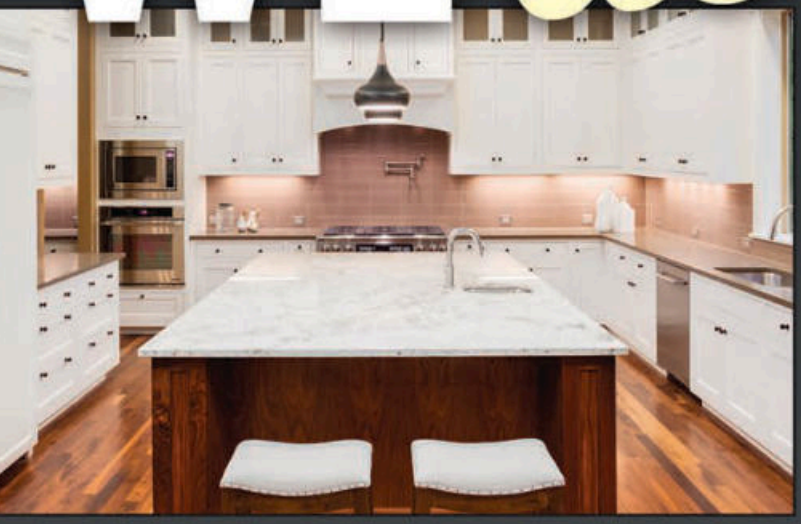
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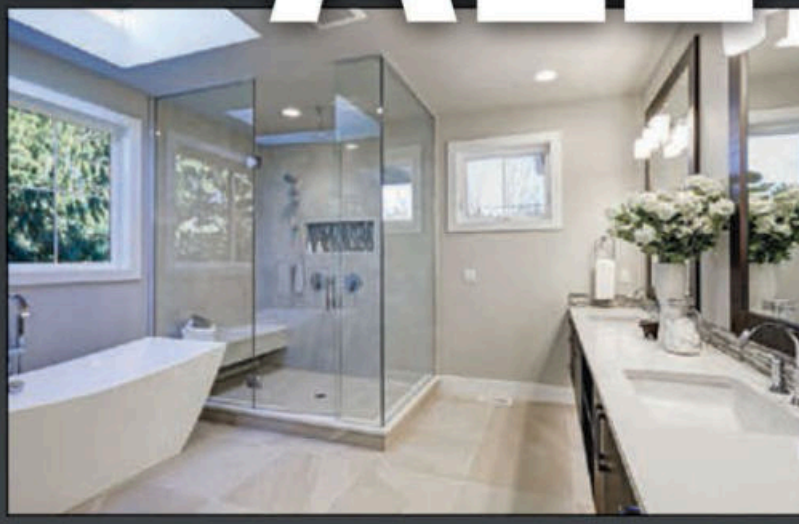
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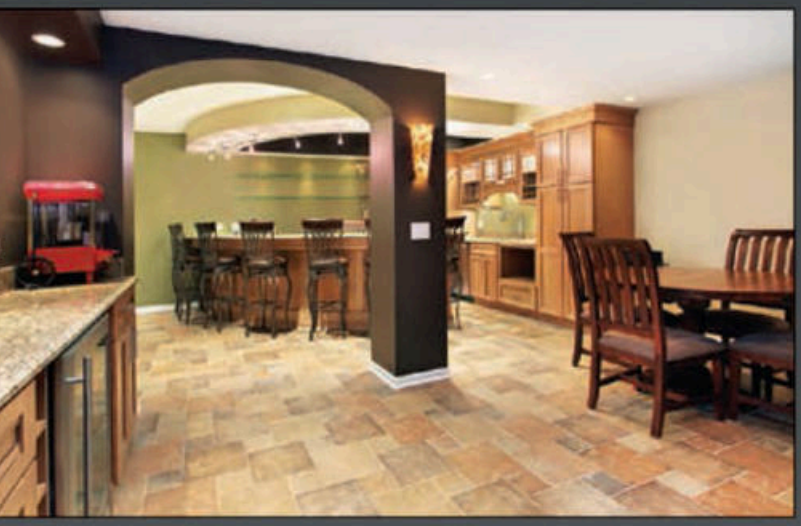
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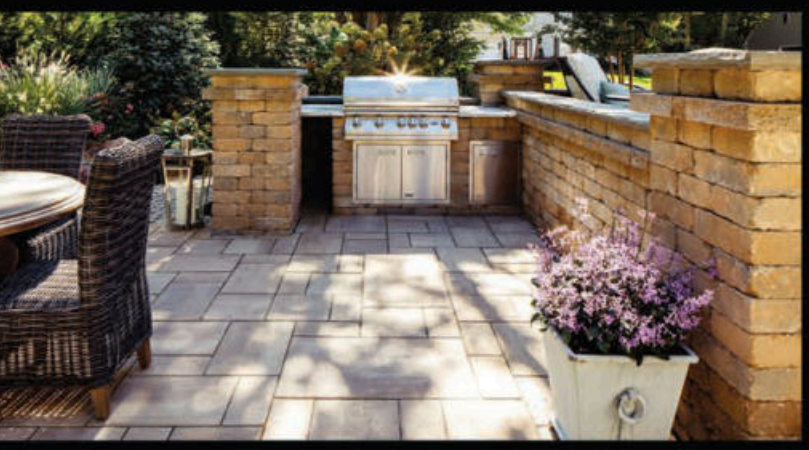
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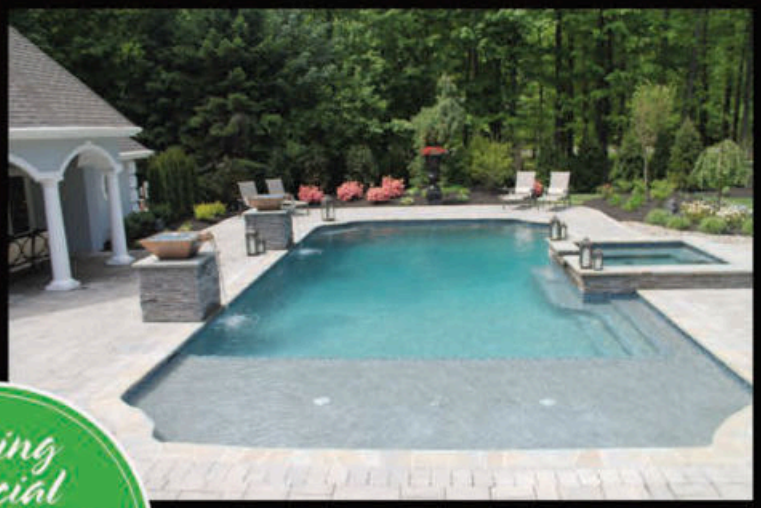
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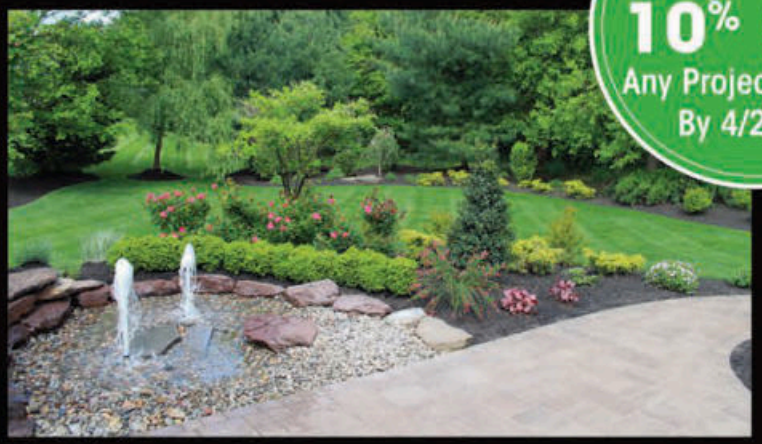
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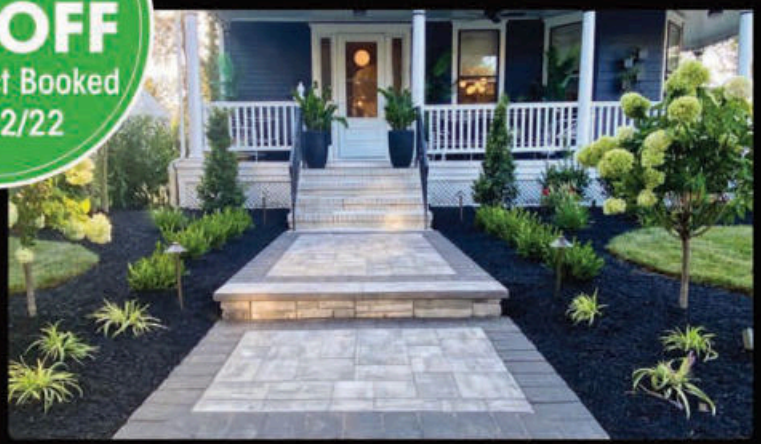
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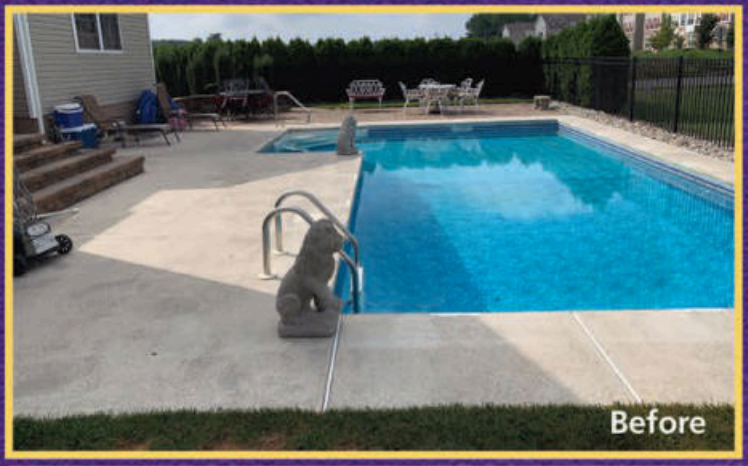
Here's what our customers are saying....

Mr. Gill, Thanks for stopping by the job and introducing yourself. I knew from the minute your amazing truck pulled up to our house on time for the scheduled appointment, we were off to a great start! After meeting with your landscape designer and when he came back with a plan, Gill's made our choice of contractors even easier. The quality and expertise of the work was incredible! Thanks for creating a paradise in our pool area.
- DAN L

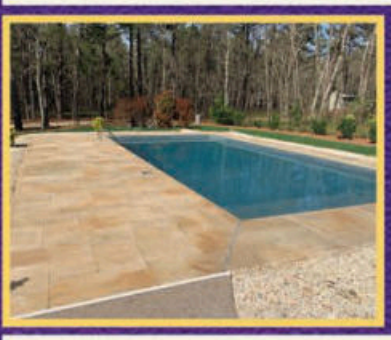
Brian, your company recently completed 2 patios and a landscape project for us. Ed was amazing as well as the hard-working crew. I enjoyed coming home every day from work to see the progress. The workers you have take their jobs so serious and have taken this project to the next level with the field changes. Could not be happier.
- DON C

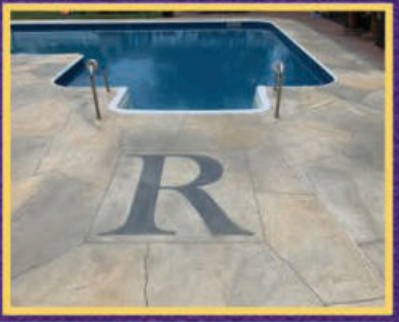
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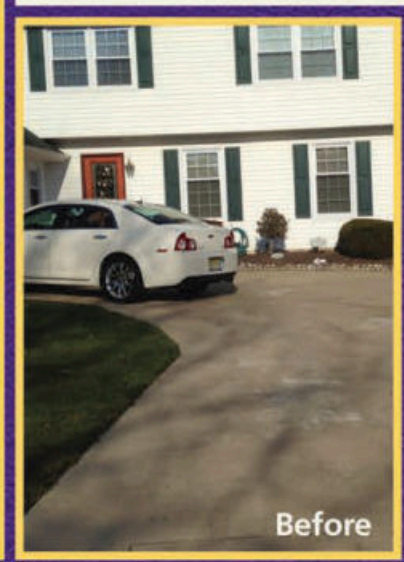
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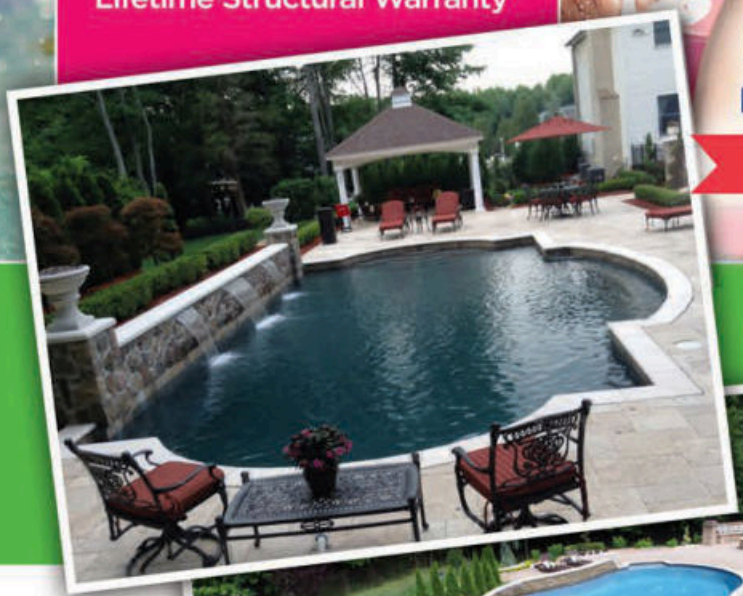
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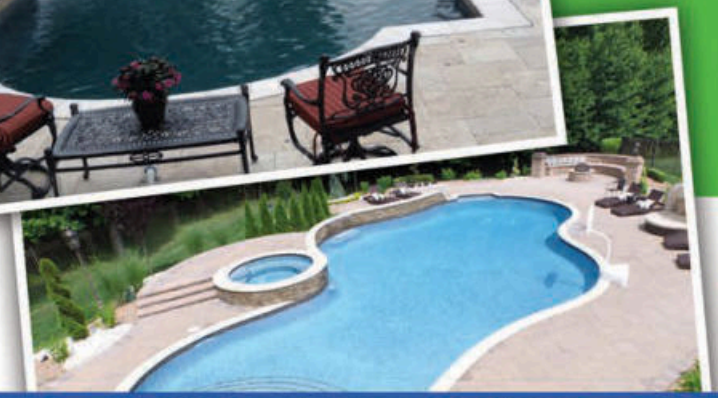
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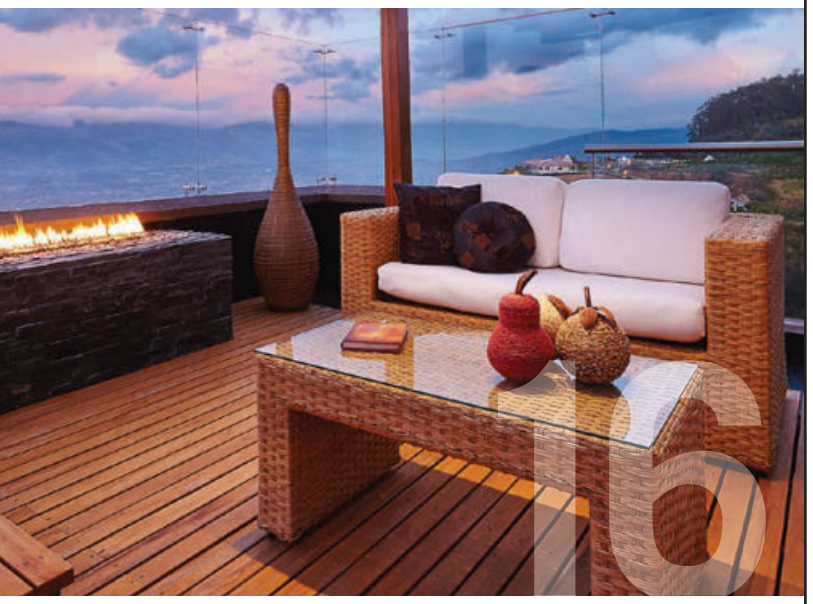
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ask the expert by Matt Cosentino

Amiano & Son Design-Build

ONE OF THE KEYS TO HAVING LONGEVITY IN BUSINESS IS TO ALWAYS EMBRACE ONE'S ROOTS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY REMAINING FORWARD-THINKING, and Amiano & Son Design-Build seems to strike a perfect balance in that regard. The company continues to adhere to the cornerstones on which it was founded in 1968, yet also welcomes in younger voices and a fresh perspective, and that approach has led to sustained success for more than 50 years.

With the millennial generation becoming more active in home-buying and remodeling, Amiano & Son is well positioned to suit their needs when it comes to kitchen and bathroom renovations, additions and more thanks to company leaders like Joseph Clymer. He joined the family business at age 15 as a laborer and ascended to the role of director of sales and design before his 30th birthday.

Clymer is a member of the prestigious National Kitchen & Bath Association Thirty Under 30 program and has been recognized locally by being inducted into the SNJ Millennials 30 Under 30. He and his team have quickly become known for their unique, original designs that are appreciated by homeowners of any age.


Joseph Clymer, director of sales and design

AMIANO & SON SEEMS TO HAVE A NICE BLEND OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS ON ITS STAFF, INCLUDING A STRONG REPRESENTATION OF MILLENNIALS. DO YOU THINK THAT'S IMPORTANT?

As a company, more than half of our staff in the office as well as in the field are millennials and we've been trying to emphasize the importance of having younger people within the industry. I am the director of sales and design and I'm 27. We have two other designers in their 20s as well. We bring a fresh, new look to all aspects of remodeling, including kitchens and baths. We all do extended learning to keep up with current trends and also what's traditional. It makes for a good balance, because our owner, Lou Amiano Jr., has been doing this for 25-plus years now, so we get a lot of guidance from him and he brings a whole different outlook on styles and the approach to a renovation.

ARE MILLENNIALS STARTING TO BECOME A LARGER PIECE OF YOUR CUSTOMER BASE?

Yes. We're working with a lot of younger families and younger couples who are looking for our expertise about what's current and for us to guide them to what will work for them and their family. For example, if it's a younger couple and they're planning on growing their family, then we're going to design the kitchen around growth for them. We keep different things like that in mind because we're at a similar point in life ourselves so we know what to look out for.

HAVE YOU FOUND MILLENNIALS TO BE MORE OPEN TO BUYING FIXER-UPPERS AND UNDERGOING REMODELING PROJECTS SO THEY CAN GET THE SPACE THEY DESIRE?

We've definitely seen that. This is the first generation to have technology at their disposal from a very early age. A lot of people we work with within that age group are utilizing things like Houzz and Pinterest, idea books or mood boards and sharing Instagram photos with us and using that as an inspiration for their project. They can say they really like this cabinet color or this cabinet style or the way the backsplash flows with the countertop. When the design team sits down and goes through these pictures with them, we can pick and choose which components from these inspiration pictures we want to pull into their remodel. The younger generation is definitely more proactive when diving into a project and doing a lot more legwork, sometimes before they even make the call to a contractor.

THIS GENERATION SEEMS TO BE INTERESTED IN ROOMS THAT ARE RICH IN CHARACTER AND HAVE UNIQUE FEATURES TO THEM. DOES THAT MAKE IT FUN FOR YOU AS A DESIGNER?

Yes. Trending materials are definitely a hot commodity right now. What I mean by that is, instead of doing something more traditional like a raised panel door or a natural stone backsplash, we're doing something like an exotic wood floor or white shaker cabinets with quartz countertops and a blingy backsplash. That's a whole different clientele and a whole different style than what we were doing even five or 10 years ago.

ALONG WITH YOUR COUSIN SOPHIA AMIANO, WHO IS A DESIGNER AT AMIANO & SON, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE USHERING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS?

It's very important to us. We've seen the blood, sweat and tears that went into it from our grandfather to my uncle and her father. We don't take that lightly. We want to make sure that the hard work and dedication to our clients over the years gets handed down. We want to bring a new approach, bringing different design ideas in and bringing in new materials to our showrooms in Southampton and Barnegat Light. We're trying to keep everything going but also keep adapting to the times as well. H&H



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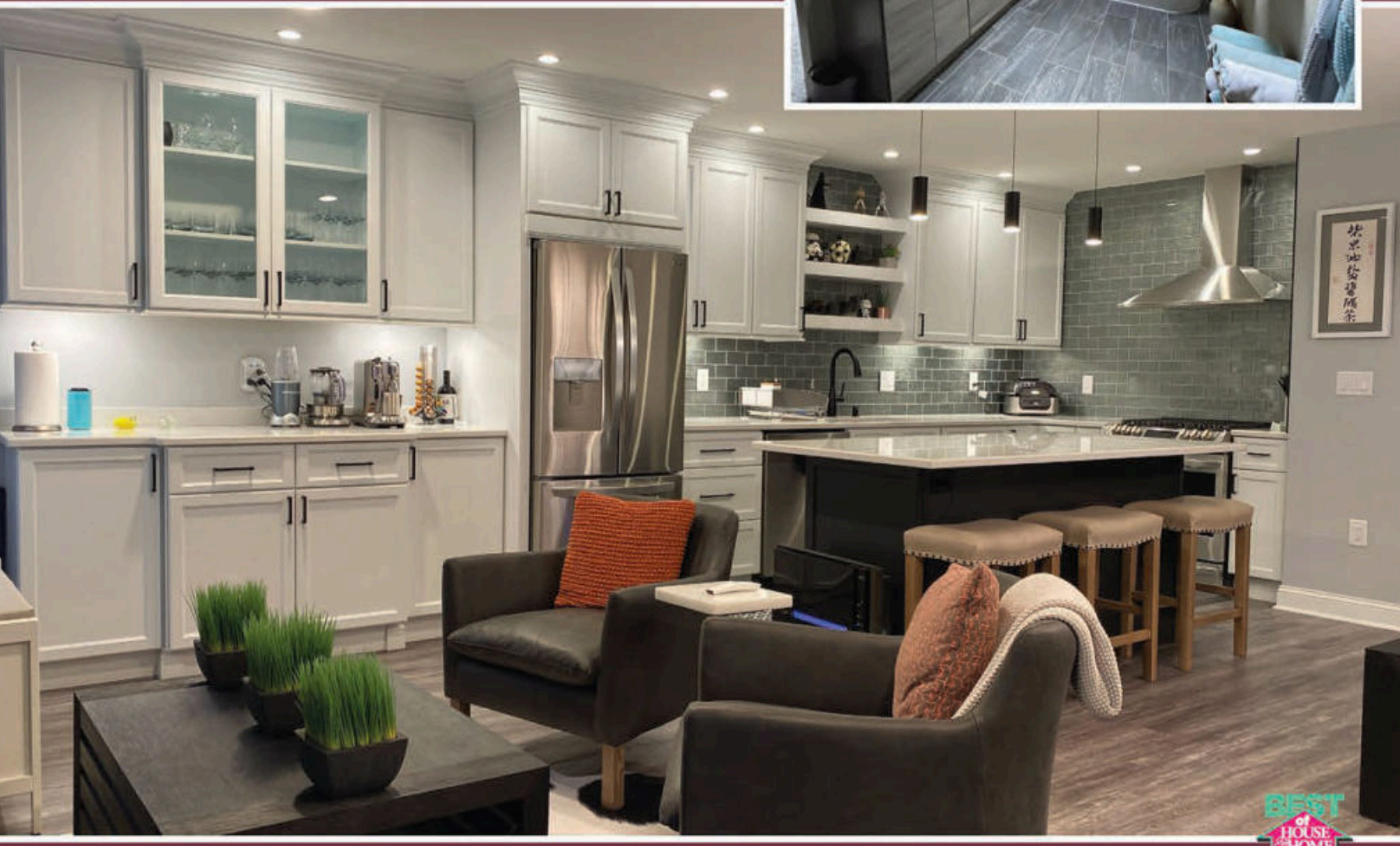
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H&H profile by Lindsey Getz

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WHEN YOU NEED WORK DONE ON YOUR HOME—expected or not—you want to know that you can trust the contractor you've hired to get the job done well. After all, you're not an expert on what's involved in services like roofing, siding or windows and you don't want to get taken advantage of as a result. Because of that, it's important to choose a company that you can feel confident is reputable.

But how exactly do you know a company can be trusted?

One important factor in choosing the best contractor is longevity. Only a company that performs great work is going to be able to stick around for the long haul. That's exactly the case with Emmons Roofing & Siding, a company that has been offering expert care for South Jersey and the Jersey Shore area since 1996. They are a well-known name in the region—and for good reason. Their success was built upon a reputation of honesty, integrity and good work.

In fact, the company is an Owens Corning™ Platinum Preferred Contractor. That's not a designation that any old company can have. Platinum Preferred Contractors are in the top tier of a premier network of roofing professionals. In order to achieve this title, they must have passed a workmanship inspection, been professionally screened for financial stability and customer service, and continue to adhere to stringent guidelines set forth by Owens Corning. Fewer than 1% of roofing contractors in the United States are Owens Corning Platinum Preferred.

"It's a title that backs up our already strong reputation," says Stephanee Kelly, co-owner of the company along with her husband Matthew. "Only the most reputable companies are able to earn that designation."

Besides being able to feel confident that you've hired a contractor you can trust, this designation benefits homeowners in a more tangible way as well. That's because Platinum Preferred Contractors are able to offer 50-year warranties on their work—much longer than other companies can offer. According to Owens Corning's website, "because we stand behind these warranties, we need to make sure that we are backing up the best roofers in the business."

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST STORM CHASERS

Unfortunately, when it comes to contractors for roofing, siding and windows, there are a lot of fly-by-night companies out there and it's important for homeowners to protect themselves. In the business, many of these companies are called "storm chasers." They follow severe weather from area to area, knowing that there will be a lot of work.

They typically have no community roots and therefore no knowledge of local building codes. Their "rush job" often has shoddy work and since they typically leave the area in chase of the next storm, they can't be reached when there are problems.

> **"At Emmons, you are not only investing in a new roof, new siding or new windows—you're investing in peace of mind."**
>
> —Stephanee Kelly, co-owner, Emmons Roofing & Siding

How can you spot a storm chaser?

Kelly says it's critical to be wary of contractors who may not have a physical office—again, an indicator that they may be a fly-by-night company. They'll do the work (poorly) and then disappear, leaving you with problems.

"We are a local small business in Williamstown with real people answering the phones—not an answering service," Matthew Kelly says. "We don't work out of a house and we do not have a 'virtual office.' Be wary of contractors that will not provide you with a physical address but instead only have a P.O. box or suite number and only use an answering service."

Some of the worst storm chasers don't even carry the proper insurance and are therefore putting you at risk.

"We are fully insured and also carry liability insurance, which is required for roofing operations," Matthew Kelly says. "But many contractors carry cheaper insurance that does not include liability insurance, leaving you, the homeowner, liable if a worker is injured while working on your roof. Make sure the insurance certificate sent to you by your contractor's insurance agency specifically includes liability insurance."

CHOOSING WISELY

At the end of the day, your choice in roofing, siding and window contractors can be the difference between good, quality work—and a big headache. Kelly says that the last thing Emmons wants to see is people in their local community get taken advantage of by unscrupulous roofing, siding and window contractors.

"You should be able to feel confident that you've chosen a contractor that you can trust—not one that is going to leave you with problems to fix after they've gone," says Stephanee Kelly. "At Emmons, you are not only investing in a new roof, new siding or new windows—you're investing in peace of mind." H&H

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EmmonsRoofing.com/platinum

by **Lindsey Getz**



Set Up Your Space for Summer

At **Sequoia Out Back**, customers can find endless inspiration for their outdoor dreams.



It's safe to say that the pandemic has taught us to appreciate the outdoors even more. While backyard outdoor living areas have been soaring in popularity for years now, for many, the stay-at-home orders and the experience of being stuck indoors for so long have made homeowners absolutely crave these spaces more than ever. They are truly a must-have—a fact that's been increasingly evident at Sequoia Out Back, where owner John Keller says that he's seeing even more people come into the showroom than ever before.

From the moment that homeowners walk through Sequoia Out Back's front doors, the experience is really unlike any other. The 30,000-square-foot showroom has everything you could want for your personal oasis on display so that you can envision it in your own backyard.

When you walk through a typical patio store or a big-box store, items aren't usually set up or paired together the way they would be in your backyard so it can be difficult to visualize your finished space. At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

The goal of the showroom has always been to make homeowners feel like they're stepping into a real-life outdoor space. This helps homeowners to make the best choices when it comes to furniture and decking supplies that will work for their own projects.

Pair these gorgeous displays with the knowledgeable and helpful team members who are ready to assist—and homeowners can really appreciate the showroom visit



[H]ere, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas."

—**John Keller,** *owner*

experience. Customers always leave Sequoia with a lot of great ideas and information.

Of course, in general, inventory has been a major issue since the start of the pandemic. Homeowners who have tried to purchase furniture and decking may have noticed limited stock. But Sequoia Out Back has been fortunate to be able to keep a lot of inventory in stock thanks to its relationship with manufacturers and its purchasing power, as well as having a large quantity from the start. Even so, with so many people coming through the doors, now is the time to start planning for the spring while inventory is still available.

After all, before you know it, the weather will be consistently warm, and we'll all be spending even more time outdoors. Homeowners want to make sure their space is ready now!

"The sooner you can start planning, the better," urges Keller. "The number of visitors coming to the store right now is higher than ever for this time of year. It's definitely not too early to start thinking about setting up your outdoor space."

As you start planning, Sequoia Out Back has all of the amenities that you might want to consider. This includes fire pits, patio furniture and all of the material supplies including decking and railing and hardscaping. Sequoia works with all of the leading manufacturers including TimberTech, Wolf, Trex, Zuri and Fiberon—all of whom continue to offer innovative products.

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or someone who was sent by their contractor to look for materials, Sequoia's showroom can accommodate everyone.

It's all about making the experience as easy and as enjoyable as possible for homeowners. As the true outdoor living experts, Sequoia and its team are ready to help make homeowners' backyard dreams come true.

"Outdoor living has been a trend for a long time but it's hotter than ever," Keller sums up. "I think we're all ready to start spending more time outside." **H&H**

Sequoia Out Back

2420 Bethlehem Pike, Route 309 | Hatfield, Pa. | **(866) 650-DECK** | **DeckSupplies.com**



Ready TO Relax

BY LIZ HUNTER

Pros weigh in on how homeowners can help their deck project progress and have them enjoying it soon.

As issues around the supply chain and inflation continue to dominate the news, many homeowners might think there's no hope when it comes to improvement projects, especially a new deck. However, they shouldn't be discouraged, according to local industry professionals who say their outlook is positive, especially when customers prepare properly. We asked a few local companies to chime in on the state of their industry and how homeowners can help move a project along. With the right professional by your side, you'll be relaxing on your new deck in no time.

For anyone who is ready to embark on a deck project, what should they know about where things stand in terms of supply chain for this industry?

"As far as I can see right now, supply chain for decking and other finishes is pretty good. Costs are up for sure, but vendor inventory of in-stock products seems to be mostly back to normal. Some of the special-order space is still experiencing longer than desired lead times but at least availability for these items seems to have mostly resumed. Our customers have been very understanding of how things are right now since literally everyone is experiencing the same situation; and we've all now become accustomed to the new ways we've had to operate." —BRIAN IWANO, FOUNDER/PROJECT MANAGER, BLUE TREE BUILDERS

"All items that we use on our projects are made in the USA and so while there are some material shortages, we have adjusted on our end and ordered materials sooner in the process than normal to ensure there are no delays. We also now stock many items in our warehouse to ensure the clients' projects are not delayed when it comes time to build."
—MARV ESH, OWNER, KEYSTONE CUSTOM DECKS



BLUE TREE BUILDERS





How can homeowners make good use of their time and get on a builder's schedule? What kinds of things need to be handled in the early stages of planning and design?

"We are currently booking our summer 2022 schedule. The best way to get the process started is for one of our team to come to your house to start the initial conversations about what you as a client wants to accomplish with your space. From there we can recommend different designs, features, and overall layout based on our experience and we take all of that and our design team designs your dream outdoor living space! If you move ahead with Keystone, we will take care of all permitting to make this a turnkey process for our clients." —MARV ESH

"Homeowners should plan six months to a year in advance as they look to explore adding an outdoor space. Go and visit their potential contractors' showroom; they will assist with design ideas. ... Timelines and budgets should be discussed up front ... to set reasonable expectations." —JOE KALNAS, GENERAL MANAGER, MY DECK

"A township zoning application with your plot plan or lot survey is the absolute first step in any project that alters the permanent exterior footprint of your home. Zoning approvals, unlike construction permits, are the responsibility of the property owner. Most contractors are happy to help with this step but it's the homeowner's name that goes on the application. Some towns even charge contractors more money to submit zoning applications on the homeowner's behalf. Zoning simply gives you the permission for the footprint of the project. Construction permits cover the actual building of the project and are handled by the builder. Construction office staff can also help guide you through the requirements and help with the form. Sometimes a zoning variance may be required for approval, and that always falls on the homeowners to get through. Townhouse or other association approvals needed? Then there's all that goes along with that too." —BRIAN IWANO

What kind of design expertise can a deck industry professional specifically provide to help the overall project?

"Building an outside/inside room takes a lot of experience. You have to know about gas appliances, fireplaces, water features, plants, landscape design, hardscaping, patios, different materials and textures, and find a way to put it in someone's budget. Most people limit looking at materials at [places like] Home Depot. Wouldn't you rather call someone who knows every material available?

"When I design backyards, I ask them if they want a pool. They may say no, but you don't want to shut your backyard off. You cannot build something now that will preclude them from having a pool someday; you don't want to limit your property." —BILL WILSON, CO-OWNER, AMAZING DECKS



"Every home is unique to its own property, topography, setbacks and restrictions. I recommend getting a licensed deck builder to visit your home. Hire a professional, someone you are comfortable with. They will usually do the right thing." —JOE KALNAS

Ready to Relax

When a homeowner meets with a deck builder, what kinds of things should they have prepared to show/discuss?

"Collect a bunch of pictures that show various features or design elements you're looking to incorporate in your project. There's no such thing as 'too many pictures.' You don't have to have it all figured out. Just a little direction will help us run with it and design something awesome for you. ... It's also important to be serious about completing the project, communicate your budget and have some ideas about what you're looking to accomplish and how you want it to look." —BRIAN IWANO

What features continue to be valuable additions to a deck project?

"When it comes to outdoor living spaces, we are a turnkey design/build firm. Most of our projects will have a deck and porch. From there we incorporate fireplaces, kitchens, patios, water features, hot tubs, pergolas and many features like that. We also have recently launched our pool division so we can now add a pool to complete your one-of-a-kind dream outdoor living space." —MARV ESH

"There are more options for finish materials out there now than ever before. Finish selections are purely driven by personal preference and budget. From exotic hardwoods to stained composites, lattice, covered or half-covered decks, motorized screens and privacy walls, to benches, custom fabricated stone accents, fireplace—gas or wood burning—and audio and electrical. ... There's a lot, and we've installed a lot!" —BRIAN IWANO H&H

RESOURCES

Amazing Decks
Ambler, Pa.
Flemington, N.J.
(215) 654-1886
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Blue Tree Builders
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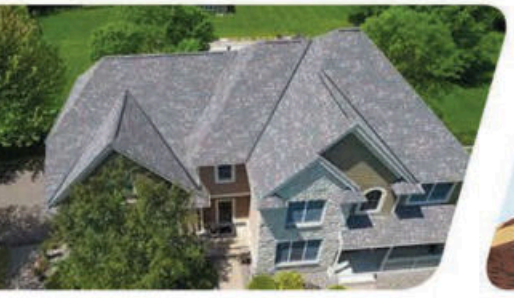
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Your Own Personal Paradise

Pools remain the hot-ticket item for backyards and **Del Val Pools & Spas** is the trusted company to call.



For the past two years, our homes have been our haven of comfort and safety, and even though many facets of our life feel normal again, the interest in staying home remains. However, people want their home to feel like a retreat, and nowhere is that investment better reflected than in a custom-designed pool.

Bryan Hull, partner at Del Val Pools & Spas, says demand for backyard pools continues to be sky-high. The pandemic's influence on the pool design/installation industry was like nothing this second-generation, family-owned and -operated business had ever seen, he says, and it has proven which companies are equipped to handle the requests.

For more than 25 years, Del Val Pools & Spas has been building pools across South Jersey and the Shore, with complete sales, installation and service. Hull says the company's reputation has been earned by its top-notch customer service. "Our customer retention rate is high because of our communication. Customers can call up and always talk to a member of our family and get to the right person. Our staff and crew return year after year, meaning customers are getting a well-trained and smart team to handle their project," he says. "The experience is here and the family feel is here."

Among the offerings from Del Val Pools & Spas is their expertise in custom gunite pools.

"Fiberglass and vinyl pools are still a great way to go, but they have standard shapes and sizes. Gunite pools have the ability to be completely customized and can be done up with all the features," Hull says.

Sundecks are the No. 1 feature in gunite pools, he continues. "We include these standard in our gunite pools. They are great for putting a couple Adirondack chairs and maybe an umbrella for some shade." Customization can go further with beautiful coping and tile, bubblers, waterfalls, raised spillover spas and exquisite color-changing lighting.

Gunite gives homeowners the freedom to form the pool around their yard, and the addition of landscaping, hardscaping and fire features surrounding the pool makes it even more enjoyable, and helps it blend into the scenery.

Unlike some other companies you might come across, Del Val Pools & Spas can handle it all, from start to finish. "We're a one-stop shop for pools, and we've invested in the equipment, including our own gunite trucks and sprayers," Hull says. "Most companies have to sub those parts out, but we've eliminated the need for a subcontractor so it's our own crews doing everything."

The biggest advantage to this is efficiency. "We control the schedule and we can give customers answers. When a company uses subcontractors, homeowners can't get answers right away because they have to go through the layers of communication. When a customer calls us, we know the schedule. Investing in this equipment has been one of the best decisions we've made," he continues.

To begin the process, Hull recommends homeowners talk to a sales team member who will determine what can fit in their backyard, taking into account township setback requirements. The company's longevity has made them very familiar with township departments, which also helps things go smoothly during the process of zoning and permitting. Once that is underway and the hole is dug in your backyard, Hull says it's four weeks for the build time.

Pools built by Del Val Pools & Spas are known for their quality, and with some regular refacing maintenance, a gunite pool can last up to 25 years. The company offers warranties on all of its pools, both in-ground and above-ground. It also has an extensive service department that can be called on to ensure heaters, filters and pumps are running properly before the season.

If you've been delaying the dream of your own backyard oasis, Hull says there's not a moment to wait. H&H



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by **Madeleine Maccar**

Pre-Season Preparation

No matter the kind of pool you have or how long you've been taking care of it, area experts have plenty of advice for any homeowner looking to greet swimming season with a pool that's ready to beat the summer heat.

As the days get longer

and signs of spring start announcing themselves in blooming pastels and singing birds, summertime days spent enjoying your backyard pool are never far behind.

But before those idyllic weekends and poolside parties make their seasonal return, assessing and preparing the pool at the center of your summer activity should be your No. 1 priority—and one that you shouldn't delay handling, since professionals are still navigating an inundation of service requests.

"People should already be calling and scheduling their pool openings because everyone wants to be open by May 31, especially this year," notes Walter Beyer, a co-owner of Stardust Pools, one of the oldest pool companies in New Jersey. "We must have booked over 100 openings already for April and May. This year has already been like no other, and a big issue is not having enough workers."

Some local experts in what it takes to begin your summer with a masterfully repaired, refreshed or renovated pool spoke to *House & Home* about what you can do to head into summer with a pool that's as ready to greet the warmer weather as you are.

AVOIDING COMMON ERRORS

Having professional assistance in opening your pool, no matter the type, can be invaluable in helping a first-time pool owner avoid reinforcing bad habits, as well as ensuring that longtime owners are up-to-date on the best and newest ways to preserve their investment. But if you're calling on the experts, prepping their workspace is imperative.

"Basically, to prepare for someone to come out and open the pool, you need to pump the water off the cover, get the leaves off the cover, if possible, and put a hose under the cover to fill the pool all the way up so when we go out there, we can run the pool and it's ready to go," Beyer explains.

With a number of new pool owners opening their backyard swimming oases for the first time—Derek Blasker of Fiberglass Pool Designs says his company installed 131 last year alone—there's a lot of potential for beginner mishaps that could put your pool out of commission until the necessary repairs are made.

"A pretty big rookie mistake when you're starting back up for the year is draining all of your equipment, so when it comes time to turn everything back on, people forget to prime the pump by filling it up with water," Blasker says. "They just flip it on expecting it to be able to create the suction pressure, and then they burn out the motor before the season even starts."

Not all damage comes from a one-time blunder. Administering an incorrect chemical concentra-

Image courtesy of Epoxy Floor Experts



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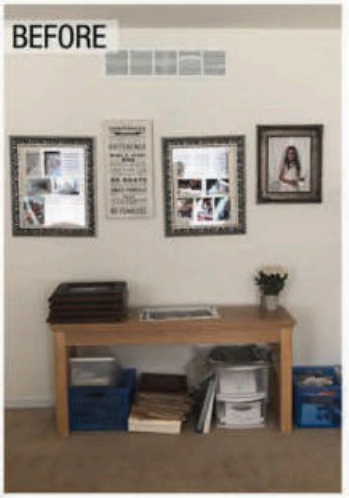


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Pre-Season Preparation



tion can cause the kind of slow damage that creeps in over time. Blasker notes that the very chemicals meant to sanitize your pool can produce issues in the long term, especially if you eschew professional advice and keep making the same mistakes.

"People like to put their chlorine tablets into the skimmer, and it's such a heavy concentration of chlorine flowing directly down that sometimes it will force the pipe itself to start to crush itself, so it starts to warp," he says. "That will slowly deteriorate the pipes in your pool. It's not going to happen instantly but, if no one ever tells you to stop doing that, it's going to cause problems over a prolonged period of time. If you start early with something like a floater or an automatic chlorinator, that will prolong the life of your pipes."

CHECKING THE BASICS

A visual assessment is a good place to start, which will help you identify any necessary fixes—including a clogged pool filter, floating winter debris, liner damage, chipped tiles, wear and tear to your pool decking, and broken equipment—as well as their immediacy.

"Liners and covers tend to get rips or holes in them, safety covers especially if storms came through and branches cut through the cover, which you'll need to replace," Beyer says. "If there's a hole in your liner, the water levels can get too low, and then the liners shrink. … A lot of people put off replacing or repairing their liners, and then they open up a pool and find out that this is the year they need to put a new liner in."

You'll also want to check your water's chemical balances early in your reopening schedule. A water sample is a critical assessment of your pool's health, and will guide you toward any necessary chlorine, calcium, alkaline or pH adjustments, especially since elements like sunshine and the acidity of rain can influence its chemical levels.

"When we open up a pool, we do free water testing," notes Beyer. "We'll take a sample that day, and the next day our office will call to tell you what you need to do to stabilize your pool and chemicals."

Of course, it's not just what's inside your pool that matters: The decking around it is an important part of your swimming environment that requires care and attention, too.

Jason Larsen at Epoxy Floor Experts says that even the highest quality concrete will eventually show its age once it's weathered enough cycles of seasonal extremes.

"The problem with concrete is that it cracks," he says. "There's

Image courtesy of Stardust Pools



nothing you can really do to stop that. You can keep the surface sealed as best you can, which might prevent some of the pitting, but as far as the heaving and the cracking, there's not much you can do. That's just the nature of the beast: When concrete cures, it shrinks, and when it shrinks it cracks."

REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS

Harsh weather does account for inevitable maintenance projects, though substandard installation work can be the culprit, too. "We get people who call us because their concrete's looking ugly and want us to come out and assess the situation," Larsen says. "A lot of the heaving and the settling is usually because the substrate wasn't installed properly.

"There are sealers you can use," Larsen adds, explaining that certain options and upgrades can alleviate some of that repair onus. "We fix concrete with other products, so we'll resurface the whole area with either a stone or a rubber material, depending on the situation. If you have a lot of cracks or you can see that the slabs are moving constantly, then we'll use our rubber product because that's flexible: As the concrete moves, the rubber moves with it."

If you're eyeing your pool with a refresh rather than repairs in mind, custom features or architecture like waterfalls and lighting can certainly dress it up—though you'll also have to follow those extra maintenance steps at the beginning and end of every season.

"It's almost impossible to fully drain the waterfalls because you can't just cap them off," Blasker says. "A lot of the cascades are just a long strip with a bunch of little holes in it that the water flows out of, and there's nothing you can really do to seal it off for the winter. If you don't properly blow it out, and then cap it off at the valve, or you don't put enough antifreeze in it, it's all above-grade so you can really run into some issues there."

Beyer also notes that concrete pools' upgrades tend to focus on surfaces, like coping, tiling and finishes.

No matter your goals for your pool this summer, the guidance and hands-on know-how of the area's pool professionals will keep your pool running … well, swimmingly with a professional pre-season inspection.

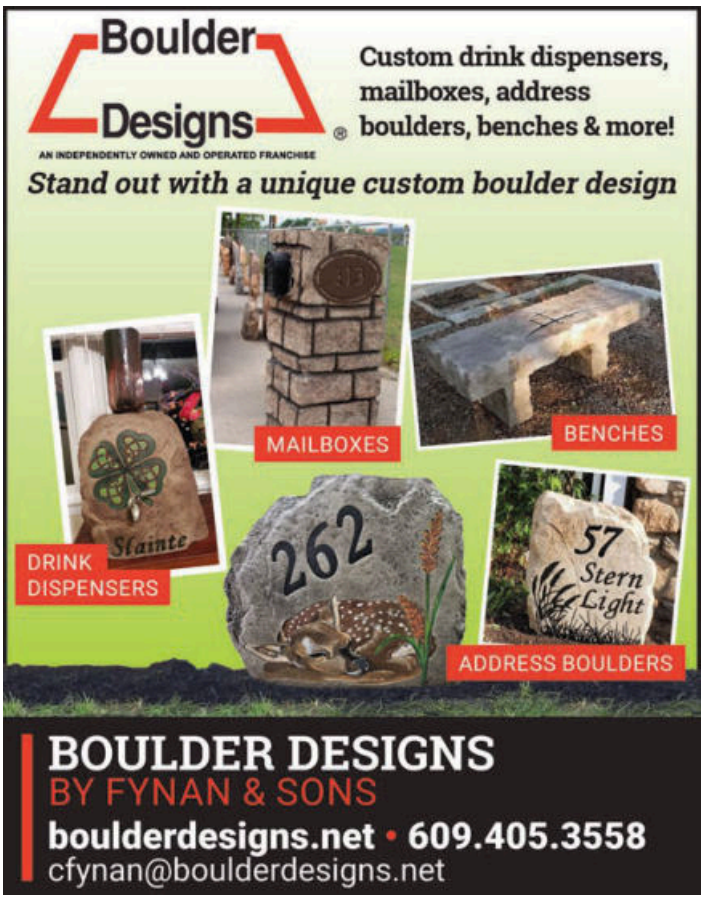
"When I'm done installing a pool, I go over everything with them: how to do their maintenance, what they need to put in it, when to check the chemicals, opening the pool, closing the pool," Beyer notes. "We recommend a professional inspection right after your pool is open to make sure everything—your heaters, your pumps, your filters—is working and running properly. And, if you're buying a house with a pool, make sure you get a pool inspection along with your house inspection." **H&H**

RESOURCES

Epoxy Floor Experts
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Led by a desire to take care of their community by providing high-quality work, the team at East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows treats every client—and the homes they love—with a respect befitting family.

by **Madeleine Maccar**

Where the Heart Is

Your home isn't just four walls and a roof: It's a treasure trove of memories, a meeting place for your nearest and dearest, a collection of lovingly selected and generationally passed-down items.

When structural repairs are necessary, you want to trust your beloved home with contractors who will also regard it with the respect and love it deserves, which is the philosophy at the heart of every job East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows proudly puts its name on.

In fact, every member of East Coast's more-than-200-person team treats each client like they're owner Larry Stiteler's mother and every house like they're guests in her home, according to East Coast President Jeff Kay.

"We typically leave a property better and cleaner than we found it," he says while describing the award-winning customer service that East Coast has unfailingly offered for more than 40 years.

A "detail technician" will start the project with a free on-site assessment that includes taking measurements, preparing material orders and staging the worksite. When it's time for the work to begin, a dedicated installation team takes over, headed by a project manager who will also serve as a client's constant point of contact.

"That's how they get that personal attention, and that level of organization is what makes the process a painless one," Kay says. "Sixty percent of our business comes from referrals, and I think that speaks volumes to the customer experience."

East Coast hasn't just earned recognition and rave reviews for how it treats clients, though. For more than 10 consecutive years, it's won Best of the Press awards in roofing, siding, windows and contracting. "That is voted on by the residents of Atlantic County," Kay points out. He adds that East Coast has also won the nationally ranked Best of the Best Award for three years in a row.

To maintain those demanding standards, potential employees are painstakingly vetted to ensure their personality and professionalism meet the company's expectations for customer care. Once they're on the team, installers go through additional training to be certified as GAF Master Elite Contractors in roofing, CertainTeed Master Craftsman and 5-Star Contractors in siding, and ProVia Certified in windows and doors.

That additional education ensures they deliver manufacturer-specified results to ensure proper installation, as well as offer guarantees like the "Golden Pledge" warranty on every roof they do. That 25-year workmanship and leak-free guarantee and 50-year warranty is not only 100% pro-rated but also an offer only Master Elite Contractors can extend.

"We take our installation teams to GAF headquarters in Parsippany once a year to be retrained and certified: half the day's in the classroom, the other half is hands-on," Kay explains. "Only 2% of contractors achieve GAF Master Elite Contractor status, and we're also in the President's Club. Of the 2% of contractors who do reach the Master Elite status, only about 10% reach the President's Club."

That diligent professional training is paired with local, home-grown talent, all of whom keenly understand how the region's seasonal extremes can impact the lifetime and effectiveness of their products.

"We're able to easily identify the most vulnerable areas of your roof, your siding, your windows, your doors based on the seasonality," says Kay. "There are installation techniques we follow that are specific to the Northeast."

East Coast takes its community responsibility just as seriously as the quality of its work. Their doors have stayed open all throughout the pandemic because homes didn't stop needing repairs, even when it felt like the rest of the world stood still. Working through the pandemic inspired the Economic Relief Rebate Program, a springtime promotion that helps make the cost of crucial repairs easier to absorb.

"If you hire us for your projects, we offer you no money down—no payments or interests are due for 12 months—and we lock you into last year's pricing," explains Kay. "You don't owe any money until next year. Then when we're done with the project, we will send you a rebate check for up to 15% of the total price of your project."

The pandemic directly inspired the program, as it was another way to provide local assistance when "people need help now more than ever." It's the newest way the team is able to step up and give back: Longstanding outreach efforts include giving away roof repairs to locally active homeowners in need every holiday season, and Stiteler is personally involved with the childhood hunger nonprofit MANNA Worldwide, in addition to building dental facilities in Guatemala.

"At the end of the day, we do what we say we'll do, and we go above and beyond to help people," says Kay. "We live and come from a place of service." H&H

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With spring in bloom, homeowners across the country are preparing to spend the coming months in their own backyards, and chances are they would like to invest in some updates. Our annual landscape directory connects our readers with local resources to consult on any project related to the outdoors. This comprehensive list includes companies that can create an oasis with a pool, patio or deck, not to mention hardscaping, water features and shade elements; or professionals who maintain landscaping, provide furniture or install fences and much more. No matter what you need, your outdoor space is in good hands.

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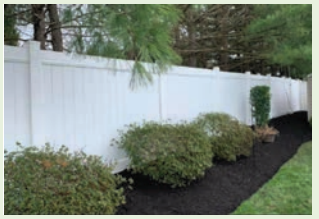
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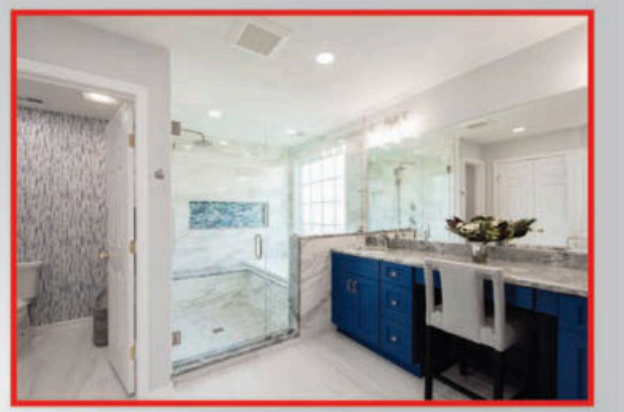
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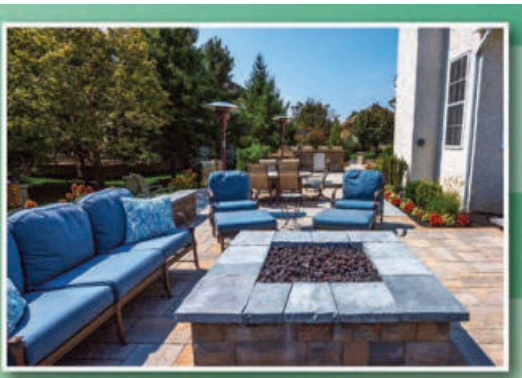
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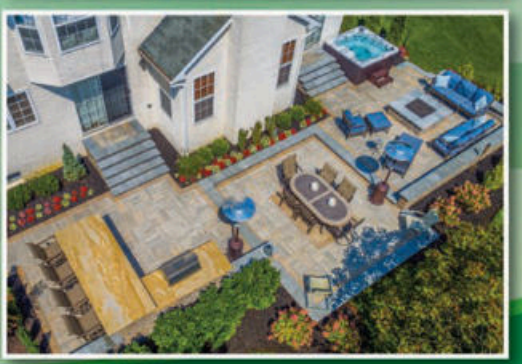
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ask the expert

New Castle Artisan

by Brittany Ann Morrisey

OVER THE YEARS, HARSH WEATHER CAN CAUSE CRACKS AND OTHER DAMAGE ON A HOME'S CONCRETE SURFACES. Homeowners may put off repairs due to cost concerns, but replacing that concrete is not always the answer. Gwen Kunkel, owner of New Castle Artisan, can breathe new life into your existing surfaces—whether it's your driveway, pool deck, patio; practically any concrete surface around your home—with improved products and techniques. *House & Home* spoke with Kunkel about the economic and aesthetic value of concrete resurfacing.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO RESURFACE CONCRETE VERSUS REPLACEMENT?

The benefit of resurfacing is instead of just fixing a problem like cracking, pitting or damage from mold, you can make a home improvement. Right now if you have concrete that's cracked or un-level, you can repair or replace it with new concrete, but you'll just have new concrete. It doesn't increase the curb appeal of your home. It doesn't increase the value of your home. With resurfacing, we add design and we carve the cracks into the existing pattern after we repair them, so you've got something that looks like you spent money to do a home improvement and not just a home repair. That makes it more valuable financially and aesthetically.

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HOW LONG DOES YOUR WORK LAST?

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YOU ALSO RESURFACE POOL DECKS. HOW COST EFFECTIVE IS THAT?

The cost to rip out and replace a pool deck is usually considerably more than resurfacing. Being that most pools are located in the backyard, just the concrete can cost up to 35 percent more because they have to wheelbarrow it in, which is labor intensive.



Gwen Kunkel and brother Paul Randall of New Castle Artisan

WILL IT RUIN MY LANDSCAPING OR GRASS?

No. As a matter of fact, aside from it being beautiful, you wouldn't even know we were there. You don't have to take down any fences. We don't use any heavy equipment. Everything we bring is carried in and carried out, so your landscaping looks exactly the same.

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Spring SHOWCASE



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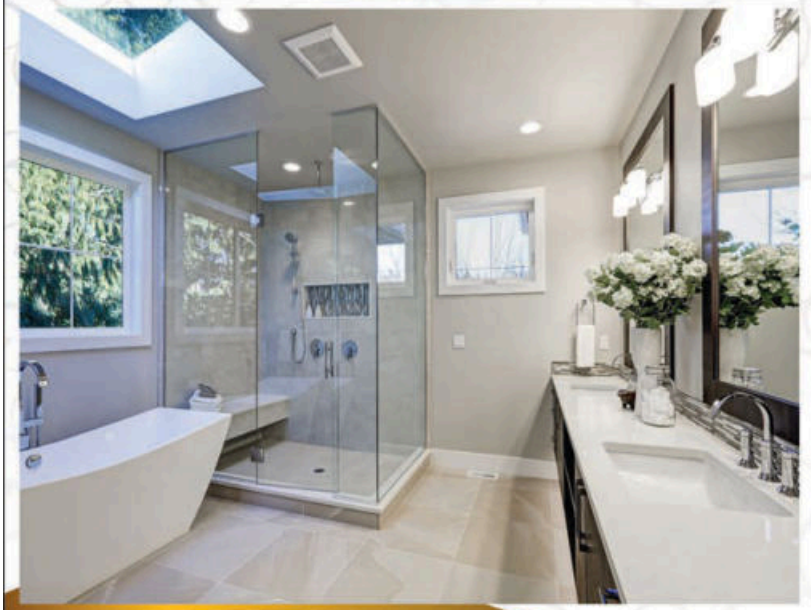
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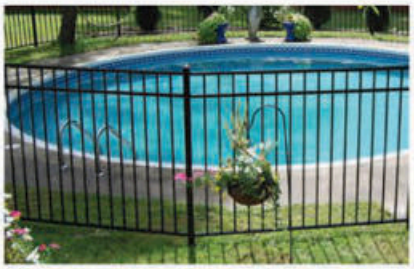
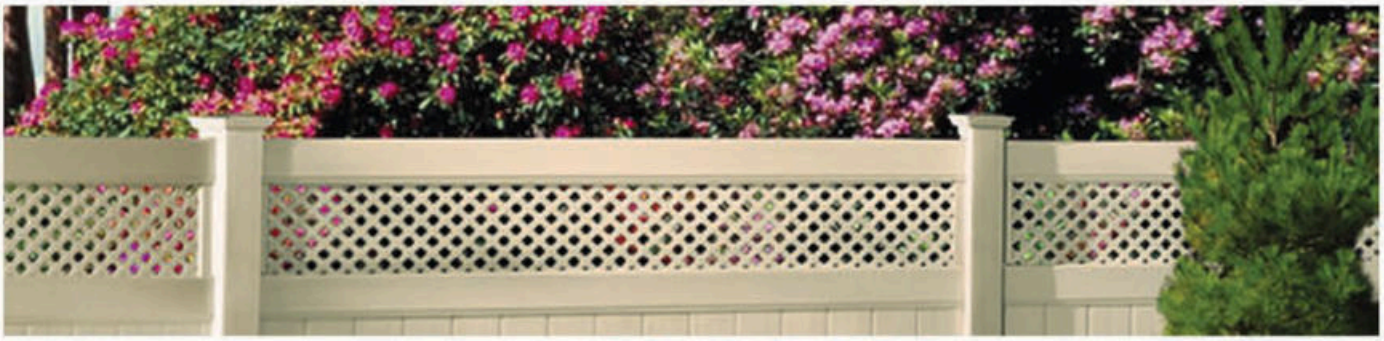
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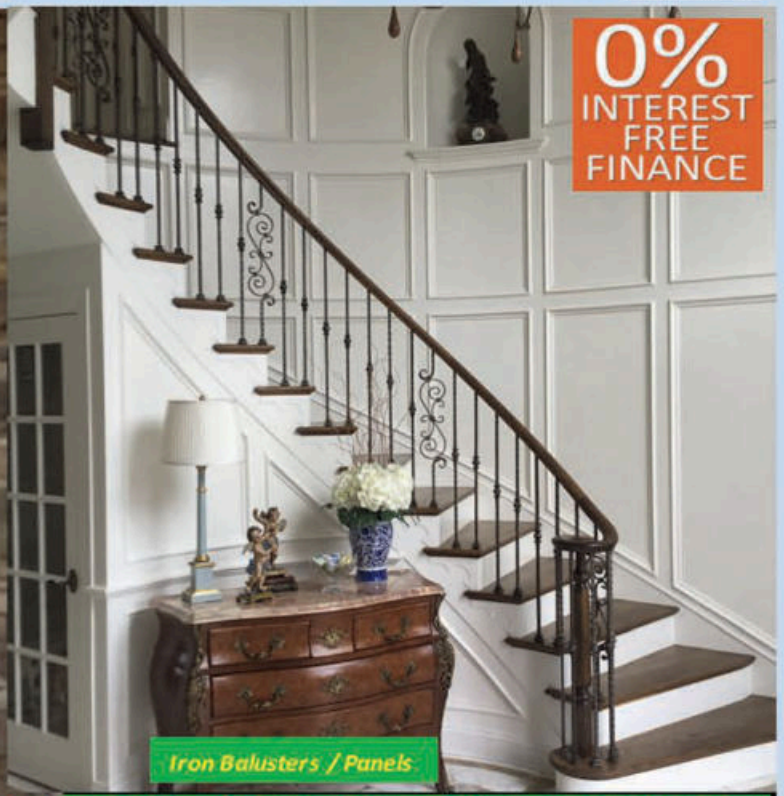
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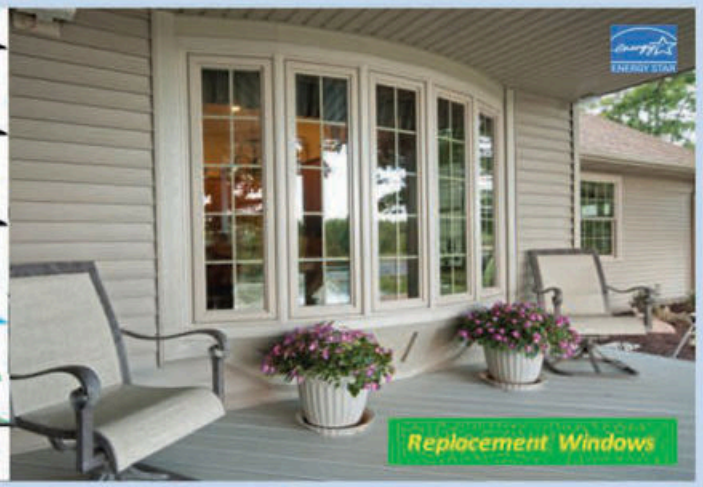


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HOME SAFE HOME

BY MADELEINE MACCAR

With more and more people choosing to age in place at their longtime homes or in a dedicated in-law suite at an adult child's home, there are more and more options for doing so safely and comfortably.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, baby boomers will all be 65 years or older by 2030. And while 65 isn't as old as it used to be, the generation's elder members have already retired and are considering where they want to spend their golden years—and it's never too early to start thinking ahead for those who aren't quite there yet. Retirement homes and assisted care facilities are increasingly popular options that offer independence, a sense of community and the comfort of professional care while others hire an in-home caregiver, but those options aren't for everyone.

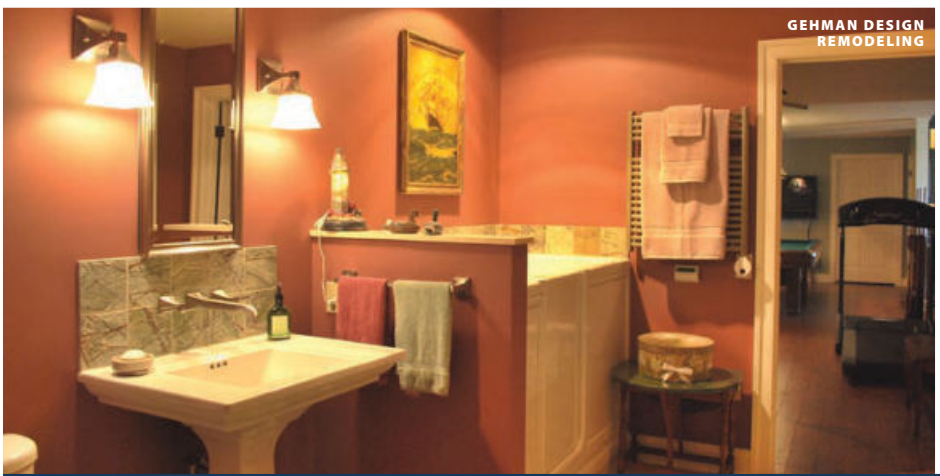
Many wish to assert their independence by growing older in the homes they've filled with a lifetime of memories; others prefer moving in with family. A familiar home retrofit with safety features is an attractive and accessible option, just as it's becoming more common for multigenerational households to rely on converting or adding a dedicated "in-law suite" to accommodate aging loved ones' needs while offering the peace of mind that comes with being close by in the event of an emergency.

And there will be emergencies, though external hazards can be minimized by consulting experienced professionals.


GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING

"One of the most common mishaps is falling, so you need to really look at the space and eliminate those risk factors," notes Dennis Gehman of Gehman Design Remodeling.

Whether you're planning to age in place, you're the caretaker providing a living area to keep elderly loved ones nearby or you're just now starting to explore your options, how you proceed depends on personal preferences, influencing factors and individual situations. But one thing remains the same: Safety always comes first.


GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING

A Safer, Comfortable Space

Taking the proper precautions begins with minimizing the potential for falling and tripping.

"The most common room in the house for falls is the bathroom. People are getting up and off the toilet and might be off-balance, they're stepping up over the side of a bathtub to get in and out, and then you have wet feet, and so there's slippery surfaces to watch out for," Gehman explains. "Adequate lighting helps since our eyes don't see as great as we get older, and you'll want to identify tripping hazards, such as area rugs on hardwood floors."

A daily tripping hazard are both indoor and outdoor steps. But installing a residential elevator can be a surprisingly easy potential solution, according to Todd Trovarello of Personal Elevator. He notes that it's often to clients' pleasant surprise to learn that an elevator only needs five square feet of interior or exterior space and tends to be more affordable than they anticipate.

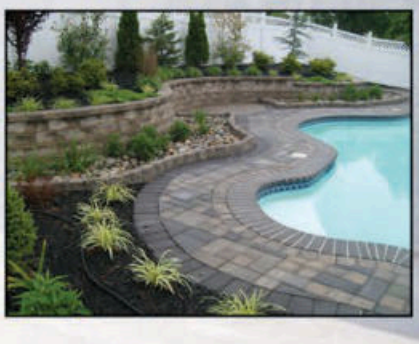
Trovarello has specialized in installing and retrofitting home elevators for three decades, and he's noticed a significant uptick—he used to annually average six or seven retrofits a year and says it's now up to nearly 30—over the past two years of the pandemic.

With area real estate prices soaring and the lack of available properties, Trovarello has seen how reluctant older homeowners are to move, even into an adult child's home with dedicated space and amenities. It has contributed to a surge in outfitting a family home with safety features specifically designed for the elderly.

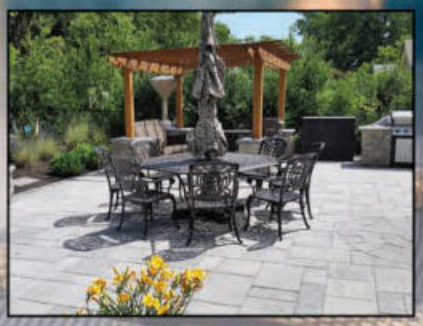
Of course, people who age in place want to be surrounded by the cozy familiarity of the homes they love and those moving into a suite created for them don't want to feel like they're relocating to a medical facility that's more coldly functional than warmly inviting.

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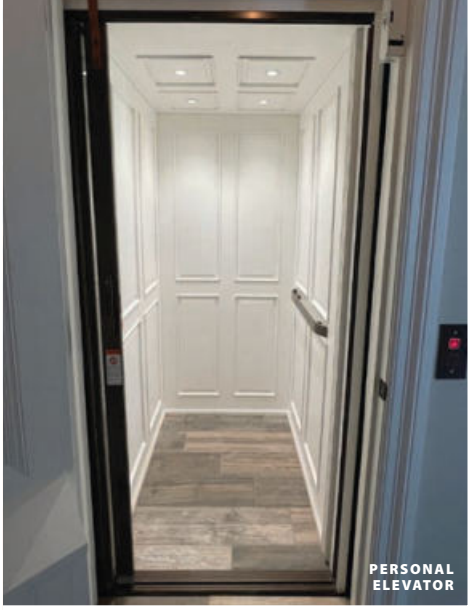
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PERSONAL ELEVATOR


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Installing grab bars is a must no matter what, though they don't have to be permanent and, with modern manufacturers reliably combining safety and style, they certainly don't have to feel clinical.

Gehman emphasizes how crucial grab bars are in outfitting older loved ones' living spaces, although there are some options that can be easily removed. "People are often hesitant about grab bars because they don't want their house to look too institutional, like a hospital or a nursing home, but there are some good-quality grab bars out there nowadays that work with a suction cup if you have a smooth surface—they won't work as well on walls with smaller tiles or a painted surface," he explains. "That's a do-it-yourself project where you wouldn't have to pay a professional to install it."

Something as simple as switching out round door knobs for levers and handles can make a huge difference for people with arthritis. On a larger scale, wheelchairs and walkers need to be accommodated so an older loved one has enough room and stability to navigate corners and elevated areas. Replacing existing hinges with offset ones, which allows a door to swing clear of the inside frame to widen the entry space, is a common solution.

Technology has been a huge asset in creating accessible spaces. With the touch of a button, assistance of a remote or voice-activated commands, it's easier than ever for individuals with limited mobility to have complete control over the comfort of their homes. "Anything that's electrical or electronic these days, there's an app for it," Gehman points out. "Your thermostat, the WiFi, locks, security cameras: It can all be controlled from a smartphone."

Aging in Place at Home

Those spending their later years at home will benefit from being surrounded by a familiar, cozy environment, but their homes will need to undergo potentially extensive remodeling and retrofitting.

"An existing space can certainly be modified but it's oftentimes a whole lot easier if we're designing an addition, because we're keeping those [safety features] in mind right away," Gehman says.

The most important thing, Trovarello says, is ensuring that modifications make the entire house accessible.

"A lot of people are trying to stay in their homes—they're not trying to move or downsize," he observes. "When they want to age in place, my main goal is always to give them access to every floor."




GEHMAN DESIGN REMODELING

Creating an In-Law Suite

Whether you're converting an existing space or building an addition, designing an in-law suite means being cognizant of any potential restrictions.

"Every municipality has different zoning classifications. … We have found that they will permit an in-law suite, with a caveat about the kitchen," says Gehman. "If all you need is a bedroom, living room and bathroom space, it's not a big deal. But if they want a kitchen and it's not zoned for it, what determines that it's a kitchen is a built-in cooking surface."

There's also the additional demands on a home's plumbing to consider.

"Sometimes we run into issues if they do not have a public sewer because on-lot septic systems are sized for the number of bedrooms in the house," Gehman adds. "And so by adding another bedroom, sometimes that means you'll have to address your sewer capacity."

You'll also want to consider privacy measures like separate entrances—with ramps, a gradient sidewalk or even lifts rather than steps.

Additional Advice

To ensure that you're creating a space with current and future needs in mind, Gehman advises seeking input from a physical or occupational therapist during the construction or modification period, especially one who knows an individual's specific limitations.

No matter the approach you take, the upfront cost can be daunting, for sure. But, as Gehman points out, that's a one-time upfront payment, versus the ongoing costs of relocating to a retirement community.

He does caution that, no matter the approach you take, prepare for delays, especially with the ongoing material shortage creating unusual snags in the process.

"It's always going to take longer than you think," he notes.

Whether you're looking to age in place or break ground on an in-law suite, Trovarello emphasizes the importance of working with an experienced professional who's just as invested in the occupants' safety and comfort as you are.

"We've done elevators to accommodate people's parents, handicapped people and even disabled children and aging animals," he says. "I just have a passion for helping people and helping them get around their homes as they age." H&H

RESOURCES

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TriCity Kitchens

Elevating expectations.

by **Amanda Hamm Hengel**



LONGEVITY. IT'S AN ATTRIBUTE LONG REVERED BUT NOT OFTEN ACHIEVED IN THE BUSINESS WORLD. With so many companies—big box included—in the mix, it can be difficult to stand out and endure the test of time.

That being said, it's no small feat Vineland-based TriCity Kitchens is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. What started as a lumber company in 1971 has grown into a kitchen cabinet-focused entity where customers have come to expect the best. And President Keith Bernhardt Jr. says TriCity Kitchens aims to provide nothing less.

"In today's world, you have to find a way to be specialized and be extremely good at something," he says. "We were always good at kitchen design, so we decided to make that our focus over and above general lumber, and we've really been able to capitalize upon that."

With a core group of five designers and eight installers, TriCity Kitchens is able to offer customers an array of services that match any budget or remodeling goal. Working with manufacturers such as Plain N Fancy Cabinetry out of Lancaster, Pa., along with nearly 10 others, TriCity Kitchens is able to truly develop the kitchen of each customer's dreams.

"We also have our own shop where we're able to do some custom pieces," Bernhardt adds. "This way, we're able to supplement some of our more basic orders with a custom piece to give the homeowner their own unique product."

TriCity Kitchens also boasts one of the largest cabinetry displays in the Mid-Atlantic area, and Bernhardt says being able to offer customers so many options is part of the reason he looks forward to heading to work every day.

"I think helping homeowners find ways to make their homes better is one of the favorite parts of my job," says Bernhardt. "Figuring out how to make something work better, or look better, or offer something more for design or storage or cooking is what really makes my job enjoyable."

A testament to the quality service TriCity Kitchens provides is the number of repeat customers the business has seen over the years. In fact, many customers who have had TriCity Kitchens help remodel their homes return to them—even when they move out of state.

"With the help of our manufacturers, such as Plain N Fancy Cabinetry, we have been commissioned to do work up and down the East Coast for both new and past clients," Bernhardt says.

While kitchen cabinets are now the company's focus, Bernhardt adds TriCity Kitchens also installs bathrooms, home offices, closets and more.

"With the pandemic, people are trying to make their home adapt to this change in life, and we are here to help with that," he says. "People are spending more time at home, more time in front of the computer and comfort is really the big word right now.

"We're helping to make it easier to get on a Zoom meeting from your kitchen, or to help design a home office," Bernhardt adds. "Whatever they need, we can help make it happen."

TriCity Kitchens has worked with many customers over the past 50 years, and anxiously awaits the opportunity to work with many more in the years to come.

"The experienced group at TriCity Kitchens is looking forward to developing more relationships and finding solutions for everyone," Bernhardt concludes. "The pandemic has left people searching for better cabinet and storage solutions and we welcome the challenge and are poised for growth in the coming years." **H&H**

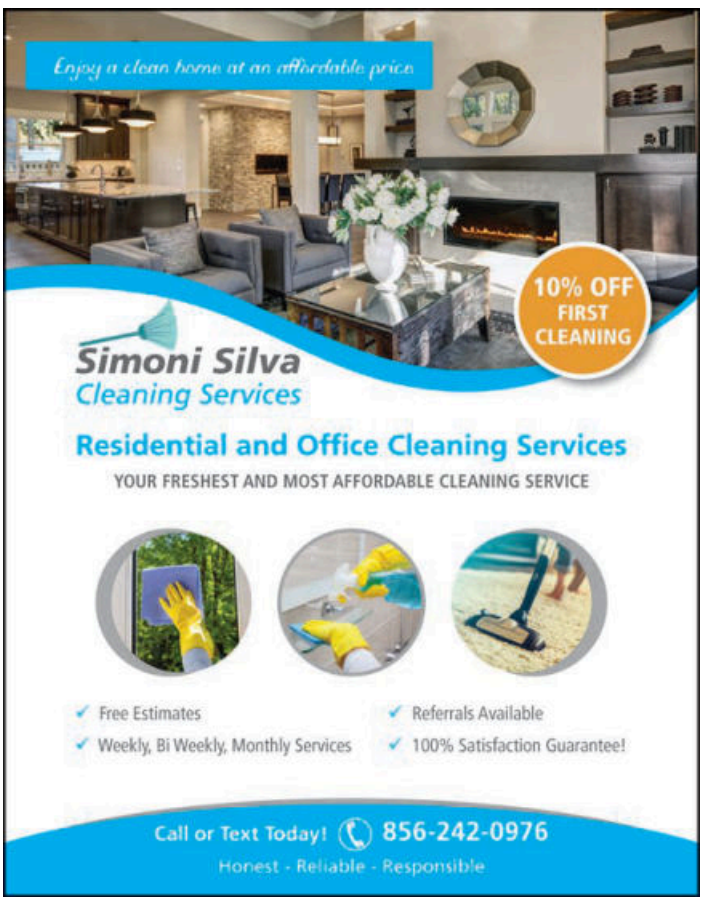


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