Volume 23, Issue 2
South Jersey

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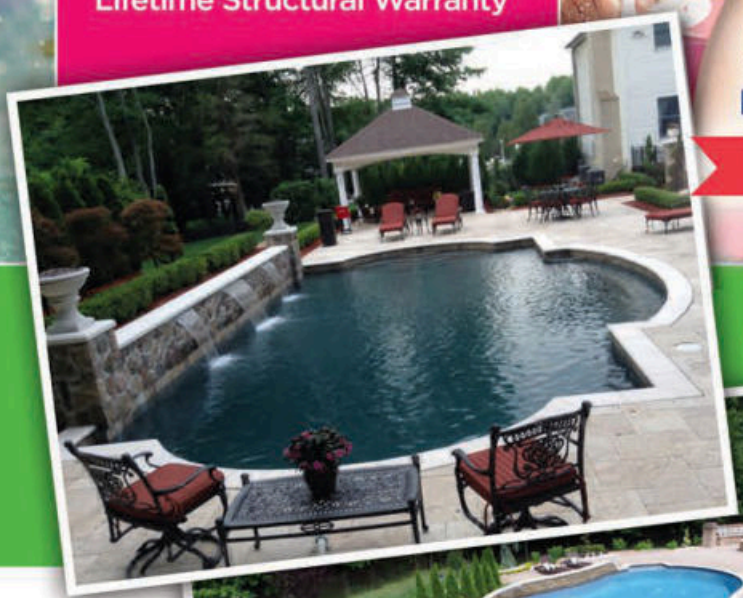
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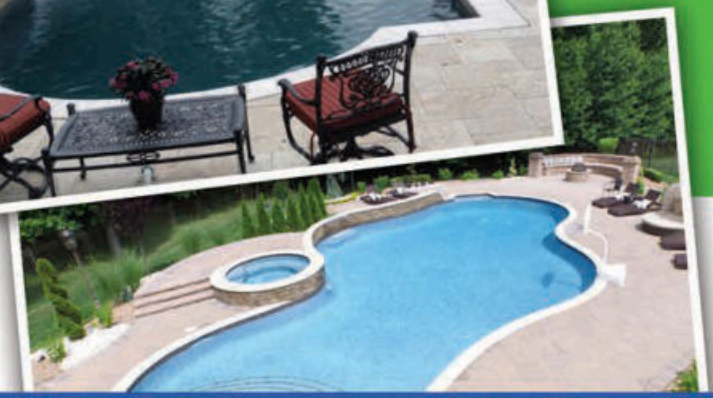
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We are excited to present our eighth annual

Best of House & Home.

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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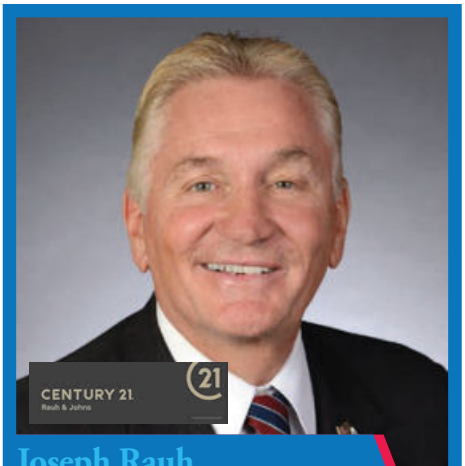
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How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home's* Best of Winners?
We feel accomplished. Lou and I have worked so hard to create unique processes for internal and external needs. When our clients recognize those efforts you gain a sense of accomplishment.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
The most rewarding thing is creating a finished product that is visually amazing and having the knowledge that people will go into that space and enjoy a new beginning in their home together.

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1637 Route 206, Southampton, N.J.
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BEST of HOUSE&HOME in:
ADDITIONS



How many years have you been in business or in this industry?
Hard to believe 2023 will be our 17th year in business.

What makes you the best in your industry while separating yourself from your competitors?
We design and build gathering spaces with soul. As a full service design-build firm, we're able to take a collaborative, streamlined approach to the process. This eliminates the common disconnect between customer-designer-builder. We have the hands-on experience at the leadership level to know how to get the job done. That's why we're different.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
Family & community solves so many problems. We approach everything we do with the sole purpose of building inviting gathering spaces so people can have somewhere that fosters that community. That's why we've invested in the resources to be able to drive the entire process from start to finish.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
The best part for me is as we near the finish line on these projects, people start buying furniture and seeing how their new spaces are really going to serve the purposes they had envisioned. Sometimes they'll even send me pics and a thank you note. That's a home run for us.

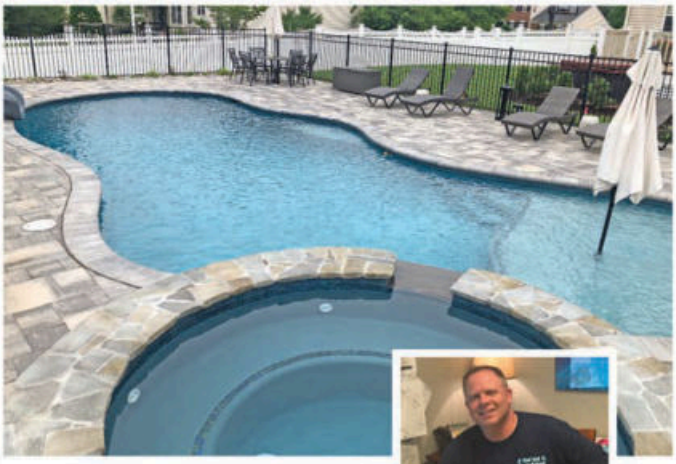
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How many years have you been in business or in this industry?
If I divulge that number, my wife would not be pleased because we came in as the second generation … and now, our children are active in the business. Let's just say a quarter of a century and see how much trouble I get in when this goes to press.

What makes you the best in your industry while separating yourself from your competitors?
The third generation of the Hull family is rising through the ranks. It's decades of experience in design and engineering building a personal aquatic oasis from the coastal islands to the center of the tri-state area that sets us apart. Del Val Pools has become synonymous with custom gunite configurations.

How does it feel to be recognized among House & Home's Best of Winners?
It's an honor naturally, but the credit goes to the staff in our three locations and our customers. It's the successful synergy between the two that makes us both winners.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
I used to have a lot of stock answers, but COVID changed my perspective forever. People stayed home for the better part of almost two years, and it changed the custom pool industry. Families now look first to their homes and their own backyards for vacations, leisure time and get-togethers. I realized during COVID, after losing my brother to the virus, that we just don't build pools, we are in the business of making memories.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
Del Val Pools is an unusual family-run business. We are big in terms of the number of pools we construct, but we are small in terms of feel to our customers. I am in involved in just about every pool we build, and every situation is unique. Building pools at the Shore has one set of challenges; building pools in the center of the state is an entirely different engineering mindset. For me, it's the combination of meeting people and the intellectual stimulation that comes with turning paper dreams in to a custom gunite reality that keeps me going.

BEST of HOUSE&HOME in:

Basement Systems



Kim Gattuso, Owner
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DryGuys.com

How many years have you been in business or in this industry?
Dry Guys Basement Systems is a family-owned and operated business founded in 1986, and we are now on second-generation ownership.

What makes you the best in your industry while separating yourself from your competitors?
We emphasize our "WOW Service." We are servicing people, not just a home, so we make sure to go the extra mile for every customer to provide service that will make them say, "Wow."

How does it feel to be recognized among *House & Home*'s Best of Winners?
This is such an exciting opportunity for our Dry Guys team. It means a lot to us because this is something that readers voted for, not a poll that we advertised ourselves. We are incredibly proud of our team and are ecstatic to reach new people.

What keeps you motivated every day to do the work you do?
Basements and crawl spaces can be pretty gross, but the team coming in each day and doing their best gets me going. My team's personal lives are important. Seeing them happy at home with their families and bringing that energy to work to take care of customers is awesome.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?
The most rewarding part is exceeding people's expectations and changing lives, one home at a time. Customers don't have to worry about water or mold in their basement or crawl space after it rains, and can have some peace of mind when the weather hits. I love connecting with customers, and am thrilled when I see them in the grocery store or around town and they tell me how happy they are!

Are there any new products or services you are offering that you'd like our readers to know about?
For basements, we have a set of products we like to call the "Big Three." These include our full-perimeter WaterGuard, TripleSafe and the SaniDry™ Sedona. These are our waterproofing systems, dehumidification systems and our sump pump station that will keep you dry all the time.

BEST of HOUSE&HOME in:
BATH & KITCHEN DESIGN



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

We are family owned and built our business not by being the "salesman" but rather the confidant you trust in guiding you through a process of remodeling your home, your safe place. We take extreme pride in offering quality, affordable products that will increase the quality of life and value of your home. We treat every home as if it were our own.

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

We are humbled by the people we meet every day in this business. We work extremely hard to make all their dreams come true, and to be honored with this gives us the feeling of doing it right. Without the referrals from the friends/clients we have worked with we would not be here.

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

If you are not motivated at your job, the job gets stale and goes away. We have an amazing staff to work with every day, we have the best contractor base you could wish for and customers that send their friends and family in to see us! We are motivated to keep everyone working, keep our customers happy and keep our family name a positive one in our community. We get to design and sell the most beautiful products and take a person's home that they raised their family in and change it to be so much more than a kitchen or bath; we get to make it a place of relaxation and peace in these stressful times.

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WORDS

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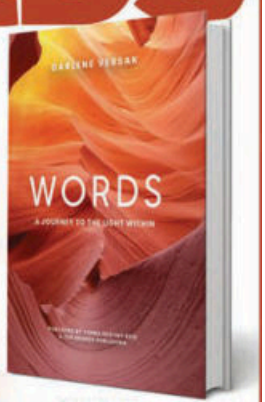
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Photograph by Jody Robinson

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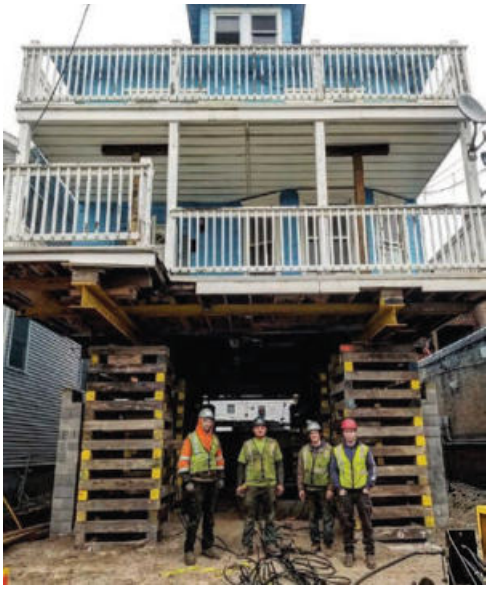
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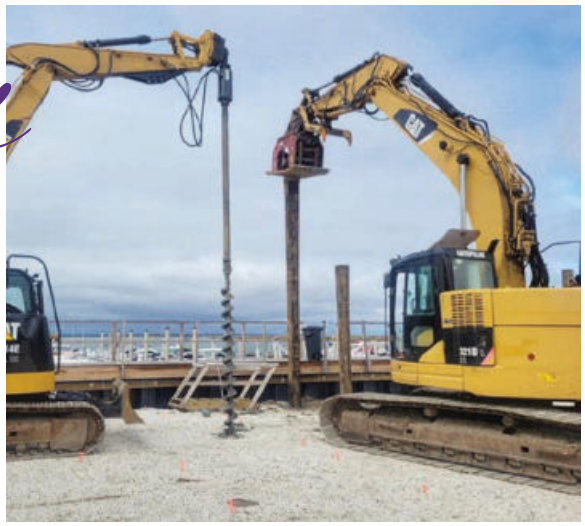
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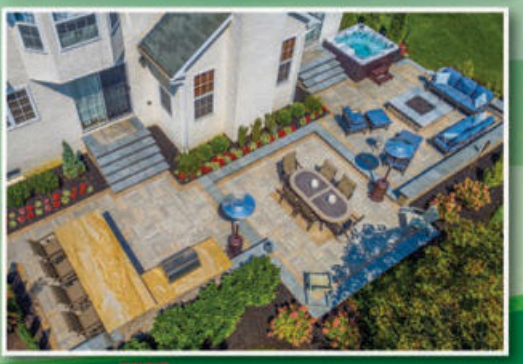
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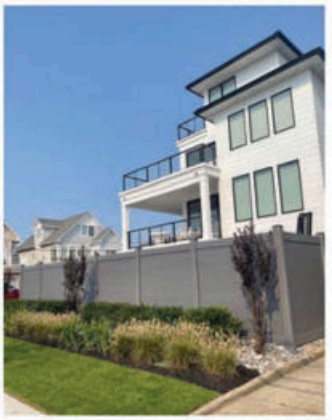
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BASEMENT BR

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



ILLIANCE

BY
KATIE
FRANCIS



Photo courtesy of Gehman Design Remodeling

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-

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.



"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 undoubtedly 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.

"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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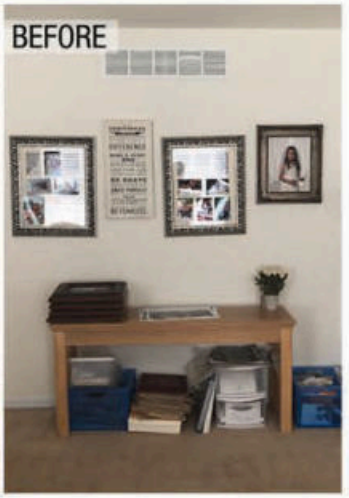


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BASEMENT BRILLIANCE



"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, antibacterial, 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

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H&H profile

Emmons Remodeling

A company you can trust for home improvement projects.



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."

AN INSIDE LOOK

And while Emmons are trusted experts you can count on for your exterior projects, their skilled interior remodeling team has also built up a solid reputation thanks to its more than 30 years of experience providing fine craftsmanship and exceptional customer service.



In fact, the family-owned company has grown, as several talented remodeling industry professionals have recently joined Emmons to help serve its more than 6,000 existing customers.

And Emmons' interior expertise is not limited to kitchens and bathrooms, as they also provide full-service remodeling and construction services for additions, interior renovations, porches, decks, windows, doors and basement finishing. The design team works with clients as a trusted advisor to help them make the right decisions on products, materials, colors and selections using a proprietary Curated Design Concept, which is an industry first. It's an easy way to quickly get a custom-designed project without the heavy cost of a design-build process.

It's all part of the company's desire to make remodeling one's home easy and affordable with exceptional financing programs and realistic pricing. The high level of expertise that Emmons brings to each and every project is backed by a 5-year warranty and a lifetime service guarantee, further illustrating why they continue to be leaders in the field.

CHOOSING WISELY

At the end of the day, your choice in finding the right contractor 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," she says. "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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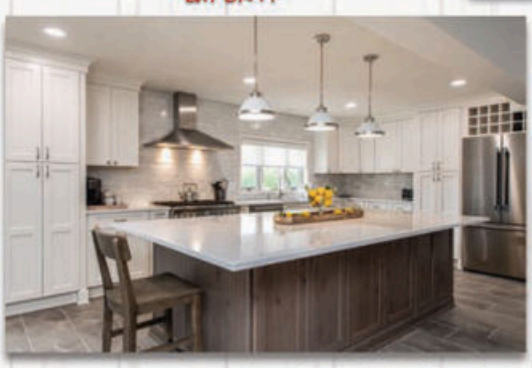
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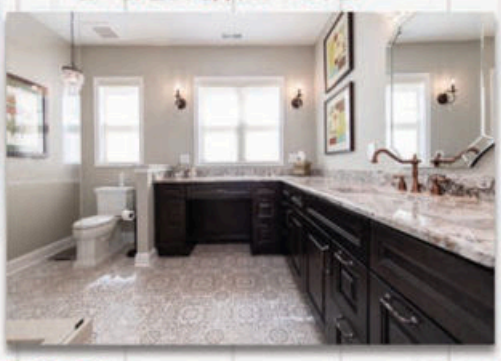
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