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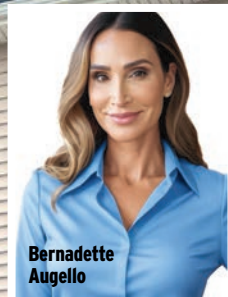
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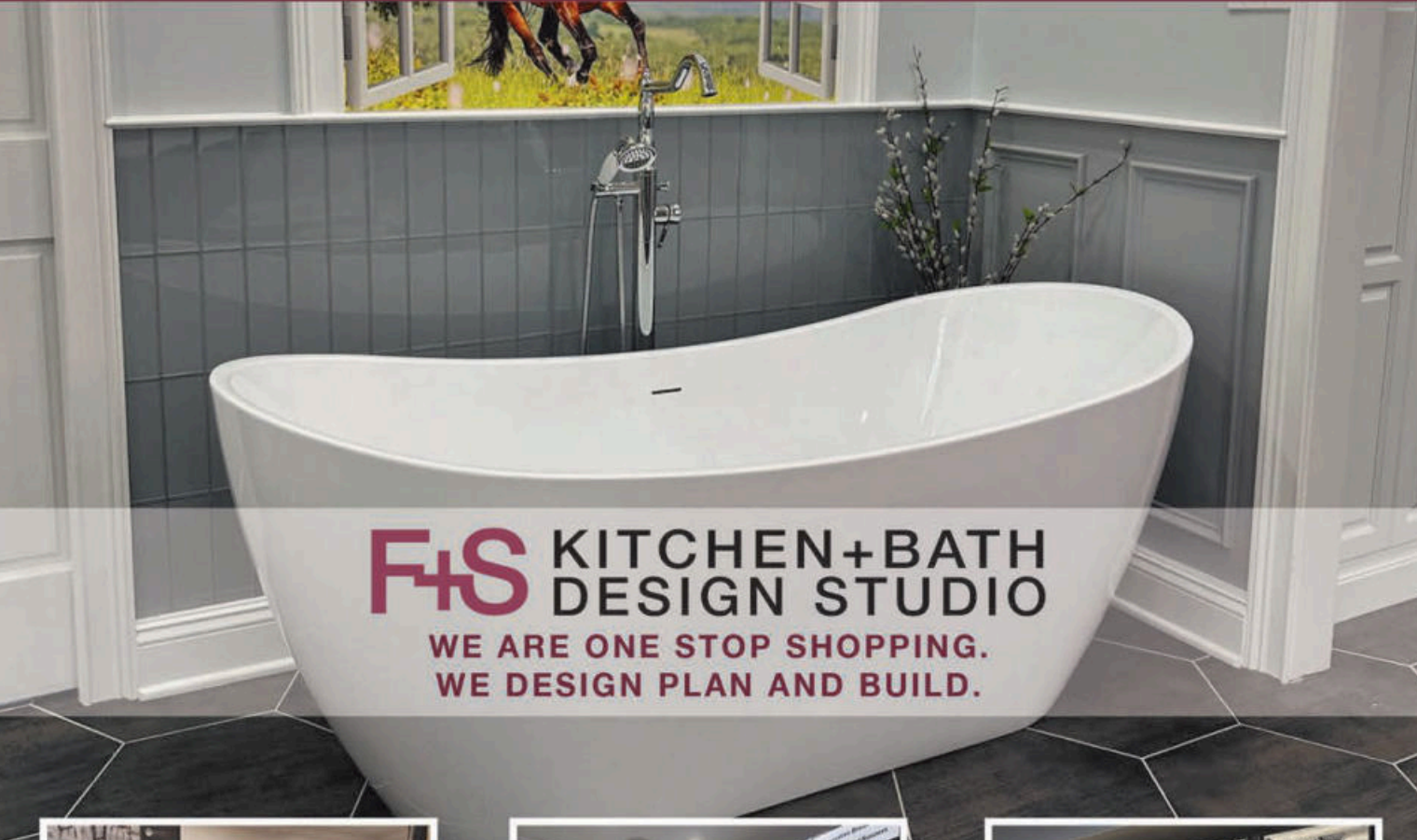


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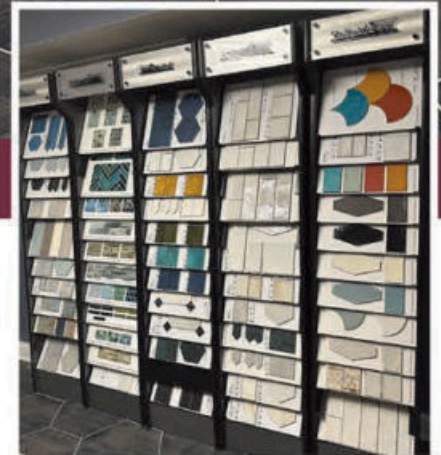
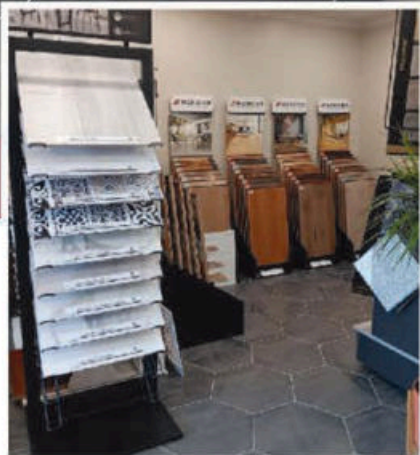
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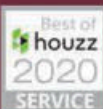


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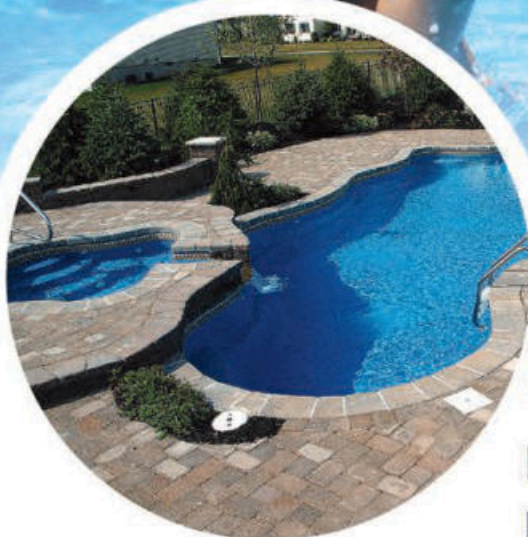


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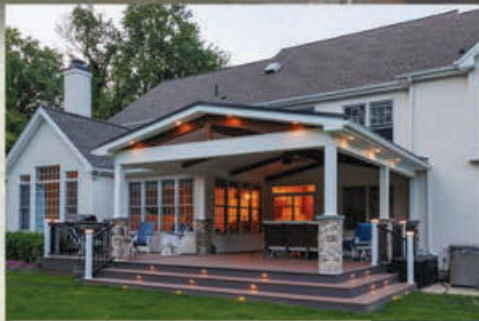
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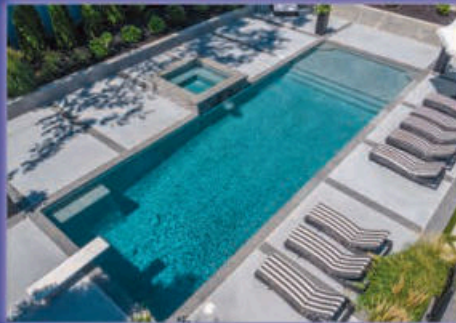
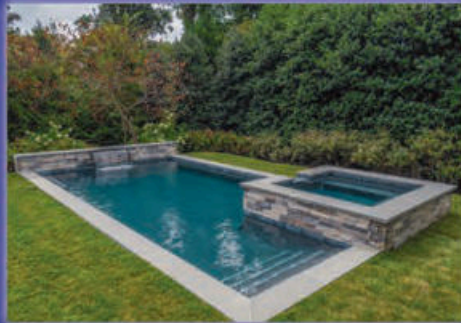
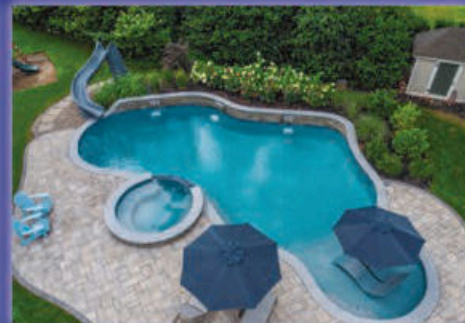
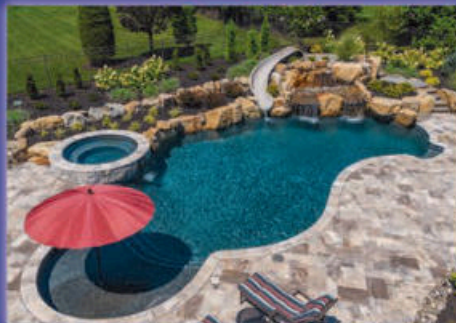
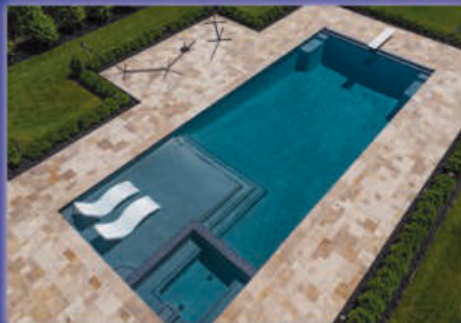
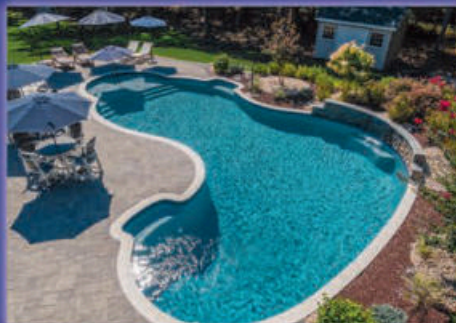
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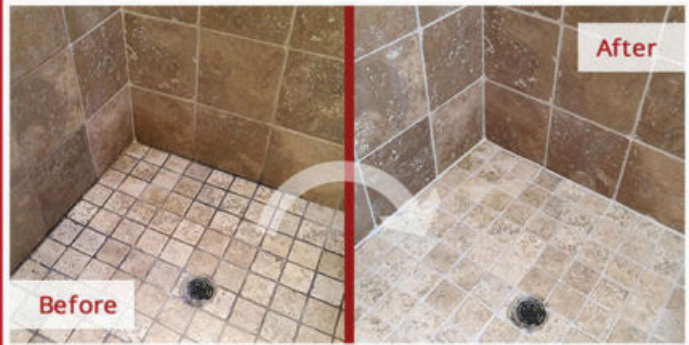
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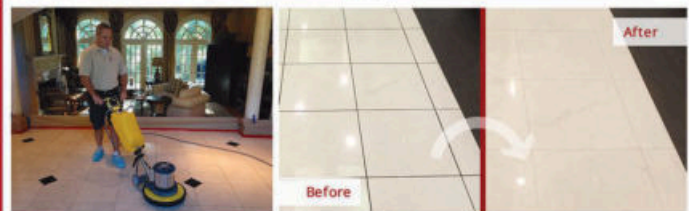
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Why Our Customers Love Us

For 34 years, **Gill's Landscaping** has been beautifying local yards with inspired designs and personalized customer service. *By Matt Cosentino*

Gill's Landscaping, a leader in the region for three decades, is kicking off spring by continuing to do what it does best: providing beautiful outdoor projects and top-notch customer service for families and businesses across South Jersey.

A full-service landscaping and maintenance company, Gill's has creative designers and experienced professionals who are passionate about giving their customers the outdoor

living spaces of their dreams, whether that includes lush green lawns, fragrant flowers, water features, stone walkways and patios or all of the above.

Gill's was founded on the cornerstone of customer satisfaction and has always gone the extra mile in listening to its clients' wants and needs and delivering the personal attention they deserve. That is why it is so satisfying for the company to receive positive feedback after a job well done. **H&H**

Voted Best in Landscaping Design 6 years in a row! Here's what our customers have to say:



It was a pleasure dealing with your company from the initial call for estimate to the most professional crew sent out to install the new irrigation system. Everyone worked hard and constant and there was no damage to the lawn. We just wanted to let you know what a first-class operation you have and we will definitely recommend your company." —**JOSIE & HARRY**

Thank you for the wonderful job performing a landscape service for us. Ed did a great job and he did so with little direction or guidance from us. He used his creativity and landscaping "know-how" to create something very special to us. It was done professionally and just what we wanted. Thanks again for a great job!" —**THOMAS & DAWNA**

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 good 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." —**MIKE W.**

This is my second large project with Gill's and we couldn't be happier with the results. As with our first project, Ed came out to the house and presented us with his vision for our project. We were blown away with his ideas. Gill's employees were at my house bright and early every morning and diligently worked until the project was done. Mr. Gill also stopped by to introduce himself and thank us for our business. Our home looks like a different home! As with our past experience, we are beyond thrilled with the service we received from Gill's Landscaping." —**MELISSA K.**

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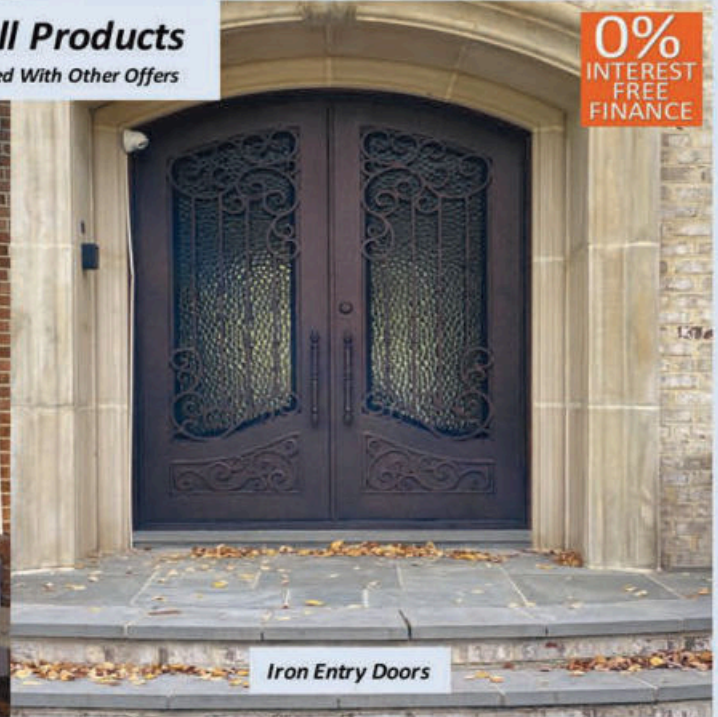
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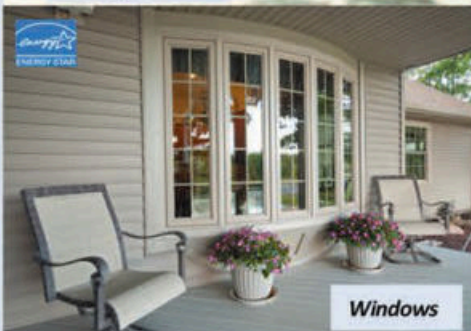
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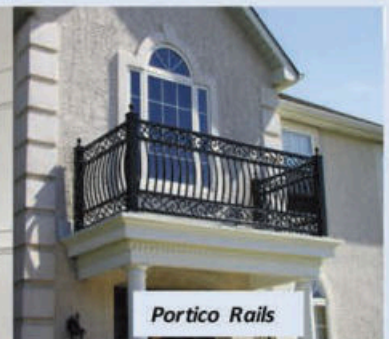
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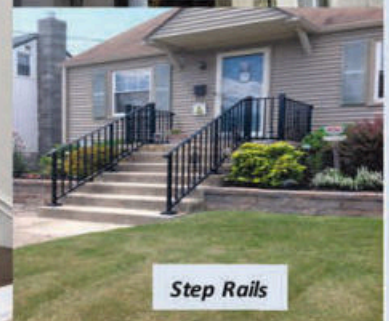
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A Matter of Trust

When it comes to finding the right contractor for the job, **Emmons Remodeling** offers clients both expertise and peace of mind.

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 Remodeling, 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 Stephanie 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.

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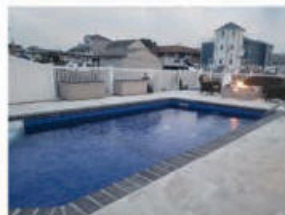
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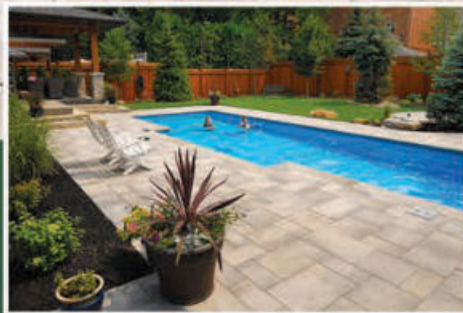
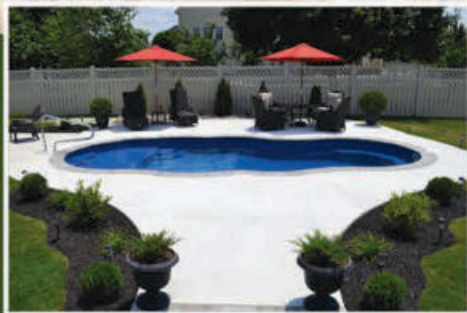
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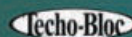
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As voted by our readers, the following companies and professionals are being recognized for their quality products, expertise, top-notch customer service and reliability. We're also featuring a closer look at these companies in informative spotlights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

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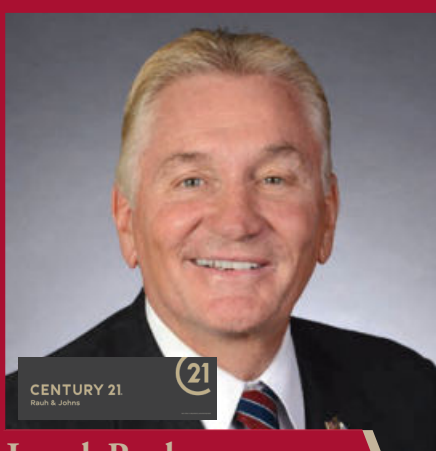
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Fisher

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

Antiques and Clocks Repair and Service has been family owned and operated for 35 years. My wife and I opened our business in the late 1980s as a small antique and clock store located in Cinnaminson. As time went on and our family grew, we decided to work from our home in Moorestown, which enabled us to fix clocks and also spend more time with our family.

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

We always put the needs of our customers first. Clock repair means trust. Many families have a clock that is special to them and their families. Many clocks have been passed down from generation to generation. Our customers are usually pleased with the level of detail and attention to their heirlooms that we take pride in giving them. We care about their story. Many of the clocks we work on are antiques or

older clocks and have been with a family member through their childhood and even at a grandparent's home, and in many cases, even longer than that. They know when we fix their clock it is done correctly and by a master clockmaker. We also offer a guarantee on the work that we do, even on antique clocks & museum clocks.

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

We feel honored to be recognized by a magazine that has a great reputation within the home improvement industry & to be voted by the readers as Best of House & Home for the sixth year in a row. After many years of hard work and customer satisfaction, it makes us even more motivated to continue our work.

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

Seeing how happy people are when we return their clock gives us pleasure. Many of the



David & Lisa Fisher, owners

clocks we get haven't run in years. It is always great to know that the way we make our living also brings joy to others.

Antiques and Clocks Repair and Service

Moorestown, N.J.

(856) 786-3444 | (856) 912-6798
antiquesandclocks1@gmail.com



BEST of **HOUSE&HOME** in:

REMODELER/BUILDER



BLUE TREE BUILDERS

Blue Tree Builders

Brian Iwano, owner

ExperienceBlueTree.com

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

Hard to believe 2024 will be the 18th year in business for Blue Tree Builders.

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

We are constantly looking inward to ask ourselves, "How can we bring more value to this opportunity?" and "How can we continue to improve our processes to offer the best experience possible?" In addition to the constant continuous improvement efforts in clear communication at every level of the project, another way we've been able to bring more value up front is the full-service in-house design component of the business. We've seen over and over how our clients appreciate the continuity & simplicity this brings to the planning & execution of their projects.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

This business, like many others, is hard. Expenses are high and frequent, there are LOTS of moving parts, and no matter how good you are or how long you've been at it, risk never completely goes away. But, everybody needs somewhere to live. Everybody. And for most people, there's an opportunity for their homes to be restorative and life-giving environments for all those around them. Those opportunities and the abilities we have to create those spaces is extremely rewarding. There's a well known quote in leadership training circles that says, "People will often forget what you said, but they'll never forget how you made them feel." It's an honor to have the ability to create gathering spaces that people won't forget experiencing.



Best of HOUSE & HOME

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.



Steven Matteo, Owner
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BEST of HOUSE & HOME in: **FLOOR FINISHING**



How many years have you been in business?

We have been in business for 34 years.

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

We respond quickly when a quote is requested. We have a fast scheduling turnaround and provide quality workmanship. We also have excellent customer service.

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

We feel motivated by the positive feedback that we receive from our customers, and by delivering a quality product and services.

What do you find most rewarding about this industry?

Helping homeowners improve their homes in an affordable way, and seeing how happy they are with the finished product.

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

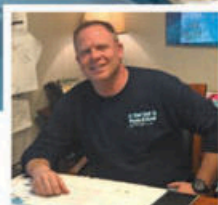
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BEST of **HOUSE&HOME** in:

GUNITE POOLS, POOL RENOVATION, REPAIR & SERVICES



Del Val Pools & Spas
(856) 629-2999
DelValPoolsAndSpas.com

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 you 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 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.

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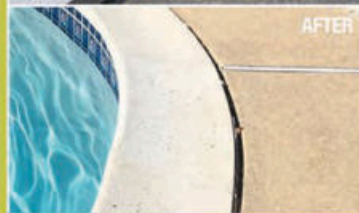
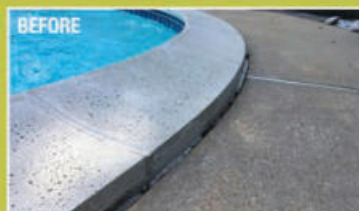
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Built to Last

by Carly Murray



As an increasing number of homeowners anticipate staying in their residences long term, they're considering longevity as a primary driver of their home renovations.

With home prices and moving costs at an all-time high, it's no surprise that many are deciding to stay put.

Consequently, those planning to put down long-term roots want their home to be long-lasting and characteristic of both their preferences and their family's needs for years to come. *House & Home* spoke with area experts for advice on how to achieve longevity in functionality, style and advantageous residency.

"People are remodeling their house to stay [there] as opposed to selling it and moving into a new house, and they're remodeling and making the house more convenient [in preparation] for as they get older," says Aaron Lewis, owner of Closets For Less.

Storage solutions are an excellent way to create the feeling of an expanded space with the extra benefit of organization. The

days of chaotic clutter and not knowing where anything is are long over, especially with organizational systems that vary depending on client needs.

"I often explain to people that a closet system is a great idea for any space that you want to maximize the storage in. It is a flexible system, which allows you to use the space for your exact needs, even if those needs change in the future," says Karen McWilliams, owner of Closets by Karen.

Homeowners are also becoming more creative than ever before: transforming garages for more space, creating gathering places in their outdoor areas and dedicating unused rooms to make expansive walk-in closets reminiscent of Barbie's.

"If they want to get rid of their furniture and make their closets

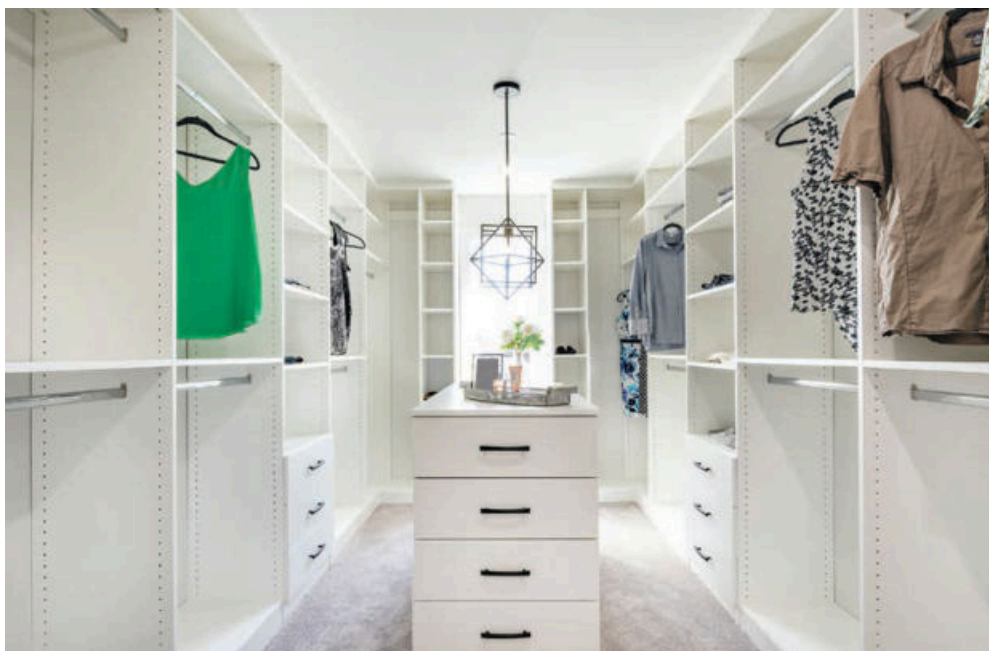
Built to Last

more of a dressing area, we can put drawers in the closet as opposed to just shelving, shoe shelves and so forth,” explains Lewis.

Walk-in closets can be a game-changer, providing a better quality of life with clothes and accessories easily accessible and arranged to speed up a morning routine. With organization trending on social media lately, people are looking to both simplify the everyday aspects of their lives and designate spaces and systems for specific purposes. It’s also in style to show off these home transformations—which is why design and color are equally considered.

“In general, organization of every aspect of your life has become a huge trend. Closets and closet organization have become a priority when people are remodeling a space, building a home, or just need to make their existing closets more functional. As far as the closet materials go, I am seeing a huge trend of lighter wood and white closets. Most people want a light, bright feeling in their closets,” says McWilliams.

One option is to use a personal passion as a starting point for brainstorming ideas to create a prized new space. Book lovers can take their supply of books and organize them by color to display a unique and charming library for visitors to admire while also designing a picturesque environment in which to read; seated window nooks are great for pets and a place to relax in the sun-



light while still indoors; a backyard patio with television and sound system installations can be the new favorite place to watch the game—the options are endless.

Home Trimwork’s design sales manager Mark Ollivier determines his client’s taste from inspiration images. His projects include built-ins, stairways, paint, molding, fireplace mantles and flooring, thus bringing the wisdom it requires to make a room—and the entire home—come together harmoniously.

“For many years, clients would tear out magazine pages of images they like and put them on the refrigerator door so they could glance at it several times a day. These days, anyone can do a simple Google search and have countless images to browse and save,” he says. “Getting the client to

share these images so that we can review them together is vital. Having several images from a client is very helpful to see if there is a common thread from a style standpoint. As we go through these examples, I can pick out certain details to see what part of the example draws their eye. From there, I can apply those features to their design and display how it flows and complements their space.”

While everyone’s taste is different, experts see more of their customers drawn to timeless designs with room for alterations. Having modifiable implementations allows for tweaks to be made when a fixture needs sprucing up, allowing for easy changes in the future. Neutral colors and simple lines are popular for that very reason.



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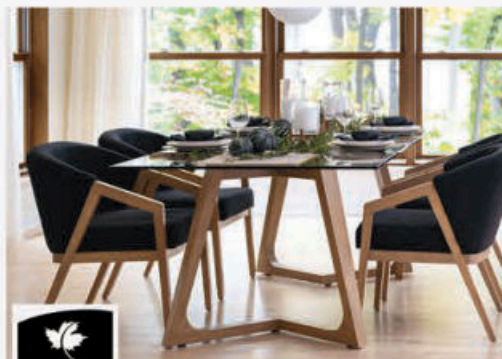
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Built to Last

“Clean, simple lines with painted finishes tend to have more longevity, as they can easily be changed as time goes on. Natural wood products that commonly receive stained finishes are not as common unless we have a client that has longed for a traditional-style library or home office where most or all of the surfaces are finished with stain and polyurethane. This, of course, is timeless if done properly,” Ollivier continues.

Whether opting for an addition like a protective top coat or a larger construction project like new flooring, any change can make a long-occupied home feel revitalized and brand new. If the time comes to move one day, refurbishments and exclusive qualities only add to the property value.

“[Floor finishing is] a water base or oil base. It depends on the type of the floor they have; we figure out the best finish to put on the floor. Water base is going to last longer than three years ... even oil base is good as well, standard for three or more years,” says Gilmar Marcelino, owner of Victorian Floor Finishing.

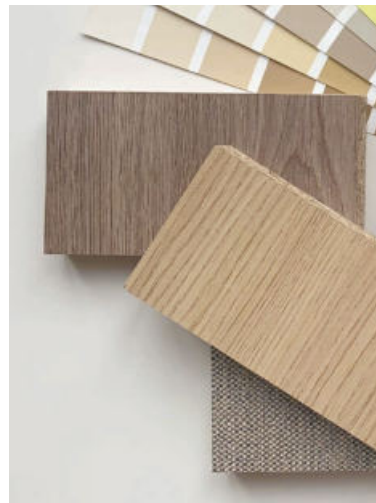
To prove that planning is everything, he emphasizes an all-at-once methodology.

“One shot from beginning to the end; not phases, like, one room today, another room tomorrow. We never recommend that. Two things: the process takes longer ... and the cost of the effect,” Marcelino continues.

The key to a long-lasting look is to implement materials that are more resistant to damage. Like everything, finding the right product is a case-by-case scenario, but evaluating expectations and necessities for a project with a professional can make renovation goals a reality. Knowing the chosen materials and products will go a long

way in expediting any needed replacements in subsequent years.

It's no mystery why homeowners are opting to make a home the best possible version of itself. At the forefront of a completed project is the everyday satisfaction it will bring for years to come. Refurbishments, remodeling or just a fresh coat of paint can bring a new spark of energy to your home and, subsequently, to your life. **H&H**



RESOURCES

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Along with energy consumption comes damaging and lasting impacts to our skies, water and land. That's why in 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy came together to create the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Program—its aim being to reduce the amount of energy used within the



Jose Diaz,
Director of Allied Experts'
Home Solutions

United States—and it worked.

In the past year alone, the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program resulted in 520 billion kilowatt hours saved. That's equivalent to the average energy consumption of 4 million homes!

The program all starts by making small but powerful adjustments to your home.

House & Home spoke with Allied Experts' home solutions director Jose Diaz about how the program can not only save homeowners money, but also be the next step to creating a more sustainable and equitable way of living.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE HOME PERFORMANCE WITH ENERGY STAR PROGRAM?

The Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program is a collaborative effort between the U.S. DOE [Department of Energy] and EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], which is designed to improve the energy efficiency of American homes, making them safer, healthier and more energy-efficient. It includes a network of utility and nonprofit sponsors, along with home performance contractors, who work together to deliver home energy upgrades.

HOW DOES THIS PROGRAM WORK?

The program operates by providing homeowners with a comprehensive evaluation of their home's energy efficiency. This includes



a visit from a Home Performance Energy Advisor who assesses the home and installs energy-saving measures.

WHAT IS COVERED UNDER THE PROGRAM?

Homeowners receive a detailed report with energy-saving tips and potential additional measures for further improvements. These additional measures, such as attic insulation, ductless mini-split heat pumps and air sealing, are eligible for rebates through the program.

HOW CAN ENROLLING IN THE PROGRAM SAVE HOMEOWNERS MONEY?

Improved energy efficiency can lead to significant savings on utility bills for homeowners. Over time, the savings can offset the initial investment in upgrades. Many homeowners want to make their homes greener and more efficient, but they may not know where to start. Energy audits are key to families in identifying suitable projects. By offering rebates and incentives for energy efficiency improvements, households can replace appliances or make home repairs while saving money in the long run. These improvements encompass home weatherization services like ventilation, air sealing, upgraded insulation, and highly efficient heating and cooling appliances like heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners and water heaters.



WHAT SHOULD HOMEOWNERS KNOW ABOUT THE HOME PERFORMANCE PROGRAM?

Homeowners should be aware of the remarkable opportunities that have been presented by the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program making their homes cleaner, greener and more comfortable than ever before. Moreover, this program is a data-driven approach to incentivizing energy efficiency, unlocking innovation and increasing equity. It is a significant step toward a sustainable future for all.

The Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program and contractors like Allied Experts are game-changers in the efforts to promote energy efficiency, sustainability and equity in our communities. Let us seize this opportunity to work together and create a cleaner, greener, and more comfortable future for all homeowners. **H&H**

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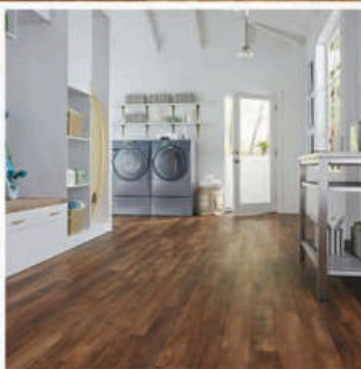
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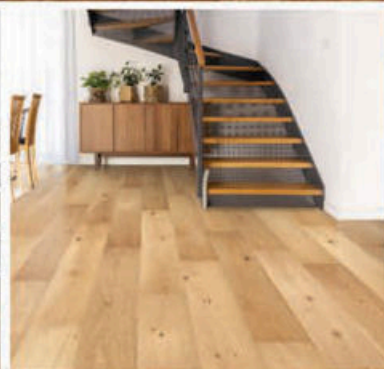
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More Than a Pool

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas elevates backyard atmospheres with quality custom designs

by Kristen Dowd

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas partner and general manager Mike McCool recognizes that there is a lot more that goes into a new pool than there used to be.

“The backyard has transformed over the last 10 years or so away from being just ‘your yard’ and into another room of your home with the same care and detail put into it,” McCool says. “Because of this the design of your pool has become more than just a pool but the focus of the outdoor living room. There is a lot of coordination with creating what a customer’s backyard haven is going to be.”

Fortunately, the family-owned South Jersey business is more than up to the challenge of bringing a customer’s backyard pool vision to life. In its 55 years of business, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas has helped to create thousands of backyard paradises throughout the region.

And what’s more, they make the process as easy as possible for their customers.

“We’re a start-to-finish gunite custom pool company—the design, the build and the service afterward,” McCool says. “We have our own crews that handle the work which helps us control quality and makes the process go smoother.”

There are six designers at Swim-Mor Pools & Spas who can help guide customers on a new pool design. The company’s countless photos and 3D drawings can provide inspiration, and the final design is what best suits the backyard, according to McCool.

“Size, setbacks, elevations. We’re here to help you work through that,” he says.

Finding the right pool

“The first step is to give us a call. From there we’ll set up an appointment to come out to your home,” McCool says. “That way we can see all the aspects of the property. What the contours of the yard are. What the access is like. Even the best location based on where the sun rises and sets.”

The timeline to get started is largely based on the homeowner and how decisive they are, McCool adds. Once everything is confirmed, things move to contract and Swim-Mor Pools & Spas starts working on permits.

“Time is of the essence. Permits can take from two weeks to several months, all depending on the municipality,” McCool says.

Pool popularity

Prior to March 2020, business was strong for Swim-Mor Pools & Spa. That was only boosted when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region.

“The pool business was never busier than it was in COVID,” McCool says. “The lockdowns forced people to stay at home and they immediately focused on the backyard.”

Although that business boom has settled down a bit, things are still busy. But pool trends, according to McCool, have held fairly steady.

Hampton-style pools have long been a customer favorite, but equally popular are the freeform designs, which can be customized to fit into any backyard environment.

“Through COVID there have not been many significant changes in the industry,” McCool says,

“other than the increased popularity of adding more bells and whistles to the pool.”

Natural stone is popular for the coping along the pool’s edge, McCool says, as well as darker finishes in the pool. A majority of Swim-Mor Pools & Spa customers are using a salt sanitation system and automated controls in their new pools, as well as choosing to add water features—waterfalls, fountains, deck jets and plenty more. The company also offers many in-pool fixtures for lounging—bar stools and benches that can tie into your outdoor kitchen or can run inside the pool, along with table areas, sundecks for your lounge chairs and custom fire features. Color LED lighting packages come with every pool, too.

The majority of customers also choose elements to lengthen their pool-enjoying season, such as heaters and spas. “It will extend your pool season by a few months,” McCool says.

Why Swim-Mor Pools & Spas?

Being a local family-owned independent business makes Swim-Mor Pools & Spas a smart choice for customers, according to McCool.

“We’re not national. We’re not a franchise. And we do not try to sell everything. Our expertise has been building custom gunite pools for 55 years and that’s what we focus on,” he says.

Save for a few aspects that are legally required to be outsourced to independent licensed contractors, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas uses all of their own crews for the pool construction, which McCool says is unique for the pool business.

In addition to building new pools, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas also specializes in renovating gunite pools. The experienced team can handle everything from your standard renovation of replacing your coping, tile and plaster finish, to adding features such as raised water features, sun decks, and even spas that were not originally built with the pool. McCool says, “Even though your pool may not have originally been built with the more current popular features doesn’t mean that Swim-Mor cannot add them now.”

The 2023 pool season is already underway for the business, which thanks to the mild winter meant they were able to start construction early. Pool openings and service will ramp up from mid-April to Memorial Day.

But, for those looking to add a pool to their backyard this summer, it’s not too late. “We’re still building for this year. We’re still selling for this summer,” McCool says. “But don’t waste time. Get in!” **H&H**

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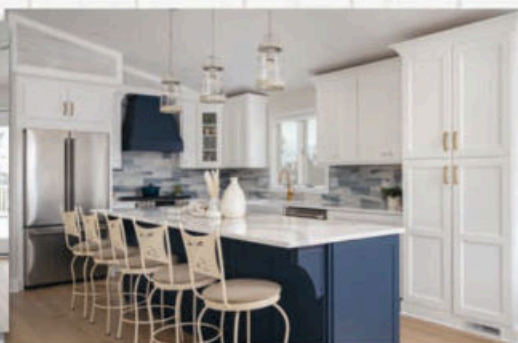
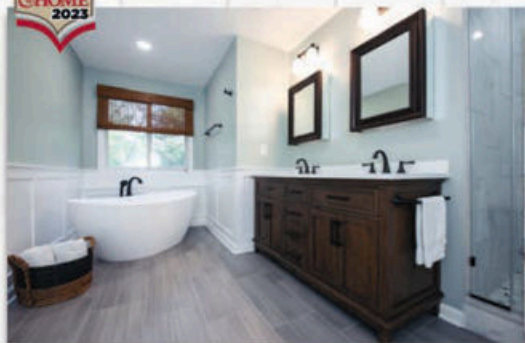
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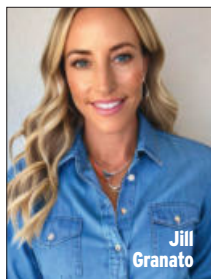
The Home Team Advantage

by MADELEINE MACCAR

Bernadette Augello and her team of top-notch realtors not only offer tons of local and industry experience but also benefit from some personable partners' wealth of knowledge and expertise, too.



Bernadette Augello



Jill Granato

When you're looking for a real estate team, it's rare to find one with lifetimes of industry experience, lived-in local expertise, a network of trusted specialists, magnetic personalities and dedicated professionalism, which is why Bernadette Augello & The Augello Team at Berkshire Hathaway are so in demand.

Augello, a lifelong Washington Township resident, grew up both locally and in the industry. She warmly recalls her uncle owning Scarduzio Realtors on the Black Horse Pike, as well as countless early lessons about treating every client like her only client and embracing her natural gifts to stand out in a crowded field.

"I know the area very well, and especially after growing up in and then being in the industry for almost 30 years, I know just about every aspect of the real estate field," she explains. "It's satisfying when the children of clients of 20 or so years contact me to look for their first home. Many of my clients have become good friends. The best part of my job is seeing how happy my clients are after closing."

Starting her career in 1996, where she attended the Weichert Real Estate School, Augello recalls working hard to get her business started. Her husband, both a native of and police officer in Washington Township, had helped to get the business started, connecting Augello with many police officers, friends and family in need of some help buying and selling.

While her team of hand-picked realtors is fiercely dedicated to delivering above-and-beyond client experiences, they also benefit from the thoroughness of two professional partners, loan originator Jill Granato of AnnieMac Home Mortgage and title-company expert Jaimie Walton of City Abstract.

Granato, whose realtor father Augello cites

as a treasured mentor, also brings a lifetime of industry experience to her role. Her professional background began at 19 and includes working as a loan processor and getting her own real estate license. But it was the financial side of the business that appealed to her the most, satisfying a desire to dig into complex matters while also drawing on her drive to help others.

"I was more interested in the numbers and figuring out how to get people to qualify, and I just took to that," begins Granato. "I love that I can connect with people, I love the challenges of doing all kinds of financing, whether it's a first-time homebuyer or someone who needs credit repair. I'm very responsive and very transparent. I'm an optimist, but at the same time, I give everybody realistic expectations."

As Walton, who's also a licensed realtor with a family entrenched in real estate, describes herself a triple threat, bringing a unique value to every transaction with 20 years of title-insurance industry expertise that includes being an account executive, closing agent, office manager, sales representative and recruiter, and mortgage loan officer. She is known as



Jaimie Walton

one of the top closers in her area: Being a passionate person who puts 100% into what she does, along with a bubbly nature, are strong assets in a people-driven industry.

"I really enjoy bringing people together, making people happy and using my gifts to make people feel comfortable and feel like they had a successful transaction," Walton says. "I understand each part of the transaction, so I can really help people at every stage of it—and I love being able to do that."

Augello, Granato and Walton all have their fingers on the pulse of industry, helping them determine how today's trends guide each client experience.

"It is a challenging time with the lack of inventory: With interest rates being high, people don't want to move or sell their properties when they have a great interest rate," explains Walton. "We have to get creative in the ways we draw in business, and we have to be at the most professional level that we can to really help people navigate through this tough market."

"There's buyers now, but it is a little slower than normal," adds Granato. "But as far as the [interest] rates go, that's just temporary: Everything ebbs and flows and changes. But I'm thinking that within the next year, we're going to see some positives."

And as Augello notes, there are always opportunities if you know where to look.

"Buyers are still out there," she says. "When I started in this industry in 1996, interest rates were at 7, 8 and 9%—and people were still buying then. Obviously, the price of houses has increased, but it doesn't seem like it's slowing us down any: I'm still getting multiple offers on listings, there's a lot of cash buyers, and a lot of people are still making offers over the asking price."

Transparency, accessibility and immersive industry knowledge are all why clients both loyally return and refer loved ones to The Bernadette Augello Team. All three women readily note how so many clients have become like family, as a team of personable, trustworthy professionals has a way of leading with an authenticity that clients recognize and appreciate.

"I'm always in communication with my clients, and I get referrals a lot because I'm very attentive and responsive," Augello says. "People don't want to be a number or just a sale: They want to feel that warmth and know that I really have their back. They trust me, and they know their happiness is important to me." **H&H**

Berkshire Hathaway: The Bernadette Augello Team

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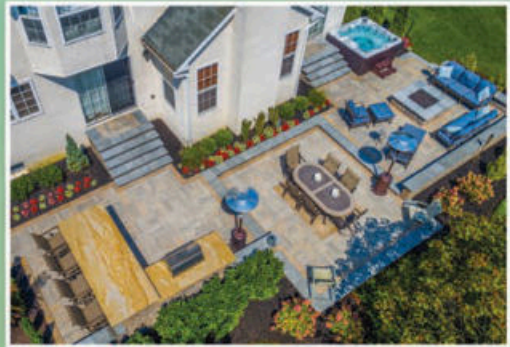
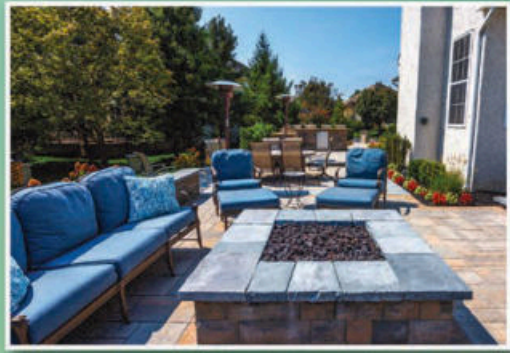
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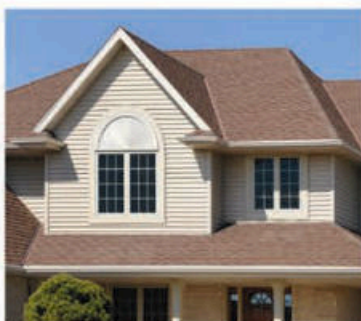
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