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*Magazine*

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# Welcome Home!

A sure sign of Spring is the arrival of the Home & Garden Expo. It is hard to believe that Welcome Home Magazine first participated in the 1991 Home Expo. We always enjoy visiting with many of you as we distribute the latest issue of Welcome Home at the entrance to the Expo. Many of our advertisers have impressive exhibits at this year's Home & Garden Expo and we encourage you to stop and learn what products and services they have to offer.

To many people, the Home Builders Association of Western Michigan is known for being the organization that brings us events like the Home & Garden Expo and the Parade of Homes, but there is more to the HBAWMI. Established in 1946, the HBAWMI is the professional association for members of the area housing industry. In this issue we learn more great things about the HBAWMI.

As the warmer temperatures pull us outdoors we will be dusting off the grill for some great outdoor cooking. Expanding on the idea of cooking out we look at outdoor kitchens. From grills to pizza ovens and cooktops, outdoor kitchens are becoming a center piece for entertaining.

Our Feature Home came about when Matt and Rachel decided it was time to remodel their home. DeHaan Remodeling Specialists were first and foremost to come to mind. The project included a complete bathroom remodel with some kitchen upgrades.

Stress seems to be a part of our daily lives. When we go home we anticipate our home to be a refuge, but relaxing might be impossible if our home is cluttered. A well designed closet may make a huge difference in reducing your stress level.

Beyond the comfort and pride that our home provides we expect to be safe and secure. The reality is that we must take proactive steps to protect our property and family. Local experts explain how some common sense steps as well as some of the latest security products can give us peace of mind.

*Welcome Home,  
John*



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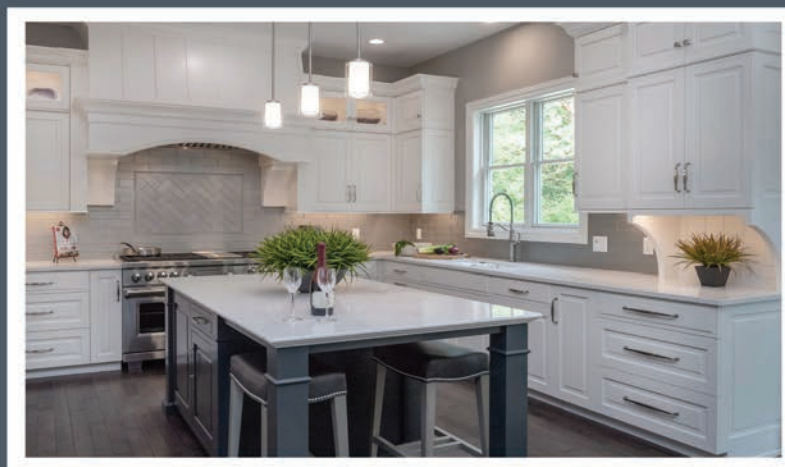


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# Strawberry Shortcake

Photography and recipe by Linda Hoard

We're all hoping spring is just around the corner, and with spring comes strawberries and Strawberry Shortcake! These homemade biscuits are the easiest, and you can top them with a super easy strawberry compote, or just plain sliced strawberries! You can also add a little extra flavor by including some basil or mint leaves to the strawberries as you cook them with a little sugar. Either way, this is a fabulous way to celebrate spring!

## Biscuits:

2 cups self-rising flour  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream  
1 large egg, beaten

Preheat oven to 400. In a medium bowl, mix together the flour and sugar. Add the whipping cream and blend with a fork until the dough just comes together. It will be sticky. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and pat it into a 9x12 inch rectangle. Cut into 12 3" squares. Whisk egg with 1 Tablespoon water in a small bowl. Transfer squares to a parchment-lined baking sheet and brush tops with egg wash. Bake until tops are golden brown, 15-20 minutes.

## Variations:

**Blueberry Biscuits:** Add 2 cups washed fresh or frozen blueberries and 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel into the

## Strawberry Compote:

1 1/2 pound fresh strawberries, hulled and quartered  
1/4 cup plus 2 Tablespoons sugar, divided  
1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
Optional: 2 sprigs basil or mint leaves

Cook quartered strawberries with 1/4 cup sugar (and optional herbs) over low heat, stirring occasionally, until berries are soft and mixture has thickened slightly. Let cool.

Using an electric mixer, beat cream until soft peaks form. Add remaining 2 Tablespoons sugar.

Split shortcakes, fill with berry compote (or fresh sliced strawberries), top with whipped cream.





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By Barbara Fisher  
Photos courtesy of the HBAWMI

Can we get excited about a professional association to which most of us are not members? We can! The Home Builders Association of Western Michigan (HBAWMI) was established in 1946 and is the professional association for members of the housing industry in Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Calhoun, Branch and Van Buren Counties as well as parts of Allegan and Barry Counties. The Association serves members of the housing industry (e.g., residential contractors, developers, etc.) plus associate members (those who support the home building industry) by staying current on industry trends, providing continuing education and promoting efficient, quality housing that isn't prohibitively expensive. For the general public, there is a roster of HBAWMI members with verified credentials.

#### BUT THAT'S NOT ALL THE HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN MICHIGAN IS ABOUT.

The Association brings us the Kalamazoo Home & Garden Expo. Vendor space for 2020 is sold out and this year's Expo will offer a host of new vendors. Visitors will be able to check out the latest trends, meet with local vendors and for those in the immediate market, get multiple quotes for goods and services while taking advantage of exclusive savings that are offered during the Expo. The 2020 Expo is located at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center and runs from March 13 – 15.

In June it's the annual Parade of Homes (June 12 through June 20). Like the Expo, the Parade offers a look at trends, provides opportunities to talk with various builders and vendors, showcasing everything from home styles to showers, counter tops, kitchen cabinets, floor coverings and landscaping. Can't make it to all the featured homes? Oh snap, that's the time you are scheduled to take a much needed vacation? You're in luck; this year there will be a virtual component to the Parade for the first time.

We all hear about building scams or disreputable companies that put a black mark on the industry. The

Association checks each of its members to make sure they hold any licenses that are required, that they are insured and each member is required to sign a Code of Ethics. The public can access the membership list when seeking to build, remodel or complete maintenance work. Jeffrey Tafel, CEO of the HBAWMI stated that in the 20 months he's been with the Association, he's received only one minor call on a member company and the misunderstanding was promptly remedied to everyone's satisfaction.

The Association keeps a sharp eye on proposed changes to the Michigan Building Code. Explains Tafel, each time a new requirement is added to the Code the cost of new construction or remodeling increases. A current example is the proposal to mandate wiring for electric cars in new construction. The Association believes this should be an option rather than a Code requirement. Another push is for tankless hot water heaters (rather than the standard hot water tanks most of us use). The Association employs a common sense approach to advocate against Code changes that unnecessarily inflate building requirements which in turn increase construction costs and put home ownership out of reach for more individuals and families.

The Association also participates in meaningful community projects and has partnered with Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS) and the Foundation for Excellence/Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to create the Kalamazoo Attainable Homes Partnership (KAHP). Construction of four homes was recently completed as a pilot of the program designed to bring quality, attainable homes to Kalamazoo's underserved neighborhoods – neighborhoods that haven't seen new construction in decades.

"KAHP fits with our mission and will positively impact neighborhoods. We can change the lives of people living in these neighborhoods and provide opportunities for our members", explains Tafel. The KAHP plans to build 10 new homes each year for a period of 10 years in five neighborhoods





Photo courtesy of ADIDA, Inc.

(Edison, Eastside, Northside, Vine and West Douglas). All homes will be new construction, single family, and owner occupied. Over time, introducing these homes is projected to strengthen neighborhoods. Already the four houses have ignited neighborhood hope and pride amongst current residents. The Foundation and LISC provide the funding for construction as well as the appraisal gap (what a family is able to pay for the home and its actual value); the construction portion of the funding can be used for subsequent construction once the house is purchased. KNHS offers comprehensive education and support in preparation for home ownership, a required component of the program. HBAWMI solicits members to

become Champions. Champions are companies that agree to provide their goods or services at a discount and in return become the exclusive provider of a piece of the construction for all homes constructed (e.g., lumber, windows, pest control, appliances, floor coverings, etc.) Explains Tafel, "the plan to build 100 homes cannot be done through donations, that just isn't sustainable. The Champion program is something everyone can feel good about." These homes may be constructed for less but they are absolutely not short on quality. Materials such as 50-year roofing, energy saving insulation and heating and air conditioning systems, durable flooring materials make these homes sustainable and will save families thousands a year



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in utilities and maintenance. Efficient designs are a hallmark that save on construction costs without detracting from quality or aesthetics (e.g. in the two-story plan, the bathrooms are stacked above one another and near the kitchen walls for the most efficient use of plumbing materials).

The Home Builders Association of Western Michigan would like to expand the concept to construct quality, energy efficient homes for the middle class. Tafel notes that with "thousands of new jobs set to become available in the area, housing will be at a premium." We've probably all heard that it's a seller's market for homes in the middle income range: list a home and there's a sales agreement before the week is out, many times before the sun sets. The expanded version of the concept would build homes for middle income families by attracting builders and using a similar model to KAHP without the need for supplemental funding.

The Home Builders Association of Western Michigan looks forward to welcoming the community to the Home & Garden Expo and Parade of Homes and always welcomes feedback.



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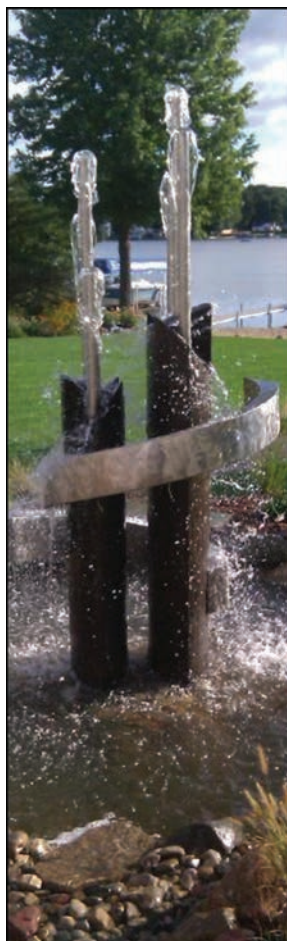


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# Tips and Considerations for Outdoor Kitchens

By Barbara Fisher

Kitchens are moving outside and making a big statement when they get there. Outdoor kitchens can be simple (such as a pizza oven and prep area) to stunning (an entire standalone kitchen with all the bells and whistles). Collectively they promote an outdoor experience whether relaxing with friends or family or hosting a child's birthday party. You'll find outdoor kitchens on urban rooftops, backyards and on sprawling estates.

## PRELIMINARIES

Like all well done projects, planning is essential. Whether you're a DIY guru or need to call in the professionals, there are the fundamentals to consider before the space can take shape.

Take stock of the outside space and go armed with a tape measurer. Are there any untouchables that must be worked around (a favorite tree, a pond that took years to build, a swimming pool, etc.)? Where are the utilities located? What about prevailing winds? Be a good neighbor and avoid blowing smoke over your neighbor's pool, as well as toward the outdoor kitchen eating area(s), or in your windows and doors.

How is the space going to be used? Will the space be used as a centerpiece for entertaining? "Consider the relationship between your indoor and outdoor kitchens. If they are relatively close together, an outdoor kitchen can utilize the indoor kitchen's capabilities, such as prep space and storage. Conversely, a fully independent outdoor kitchen with refrigeration, warming cabinets and cabinetry is more self-reliant, but will require more space and connections for gas, water and electric-

ity," explains Russ Faulk, head of product and design at Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet.

What about eating space? Will stools around an island work or is something more amenable to casual socializing more in line with your dreams?

## PLANNING AND DESIGN

Armed with the lay of the land and what features you're thinking about, it's time to design.

First it helps to get a bit of the jargon down. There are functional zones to the kitchen explains Faulk, "cold areas (refrigeration), hot areas (grills and cooktops), wet areas (sinks) and dry areas (prep counters and storage) and just like the inside kitchen, you'll want to create a smooth flow between the various components." Remembering the relationship between your indoor and outdoor kitchens, which of the zones need to be part of your outdoor kitchen design?

"It all starts with the grill", maintains Faulk. "Base your selection on the cook you aspire to be, not the kind you are now. Remember there are no industry standard depths, heights or widths when it comes to grills." Faulk goes on to say that solid advance planning can avoid challenges later if upgrades become desirable.

"Pizza making can be a very social kind of cooking, and it makes a great theme for gatherings of friends and family. Guests of any age can enjoy experimenting with different combinations of ingredients," Faulk explained and shared "that at Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet, roughly 50 percent of customers





"that at Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet, roughly 50 percent of customers who order an outdoor kitchen also include the Artisan Fire Pizza oven to complete their outdoor cooking experience."

Form follows function, as they say, and you'll want to plan for effortless movement between the functional zones. "The perfect outdoor kitchen for entertaining is about more than just the appliances. Like indoor kitchens, outdoor kitchens are made up of functional zones," says Faulk. "The cold zone should be next to the wet zone. This will simplify moving food from the cold zone refrigerator to the wet zone sink to wash and get ready for grilling in the hot zone. Also plan for uninterrupted counter space, or landing areas, for placing platters and utensils while cooking. Be sure to dedicate enough space for each zone and think about the relationships among them for cooking and serving activities". And while you're at it, "don't isolate the cook from the rest of the party," when considering the design Faulk advises. Functionality also includes the best practical placement or installation of utilities that will be needed.

Outdoor kitchens are subject to sun, rain, heat, cold and darkness. Should the plan include shelter from the elements such as a pergola? Because weather is a factor in outdoor settings, Faulk recommends selecting low-maintenance equipment and building materials. Counters, patio and decking areas should be resistant to grease; choose flooring that isn't as prone to becoming slippery when wet. All materials designed to remain outside must be able to withstand high and freezing temperatures. Fault points out, "make the space as easy to clean and maintain as possible so that the space will be enjoyed and used."

Remember that the outdoor kitchen is a part of the overall style and landscaping of the house it will complement. Consider design features that will tie the two together. Pick





components that complement your style and are functional enough to accommodate the purpose of your outdoor space.

Extend the season with heaters and protection from the sun and rain. "Incorporate shade trees, pergolas and awnings in cooking and dining areas, but don't put a combustible ceiling or awning above an outdoor grill," Faulk noted.

Other things to consider include lighting for both cooking and entertaining once the sun sets. Including a few strings of unique decorative lights can make a big impact for a few dollars. Don't forget to give consideration to incorporating music or other entertainment as part of the design. Like most tasks, it's frequently easier (and less expensive in the long run) to build in desired features during the initial building phase.

And last but not least, practice safety first. Have a fire extinguisher immediately accessible and know how to use it.

There are as many designs to outdoor kitchens as there are dreams to create an outdoor oasis. Whether you tackle the project as a DIY project or engage professional help, an outdoor kitchen could become a centerpiece at your home.



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# TIME TO ENJOY NICE THINGS

By Zinta Aistars  
Feature Photography by Zolton Cohen

Getting a car wash is not the usual way that DeHaan Remodeling Specialists, Inc., picks up new business, but there's a life lesson here: wherever you go, whatever you do, you are always an ambassador for your business.

As the dirt washed off the DeHaan truck, its logo once again big and bright along its sides, the owner of Bob & Kay's Auto Wash took notice.

"I would see them drive through the car wash from time to time," says Matt Finley. "And they would always have a friendly smile and wave. They seemed to be kind and courteous people, and I got a good sense from them."

And so, when it came time for Matt and Rachel Finley to take on a major remodeling project for their home in Portage, DeHaan Remodeling Specialists were first and foremost to come to mind. It turned out to be one family operation working with another.

Bob DeHaan, owner and designer at DeHaan Remodeling Specialists, owns the business along with his wife, Mary, who oversees the main office on West Main in Kalamazoo. It's been a family operation for 42 years, and today three DeHaan sons work alongside their parents. And, when needed, they drive the company vehicles through the car wash.

Matt and Rachel Finley moved to Kalamazoo from Flint when he was a student at Western Michigan University. They married in Kalamazoo and decided to stay.

## THAT WAS SEVEN CHILDREN AGO.

"Our oldest is now 26, but the youngest is in 6th grade," Rachel says. "That means we have four left in the house. When we had seven in the house, we used to joke—we can't have anything nice! But when the kids started moving out one by one, we thought maybe it was time for something nice."

"A large family doesn't allow for a budget to remodel a home," Matt says. "Just groceries alone took a big part of our budget. But now we thought we might have enough."

The Finley family called the DeHaan family.

## MAKEOVER FOR A DIMINISHING FAMILY

When the Finleys began their family, they bought a two-story, five-bedroom house in Portage, in a quiet neighborhood off Angling Road. The house had been built in 1985 and had a fenced-in yard, perfect for kids. It had a finished basement, a living room, dining room off the kitchen, and a family room that centered on a brick fireplace.

"When we started thinking about making a change, we looked around a bit at what was on the market, and there wasn't much available. We decided to stay and remodel instead," Matt says.

















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That fit the DeHaan Remodeling Specialists motto: "Don't move. Improve."

The project began the second week of August 2019 and was finished before the end of October. That, Rachel says, made her happy—it was a quick turnaround for all that the Finleys wanted done.

"No, it's not like HGTV where you watch a house being renovated in two days," she laughs. "But we thought that this was pretty fast."

A large part of the renovation was the upstairs bathroom off the master bedroom. It had apparently been built by previous owners as an addition that extended over the garage and it often felt chilly.

"We completely gutted the bathroom," Bob DeHaan says. "It had a step-up garden tub with a shower in it. There were pedestal sinks with no storage or counters. A skylight above had rotted around the edges and needed to be replaced."

With the 300-pound garden tub gone, the DeHaans built a large walk-in-shower in its place, using a black-and-white theme in subway tiles and flooring to add eye-catching patterns.

"The bathroom used to be pink and green and gold. It was hideous," Rachel says. "Now it's a comfortable and warm place—even the floor is heated tiles. Our previous window didn't open, but this new one does, and we hadn't realized how much damage there was around the skylight until they took the old one out."

The bedroom, along with most rooms in the house, got a fresh coat of paint, a new ceiling fan, and new carpeting.

"We wanted carpeting in all of the bedrooms for warmth," Rachel says.

## EVERY ROOM AN INVITATION TO RELAX AND ENJOY

Paint colors throughout the home reflect that warmth—with brown, burgundy, dusty blue tones.

The kitchen, too, received a makeover with expanded storage where a closet used to be, new quartz counters, stainless steel appliances, backsplash, and a large island with a farmhouse apron sink.

"The closet turned into a butler's pantry," Rachel says. "It has matching backsplash with the kitchen."

The Finleys point with pride to the



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new mantle over their family room fireplace, along with built-in shelving to the side of the fireplace with lighting to show off mementos tucked inside. The room beckons its owners to relax before a crackling fire with its darkened tones, new carpeting, and plush furniture under a wooden-beamed ceiling.

The living room was refreshed with new paint, and the dining room just beyond is currently undergoing change, with wallpaper coming down and—

“And I’m not yet sure,” Rachel smiles. “New wallpaper or new paint. That’s up next for our upcoming renovation, along with another bathroom.”

The finished basement received new flooring in earth tones—called a “floating floor” because it didn’t need to be nailed down or glued, but simply installed over the old floor—and the fourth bedroom has become an inviting guest room. So nice that, Rachel smiles again, she finds herself hanging out there for Mama’s quiet time.

Rachel gives credit to Mary Quinn, a designer for DeHaan Remodeling Specialists, for helping her choose the finishes, from floor tiles to carpeting, lighting fixtures to paint colors. Others contributing to the project included cabinetry from Northwoods, furniture from Stewart & Clark, flooring from Migala Carpet One Floor & Home.

“Wow, it was all nicer than I thought it would look when it was all finished,” Rachel says.

“We never came home from work to a mess,” Matt adds. “It never felt like a construction site. We lived here the entire time of the renovation, and every person working here cleaned up after themselves end of the day.”

“I would do it again,” Rachel nods. “And we will, soon.”

The Finleys point to the main floor bathroom. And, who knows, they may yet find another corner somewhere that could use a refresh after another kid or two moves out.



During a live broadcast in orbit aboard the International Space Station Army Col. (Dr.) Andrew Morgan administered the oath of enlistment to Future Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines assembled at the Kalamazoo Air Zoo and 100+ locations around the country.

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# Reduce Clutter and Get the Closet of Your Dreams

By Brittany Tomaselli

It seems more often than not that our everyday lives are plagued by stress. While most of the time the sources of these stressors are not under our control, our homes can and should act as a refuge. We all want our homes to be a stress free zone, but if your home is cluttered, relaxing can feel almost impossible. Taking proactive action to make your home more organized is an important and easy way to reduce the stress in your life. But where do you start? You might not realize it, but your closet might be the crux of your clutter problems. Too often we think of them as just tiny rooms with lots of clothes hangers, and as a result they quickly become cramped and messy. Closets are often an afterthought, but they are a vital part of our everyday lives, where we often see the most clutter even though we interact with them multiple times a day. If you want a home that serves you well, it's best to invest money in what you use most. Upgrading your closet can make a huge difference in your life.

## KNOW YOUR OWN HABITS

The first thing to do when improving your closet is to ask yourself some questions. Make sure you understand your own wardrobe habits before you start making changes. Really think about how you want to be able to use the space. Bette Hall, co-owner of Halls Closets & More, says some good questions to answer include:

- Do you want to make this a dressing room, and if so how many drawers will you be using?
- Do you keep your shoes in your closet?
- Do you have belts, ties, or jewelry?
- Do you mainly fold or hang your clothes?

Knowing your wardrobe habits will help keep you from making mistakes in your closet design. Think about how much of each type of clothing you have and how you use or store them. For example, do you bunch your socks or roll them? If you bunch them, you'll need more space. Take account of how many of your shirts need to be hung up and how many are folded. According to Bette, this is an important component to designing an efficient space. As she says, "Make sure you have the amount of hanging space you need first before adding additional shelving or drawers. You can put a dresser in the bedroom, but you can't hang your clothes in there!" Additionally, think about how you get dressed. Keeping items you use most at eye level and items you use less either above or below will keep things ergonomic and easy to access.

## GET ORGANIZED

After you have an understanding of what sort of closet will serve you best, you can start to consider the broader aspects of organizing. There are two major aspects to an efficient closet to keep in mind throughout the process. The first aspect is a closet's flexibility. No one's life remains static for long, so it's best to build a closet that can adapt. You may wear suits and/or dresses everyday while you're early in your career and then later on find yourself leaning towards more casual clothing. Not to mention style and your own personal tastes will always evolve. With this in mind, always make sure your closet is built with adjustable elements. Bette says that not only is this handy because our needs change, but it is also more desirable to buyers if you decide to sell your home. For these reasons, she says, all of the products they provide, shelves and rods included, are always adjustable.

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out of the space you have is relatively simple and will make a huge difference.

Using all space available doesn't just apply vertically--it's important to account for the depth of your shelving as well. A lot of closet shelving is 12" deep, and this may work just fine for many people. However, if you tend to keep clothing like larger sweaters or longer shoes stacked on shelves, then it's likely that they will hang over the edge. Not only does having shelves that are too shallow look sloppy, but it could also leave lines or indents in your clothes. This is easy to fix by simply making sure to account for the size of the items you are planning to store and then planning your shelving depth accordingly.

#### MAKE IT HAPPEN

Knowing the basics of what makes a smartly designed closet can go a long way in the organizing process. The next step is getting in touch with professionals who can help put everything into action.

Getting organized doesn't have to be a major chore. With a little help and planning, you can easily tackle the clutter and make your closet serve your life and habits. By taking into account your personal habits, maximizing the space you already have, and creating an ergonomic set up, your closet can make your daily life easier.

The second aspect to an efficient closet is using all the space available to you. Leaving dead space is a huge waste. "The main mistake that I see is the top shelf being too low," Bette says. Sure, you can put boxes or folded clothing up there, but once it is stacked too high it will be difficult to access and still leaves unused space. In fact Bette says that one of the easiest ways to increase the storage capacity of a closet is to use the height of the room. "Many closets do not have a double rod and if they do, the top rod is not high enough to have a proper double hang. In doubling up a rod, we can then use some of the space to add the shelving for folded clothes, shoes, or drawers," she says. Additionally, she notes, we should always consider room for outlets and proper usage of corners. You can use the space in your closet all the way from the ceiling to the floor. Less accessible areas, like closer to the floor, can be used for storing off-season clothing or for items that you use less often but don't want to keep in a damp basement. Maximizing the use you get



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# Home Security

By Zinta Aistars

What can be more important than protecting our home and our family? According to U.S. News & World Report, nearly a quarter of American homes now have some level of a security system installed—and the number is expected to rise. Research has shown that security systems are an effective means of deterring burglaries and home invasions.

Knowing that our home and all who live inside it, along with our possessions and pets, are as safe as possible gives a homeowner peace of mind. Whether we wish to protect our deliveries from “porch pirates”—thieves who steal packages delivered to our front doors—or build our own personal and impermeable Fort Knox, security systems are available for any level of security a homeowner wishes to install.

Jack Winter is head of dispatch at Michigan Security & Lock in Portage, “but I wear many hats,” he says. The business was established in 2012 and is currently looking to expand, Winter says, and is already servicing an area as far north as Grand Rapids, east to Jackson, and west along the lakeshore.

“We offer home security system installation, keyless door locks, indoor and outdoor security cameras, and 24-hour locksmith services,” Winter says. “First, we meet with the homeowner to do a site survey and talk about their needs. We can install our equipment or equipment bought from another vendor.”

A Michigan Security & Lock master locksmith, licensed and bonded, can install new high-security locks or rekey existing locks with same-day service. Technicians can install a wide spectrum of cameras inside and outside the home. Intercom systems allow for communication throughout the home but also with someone approaching the home outside. Keyless door locks are also available.

“Keypads on doors are popular with our customers,” Winter says. “We can also set up your smart phone with software that allows you to view what is happening at your

door and speak to that person. These kinds of apps can also lock and unlock doors.”

A fleet of vans with mobile technicians are ready to deliver an on-site service to anyone locked out of home, office, or automobile or in need of emergency door repair.

“I’m aware that people are concerned about security systems being hacked, but ours are hard-wired so that they can’t be,” Winter says. “We can use your phone network instead of Wi-Fi.”

Prices vary greatly, he says, depending on what kind of security system the homeowner wishes to install, the recording devices used, and the extent of wiring needed. Technicians work with the homeowner’s budget and provide maintenance and education on various products.

With an office located at Western Michigan University’s Technology Park since 2003, EPS Security keeps a headquarters in Grand Rapids, where they do their own monitoring for the security systems they install in homes in Southwest Michigan.

“EPS Security has been around since 1955,” says Jeremy Schellie, marketing and communications manager. “We are the largest family-owned security system business in Michigan. We also have offices in Traverse City and Petoskey to serve both residential and commercial security needs.”

Schellie points out that while many such businesses use a third party to monitor residential security systems, EPS Security uses its own monitoring center.

“That means we have a strong working relationship with local authorities and first responders,” he says.

Consultants meet with homeowners in their homes to answer questions and assess security needs.

“The best way to think about security is in layers,” Schellie says. “A homeowner can have deadbolts on doors, or a dog, or own a gun to protect their home and think that’s all they need—but the best security system is in layers so that if a



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home invader gets past one layer, there is yet another and another layer."

EPS Security offers various alarm systems, video surveillance, home automation, and life safety alarm systems. Alarm systems can detect motion, sound, or even glass breaking. Such systems can also detect water if a home should flood. Home automation can allow the homeowner to control door locks, thermostats, garage doors, and lighting remotely, by using a smart phone or computer. Life safety alerts the homeowner and first responders to danger from smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide.

"We use a 24/7 connection and LTE alarm signal speed through a secure cellular communicator," Schellie says. "It's your security system's personal, built-in cell phone. Internet signal communication is also available to homeowners as a primary or back-up option."

Schellie warns that many tech companies are getting into the security business "but have security flaws themselves. We put time into the security aspect. Our operators are trained and certified to the industry's highest standards. You may pay a little extra, but that's the extra value you get."

A homeowner should plan a budget for the security system, but also for ongoing monitoring if that is desired. Along with technology, however, there are other common-sense ways to protect one's property. A myriad of do-it-yourself systems are available, although they may not offer the same level of sophistication or be able to prevent hacking.

Before even considering installing a security system, a simple walkaround your property may reveal issues such as landscaping that needs to be trimmed away from the house to avoid blind spots. Deadbolt locks on doors are still and always a good idea. Don't loan out spare keys to others—they can too easily be lost. Bright outdoor lighting around the home can deter intruders before they even approach your home. And take some time to get to know your neighbors—we can all help to keep our neighborhoods and communities safe.



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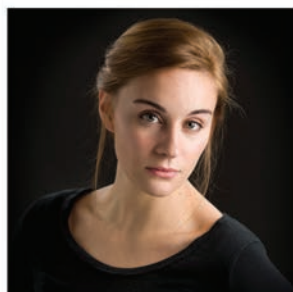
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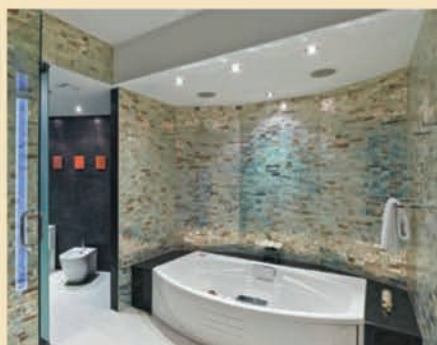
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