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Magazine

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WINTER 2018



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MARTE'S BUCHE DE NOEL



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Feature Home

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Margaret and David's Gull Lake home, built by Hawks Hollow Builders, features a massive Finnish Tulikivi soapstone fireplace which overlooks a custom Jack Gesmundo-built walnut slab dining room table. Located near the stairway, heat from the fireplace rises naturally to the upstairs.



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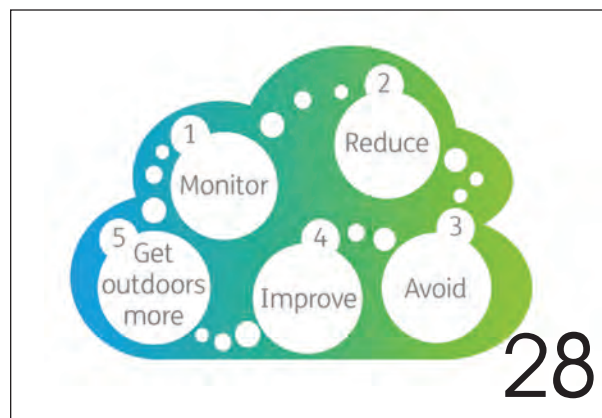
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PUBLISHER

O'Keefe Publishing, Inc.

EDITOR

John O'Keefe

ACCOUNTING MANAGER

Donna O'Keefe

ADVERTISING

John O'Keefe

johno@jbprinting.com

269-547-0333

269-349-9601 (JB Printing)

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Zinta Aistars

Zolton Cohen

Barbara Fisher

Linda Hoard

PRODUCTION

O'Keefe Publishing, Inc.

PRINTING & MAILING
by JB PRINTING CO.*

PRINTING & MAILING
by JB PRINTING CO.*

Terri Bennett, Jerry Elkins,

John Fahl, Mike Fahl,

Randy Fischer, Brian Fulbright,

Carl Gillespie, Dianne Lane,

Shannon Long, Mike Majors,

Bert Meinema, Randy Viers

* JB Printing is an O'Keefe Publishing company,
and is the first printing company to be designated as
a Clean Corporate Citizen by the Michigan DEQ

Welcome Home Magazine© is published quarterly

Welcome Home Magazine

3111 Lake Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49048

Phone 269-547-0333 / 269-349-9601

okeefepublishing@sbcglobal.net

www.welcomehomekzoo.com

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Celebrate the Season Buche De Noel

Photography by Linda Hoard

Martha Forbes came to America as a young bride, and brought her customs, recipes and love of life! One of my favorite holiday memories as a teenager was when Aunt Martha made this Buche De Noel for our Christmas gift.

"This is the authentic French Buche De Noel (or Yule Log). In 1951 when I was 17 years old, I learned to make it when I was going to Home Economic in Aubie-et-Espessas, a town outside of Bordeaux, France. I used to ride my bicycle 20 km each way every Thursday to go to the school," Martha remembers. This cake melts in your mouth and will be a wonderful addition to your holiday table.

Servings: Serves 12

For the sponge layer

8 eggs
2/3 cup sugar plus 2 T. sugar
1 cup self-rising flour
1/4 melted unsalted butter

For the buttercream

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
12 egg yolks
1 tablespoon vanilla
4 - 4 oz. bars Sweet German
Chocolate
1 lb. unsalted butter

Optional garnish

Meringue snow flakes
Marzipan leaves
Meringue Mushrooms

Preheat the oven to 400F. Line a 10-inch by 15-inch baking pan with a 1-inch lip (jelly-roll pan) with parchment paper. Butter the parchment or spray it with cooking spray. Set the pan aside.

Separate eggs. Beat egg whites until hard. Beat 2/3 cup sugar and the egg yolks for about 5 minutes, until thick and foamy. Fold the egg yolk mixture into the stiffly beaten whites. Carefully fold one cup of flour into the mixture. Slowly stir in 1/4 cup melted butter. Do not over-mix or the cake will bake up into a tough texture.

Gently spread the batter into the prepared pan. Bake on the center shelf for about 8-10 minutes, until the cake is just set. Check after 6 minutes to be sure the sponge layer is not becoming too dark.

Prepare a damp dish towel lightly sprinkled with the additional 2 tablespoons of sugar. Immediately turn the cake onto a damp dish towel gently roll the cake, still in the towel, starting at the 15-inch end. Allow it to cook completely.

Buttercream:

Bring sugar and water to a boil and set aside to cool slightly. Beat the egg yolks until very light and foamy, then trickle the sugar syrup down the side of the bowl in a very thin stream, continuing to beat vigorously as you do so until it is thick. Melt the chocolate over hot water in a double boiler or bain-marie arrangement. Cream the butter until very light, stir in the chocolate and combine with the egg yolk mixture. Spread the sponge sheet evenly with half the buttercream, roll up and spread the outside with the buttercream.


Decorate as desired to resemble a Yule Log.

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Courtesy of Pennings & Sons

The Hardest Working Room

By Zinta Aistars

As you enter your home from the outdoors, you bring that outdoors with you: mud, dirt, leaves, sure, but also arms full of backpacks, tools, sports equipment, groceries, briefcases, you name it. Your muddy-pawed pets may be trailing you in, too.

Before you enter your personal haven, you will want to shed all of that. Where? The mudroom!

"There was a time that people skipped having a mudroom, sometime in the 80s and 90s," says Brian Pennings, president of Pennings & Sons. "Having a mudroom is a trend that has come back and makes sense. People used to just come right into the house from the garage and track everything in with them."

Everything can be fixed. Pennings & Sons does it all, from concept to design to the final build. In older homes that have no space between the outside and the inside, Pennings suggests bumping out a wall into the garage. It's a cost savings over building an actual addition.

"Then, think about how you want to use that space. What are your family's needs?" he says.

Wherever you decide to go for help in designing and creating a mudroom in your home, here are your considerations to discuss with your builder:

- Who will be using the mudroom—kids? pets? how many

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*Courtesy of Hall's Closets & More
and ORG Home*



*Courtesy of Pennings & Sons
Great Things Local®*

adults? and what will they be carrying when they come in the door?

- Is it easy to enter and exit the mudroom? You don't want people shuffling around each other.

- Consider site lines in your layout. You won't want those muddy boots to be in view from the living room.

- Have you provided seating? It's hard to remove those boots when you are standing up.

- Think about weather when you choose your flooring. Ceramic tile works well under the elements and is easy to clean. A vinyl plank floor can work well, too.

- Same goes for the walls. Think about hand prints and splashes of rain. Beadboard paneling can be attractive and easy to clean, and painted wood resists stains better than drywall.

The cost of building a mudroom can vary widely, depending on needs and layout, but it can usually range from \$1,000 to many thousands. While some homeowners simply want a closet and bench, others may want a room large enough to include laundry, lockers, benches, perhaps even a wash area for pets.

"The first thing we do is go to a customer's home and take a look at the space," says Allen Spencer, owner and

master cabinetmaker at Homestead Cabinetmakers. "We get measurements, bounce around ideas, and then begin to create a 3-D computer drawing for a good visual."

While every aspect of a mudroom can be customized, Spencer offers suggestions.

"Ideally, the mudroom has a heated tile floor, a bench to sit on while removing shoes and boots and a space beneath the bench where to tuck them away, with cabinets and cubbies above," Spencer says. "Usually there is a shelf for gloves and hats, and a tall locker cabinet for coats and jackets or a coat rack. A drain in the floor for easy clean-up is great to have, too."

Spencer says the greatest misconception he sees is that creating custom-made cabinetry is a more expensive option.

"Our customers are often pleasantly surprised at the cost of having cabinetry built to their needs and their space," Spencer says. "While pre-built cabinetry has to use filler strips to fill in gaps where it doesn't fit the exact space, our custom-made cabinetry is built wall to wall, crisp and clean, with every square inch used."



Courtesy of Homestead' Cabinetmakers

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Bette Hall, along with husband Ron, owns Halls Closets & More is another local, family-owned cabinetry business that will customize to a homeowner's needs. Bette Hall starts a project with customers by talking about design, while Ron Hall works with builders to complete the project.

"Mudrooms are definitely a strong trend right now," Bette Hall says. "It is usually a space coming in from the garage, but if it is a part of the front entrance, then we can build a more enclosed space and with closed doors on lockers."

Hall says that bench lockers are popular. Hooks for coats and backpacks are important, at least one hook per family member, and homeowners may also want to consider space for sports gear and pet needs, too.

"Don't forget your animals," Hall says. "You may want extra hooks for dog leashes, and space for travel crates, maybe even a litter box."

Another consideration, Hall says, is the environmental impact of the building materials one uses in the home. Halls Closets & More pride themselves on using sustainable, earth-friendly materials. They also recycle many of the materials used in their projects. These earth-friendly materials include all recycled or recovered wood fiber materials.

"If you smell that 'new house smell' when you enter your home, that's not a good thing," Hall says. "People have allergies. Some building materials can emit formaldehyde and other chemicals. Our boards do not give off emissions, and that's something you want to think about in a healthy household."





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Twelve Baskets

By Barbara Fisher
Photos courtesy Twelve Baskets

The holidays are synonymous with generosity and goodwill: toward our families, our friends and our neighbors. Twelve Baskets, a non-profit organization, operates a food pantry to assist individuals and families facing hard times at the holidays and throughout the year. Its mission is “to lead the fight against hunger in our community by bridging the gap between the need and the excess, while restoring hope, dignity, and self-respect”. Many pantries see an uptick in donations at the holidays and Twelve Baskets is no exception. Twelve Baskets is grateful to its community partners who allow them to put food on the tables of the hungry all year long.

Opening its doors in June of 2014 and welcoming its first 18 families, Twelve Baskets now serves between 90 to 100 families each week. While not affiliated with any church, many of the organization’s Board members are faith-based and all are committed to giving back to the community. Serving Portage, Three Rivers, Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, the food pantry had its inception with a presentation to members of a local church. Carl (Board Vice President) and Joann (Board Secretary) Wespinter are the only remaining members of the original group; hearing the initial presentation and seeing the vision into reality.

Until 2018, Twelve Baskets was open twice a month but due to the number of people needing assistance, the pantry is now open four times a month. “We only have a small number [of families] that are what we call ‘regulars’ because of their financial situations. Most of the families are short-term; we are filling a need between jobs or because of unexpected expenses,” Joann explained. In a relatively stable economy, the pantry sees about 10 new guests each week and about the same number drop off each week. Guests must show ID at each visit and may shop twice a month. A personal shopping assistant helps guests





pick out their food from each section of the pantry; enough to last for two weeks. While there are treats as they are available (the “fun fridge”), the pantry predominantly stocks healthy and nutritious food. Shopping assistants can also provide education, assistance with food choices and preparation suggestions or recipes.

Twelve Baskets hopes to expand beyond offering solely the food pantry. They currently distribute clothing on an informal basis and hope to formalize a no-charge, on-site clothing distribution service. Adequate space is a deterrent to that dream and space is an issue from a number of other practical perspectives. Twelve Baskets operates out of a 2,800 square foot building with a parking lot that is too small for the size of the operation. West Michigan Stamp & Seal (next door) generously offers the use of its parking lot to the pantry. Add in pantry aisles, shopping carts, guests and volunteers and it gets crowded. There is no waiting area to speak of so guests must wait outside in the elements for their turn to shop. We all live in Michigan so we know that the elements encompass a lot of possibilities: rain, sleet, snow, unrelenting heat, bitter cold, wind. Last year 2,465 persons were registered to receive food (724 families). That included 829 children and 341 individuals over the age of 60. While growing means Twelve Baskets is reaching more people, it also means that more people in our communities are hungry. During an interview with WWMT featuring members of the WMU football squad who both donated and helped distribute Thanksgiving dinners at Twelve Baskets, Board President Bill Steger offered that Portage alone has a population of 48,000 people with an estimated 12 percent (5000 people) going hungry every night.

With the needs of its community in mind, the 11-member volunteer Board is embarking on a building campaign to raise \$500,000 to purchase their current location and the much larger building next door. Renovations will need to be completed in the larger space, some of which will need to be funded through the sale of their current location. Their goal is to pull this off by the end of 2019 as the opportunity to purchase may not be available beyond that date. A true “working” Board, each member has their area(s) of responsibility for the management of the pantry.

Twelve Baskets relies on the generosity of businesses and individuals for donations. It isn't just food that goes into running a pantry, there is locating the food, people power, shelving, refrigerators/freezers, counters, transportation to pick up donations and much more. Twelve Baskets has many local businesses supporting their efforts (some donate and others serve as collection points) as well as businesses in Grand Rapids, White Pigeon, Allegan, Centreville, Scotts and Hamilton. Occasionally they run short of being fully stocked before a distribution date. A local church provided funds for them to purchase shopping carts and located a replacement van when a tree fell into the parking lot where their two vans were parked, the vans minding their own business we might add. One van was relatively unscathed but the other was mortally wounded. When a local business suffered a power failure, they quickly donated ice cream to the pantry. A grandmother was overwhelmed with receiving ice cream during her shopping trip noting she hadn't had ice cream in years and her grandchildren had never tasted ice cream. The pantry provides food for the hungry and does its share of tugging at the heartstrings of the volunteers as well.

The pantry is always in need of additional volunteers who want to make a difference or give back to their communities.

There is never a lack of things to do: parking lot attendance, people to break down boxes, drivers to pick up food, stockers and shopper assistants. Donors' charitable gifts keep Twelve Baskets open and shopping carts full. With just \$1, Twelve Baskets can provide enough food to feed a family of 5 for a day. Tax-deductible donations may be made through Twelve Baskets' secure website via Pay Pal or a credit card. Twelve Baskets also participates in the AmazonSmile program (Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to a charitable organization of the buyer's choice). The website was rebuilt as a school project by five Kalamazoo Valley Community College students as part of their Advanced Web Design class. Twelve Baskets gratefully accepts gifts of long-term appreciated securities, including stock, bonds, and mutual funds.

Twelve Baskets feeds the hungry in our communities and touches the lives of its volunteers. "I am not the same person I was four and one-half years ago; I see everything in a different light now," offered Joann of her journey with Twelve Baskets.



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THE COZY HEARTHSIDE LAKESHORE LIFE

By Zolton Cohen

Feature Photography by Gary Yonkers Photography

Pardon the pun, but a flood was the precipitating event that spurred Margaret and David to demolish their existing Gull Lake house and replace it with a cozy, intriguingly designed, energy efficient home.

Four years ago, while attending a family funeral in Florida, the couple received word that a pipe in an exterior wall had burst and filled the interior of their house with water, ruining floor coverings and much of their furniture. Margaret says, "It was like a tropical rainforest when we walked in. We had a company drill holes in every wall and they dried it out with big fans for weeks."

But the flood wasn't the only issue with the house. David says, "Every summer when the air would get humid the tile on the slab floor would sweat like a Coke bottle; we would mop up the water with towels. We also knew there was a mold issue in the walls, and acoustical tile was sagging from the ceiling while mice ran around overhead. We were done. The house needed to be gone."

LAND WITH A HISTORY

David's family bought the property in the early 1950's. They replaced the original cottage with a simple ranch, which they then used during the summers. "We had a lot of good years in that house," David says. "When Margaret and I moved in it was just a summer residence, so we winterized and insulated it."

But they had been thinking for years about replacing it, and the flood motivated them to finally put their plans into motion. While they were still in Florida, Margaret urged David, "Call Hawks Hollow Builders."

Sera Gesmundo, now President of Hawks Hollow Builders, was then in the process of taking over leadership of the firm from her father, Jack, who founded it in 1973. Margaret says, "We knew we wanted to work with Hawks Hollow because of their reputation for building finely crafted homes, and we had been thinking long and hard about how we wanted to live here

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ABOVE: Craftsman-style board and batten siding and cedar framing around the front entrance are part of the low-maintenance exterior of the home.

LEFT: A soaring ceiling, solid cedar framing and an Ipe deck make the second story screened-in porch a pleasant place to while away the hours enjoying the breeze and the lake view.





ABOVE: Salvaged from the kitchen of the previous house, a cherry butcherblock island countertop blends well with the extra-tall custom maple cabinets built by Hawks Hollow Builders.

RIGHT: Margaret's dream of having a pantry devoted entirely to dishes rather than food storage is fully realized in this well-designed room off the kitchen.





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because of David's history with the place. He knows where the sun rises and sets, and how snow falls and accumulates on the land. But we wanted something that wasn't as big as the lot could support; we wanted a house at a scale that would fit in with the neighborhood and look as though it had been here for 100 years."

Gesmundo says, "Many of the houses alongside Margaret and David's are older and have been there a long time, though some have been developed to become bigger. David and Margaret wanted their house to be a part of the neighborhood, congruent and in context with the existing homes both from the road and from the lake. I think we pulled that off." It was also important to the couple to have an open floor plan and easy access to the outdoors because, as Margaret says, "We're outdoor people."

CRAFTSMAN STYLE APPEALS

Valentina Velkova, President of ADIDA Inc., Architectural Design, Interior Design and Art, was brought on board to help turn Margaret and David's ideas into reality. She started by visiting the couple in the existing house, walking through it and around the property with them in order to internalize how they lived. She asked questions about what they liked and didn't like about the house, and how they wanted the new one to be different. Velkova says, "It's good to see the plusses and the minuses. But a very fortunate aspect of this project is the location. It is a beautiful property and a beautiful lake, with beautiful views in every direction. So, one of the main goals was to open up the house toward the lake."

The open-plan Craftsman style design allows a lake view from every room except the service areas like the pantry and mudroom, and the bathrooms. The kitchen has views of the lake as well as the main entrance and driveway. Cedar posts and beams frame the main entrance and wrap-around porch, as well as the private second-story screened-in porch off the upstairs master bedroom. Board and batten siding, and Craftsman window and door trim, completes the look. The structural aspect of the home was engineered by Tom Palarz, Principle of Nehil • Sivak, P.C.

Velkova says, "David and Margaret entertain during the summer. So, with coming from the lake it seemed like a good idea to put in a bathroom with a shower that has direct access to the outdoors. It's also handy for when they work outdoors in the garden."

Along with the open floor plan, David and Margaret wanted two master bedroom suites. Velkova says, "That's a bit unusual. But it's so they can continue to live in the house as they age. Right now, they're using the upstairs master suite with its beautiful view from the screened in porch. As they get older, the bedroom upstairs will become a guest bedroom and they will move into the master bedroom suite downstairs."

Margaret says, "Sera and Valentina came up with so many great ideas, and they also came up with really good people to work with - for lighting, cabinet knobs and other things. John and Rich, the carpenters from Hawks Hollow, did such an amazing job on the porch off the master bedroom. And everybody was so helpful and cooperative with everyone else on the project."



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ABOVE: A custom redwood burl front door from California graces the entry foyer while ceiling beams in the living area help delineate spaces in the open-plan design.

RIGHT: Seen from the lake, cedar framing on the screened-in second story porch off the upstairs master bedroom and the wraparound porch on the first floor catch the eye.





ABOVE: Practical cabinets and a practical floor highlight the mudroom and laundry area off the garage. The faucet on the unique slop sink has a hook that is used to hold the handle of a bucket while it fills with water.

LEFT: A low bench built into the mudroom offers a place to sit and take off shoes and boots, and drawers to hide away backdoor clutter.





ABOVE: One of two master bedrooms in the house, the one upstairs has French doors that lead to a second-story screened-in porch that overlooks the property and the lake beyond.

RIGHT: A soaking tub and doorless walk-in shower in the master bathroom can accommodate two bathers at once.



A WARM FIREPLACE BECKONS

David adds, "The fact that Hawks Hollow is known as an energy efficient builder was very important to us. We like to burn wood, so we wanted something that was compatible with that - a Tulikivi brand soapstone fireplace from Finland. The house is basically built around it, and it is located near the stairway so some of the heat it produces can travel upstairs. It was a challenge at first to find a place for it, but now that it's there it makes sense." The stone chimney from the fireplace is exposed in the master bedroom so it can radiate heat when a fire is burning downstairs.

Margaret and David mention that Ashleigh Kosin, Owner and Designer at Bell Tower Lake House Living Company in Richland, was another important member of the team that put the home together. Margaret says, "Ashleigh was so valuable to the process. She was the one who designed all the furniture placement; she came in while we were still building and could see things spatially in a comprehensive way. All the furniture is new because we weren't bringing anything in from the flood."

Kosin says, "Margaret had been shopping at our store for a couple of years, so I had a good idea of her taste in furnishings. It is important to her and David that their furniture is handmade, built in the United States, and

eco-friendly. They have a lot of nice art, so I was able to work with that, pulling out colors and textures to compliment what they already had, and to make it look as though it had been in place for 20 years. It was a timeless approach, and fun to bring their design style to life."

One furniture item in the house didn't come from a store though. Jack Gesmundo built a walnut slab table for the couple similar in design to one he had built earlier for Sera. Margaret says, "Ashleigh came to Hawks Hollow where the table was stored while we were building. She brought wood samples and figured out the kind of chairs that would look good with it. It was such a valuable service because I wouldn't have known what to do."

CUSTOM TOUCHES ABOUND

When walking through the house, David and Margaret each point out many of their favorite rooms and features. David says the heart of the home is the kitchen area, where he does much of the cooking. The countertops are a couple of inches higher than standard because both he and Margaret are tall, and the maple cabinets, custom built by Hawks Hollow, are also tall to provide plenty of storage space. David enthuses about the steam oven, explaining how it infuses various foods with heat

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and moisture, and says it is the ideal appliance to reheat leftovers.

One of Margaret's dreams was a pantry devoted not to food, but to dishes. And that has come to fruition in this house. "I don't like to kneel down to get things out of lower cabinets," she says. "It has worked out perfectly. We have dishes we treasure so it would be a shame to hide them away, and we can see everything and know where everything is." The highly refined concrete countertops in the kitchen and the bathrooms were built by the Hard Topix Company in Jenison, Michigan.

Margaret and David are quick to express thanks and gratitude for the team of experts who worked on the house, Margaret says, "Sera was always kind in her direction when she was talking to us. If I decided to forge a new path that wasn't very bright, she was so generous of spirit to gently bring me back and not tell me how inappropriate my thinking was. And that's what David and I got from everyone who was involved - Val and Ashleigh and everyone else. That's what made it fun, with everyone contributing ideas to the project. Building a home is not the kind of thing we do every day, so you have to learn to trust; to trust the process and the people involved. We were working with three wonderful professionals. It was an amazing experience because they listened. They heard us, and they understood what we wanted."

Gesmundo says that Hawks Hollow Builders brings together best construction practices, innovative and creative designs, and a team of the area's best craftsman and trade partners. In terms of energy efficiency, she says, "We build to our standards whether or not the client asks for it. We feel it is; not just to reduce the amount of energy used by the house, but with proper assembly of the walls so they stay dry and don't mold or rot and can be sustainable for 150 years. And that leads automatically to ongoing comfort for the occupants."

She adds, "We're proponents of the concepts laid out in Sarah Susanka's 'Not So Big House' book that create multi-use spaces and make use of superior materials and design elements to craft high-quality spaces that you enjoy being in. It's not enjoyable to sit in a high-ceiling living room where you feel small and cold. With Margaret and David's house, I think we accomplished that."





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Planning an Event to Remember

By Zinta Aistars

The special day is coming up. Perhaps it is a wedding, or maybe a business conference. It could be a retirement party or a birthday gathering. Whatever the occasion, it is going to take some careful planning to put together an event without glitches.

Hiring an event planner can take a lot of stress off your shoulders and ensure great results—and the greater Kalamazoo community has several to choose from to help you plan that perfect day.

Pointers for a successful event begin with planning early. Depending on the scope and importance of the event, you may want to get a start a year ahead, even two, if the venue of your choice is in high demand.

Once your venue is secured, remember to be flexible. Expect changes, especially if your event is an outdoor one. Rolling with the punches can ease stress. For that reason, you may want to have a basic “Plan B” in mind for those unexpected issues that can come up.

Don’t be afraid to negotiate pricing. From event planner, to venue, to catering, to flowers, most everything that goes with an event can have a flexible price range to fit your budget.

Do a practice run as the big day nears to be sure you haven’t overlooked any important details. You may discover that parking can be tricky, or a road leading to the event is suddenly closed for construction. Perhaps the stove in the kitchen isn’t

warming properly. You never know—until you know, and then you still have time to fix it.

Dottie Myers-Hill is the senior event planner at Amplify Marketing and Event Planning in Portage.

“Make sure to have a clear picture in your mind of what you’d like the atmosphere to look and feel like,” Myers-Hill advises. “What kind of experience would you like your guests to have and how do you want them to feel? Appreciated, entertained, enlightened, or wowed? Consideration of these things will help you make decisions on a venue and budget allocation. One of the more important things is the flow of the event—well-organized lines, easily accessible beverages, and quick service—to make sure you keep your guests satisfied. Don’t be afraid to stage things throughout the night to keep interest growing throughout the event.”

Amplify can plan events from intimate food and wine pairings, to movie premiers, to weddings and large corporate events. While the company is relatively new, staff brings a combined 30 years of experience to the business, and owner Jason Klein has been throwing memorable parties for many years. Amplify works with a wide-ranging network of caterers, venues, performers, decorators, musicians, and designers.

The Fetzer Center, located on a secluded, wooded area of the campus of Western Michigan University, is a full-service venue

that can take your event from set-up to tear-down. The Center offers a large banquet room that can be divided into three smaller spaces, two auditoriums, an atrium lobby overlooking a patio, and seven additional break-out rooms that can hold 30 to 70 people.

"If you are booking a conference, I suggest doing so a year to two out," says Connie Peruchietti, director. "A wedding, you are probably good about a year out. If you aren't planning that far out, however, we can still help—even as little as a month out."

First questions Peruchietti will ask, she says, is about the objective of the event and the budget.

"We do our best to be price conscious for our customers," Peruchietti says. "We have a lot of options, including catering on or off site, and there may be alternatives you haven't even considered."

That about 80 percent of customers return for repeat events, she says, tells a story about the experience and great service Fetzer Center offers. Peruchietti has been at the Center for 25 years, and her staff cites similar numbers, with a chef who has been providing for all kinds of dietary needs for 10 years. Students from the University do much of the wait service.

Niko's Landing Banquet Center, situated on the Kalamazoo River in Comstock, also offers many years of experience. The Center can accommodate up to 300 people, but can be closed off for smaller events. Keith Grafos, general manager, runs the place his father began about 40 years ago, even as the family business has transformed from restaurant to banquet hall.

"We were originally a restaurant, but we realized soon that we were too big for a pretty small community," Grafos says.

Turning into a banquet hall was the perfect solution, and now the venue brings in people from the greater Kalamazoo community and beyond.

"My father immigrated from Greece, and his first restaurant was Coney Island, downtown Kalamazoo," Grafos says. "Then he opened up another one in Comstock, called Dotty's. Now we are at Niko's, and he still comes in every day to help. We do everything ourselves, with menus for breakfast, lunch, and dinner."

Grafos recommends booking large events such as weddings as much as a year out, especially if looking for a Saturday. Menus can be as casual as burgers, fancied up to meats that are smoked in-house, to a whole hog. Hall rentals include step-by-step guidance, from set-up to clean-up. Events can be indoors or out, enjoying the river view. The venue has been awarded the Wedding Wire Couples Choice Award many years running.

"As my father says, you're only as good as your last event," Grafos says. "We can help make your event what you envision it to be, limited only by your imagination."



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Importance of Indoor Air Quality

Provided by the EPA

Indoor air quality refers to the quality of the air in a home, school, office, or other building environment. The potential impact of indoor air quality on human health nationally can be noteworthy for several reasons:

Americans, on average, spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors, where the concentrations of some pollutants are often 2 to 5 times higher than typical outdoor concentrations.

People who are often most susceptible to the adverse effects of pollution (e.g., the very young, older adults, people with cardiovascular or respiratory disease) tend to spend even more time indoors.

Indoor concentrations of some pollutants have increased in recent decades due to such factors as energy-efficient building construction (when it lacks sufficient mechanical ventilation to ensure adequate air exchange) and increased use of synthetic building materials, furnishings, personal care products, pesticides, and household cleaners.

TYPICAL POLLUTANTS OF CONCERN INCLUDE:

- Combustion byproducts such as carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and environmental tobacco smoke.
- Substances of natural origin such as radon, pet dander, and mold.
- Biological agents such as molds.
- Pesticides, lead, and asbestos.
- Ozone (from some air cleaners).
- Various volatile organic compounds from a variety of products and materials.

Most pollutants affecting indoor air quality come from sources inside buildings, although some originate outdoors.

INDOOR SOURCES (SOURCES WITHIN BUILDINGS THEMSELVES).

Combustion sources in indoor settings, including tobacco, wood and coal heating and cooking appliances, and fireplaces, can release harmful combustion byproducts such as carbon monoxide and particulate matter directly into the indoor environment.

Cleaning supplies, paints, insecticides, and other commonly used products introduce many different chemicals, including volatile organic compounds, directly into the indoor air.

Building materials are also potential sources, whether through degrading materials (e.g., asbestos fibers released from building insulation) or from new materials (e.g., chemical off-gassing from pressed wood products). Other substances in indoor air are of natural origin, such as radon, mold, and pet dander.

Outdoor sources: Outdoor air pollutants can enter buildings through open doors, open windows, ventilation systems, and cracks in structures. Some pollutants come indoors through building foundations. For instance, radon forms in the ground as naturally occurring uranium in rocks and soils decays. The radon can then enter buildings through cracks or gaps in structures.

Harmful smoke from chimneys can re-enter homes to pollute the air in the home and neighborhood. In areas with contaminated ground water or soils, volatile chemicals can enter buildings through the same process.

Volatile chemicals in water supplies can also enter indoor air when building occupants use the water (e.g., during showering, cooking).

Finally, when people enter buildings, they can inadvertently bring in soils and dusts on their shoes and clothing from the outdoors, along with pollutants that adhere to those particles.

OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING INDOOR AIR QUALITY

In addition, several other factors affect indoor air quality, including the air exchange rate, outdoor climate, weather conditions, and occupant behavior.

The air exchange rate with the outdoors is an important factor in determining indoor air pollutant concentrations. The air exchange rate is affected by the design, construction, and operating parameters of buildings and is ultimately a function of infiltration (air that flows into structures through openings, joints, and cracks in walls, floors, and ceilings and around windows and doors), natural ventilation (air that flows through opened windows and doors), and mechanical ventilation (air that is forced indoors or vented outdoors by ventilation devices, such as fans or air handling systems).

Outdoor climate and weather conditions combined with occupant behavior can also affect indoor air quality. Weather conditions influence whether building occupants keep windows open or closed and whether they operate air conditioners, humidifiers, or heaters, all of which can affect indoor air quality. Certain climatic conditions can increase the potential for indoor moisture and mold growth if not controlled by adequate ventilation or air conditioning.

Health effects associated with indoor air pollutants include:

- Irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat.
- Headaches, dizziness, and fatigue.
- Respiratory diseases, heart disease, and cancer.

The link between some common indoor air pollutants (e.g., radon, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, Legionella

bacterium) and health effects is very well established.

Radon is a known human carcinogen and is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

Carbon monoxide is toxic, and short-term exposure to elevated carbon monoxide levels in indoor settings can be lethal.

Episodes of Legionnaires' disease, a form of pneumonia caused by exposure to the Legionella bacterium, have been associated with buildings with poorly maintained air conditioning or heating systems.

Numerous indoor air pollutants—dust mites, mold, pet dander, environmental tobacco smoke, cockroach allergens, particulate matter, and others—are “asthma triggers,” meaning that some asthmatics might experience asthma attacks following exposure.


While adverse health effects have been attributed to some specific pollutants, the scientific understanding of some indoor air quality issues continues to evolve.


One example is “sick building syndrome,” which occurs when building occupants experience similar symptoms after entering a particular building, with symptoms diminishing or disappearing after they leave the building. These symptoms are increasingly being attributed to a variety of building indoor air attributes.

Researchers also have been investigating the relationship between indoor air quality and important issues not traditionally thought of as related to health, such as student performance in the classroom and productivity in occupational settings.

Another research area that is evolving is “green building” design, construction, operation, and maintenance that achieves energy efficiency and enhances indoor air quality.







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