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Magazine

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WINTER 2014



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Feature Home

(ON THE COVER)

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The owners of the Feature Home collaboration with builder Bill Kozar on their home to get exactly the result they wanted lends credibility to the concept that working slowly, thoughtfully and deliberately ultimately achieves the best outcome.

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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

Jenny Van Houten
jennyv@jbprinting.com
269-808-0283

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Zinta Aistars

Kaye Bennett

Zolton Cohen

Linda Hoard

PRODUCTION

O'Keefe Publishing, Inc.

**PRINTING & MAILING
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Terri Bennett, Jerry Elkins,
John Fahl, Mike Fahl,
Brian Fulbright, Ray Healey,
Joe Hegedus, Dianne Lane,
Shannon Long, Mike Majors,
Bert Meinema, Dawn Taggart,
Austin Whipple

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okeefepublishing@sbcglobal.net
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It's all about you *Kalamazoo*

Ten things I Love about the Portage and Kalamazoo area,
by Peter Strazdas

- Portage and Kalamazoo region has one of the best bike/trailway systems in the state. Add the wonderful park and outdoor recreation opportunities, and we have something that is the envy of others in the Country.
- The quality and quantity of microbreweries. Interesting how Kalamazoo made special beer in the late 1800's and now it has come back.
- Greater Kalamazoo has earned the name - An Education Community. The quality of K-12 and institutions of higher learning is supported and cherished by the people in our community.
- This is a friendly community. We welcome and support our neighbors and give our time freely to so many community causes. We smile and say hello to strangers.
- Innovation is in the community's DNA. Past and present successes from taxi cabs to medical devices is driven by a culture of entrepreneurial spirit and innovation that is very special in our region.
- The level of collaboration between local elected officials and municipalities is something you do not see in many regions across the country.
- First class health care. Our local and regional hospitals and medical professionals are ranked very high in the nation.
- Shopping and dining. The mix of national and local restaurants is wonderful. The same is true for shopping opportunities. Being close to US-131 and I-94 makes it easy for people to come and go from our community.
- The connection between libraries, municipalities, and educational institutions and how they support each other for a higher quality of life.
- Arts and entertainment for a community this size is exceptional. The level of support from the community and number of artists engaged adds a lot to our diverse culture.



Peter Strazdas is the Mayor of Portage and Associate Vice President of Facilities Management at Western Michigan University.

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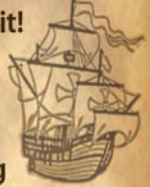
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Celebrate the Season

G.L.S.Co. Schrod in Parchment

Photography by Linda Hoard

Cold outside? Warm up with a wonderful dinner at Great Lakes Shipping Company in Kalamazoo. From the cheery fire at the entrance to the welcoming fireplaces in all the dining areas, you will enjoy the relaxed, comfortable environment. Locally owned and operated, the Great Lakes Shipping Company opened its doors to Kalamazoo in 1974 offering the area's first taste of slow-roasted prime rib, choice aged steaks and a unique salad bar, and continues to serve fresh seafood, chicken, pasta as well as regional favorites and updated classics. Their commitment to quality is uncompromised, as shown in the creative preparations of high quality foods and professional service.

The schrod dish shown above has remained a favorite over the years. For a nicer presentation when preparing the recipe, cut a large X in the bottom of the bag from corner to corner and set the bag in a glass baking dish. Then, carefully place the ingredients in the bag and close. When ready to serve, do not unroll the top of the bag. Using a large spatula, transfer the bag to the serving dish and simply lift the bag up, letting the schrod slide out from the bottom onto the plate.

Great Lakes Shipping Company Schrod in Parchment

4 oz. sliced schrod (or cod)
5 raw shrimp (tail off)
4 large bay scallops
1 heaping tablespoon Bercy Butter
lemon pepper


Place sliced schrod, shrimp, and scallops in an ink-free parchment bag or covered casserole dish. Top with Bercy Butter and sprinkle with lemon pepper. Tightly roll top of bag leaving room for air to circulate (or cover casserole dish). Bake at 400° for 12-15 minutes.

Bercy Butter (extra can be frozen for later use)
Blend together the following ingredients:
1/2 pound softened unsalted butter
1 finely chopped shallot
3 tablespoon white wine
1 teaspoon fresh basil
1 teaspoon freshly chopped chives
1 teaspoon freshly chopped parsley


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A Tip to Reduce Stress: Organize Your Closets

By Kaye Bennett
Photos courtesy of Halls Closets & More and ORG

Professional organizer Darlene Reitz, owner of The Clutter Buster, in Kalamazoo, is convinced that the phenomenon of clutter is both a cause and an effect. "It's a two-fold thing," she says. "For some people, clutter itself causes them stress. For others, the clutter in their surroundings is a sign of what's going on inside them."

Whether the disorganization is the cause or the effect, Reitz feels that getting order in their lives can significantly reduce people's stress levels. She's been helping her friends get organized "forever," she says, and about 12 years ago, she turned her experiences into a business. She even teaches a class in the Kalamazoo Public Schools Community Education Enrichment program twice yearly to help people come to grips with the mess around them.

Her process, says Reitz, is simple. After people call her, the first step is to find out what's bothering them the most. "It may not be what I think," she says. Where she may walk into a house and be struck by the havoc in the living room, it may be the bedrooms that are most vexing to the homeowner.

At the first visit, Reitz maps out steps to get the client started. Then she goes back for a return visit. If they have done what she suggested, it can save them money, because they won't need so much of her help in the future. But many of her clients, she finds, need ongoing coaching.

It's coaching with a heart, however. "I never suggest that people get rid of anything with strong sentimental attachment." But sometimes just keeping a photograph of the memento is enough, and the item itself can be passed along to a new owner.

Reitz speaks from personal experience. She's lived in tiny surroundings, where every inch of space had to be utilized; she's upsized to a house big enough to raise her six children; and then she downsized again. Her own philosophy on downsizing: "I give things to my kids if they want them, or I donate them." After all, she adds, "if you can't use something or display it, what good is it?"

De-cluttering, she's learned, can be a slow and evolving process. "You have to realize: You didn't get here overnight, so you won't solve it overnight." And solving it is tiring, both physically and mentally. She advises clients to set a timer while they organize. Give yourself, she says, 15 minutes or 30 or whatever works. When the timer goes off, you can either re-set it or stop, but at least you've started. "The hardest part is getting up off the couch to get started," she says.

Another important step: Put like things together. If you discover that you already have 12 hammers, she says, pick out the best of them and get rid of the rest. And the best part is that, if you can find your hammer, you won't go out to buy a new one every time you need to pound a nail.



"I tell people who are getting started to look through the knothole, not over the fence," Reitz says. By focusing on one small area to clean up, they are less overwhelmed by the scope of the whole project.

Reitz says that her two-session KPS class, called "Downsizing," helps instill a sense of accountability in students. At the first class, everyone comes up with a list of what they want to work on in the next week, and Reitz suggests how to go about doing that. In the second class, they share successes or challenges they had in meeting that goal. "It's sort of a Clutterers Anonymous," says Reitz.

Closets, she knows, are a special challenge for many people. Her advice: "We have to be realistic and realize that we're never again going to get down to the size we used to be. . . Or if we do, we'll want to buy new clothes to celebrate, and the old ones will be out of date anyway." Reitz herself swears by closet storage in carefully labeled plastic shoeboxes, plus one more tip: Hang all your clothes with the hangers pointing backwards. The next time you clean your closet, if the hangers haven't been turned around, you'll know you haven't worn that item in a long time, so get rid of it."

Closets are a special challenge when it comes to organization, agrees Bette Hall of Halls Closets and More, in Portage.

Hall's company, which she and her husband Ron started in 2002, is uniquely positioned to help clients who want to maximize the efficiency in their homes. The genesis of the Halls' business was a desire to organize their own home, but they discovered, no business in southwest Michigan at the time was offering any help in that regard. They found that a Holland, Michigan-based manufacturer of organization solutions was looking for a representative in this area, so the Halls' business was born. Known today as The Stow Company, that Holland manufacturer is still a major supplier for the Halls, who appreciate that its products are all made in Michigan.



Hall says she offers a free initial consultation, visiting the client's home to determine their needs. Then she uses a CAD program to design a solution, sends it to the homeowner for approval, and within two or three weeks, can have it installed.

Products exist that can help organize hard-to-store items like ties, belts, shoes and tall boots. Pull-out racks, valet rods, shelf and drawer dividers, and baskets on glides can help customers organize in very small spaces.

A byproduct of organization, says Hall, is financial. Knowing what you have and where to find it saves a lot of time and, she points out, time costs money. Remembering what you already own, she adds, keeps you from going out and buying something new – along with all the side purchases you'd likely make on that unnecessary shopping trip.

Bette Hall says that the people most likely to make initial contact with her company are women, but that "ironically, it's the husbands who are happiest with the results... We get a lot of positive remarks from the men," she says, "because then it's so easy for them." Hall also notes that many of her clients are teachers: "Teachers love to be organized."

It goes against reason, but Hall has found that many of the large walk-in closets in homes constructed in the last five or ten years need as much help as smaller, reach-in closets in older homes. If a huge closet has just one rod and shelving, it can become chaotic. Whatever the closet size, Hall says that creative solutions can easily double the usable space.

Her years in the home organization business have convinced Hall that the whole dynamic of a home changes every 13 to 15 years. As children grow up and families mature and evolve, "what you need, what you have, and what you buy change." That's when it's time to re-evaluate your home organization.

And – in the process – to decrease your own stress level. Darlene Reitz advises simplifying and taking charge of our belongings and the world immediately around us, because, as she says, "there are so many things in life that we can't control."





Dance Beyond the Stage

By Zinta Aistars

Photos courtesy of the Ballet Arts Ensemble



It's hard to say which topic infuses Cathy Huling with more passion: talking about the Ballet Arts Ensemble (BAE), where she has been co-owner since 1991 and artistic director since 2001, or talking about BAE's community outreach in collaboration with many greater Kalamazoo organizations.

Ballet Arts Ensemble at 2018 Rambling Road in Kalamazoo is an all-volunteer, nonprofit youth ballet organization, founded in 1982 by Jerre Locke James, owner of Ballet Arts School of Dance. Performances include mixed repertoire concerts and full-length story ballets such as Cinderella, Peter and the Wolf, The Magical Toy Shop, Red Shoes, Aladdin's Magic Lamp, and many others, often featuring guest dancers and musicians. Every other year, BAE collaborates with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra to present a fully-staged production of Nutcracker featuring professional dancers in principal roles.

For Cathy Huling, BAE is her home away from home. "I've been dancing since I was 4 or 5 years old," she says. "My father was a professional musician, a classical pianist and composer. My mother sang in the church choir, and my father was the organist there. I grew up in a musical environment."

A Grand Rapids native, Huling recalls her father bringing home ballet classics such as Swan Lake and playing the records on the record player. She was mesmerized. She wanted to dance.

"I was one of six, maybe eight girls who studied with Sally Seven, soloist with Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and founder of the Grand Rapids Civic Ballet," she says. "You could say we were pioneers of the Grand Rapids Civic Ballet."

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Although Huling dabbled with other dance forms, classic ballet remained her love. She attended Marietta College in Ohio, where she earned a degree in speech and excelled in debate competitions. In Grand Rapids, she was involved in civic theatre, learning what happens back stage to bring a successful production on stage. And she danced.

“These were the skills I was able to bring to BAE,” Huling says. “At 5’10”, I was too tall to be a professional dancer, but I wanted to pass my love of classical dance on to others.”

BAE works with dancers of both genders, beginning at age 4 for classes, auditioning at age 12 for productions. At present, the company has 20 dancers, representing all area schools, Huling says, including home schools. Dancers commit to two classical ballet classes per week in addition to a weekly 3-hour class and rehearsal block.

“Many of our dancers were brought by their parents to see a production when they were small,” Huling says. “We do a meet-and-greet with audience members, and the children idolize the dancers and look up to them. We talk about this all the time—that our dancers are role models and mentors to the next generation of dancers.”

BAE takes that responsibility seriously. Community outreach is as important a part of the organization’s mission as the presentation of classical ballet. Tickets are priced at affordable rates (usually ranging between \$8 to \$18), with complimentary tickets provided to a variety of community organizations, agencies and groups that might not otherwise be able to attend performances.

Recipients of complimentary tickets include Big Brothers and Big Sisters, YWCA, Black Arts and Cultural Center, Hispanic American Organization, Boys and Girls Club, Family and Children Services, Bronson Pediatric Oncology, Alzheimer’s Society, Autism Society, Senior Low-Income and Assisted Living Facilities, senior centers in Kalamazoo and Portage, and others.



"We had a young lady, oh, maybe age 8, attend our Nutcracker performance," Huling recalls. "She had cancer and was undergoing harsh chemo treatments, but she dressed up in her taffeta dress that night and we gave her a tiara to wear. A couple years later, I received a letter from her. Although her prognosis had not been good, she survived, and she wanted us to know what that performance had meant to her."

Huling shares another story about a teen who came to see a recent production of Cinderella. The young woman had Crohn's disease and had been in the hospital for a year. She would soon undergo surgery yet again.

"She was so excited to see Cinderella," says Huling. "We have an ongoing relationship with the Bronson Children's Hospital. We bring the production to the hospital, or we invite the children and their families to the dress rehearsal, where they have the entire place to themselves."

"It's a special experience for all," Huling says, "on and off stage." For her dancers, an awareness of the blessing of their own physical abilities—and that volunteering is anything but drudgery—is just one benefit of training in classical ballet. Self-confidence and an appreciation of all arts are others.

The BAE board has also established the W. Dale and Geraldine Crooks Scholarship to provide assistance for dancers who wish to pursue summer studies outside the program. The board also funds annual field trips for dancers to attend professional dance-related productions in and outside of the state.

"It's collaborating with the community and with other art venues," Huling says. "We in the arts need to reach out to each other and support each other."

For more information about BAE, contact Cathy Huling at 269.345.3433 or visit www.balletartsensemble.org







From Farmhouse to New House

By Zolton Cohen
 Photography by Zolton Cohen

Jack and Maureen's collaboration with builder Bill Kozar on their home in Allegan to get exactly the result they wanted lends credibility to the concept that working slowly, thoughtfully and deliberately ultimately achieves the best outcome.

THE BUILDING BACKSTORY

After having gone to Parade of Homes events in both Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo for five or six years and writing down features they liked in the homes they visited, Jack and Maureen next had to decide if some could be incorporated into the existing home on their property.

That issue was a complicated one to consider. Jack's family had owned the farm, currently 120 acres, since the early 1900's when his great grandfather first bought it. The old farmhouse, built in about 1835, served at one point as a "stagecoach house," where travelers from Kalamazoo, Chicago and Saugatuck would stop to spend the night. Jack grew up on the farm and bought it from his mother in 1989.

Geometric shapes, stepped ceilings and a color palette that leads from one room to another are highlights of the Bill Kozar-designed home.





The couple raised their five kids in the old farmhouse, but after the children grew up and moved away it was time to move on to the next phase of their lives. And it was time to determine whether to move the old house back from the road and repair and rebuild it, or to tear it down and start anew.

Jack says, "We met with Bill for the better part of a year to try to fit what we wanted into the old house. But in the end we just couldn't get everything to work." Although the 2,800 square foot house was relatively large, Maureen says, "There just wasn't a lot of living space

ABOVE: Geometric gable forms and different siding textures add interest to the front elevation of the home.

RIGHT: A picturesque barn on the property, situated adjacent to the house, awaits restoration.





available. It was mainly the kitchen, dining room, living room and big bedrooms. And we wanted it to be more energy efficient and to have a nice lower level. That just couldn't be done with the farmhouse; it was too small. We needed more living space to accommodate family when they come to visit."

The final straw was that the rolling land offers picturesque views in every direction but, as Maureen says, "The farmhouse had only a single window that looked out onto the acreage, over the tool shed and chicken coop. The landscape was invisible from inside." In a wry example of generational differences, Jack reports that his mother asked him, "But what do you want to look at all this dirt for?"

ABOVE: A spacious area off the kitchen quickly transforms into a dining room when the large, round table is pulled into position.

LEFT: A storage cabinet in Jack's office reflects the home's farming heritage with its sliding barn door hardware.



DESIGNING FOR LIVING

Jack says, "We really wanted certain things in this house. The width was determined by the size of the master bedroom. We wanted a walk-in shower and separate closets." "And an open design," Maureen adds. "I like a lot of space. Bill is really good with designing space. We visited every one of his Parade Homes for about three years and then talked about what we thought we wanted in the house. And we appreciated his ability to see what we already had."

After meeting extensively with and hearing exactly what Jack and Maureen wanted in their new home, Kozar got to work. "When I start drawing a home," he says, "I use circles. Not squares; not boxes. That way I don't have to worry about how they fit together at first. Then I make each circle overlap the next. And I try to blur the line between the inside and outside. I'm not the first person to do this, but I'm doing it in my own way."

He also says, "I try to do architecture that is dramatic and can't be ignored. I look for truths. I look at the human condition and at how architecture can make a person feel comfortable or not comfortable; excited, stimulated and safe."

As a result, he says, "You won't find houses that I built that

ABOVE: The lower level kitchen is used frequently when family comes to stay and during the holidays.

RIGHT: The bright light and cheerful decor of this bedroom belies its location in the lower level of the home.





have four walls. I just don't think there is any spirit that is comfortable in a box. We love alcoves. Homes with homogeneous, flat ceilings of the same height are incapable of making us feel comfortable."

All of those concepts are certainly at play in Jack and Maureen's house. Maureen says, "We wanted a custom house, and all the shapes and outlines - those are Bill's ideas. We don't have a square room anywhere. I think he drew 15 versions of the fireplace, some while sitting at a card table he had set up in the great room. Bill says the house is going to tell you what it needs. So he spent a lot of time here just feeling the space and making it right; he's not satisfied until it feels right. The thing with Bill is that he's an artist, and that's where I think we lucked out meeting him. Other builders can do a lot of things, but Bill really is a genius."

THE HEART OF THE HOME

Maureen says, "In the old farmhouse we had a galley kitchen and people were always bumping into one another. We're a large family and one that likes to gather in the kitchen, so we knew we needed a cooktop separate from the oven so we could spread out and all work in the same space comfortably."

Picking out the granite for the island, where the couple eats when they're home by themselves, was challenging, Maureen says. "There were two big slabs at the granite place that had already been sold. They really caught our eye and we said we have to have it. We were so pleased that they managed to find another piece."

Hickory floors and pillowed cherry cabinet door and drawer fronts compliment the colors in the granite island countertop.



Along the way, seemingly minor items in the overall scheme of things had to be decided on and dealt with. The light over the island had to be cut down on site in order to make it fit. And the swirling mosaic tile backsplash over the cooktop took a long time to design. "Bill was with us every step of the way," Maureen says, "helping us make those kinds of decisions."

The unusual "pillowed" kitchen cabinet door fronts are the result of Kozar's relationship with a past client. Maureen says, "Bill called a couple in Texas Corners that he did a remodeling job for and asked if we could come and visit, and that's how we came up with that look. Then that couple came to our open house."

ABOVE: Boldly colored walls in the master bedroom are punctuated by windows of unusual shapes and sizes.

BELOW: Sun streams into the master bathroom, with its separate vanities and curbless walk-in tile shower.





ALL THE REST

"I don't like dark spots," Jack says. "So we spent a lot of time working on the lighting. The farmhouse was dark and we didn't want that again." He advises, "Make sure you take time with the electric, because once it's there it's there for good."

Jack continues, "We each wanted an office; hers is called a study. We also wanted a sitting room where we could go and just sit and have coffee. It's a place where we can talk to each other at the end of the day without distractions."

Due to the home's siting, windows in the first floor master bedroom catch light from both the sunrise and sunset. An exterior door opens onto the back deck. With expansive views of the farmland available in every direction, it is obviously one of Maureen's favorite rooms. She says, "We stay in the bedroom quite a bit and watch TV and have coffee. And when I have a snow day off from my teaching job, I can spend the entire day in there."

Off the master bedroom is the spacious master bathroom, complete with a walk-in curbless shower – a feature that is part of their plan to "age in place" in the home. The couple also have separate walk-in closets. Maureen says, "I have to smile because it is unusual for a man to want his own closet. In the farmhouse we had clothes all over the house because of its tiny closets. His has two lights because he's colorblind with darker colors. We each designed ours differently."

The lower level has a full kitchen and enough bedrooms to house family and grandchildren for extended stays. Down there, a boiler provides heat through in-floor hydronic tubing; a gas forced-air furnace does the job with the upstairs. Jack insisted that some ductwork be included in the lower level as well, as he says, "Just in case something goes wrong." Although the new home is almost twice as large as the old farmhouse, the utility bills are lower, Maureen reports.

At the end of the day, Jack and Maureen say they got exactly what they wanted in their new home. Jack says, "There is a lot of living area in this house, along with the outdoor space. People can have private conversations in the sitting room or by the fireplace, or get away from one another. It's a big house for two people, but we use it all." Maureen adds, "We still say, 'wow, this is our house.' It's hard to believe."

"It's important to know where you come from," Jack says, referring to the family's history on the land. "This is our ground. This is our home."





TIME TO GO WHERE THE SNOW DOESN'T BLOW?

By Kaye Bennett

You've just finished shoveling—again!—and come inside to warm up, when you hear—again!—the roar of a snowplow as it leaves two feet of hard-packed snow at the end of your driveway. It's at precisely that moment when many Michiganders start fantasizing about Caribbean beaches and palm trees.

To make these fantasies come true, you might want to turn to a travel professional, whose years of experience and industry contacts can help ensure that your travel experience will be a good one.

The internet age has dramatically changed the nature of the travel industry. Jane Johnson, field manager of AAA Auto Club of Michigan, says that 75 percent of AAA's travel business used to come from airline ticket purchases, but now that figure's in the single digits. Instead, people are using travel consultants to help them plan big trips, family reunions, destination weddings and corporate events. Most of her projects now, says Johnson, are in the \$10,000+ range.

The internet, says Pat Kamm, the owner of Travel Focus! in Portage and Amy Carroll, its general manager, has not lessened the important role professional travel advisors play. Many customers today do extensive on-line research into their travel options before calling a travel advisor. But many people have



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learned that they don't like making that final click, committing themselves and a large sum of their money to a faceless company. "People aren't always comfortable going to an unknown [online] company to finalize the details for the trip," says Carroll. "You need someone to look out for your best interests," adds Kamm. There's a sense of security in working with people you know, agrees Johnson.

Travel experts advise would-be travelers to plan ahead, sometimes far ahead, for a trip. "It's not unheard of to plan a trip a year and a half in advance," says Carroll.

That's particularly true for one of today's hottest vacation experiences: river cruising. Johnson says that river cruising has increased in popularity by 20 to 30 per cent in recent years, making it crucial that such trips be booked far ahead. Because such cruises are extremely popular and the ships that make them are small (usually accommodating 200 people or less), some dates for river cruises are already filling up for the 2015-16 season, says Kamm.

Planning ahead is also important as the big day approaches, says Johnson. Plan for delays: Leave a day early if you're taking a cruise, just to make sure you get there in time to sail with the ship.

Another crucial tip from both Travel Focus! and AAA experts: Buy trip insurance. Your vacation is a big investment, says Johnson, and you need to consider protecting that investment in case something happens. Natural disasters such as earthquakes can interrupt a trip, and medical emergencies are always a possibility, particularly for senior travelers. Since emergency evacuation off a cruise ship can cost upwards of \$50,000, few travelers would be able to afford to pay that out-of-pocket. Seniors also need to know that Medicare doesn't cover medical expenses that occur outside the United States.

While many people see trip insurance as a good way to recoup expenses should a trip have to be cancelled, it actually covers much more than that, says Kamm. Policies can cover you for trip delays, medical problems, and even baggage and clothing, if your luggage doesn't get to you before your cruise ship sails.

Here are the sort of things travel consultants ask to help you plan your dream vacation:

- Johnson advises travel clients to think about the youngest person in the party. If you gear a trip to the youngest person, she says, "everybody is much happier."
- Travel advisors also need to know what sort of things you like to do and, of course, what budget you're working with.
- If you have some flexibility in your schedule, advisors can tell you the best time to travel to avoid crowds, to get lower prices and to maximize the chances of having good weather.

- If you're traveling internationally, Carroll says they remind you to check that your passport is current and won't be expiring in the near future. (Many countries require your passport to have three to six months validity remaining before they allow you to enter.)

- They can help you bundle the different facets of your trip, such as flights, rental cars and hotels, for the best price.

AAA offers other help to international travelers, says Johnson, including currency exchange and travel money cards (like a debit card just for trips), and it is the only U.S. organization that issues international driving permits.

Kamm and Carroll say that follow-up is another important service that travel advisors provide. If you have a problem while you're on vacation, they say, "We expect you to call us. We'll contact the provider [the hotel or cruise line, for example] to make it right." Likewise, Travel Focus! reaches out for customer feedback when travelers get back home.

A major consideration for trips that involve air travel is where to start and end your trip. While some people choose to drive to Detroit or Chicago, or even Grand Rapids or another medium-sized airport to start their trip, David Reid, the director of the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport, points out the advantages of flying out of the airport nearest your home. After a long flight home following your wonderful vacation, it can be a real treat to have just a few minutes' drive to your own house. The smaller airports, such as Kalamazoo, also offer shorter lines. A recent survey showed that the average time travelers spend in the security check line is about eight minutes—a far cry from the huge lines at O'Hare or Detroit Metro.

Add to that shorter wait time for baggage to arrive and a quick walk to where you parked your car (which, by the way,



will cost a lot less to park than in the big airports), and the advantages, says Reid, are obvious.

People sometimes believe that flights out of Kalamazoo are automatically more expensive than those from bigger airports. Reid says that this gap in fares from Kalamazoo is narrowing and that flight costs are much closer together than they once were. Kamm's staff sometimes finds, she says, that Kalamazoo flights are the least expensive option for their clients.

Reid points out that the Kalamazoo airport has a beautiful new terminal, opened just 3 ½ years ago, and that usage of the airport continues to grow. In 2014, he says, flights in and out of Kalamazoo increased by nine percent, which can only bode well for the future. The more people opt to use the Kalamazoo airport, he explains, the more likely the airlines are to see the city as a good venue for expanding services and adding more flights, which in turn, provides jobs and enhances the infrastructure, making the community more attractive for potential businesses.

Reid's advice to air travelers:

- Know the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines when you prepare for your trip. To speed up your security check, visit www.tsa.gov to learn about baggage dos and don'ts.
- Allow plenty of time, particularly during holiday seasons. Check with your airline to determine how early you should plan to arrive at the airport before your flight.
- While you're still at home, go online to check in for your flight and get your seat assignments.
- Check the Kalamazoo airport's website, www.flyazo.com, for weather and other announcements, as well as updates on arrivals and departures.

For your trips that are automotive, rather than aeronautic, Johnson points out that AAA is an easy place to go for advice. Its new app, aaamobile.com, offers maps, voice directions, road construction updates, as well as gas prices, hotels, restaurants and sights to see, at your destination and along your route. With more than a century of experience, AAA can help you plan your entire driving trip.

Whether you do your research online or head straight to a travel professional, whether you fly around the world or drive across the state, whether you fly from Kalamazoo or Katmandu, remember: Nothing beats a well-planned trip to help you make it through a Michigan winter.





Photo courtesy of Kalamazoo Custom Kitchens

Kitchen Trends for 2015

By Zolton Cohen

Jane McCormick, Interior Design Specialist at Interiors by Jane, predicts that in the future people are going to spend more time in their kitchens. "It's really the hub, the central nervous system, of the home," she says. "People congregate in the kitchen and never leave. It's like a living space and entertaining space rolled into one because people aren't just cooking in kitchens anymore. They're doing more than just boiling water and cooking chicken. It's where families start their day and end their day. So a kitchen needs to function according to each family's lifestyle."

KITCHENS GO HIGH-TECH

That lifestyle increasingly includes technology. McCormick says, "These days we'll often see a big island that has an area for food preparation, and where you can also plug in phones, tablets or computers, and where kids can sit down and do their homework."

Bob DeHaan, owner of DeHaan Remodeling Specialists, Inc., has noticed demand spiking for accommodations related to technology as well. "Everyone these days has at least a phone that needs charging," he says. "We've been installing Leviton electrical receptacles that have two USB ports built right in so you don't have to have a transformer hanging out of the wall."

Technology extends to appliances too, McCormick notes. "Appliances are getting smarter. It's almost like that cartoon *The Jetsons*. Wolf and Viking have come out with induction cooktops and ranges that identify from the shape of the bowl or container what the item is and know how long to cook it."

DeHaan points out that kitchen lighting has taken a high-tech turn as well. "LED is really the number one product these days," he says. "It can go on the tops of cabinets or under toe-kicks; really, just about anywhere you want it. Prices are coming down, the light is bright, and there are canister units available now that can be used in a shower. On top of that they're inexpensive to operate and last just about forever. That's

a good selling point for elderly people who shouldn't be standing on a ladder replacing bulbs."

COUNTERTOPS

Daryl Ann Letts, Certified Kitchen Designer and owner of Kalamazoo Custom Kitchens, says demand for quartz countertops remains strong as the material is being made to look more like granite. "Quartz has a lot going for it," she says. "It's easy to care for, twice as strong as granite and comes with a warranty. It's a beautiful material and there are now more than 90 colors to choose from. We don't see granite as much these days unless the client wants it to be something to do with nature."

DeHaan says, "Both quartz and granite are the top-ranked materials and I don't see that changing anytime soon. They're popular and prices have come down. If you stay in what I call the 'promo' colors - colors that carry promotional prices - it can be relatively reasonable. But if you go outside of that it can jump up rather quickly, to 30-50% increases."

DeHaan also says, "We're not seeing as much plastic laminate lately, but do have it requested occasionally. One of our customers said she'd rather put her money somewhere else rather than spend it on a stone countertop, and went with a stone look in laminate instead. And it's very durable. We had a customer with a 40 year old house that still had the original site-built laminate. It certainly is still the most cost-effective material."

COLORS AND FINISHES

Letts says that clients are mixing colors when they select cabinets. "The gray trend continues, in various shades and hues" she notes. "But white and off-white are still popular, maybe paired with a gray island. This mixing of colors has been going on for a while; what we call 'white with color,' or white with a glaze."

McCormick also says gray is still the 'hot' color. "It's still strong," she says. "It is the new neutral. But we're also starting to do more white kitchens because they're timeless, classic and clean."

DeHaan has also seen interest in different colored kitchen cabinets, though he says, in his business, "Darker



Photo courtesy of Interiors by Jane



Photo courtesy of DeHaan Remodeling Specialists

Home Remodeling & Design



Jane McCormick
Interior Design Specialist

Interiors by Jane

Office: 269.743.7416 Mobile: 269.206.1446
interiorsbyjane@aol.com
www.janemccormickdesign.com

colors are coming back to an extent. When it's done well, that mix makes it stand out. And multiple-color countertops are a continuing trend." An article he read recently said that when the economy is down, people generally stick with more neutral, 'safe,' colors. "But," he says, "As things are starting to pick up, you're seeing more and brighter colors being used."

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Letts says, "I had a client request recently to put in a second kitchen off the main kitchen – a cook's pantry. It's a dirty kitchen/clean kitchen scenario where the main kitchen is for presentation and entertaining while the cook's pantry is for doing more of the hard and dirty work. It's an entirely new design concept for the larger and more upscale home that would give the homeowner plenty of storage and preparation space."

"It's for baking and cooking, where you don't have to worry about it getting dirty and don't have to put things away before company arrives. It's the same as someone who sews having a separate room behind closed doors where she can leave things out and come back to them later."

"All the shelves would be open with no doors, both upper and lower, so things are easy to see and grab in a hurry. So it's really like a pantry, but you've also got a sink, oven and cooktop in there as well. There's an area where a cook can roll dough and make pastries. It would be a strictly functional kitchen, and the refrigerator would straddle both spaces, so you could access it from either area."

"You might even have a rolling library ladder to access the upper shelves, making it more convenient and safer to get items. Everything would be accessible and instantly visible, with everything in its place and organized, maybe color-coded, and maybe put in clear containers so it looks attractive. It would be an exciting and inspirational space to work. And you could put in a window above the sink so it's not a dark space."



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Do Customers Really Care About Being Green?

With everyone talking about this whole sustainability kick and the whole "going green" trend, haven't we all forgotten to ask an important question for any business? Do customers actually care if a company is being green or creating green products or offering green services? I mean, we can spend all the time, energy and finances we want on making our business play nice with the environment, but if the people who buy what we're selling don't care, why on earth would we waste our time? So, why don't we answer this question before going any further. Do customers care about being green? YES! And most importantly, We Care.

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